




LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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Memorandum

Date: July 14, 2021
To: Board of Directors
From: David Potter, Assistant General Manager 
RE: Land Resources Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The Land Resources Subcommittee met in person at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, July 13th, 2021 at the District office to take action on two agenda items and discuss a third. Subcommittee members present included Gary Hellerich, Gary Aldridge, Bruce Johnson, Dave Landis, Ron Nolte, Anthony Schutz, Mark Spangler and Ken Vogel. Others present included Deborah Eagan, Cory Schmidt, Tracy Zayac, Donna Reid and David Potter. Hellerich called the meeting to order and gave a brief welcome. Potter reviewed the agenda.

a. The first agenda item was consideration of changes to the LPSNRD Cover Crop Program. Potter stated that the proposed changes to the program were identified and discussed at length at the April 28, 2021 Land Resources Subcommittee meeting. These were discussed at that time since the proposed expenditures (\$125K) in the LRIP were based on the suggested program changes. No additional changes have been proposed since the draft was presented at the April meeting.

As the District enters into its fourth year of the LPSNRD Cover Crop Program, there have been a few additional changes proposed that would improve the program, number of applicants, and benefits. The cover crop pilot program was approved in 2017 with priority given to locations with existing groundwater, vadose zone, and soil sampling data. LPSNRD then developed the permanent cost-share program in 2018. The applications have increased each year and recommendations to the program have been noted. Although there are many benefits resulting from planting cover crops, LPSNRD's program was developed with water quality in mind and continues today with that as a primary goal. As such, our identified eligible areas are the targeted watersheds and CWSPAs (wellhead protection areas) as depicted on the program map. Groundwater Management Phase II or III Areas and fields where terrace systems are currently being installed in the NRD's Summer Conservation Program are also eligible. With water quality in mind, a recommended change to include the Salt Creek Watershed Upstream of Lincoln as an eligible area is proposed. This would increase the eligible acres in the District by approximately 298,000 acres and help reduce surface water runoff issues in the watershed. Other proposed changes to the program include an increase to the payment rate, payment limit, minimum acres, and prioritization of applications.

The subcommittee discussed the minimum acres for the program. It was agreed by the subcommittee that the required acres be left at 20-80 but may be allowed down to 10 acres, provided that it is a complete field. Such a change would allow smaller tracts in the program but prevent added administrative time determining portions of a particular field. Potter and Schmidt answered questions of the subcommittee members.

It was moved by Landis, seconded by Vogel, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to recommend the Board of Directors approve the identified and noted changes to the LPSNRD Cover Crop Program.

b. The second action item was consideration of the Inter-Governmental Agreement Between NDEE and LPSNRD for Twin Lakes Watershed Target Area Implementation Project. The District-wide Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) that was approved in 2019 identified the Twin Lakes Watershed as one of our priority areas and the District's FY21 and proposed FY22 Long Range Implementation Plan have budgeted for the application of 319 funding, utilizing a 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>.

Potter stated the Board Directors gave tentative approval at their February 17th meeting to the Twin Lakes Watershed, Section 319, cost-share assistance program, dependent upon the approval of a Section 319 application by EPA and an Agreement with the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy. In March, LPSNRD submitted to NDEE a Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for the Twin Lakes Watershed 319 Project, which requested \$300,000 in 319 funds to support cost-share incentives for selected BMPs in the watershed. Zayac discussed the schedule of the project and answered questions of the subcommittee. The project duration for this grant request will be three years. LPSNRD will match those funds with \$200,000 to be used toward cost-share. LPSNRD was notified in late June that EPA had approved the PIP for funding through the 319 Program.

Zayac also informed the subcommittee that LPSNRD and NDEE are working together on water quality sampling in the watershed in order to measure progress of best management practices and water quality improvements. A memo from Zayac was provided.

The next step will be for the District and NDEE to execute the attached Agreement, which outlines responsibilities and governs the reimbursement and reporting requirements for the project. Once the Agreement is signed by both agencies, we can begin public awareness and project implementation.

The subcommittee discussed the benefits of the identified BMPs in the watershed, the incentive program, and public outreach. It was also noted that non-discrimination language in the agreement should be reviewed/changed to match the District's. Staff will contact NDEE and work with legal counsel to see if changes can be made.

It was moved by Vogel, seconded by Landis, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee to recommend the Board of Directors approve the inter-local agreement between NDEE and LPSNRD regarding the Twin Lakes Watershed Target Area Implementation project, subject to legal counsel review.

c. The third item on the agenda was discussion of the schedule for fall cost-share applications review and consideration. Potter informed the subcommittee the District has received 72 Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share applications to date. The Eastern and Western Review groups will need to meet in late July to review the FY22 program budget and the applications in their appropriate portion of the District. The subcommittee discussed having the review group meetings virtually on Monday, July 26th. The next Land Resources Subcommittee meeting is planned for Tuesday August 10th at 5:30 to discuss and recommend the cost-share applications to the Board for consideration at the August 26th Board of Directors meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:50 pm.