




LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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Memorandum

Date: October 14, 2022
To: Board of Directors
From: David Potter, Assistant General Manager 
RE: Land Resources Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The Land Resources Subcommittee met Thursday, October 13, 2022 via Zoom. Subcommittee members attending the meeting were Gary Hellerich, Gary Aldridge, Vern Barrett, Bruce Johnson, Anthony Schutz, Mark Spangler, and Ken Vogel. Members absent were Ron Nolte. Others in attendance were Paul Zillig, David Potter, Donna Reid, Cory Schmidt, and Cole Johnson. The meeting was called to order by Chair Hellerich at 5:30 p.m. and Potter was asked to provide a background on the agenda items.

The first agenda item was consideration of an Inter-Governmental Agreement Amendment between NeDEE and LPSNRD regarding the Twin Lakes Watershed Target Area Implementation Project. Potter informed the subcommittee the District has received two additional cost-share applications in the Twin Lakes Watershed totaling \$83,945. Based on committed funds, these two applications would put the project cost over the federal funds by \$36,190. Since the Agreement was approved on July 1, 2021, LPSNRD has been promoting and implementing the best management practices (BMPs) identified in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP). Eligible cost-share projects are approved by the LPSNRD Board of Directors based on estimated construction costs, the PIP, our fiscal year budget and the Agreement. To date, LPSNRD has committed a total of \$252,245 of federal funds on recommended BMPs. Most of these BMPs are to be constructed this fall and next spring.

Due to the interest of the landowners to complete water quality BMPs in the Twin Lakes Watershed and with over 1.5 years left in the Project, LPSNRD requested an amendment to Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NeDEE) to the Inter-Governmental Agreement for an additional \$60,000 in Section 319 grant funds. This would increase the budget to \$360,000 federal funds and \$240,000 in LPSNRD matching funds for BMPs, or a total up to \$317,000 in nonfederal match as cash and /or services in-kind. The scope of the Project will not change. This is an opportunity to complete more water quality BMPs for the Project.

Potter stated the District received verification from NeDEE on October 11th that they are in agreement to the proposed amendment and commend us on the successful effort to get water quality practices implemented in the watershed. A copy of the draft Agreement Amendment, letter of request, approved Project PIP budget sheet and amended/proposed budget are attached.

It was moved by Vogel, seconded by Barrett, and unanimously approved, with Schutz not present, to recommend the Board of Directors approve the Inter-Governmental Agreement Amendment between NDEE and LPSNRD regarding the Twin Lakes Watershed Target Area Implementation project, subject to legal counsel review.

Prior to taking up the second item, NRCS District Conservationist Cory Schmidt provided a status report on conservation work being done in the District. Due to dry conditions and lack of soil moisture, most land treatment projects are on hold. Project fields are evaluated on a site-by-site basis. Fields with corn stalks are worse than those after beans and wheat. It's estimated that another 1-2 inches of rain will be needed before some work can be allowed.

The second item on the agenda was consideration of the surface water quality applications. Potter stated the District received a total of 10 additional fall Cost-Share Assistance applications for conservation work and FY'23 NRD funds. Applications were divided into the Eastern and Western portions and submitted to those appropriate Review Groups for review and consideration.

The Western NSWCP Cost-Share Review Group reviewed four additional applications in the District's western portion for NRD cost-share assistance, totaling \$48,562. One application is located in a Targeted Watershed (Stevens Creek), qualifying for a 75% cost-share rate. The District still has FY23 funds available for conservation practices District-wide and in the Stevens Creek Targeted Watersheds and are accepting late applications (beyond July 1st deadline). Review group members include Gary Hellerich, Gary Aldridge, Vern Barrett, Anthony Schutz, and Bob Andersen. There were no objections from the review group on the submitted applications.

Potter explained that since the review of those four applications, the District received a response from NeDEE that they would approve an amendment to the Inter-Governmental Agreement to the Twin Lakes 319 Project and provide additional Federal funds. Two applications were recently received from Seward County NRCS Field Office for fall cost-share work in the Twin Lakes Watershed and were placed on hold. With the Agreement Amendment, these two applications for terraces are now being considered for the maximum incentive through the grant. The applications for Carol A. Schildt Revocable Trust and Wilma Mook total \$139,908. The attached spreadsheet and map provide information and location of all six applications in the Western Portion of the District, totaling \$188,470.

The Eastern NSWCP Cost-Share Review Group reviewed four applications in the District's eastern portion for NRD cost-share assistance, totaling \$47,794. Staff noted the District still has FY23 funds available for conservation practices District-wide and are accepting late applications (beyond July 1st deadline).

It was also noted that one application is not signed by the technician and has notes included on it indicating the technician felt there are no resource or erosion concerns at this time. The technicians are to determine if a field has a resource concern that needs to be addressed with a conservation practice after a site visit or referencing a Lidar map. If there is a resource concern present in the field, the technician should fill out and send in the NSWCP-3 form and associated paperwork to the NRD as normal. As per guidance from the General Manager and our District Conservationist, if there is **NOT** a resource concern in the field, the technician should complete the following steps:

- *Have a conversation with the producer regarding the existing functional practices and recommendations to maintain them.*
- *If the producer wants to submit an application, fill out the NSWCP-3 form and associated paperwork as normal, but do not sign the box on the NSWCP form that states "Practices and Quantities are needed and practical and will be planned in accordance with NRCS specifications."*
- *Send the paperwork to the NRD with a statement as to why the practices are **not** needed and practical. For example, "A storage terrace system is not needed due to the presence of a functional gradient terrace system that is currently controlling erosion to tolerable levels." The statement doesn't need to be a novel but needs to contain enough information for*

staff/administration, the review groups, Land Resources Subcommittee, and/or the Board of Directors to understand why the technician is not signing the needs section of the NSWCP form.

The attached spreadsheet and map provide information and location of the applications in the Eastern Portion of the District. Eastern Review Group members include Mark Spangler, Dave Landis, Ron Nolte, Bruce Johnson and Ken Vogel. There were recommendations from a few members of the Eastern Review Group to deny the application identified as not having a resource concern (Tom Ahrens).

Cory Schmidt explained the procedures followed by NRCS regarding cost-share applications and LPSNRD Resources Technician Cole Johnson shared specific information on the application noted not having current resource concerns.

The subcommittee discussed, and a majority of the members agreed, to not approve the one identified application lacking current resource concerns. **It was moved by Spangler, seconded by Vogel, and unanimously approved to recommend the Board of Directors approve the nine identified fall cost-share applications as listed on the attached tables, totaling an amount of \$223,764.**

The third agenda item was an update of the District's Cover Crop Program. Potter stated the District has approved 51 applications totaling \$91,603. The application deadline was October 1st. A press release providing information on the Program was sent to all the local newspapers and the District mailed out information directly to property owners again this year, this time to all the CWSPAs, Pawnee Lake Watershed, Red Cedar Watershed, and Olive Creek Watershed. Potter also provided an update on the University of Nebraska Extension Highboy Cover Crop Project partially funded by Section 319 funds. The project provided cover crop seed and application on approximately 3,000 acres in LPSNRD, LPNNRD and UBBNRD. Four fields in northern Lancaster County were inter-seeded with cover crops using a highboy machine the week of August 15th. A couple NRD staff and a Nebraska Extension specialist completed a "stand count" on the four fields (3 dryland and 1 subsurface irrigated) on October 12th. The results are not yet calculated but the cover crop is coming up, although somewhat sparse. More rains will hopefully germinate the remaining viable seeds. Another stand count will be conducted in the spring.

With no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.