




LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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Memorandum

Date: December 10, 2020
To: Board of Directors
From: David Potter, Assistant General Manager 
RE: Land Resources Subcommittee Meeting Minutes.

The Land Resources Subcommittee met virtually at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, December 9, 2020 via Zoom to take action on three agenda items and discuss a few others. Subcommittee members present included Gary Hellerich, Gary Aldridge, Mark Spangler, Chelsea Johnson, Bruce Johnson, Sarah Wilson and Dave Landis. Others present included Larry Ruth, David Potter, Paul Zillig, Cory Schmidt, John Albert, Cindy Spilinek, Evan Sisel, Donna Reid, Tracy Zayac and Nathan Kuhlman. Hellerich called the meeting to order and gave a brief welcome.

a. The first item was consideration of Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share applications. Reid informed the subcommittee that the District received three additional cost-share applications for fall work located in the Eastern portion of District. One is for grassed waterways and two are for terraces. According to the July 2020 Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share Program budget (which consists of FY'21 budgeted amounts, the allocated funds, obligated dollars, and available funds), the eastern portion is not over obligated and there is still available funds for conservation work. A map showing the location of the proposed conservation work was provided to the subcommittee as well as an updated Program budget.

The applications include:

- Jay Malone – \$10,000 for grassed waterways, 8-10-9, Cass County
- John Stroy – \$10,000 for terraces, 36-12-10, Cass County
- Douglas K. Nielsen - \$10,000 for terraces, 17-10-12, Cass County

It was moved by Landis, seconded by B. Johnson, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to recommend the Board of Directors approve the three identified cost-share applications totaling an amount of \$30,000.

b. The second item was consideration of the NRD/NSWCP 2021 LPSNRD Average Costs for the Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share Program. Our District Conservationist and (NRD and NRCS) technicians from Lancaster and Cass Counties met virtually on Monday, December 7th to discuss the average costs listed in the 2021 NeDNR Docket. The proposed LPSNRD docket lists the average costs commonly used in our District. Schmidt noted that some average costs on the 2021 NeDNR Docket are not reflective of average costs being charged by contractors in our area and some changes were recommended. The prepared NRD/NSWCP average costs with corrections for 2021 LPSNRD Average Costs based on those discussions and input was presented (attached). Also presented to the subcommittee was a spreadsheet that compared the new 2021 cost-share numbers with those approved for the 2020 Docket (attached). It was noted that the entire 2021 NeDNR Docket is referenced on the LPSNRD Docket sheet, therefore if approved, it would be approved by reference and be utilized for other average costs not listed on the LPSNRD Docket. Schmidt also noted that the 2021 average costs

were reasonably comparable to last year's numbers. New applications received after action by the Board will be based off the 2021 docket which will correspond with the new calendar year and the new application period (January 1, 2021)

It was moved by Landis, seconded by C. Johnson, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to recommend the Board of Directors approve the 2021 LPSNRD Average Costs for the Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-share Program.

c. The third item was consideration of a change to the LPSNRD Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share Program maximum cost-share dollar amount. Potter stated that at the LRIP subcommittee meeting, staff discussed the possibility of raising the maximum cost-share dollar amount and how it would affect conservation work. Staff felt that any new maximum dollar amounts should take effect after the first of the year to coordinate with the new docket and application period and avoid any confusion. The last increase was in 2015 and changed the district-wide maximum from \$7,000 to \$10,000 and the summer conservation program maximum from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Staff is proposing an increase of \$2,500 in the maximum dollar amounts to the LPSNRD district-wide, targeted and summer surface water quality cost-share programs. A copy of land treatment brochure with the recommended changes was provided to the subcommittee along with an average cost comparison from 2015 to 2021. The subcommittee discussed the need for an increase and the possibility of a greater increase and the pros and cons associated with that. It was also noted that there are other programs available such as EQIP that may fit larger conservation projects a little better if desired. It was agreed that an incremental increase of \$2,500 in the maximum amounts to the fall and summer programs both district-wide and targeted at this time is justified. If approved by the Board, the new maximum amounts would effective January 1, 2021 and be used for new applications received after that date.

It was moved by B. Johnson, seconded by Landis, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to recommend the Board of Directors approve the \$2,500 increase in the maximum cost-share amounts for the LPSNRD Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-share Fall and Summer Programs.

d. Lastly, staff provided updates on the various items:

- Status of Cost-Share Projects. Schmidt informed the subcommittee members of a very productive fall for conservation work. He recognized and complimented the technicians (Spilinek, Albert and Sisel) for their hard work to get projects designed and staked and staying ahead of the contractors. Producers and contractors have taken advantage of the weather and early harvest this year to get conservation on the ground. A number of land treatment projects have been completed and others are well-underway.
- Cover Crop Program. Potter and Schmidt gave an update on the 2020 Cover Crop Program. The district currently has 22 approved cover crop cost-share applications for a total amount of \$29,470. A spreadsheet of the current approvals was provided to the subcommittee. Staff continues to promote the cover crop program (brochures, website, social media, newspaper, NRCS promotion, and direct mailings) and are seeing increases since the program began in 2018 with only three applications. Last year we had 11 applications with two cancellations resulting in nine cost-share payments. Payments are made upon verification of cover crop termination in early spring before planting. The NRD Cover Crop program promotes water quality and conservation in our targeted areas, CWSPAs (wellhead protection areas), Phase 2 and 3 management areas, and on summer program cost-share projects.

- Cost-Share Project Recognition Signs. Potter discussed and presented the project recognition signs that the NRD has ordered and will be installing near some of the cost-share projects. During our LRIP meeting, the subcommittee discussed ways to promote our cost-share programs and to recognize individual projects. Project signs were one of those proposed measures. Staff has designed two project recognition signs that can be used on any of the projects. The district has utilized the budgeted amount and recently order six signs (four conservation practice signs and two cover crop signs) that can be moved from project to project.
- Twin Lakes 319 grant Submittal. Zayac provided an update on the Twin Lakes 319 Project and a tentative timeline for the application submittal and project. She also explained the EPA 319 funding and process through EPA and Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE). The District-wide Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) that was approved in 2019 identified the Twin Lakes Watershed as one of our priority areas. In addition, the District's FY21 Long Range Implementation Plan and budget has set aside \$100,000 for the application of 319 funding, utilizing watershed work group to identify watershed needs and implement Section 319 funding for BMPs in the watershed. The WQMP plan can be found at <https://www.lpsnrd.org/publications/lpsnrd-plans>. The District is working with Nebraska Game and Parks and NDEE to prepare for a 319 project and funding for the Twin Lakes Watershed. LPSNRD, NRCS, NDEE and Game & Parks Staff recently toured the watershed to determine landowner interest/needs and potential projects. The District is currently working on the Section 319 Project Implementation Plan to be submitted this Spring.
- Healthy Soils Task Force. Potter briefly presented information on the Healthy Soils Task Force. LB243 created the Healthy Soils Task Force to develop a Nebraska Healthy Soils Initiative and a comprehensive action plan to carry out the Initiative. Staff recently received a draft of The Nebraska Healthy Soils Task Force Report and wanted to provide the subcommittee with a quick update. The subcommittee was provided a copy of the table of contents and the Executive Summary of the draft report. Potter informed the subcommittee that the Task Force met virtually on earlier in the day (December 9th) at 1:00 p.m. and voted 11-2 to approve the Report. A final report will be available soon. It will need to be put in its final form (formatting, grammar check, etc.) before the end of the year.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 pm.

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