




## LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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### Memorandum

**Date:** August 20, 2019  
**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** David Potter, Assistant General Manager   
**RE:** Land Resources Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

The Land Resources Subcommittee met at 5:30 pm on Monday, August 19, 2019 in the NRD large conference room in Lincoln to discuss and/or take action on three agenda items. Subcommittee members present included Gary Hellerich, Vern Barrett, and Gary Aldridge. Members absent included Bruce Johnson, Mark Spangler, Dave Landis, Mike DeKalb and Karen Amen. Others present included Larry Ruth, Chelsea Johnson, Paul Zillig, David Potter, Donna Reid, and Cory Schmidt. Chair Hellerich called the meeting to order at 5:35.

#### (a) Surface Water Quality Cost-Share Applications. *[Action]*

The first item on the agenda was consideration of the surface water quality applications. Potter and Reid informed the subcommittee that the district received a total of 116 Cost-Share Assistance Applications (113 fall, 3 summer) for conservation work and FY'20 NRD funds. Applications were divided into the Eastern and Western areas and submitted to those appropriate Review Groups for consideration.

The Western NSWCP Cost-Share Review Group met Monday, August 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. at the LPSNRD Office to review the 57 fall applications (15 targeted, 42 district-wide) and two summer applications received for the western portion. The group also reviewed the proposed 2019 Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share Program budget consisting of the FY'20 budgeted amounts, the allocated funds, obligated dollars, and the available funds. Staff noted the program budget indicated funds still available with the presented applications and prioritization is not needed. It was also noted that one application (Althouse) had work being done in both Lancaster and Cass Counties (county line property) and funds would come from the eastern portion since a majority of the work is being done in Cass County. Review group members attending included Gary Hellerich, Gary Aldridge, Vern Barrett, Bruce Johnson, and Dave Landis. Others present included John Albert, Evan Sisel, Cory Schmidt, Donna Reid and David Potter. It was moved by Landis, seconded by Hellerich and unanimously approved to recommend approval of those Western Portion, SVL & Stevens Creek applications totaling the amount presented in the program budget.

The Eastern NSWCP Cost-Share Review Group met Tuesday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. at the Weeping Water NRCS Office to review the 56 fall applications and one summer application received for the eastern portion. The group also reviewed the proposed 2019 Surface Water Quality BMP Cost-Share Program budget consisting of the FY'20 budgeted amounts, the allocated funds, obligated dollars, and the available funds. Staff noted the program budget

indicated funds still available with the presented applications and prioritization is not needed. Review group members attending included Mark Spangler, Mike DeKalb, Karen Amen, Dan Steinkruger, and Sarah Wilson. Others present included Cindy Spilinek, Cory Schmidt, James Conradi, Fred Stevens, Donna Reid and David Potter. It was moved by DeKalb, seconded by Amen and unanimously approved to recommend approval of those Eastern Portion applications totaling the amount presented in the program budget.

The District's program funding budgets and prioritization commonly used were provided to the subcommittee. It was noted that the FY2020 cost-share program budget also takes into account those payments made in FY2020 for jobs completed in the previous fiscal year, the summer applications that were approved for this year, and the fall applications. In summary, there are 116 District cost-share applications for consideration, including 44 District-Western, 15 Targeted, and 57 District-Eastern totaling an amount of \$1,090,557 (West \$408,669, Targeted \$153,807, East \$528,081). The applications were identified on a spreadsheet and maps and provided to the subcommittee.

**It was moved by Barrett, seconded by Aldridge, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee members present to recommend the Board of Directors approve the 116 identified cost-share applications totaling an amount of \$1,090,557.**

**(b) Modifications to the NRD Cover Crop Program. *[Action]***

The second item on the agenda was to consider changes to the NRD Cover Crop Program to allow producers to participate. Potter reminded the subcommittee that the District implemented a "Pilot Cover Crop Program" in 2017 for two Community Water System Protection Areas (CWSPA). The CWSPA areas selected were the Phase 3 Elmwood CWSPA and the Phase 3 Weeping Water/Otoe RWD #2 CWSPA. The program was developed as another way to help improve ground water quality in CWSPA areas. The District received a couple applications and only one of those was planted and received cost-share. In 2018 the Board of Directors approved NRD Cover Crop Program for the Salt Valley Lakes and Stevens Creek Targeted Areas, the Community Water System Protection Areas, and any Groundwater Management Phase 2 and 3 areas located within the Lower Platte South NRD and authorized the General Manager to approve applications up to the budgeted amount of the current fiscal year and report those approvals to the Land Resources Subcommittee. In the current program there are limitations to number of acres and cost-share to the landowner, limitations on cover crop use, and other rules and specifications that are similar to the NRCS cover crop program.

Potter stated that at the June 2019 Board meeting, the Board of Directors amended the cover crop program to also include fields where conservation practices (terraces) are currently being installed in the NRD's Summer Conservation Program as eligible areas within the District. This change was promoted by discussions of the Land Resources Subcommittee trying to get more landowners to sign up for the cover crop program. Cover crops have many important benefits, including soil health, erosion control, and water quality, and consideration should be given to all of these. Although there may be interest district-wide, these identified areas will benefit from the cover crop program the most at this time.

Staff indicated they have recently received a number of comments and requests pertaining to the tenant or producer being able to submit an application for cover crop cost-share program. Last year, the District received three cost-share applications for cover crop. Only one of those was actually executed. There were many factors, mainly weather and late harvest, contributing to the limited applications and for only one of those 80-acre tracts being planted. Potter and Schmidt also shared there were inquiries from tenants at the time of sign-up last year asking if they could apply instead of the landowner since they were cash renting the ground and were paying for the seed, application, and termination. There are four other NRDs that have a cover crop program. Two of them (LCNRD and LENRD) allow

the operator or producer to apply, while the other two (CPNRD and LLNRD) require the landowner. After careful consideration, staff feels that allowing the producer (operator or landowner) of the property to apply is appropriate, provided the landowner still signs the application if they are not the producer. The only program LPSNRD currently cost-shares with the producer, not necessarily the landowner, is the SNAP Program. All other cost-share programs, including the land treatment program, are with the landowner. Staff feels the landowner should be aware of what is being cost-shared on the property so recommends the landowner still needs to sign the application, regardless of them being the applicant or not. Payment would go to the applicant or the producer. The proposed changes to the NRD Cover Crop Cost-Share Program, application, and brochure were provided to the subcommittee.

**It was moved by Barrett, seconded by Aldridge, and unanimously approved by the Subcommittee members present to recommend the Board of Directors approve the modifications to the NRD Cover Crop Program to allow producers to participate.**

**(c) Video/Film – *Dreaming of a Vetter World*. [Discussion]**

The last item on the agenda was a discussion of a film entitled “Dream of a Vetter World”. This is a 2018 documentary of the Vetter family and features the self-sustaining, self-renewing farm-farm management system they created. The subcommittee members directed staff to rent or purchase the film and plan on showing it at a future Land Resources Subcommittee meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.

Cc: Cory Schmidt, DC, NRCS