

Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission

650 W. State St., Room 145 • Boise Idaho 83720 Telephone: 208-332-1790 • Fax: 208-332-1799

AMENDED IDAHO SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC MEETING

Date and Time:

Wednesday, December 10, 2014 From 7:30 am – 5:00 pm MST Location:

Springhill Suites, Clearwater Rooms 4 & 5 424 E. Parkcenter Blvd. Boise, ID 83706

APPROVED MINUTES

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Roll Call: Chairman Norman Wright Commissioners: Roger Stutzman

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT via teleconference:

Leon Slichter Dave Radford

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jerry Trebesch

COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT:

Teri Murrison Chuck Pentzer Jason Miller
 Terry Hoebelheinrich Carolyn Firth Loretta Strickland
 Bill Lillibridge (via tele) Delwyne Trefz George Hitz
 Cheryl Wilson Rob Sharpnack

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6 PARTNERS AND GUESTS PRESENT:

- 7 Chris Simmons, IDEA
- 8 Ray Ledgerwood, Facilitator, Board Works
- 9 Tim Wendland, Idaho DEQ
- 10 Steve Becker, NPSWCD & IASCD
- 11 Kyle Wilson, NPSWCD
- 12 Art Beal, IASCD
- 13 Harriet Hensley, Office of the Attorney General

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19 20 21	Ms. Wilson and Mr. Hoebelheinrich were present. Commissioner Leon Slichter was present via teleconference.
22 23 24 25 26 27	Action : Commissioner Stutzman moved to recess to Executive Session pursuant to Idaho Code §67-2345(d) for the purpose of reviewing a Ioan application. Commissioner Slichter seconded the motion. Roll call: Chairman Norman Wright, Commissioners Leon Slichter and Roger Stutzman voted to do so. Commissioners Jerry Trebesch and Dave Radford were not present. Motion carried by the unanimous vote of Commissioners present.
28 29	Executive Session was adjourned by Chairman Wright at 7:55 a.m.
30	OPEN SESSION Commissioners reconvened in Open Session at 8:10 a.m.
31 32 33 34 35	ITEM #1A: RESOURCE CONSERVATION & RANGELAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM Action: Commissioner Slichter moved to approve Loan # A-690 in the amount of \$110,800 for a term of 7 years at a 2.5% interest rate, conditioned upon the loan officer's receipt and approval of acceptable clarifying information from the applicant. Commissioner Stutzman seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote of the Commissioners present.
36 37 38 39 40 41	ITEM #2: WELCOME AND ROLL CALL Roll Call: Chairman Norman Wright and Commissioner Roger Stutzman were present. Commissioner Leon Slichter attended via teleconference. Commissioners Jerry Trebesch and Dave Radford were not present.
42 43	ITEM #3 AGENDA REVIEW: Action: None taken
44 45 46 47 48 49	ITEM #4: STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2016-2019 WORK SESSION: see attached Session Notes, and e-mail communication from Kyle Wilson and Thomas Gehring. Commissioner Dave Radford joined the meeting via teleconference from 10:12 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. Action: None taken.
50 51 52 53	ITEM #5 ADJOURN: The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m. The next Commission Meeting is tentatively scheduled for late January, 2015, in Boise.
54	Respectfully submitted,
55 56 57	Jerry Trebesch, Secretary
58	Jerry Trebesch, Secretary

ITEM #1a: RESOURCE CONSERVATION & RANGELAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM The Board

convened at 7:35 a.m. Chairman Norman Wright, Commissioner Roger Stutzman, Ms. Murrison,

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Session Notes

Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission

Strategic Planning Work Session December 10, 2014 - Boise

Session Objective:

Development of a strategic plan for Idaho SWCC including strategic focus, goals, opportunities, objectives, performance measures, and benchmarks

Greatest Accomplishments in the Last 2 Years

- Figuring out they needed to direct employees
- Have finally have commission board members that represent the whole state of Idaho
- Have mellowed out...not as much turmoil
- At the same table
- Still exist...relationships with districts better
- Relationship building with districts, restoring trust
- Still rebuilding...couple years of rebuilding
- We are restoring trust...talking through issues
- Good relationship with legislature, with the association
- Meeting tons of people
- The improved communication and development of mutually effective relationships
- Ditto above
- Streamlining the TMDL process...catching up
- Sitting at the table, still talking...believe we are friends
- Partnership accomplishments...Whiskey Creek that had been lost under a barn...daylighted
- Transparency with districts
- Hiring of new Commission staff in last two years

Greatest Accomplishments in next 5 years

- Through working together we have more projects like Whiskey Creek to show the rest of the state
- Complete all TMDL implementation plans
- ISWCC become lead agency for conservation in state, districts more involved
- Working on getting the presence at the table in decision making
- Increase loan program activity
- Put OnePlan on solid ground...make the funding regular.
- ISWCC staffing needs met
- Build new relationships with other agencies and organizations
- Effectiveness in providing technical assistance
- The Governor will be our champion
- Will have refunded programs...funding and staff restored and program level restored
- 5 million dollars of state funding distributed annually for conservation BMP implementation
- Be able to funding the WQPA enough to implement 2 TMDL projects and 1 ground water project in the highest priority areas of the state

Greatest Accomplishments in next 5 years (continued)

- Take on new conservation programs with partners across the state
- Get the implementation programs established again
- Reeducate folks and show value of programs
- Keep a good administrator
- All 50 conservation districts utilize their statutory powers to put conservation on the ground
- Commission seeks increased funding for conservation districts thus strengthening roles in fulfilling statutory duties in leading voluntary conservation
- IASCD increases travel budgets for educating legislators and others
- \$50,000 match cap eliminated
- Organizational reality...revitalized partnership with new ideas, funding and profile...move from what we have done to something more successful
- Acknowledge new partners...see what we have in common
- Engage producers in educating on voluntary conservation
- From district perspective...all the conservation dollars should be housed in one agency for distribution
- Will have even stronger working relationships with our existing partners

Challenges & observations:

- Be relevant
- Can you think like potential partners long enough to interest them?
- Study their strategic plans to identify partnership opportunities.
- In addition to traditional partners (districts, NRCS, other state agencies, etc., look at Highway Districts they know where the problems are.
- Brief new state conservationist asap.
- Include producers more in legislative reports, education, etc.
- Seek in kind staff from non-traditional partners
- Hold regular core partner coordination meetings to develop unified goals, strategy IASCD president, exec., ISWCC administrator, ISWCC Chairman, IDEA president, state conservationist. Bring in facilitator to do unified strategic planning (goals, objectives) leading to agreement between partners.
- Assume more conservation responsibilities, aggregate voluntary conservation data for state (OnePlan?)
- Remember phases of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing.
- Use technology to increase efficiencies ask Whatcom District (Nicole)
- Opportunity is an issue or threat in work clothes
- Blow up newsletter covers, frame or poster board, put in airport, restaurants, city hall, etc.
- 4 parts to developing strategy
 - 1. Thinking
 - 2. Planning
 - 3. Doing (communicating too)
 - 4. evaluation

Function, Powers & Authorities of the SWCC

See handouts and PowerPoint Slides

District & Partner Input on SWCC Opportunities & Emerging Issues Issues:

- Increased competition for funding...coupled with potential decreased funding
- Need more \$ for TMDL implementation.
- Loss of experience of people leaving
- Waters of the US (WOTUS) takings of private property
- Loss of technical assistance from NRCS & ISWCC
- Loss of training opportunities, no certification
- Sage Grouse listing if or if not
- Ag Pollution Abatement Program have not yet developed a paper and been at table

Opportunities:

- Use Ag Pollution Abatement Plan revision to focus and educate on our roles as primary entities for vol conservation, build support
- Voluntary conservation seen in Idaho as a vehicle to avoid regulation...use to increase funding for voluntary approach, ag waste abatement plan, TMDLs
- Increase conservation funding...rebuild programs by showing value
- Rebuilding the core partners meeting at least every month
- More dollars becoming available with TMDL implementation
- Commission and/or district increase technical assistance
- Consider regular funding coordinating meetings...eg loan program (DEQ)
- Closing the feedback loop regarding the effectiveness of practice application on landscape
- Sage Grouse listing discussions Commission at table (will have staff to do this)
- RCPP programs
- Encouraging more small type BMPs to be done
- Soil health education push and promotion this year by partners, UN
- Districts opportunity to receive donations
- Expanding partnerships
- Become relevant
- Develop training/certification program for ISWCC staff and districts (conservation planning)
- OnePlan program for providing the assistance not yet available, aggregator of data
- Keep agriculture sector viable, voluntary, incentive based programs
- 75% of ISWCC loan balance loaned out for conservation
- Small enough and flexible enough to be successful even with market forces and changes in agriculture...think outside the box to meet these changes
- Be a member of DEQ's Advantage group

Mission, Vision, Philosophy, Key External Factors

Mission

To facilitate coordinated non-regulatory, voluntary, and locally-led conservation by federal, state, and local governments including Idaho's conservation districts and other partners to conserve, sustain, improve, and enhance soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.

Slogan

Conservation The Idaho Way: sowing seeds of stewardship

Vision¹

Conservation in Idaho reflects locally-led natural resource conservation leadership and priorities, is voluntary and incentive-based, non-regulatory, and demonstrates scientifically sound stewardship. The Conservation Commission and local conservation districts are the primary entities to lead coordinated conservation efforts with partners to provide landowners and land-users with assistance and solutions for natural resource concerns and issues.

Key External Factors

There are key external factors that could affect the agency's ability to meet goals and objectives. They include:

- State and federal regulatory pressure and mandates that could shift priorities and resources away from current activities.
- Changing economics and pressures within and outside agriculture and natural resources
 dependent industries, which could result in significant increases or decreases in conservation
 program participation.
- Changing economics of state and federal budgets, which could result in additional agency cuts or fewer conservation dollars being spent in the state.

Note...look above at emerging issues & opportunities

Guiding Principles (prioritized listing)

The Conservation Commission is dedicated to the following guiding principles for each goal and related activity.

- Address legislative intent and statute & promote fiscal responsibility
- Benefit the environment and Idaho's agricultural-based economy
- Incorporate valid scientific data and practices & while promoting innovative conservation practices/systems
- Benefit conservation districts' locally led, voluntary, non-regulatory priorities and projects
- Benefit the Commission's ability to serve and meet statutory authorities
- Strengthen existing and build new conservation partnerships
- Benefits conservation work in a natural resource priority issue and/or area

¹ Yellow highlighter indicates new text

Goals Grid (by Fred Nickols)

Achieve

- Increased visibility
- More \$, more human resources
- Increased funding for TMDL and Ground water implementation
- Relevancy
- District board engagement
- Increase the amount of on-the-ground conservation
- Reduction in TMDLs
- Pass on benefits and pass on to next generation
- Collaboration and reestablish connection with partners
- Strong partnership with IASCD and districts
- Achieve adequate funding and staffing for districts to perform their statutory duties
- All of our RCRDP money out and working
- Better streamlining of loan program
- Increased district participation
- Technical assistance with needed skill set to match the needs of districts
- Regular funding and support for OnePlan

Avoid

- Regulations
- Law suits
- Our exclusiveness to conservation
- Turf wars
- Power struggles
- TMDL listings
- Appearance that we have all the answers
- Alienating partners
- Bureaucracy for bureaucracy sake
- Avoid doing the same thing because that is what we have done
- New ESA listings by being proactive
- Antagonizing decision makers

Preserve

- Partnerships
- Voluntary conservation
- Family farms sustainability
- Water quality that meets standards
- Legislative support
- Individual district identities
- Non-regulatory conservation
- Our statutory authority to lead voluntary conservation
- Our technical expertise and reputation
- Our momentum

Eliminate

- Negative connotation
- Duplication of effort
- Inefficiencies
- Subsidizing wealthy operators
- Regulation
- Distrust and competition for scarce resources
- Litigation
- Communication disconnect with districts
- Competing mandates and responsibilities among agencies and organizations
- \$50,000 cap

Use Goals Grid

- Put on desk or bulletin board
- Use as bottom line
- Matrix grid
- Ranking criteria
- Leadership team, staff meetings, board meetings
- evaluations

Criteria for Selecting Strategic Priorities

See guiding principles

Goal Areas

- 1. Promote voluntary conservation by providing assistance to Idaho CDs
- 2. Provide voluntary conservation programs & services
- 3. Building support for voluntary conservation and SWCC by informing and educating partners and stakeholders
- 4. Commission Operations (appendix)

Organizational Improvement Recommendations for Improving SWCC

- Partnership coordination improve communication with partners...monthly check ins
- Written response when we hear from a supervisor and/or employee on recommendations and issues
- Reduce the amount of paper in the agency
- Executive's briefing to districts...Quick-notes
- Field staff pass info up to administrator re district supervisor comments, issues
- Utilize field staff discretionary time to secure non-traditional funding
- For field staff...use technology more wisely...planning tools...Whatcom CD
- Explore and invite new partners to Commission meetings (TNC, Trout Unlimited, etc.)
- Ask our new Carolyn for background and ideas on partnering with ITD
- Operational manuals for each staff position type
- Evaluate, inventory needs and provide training for SWCC (and district) staff that will help meet the needs of districts to assure that SWCC staff can be successful...examples engineering, conservation planning, recommendations for practices, permitting
- Reconvene tri-state conservation commission meetings
- Find someone that has grant writing skills that has experience in our field

Next Steps

- Notes to Teri & distribution to participants Ray by 12.12.14
- Drafting by Teri and staff by March
- Review by committee March Spring Division Meetings
- Commission consideration, revisions, adoption in April
- Public comment in May
- Adoption in June

Template for New Objectives	, Performance Measures,	Benchmarks
Goal Area:		

Measurable Goals

Objectives, Performance Measures, Benchmarks:

Objective	Performance Measures	Benchmarks
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From: Teri Murrison
To: "Thomas R Gehring"

Cc: SWCC Commissioner Leon Slichter c/o Idaho Dist.; Bill Lillibridge (Bill.Lillibridge@swc.idaho.gov); Eileen Rowan

(Eileen.Rowan@swc.idaho.gov)

Subject: RE: TWAG Process

Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 3:26:00 PM

Tom.

Thanks so much for writing. I handed out your email to the group yesterday. In addition, I wanted to bring you up to speed on a conversation I had with Kyle and Steve this morning. I think we have a solution that will satisfy all of you.

Kyle has requested that when Nez Perce submits requests for engineering time via the TAWG, they submit a prioritized list and Bill reviews/assigns the number of hours each project would take and determines if he can do it. Then, we tell Nez Perce what specific engineering projects we can help them with (and how many hours it will take) and award them specific projects vs. a number of hours.

The change in process will only apply to Nez Perce – all of Eileen's hours will continue to be allocated under the current system. I think we'll need to have Bill do his review ahead of the Division evaluation meeting, but that shouldn't be a problem.

Will that work for you?

Thanks again. I know Eileen appreciates working with you all!

Teri

----Original Message-----

From: Thomas R Gehring [mailto:tgehring@mtida.net]

Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2014 3:49 PM

To: Teri Murrison Subject: TWAG Process

Teri,

Per Nezperce District letter on the TAWG Process, we would like you to know we are happy with the way we have been proceeding on allocating the Technical Assistant hours. From our Districts standpoint, we feel that keeping the system as simple as possible, but yet meet the needs of all Districts concerned is working great. We see no need at this time to try changing the process.

Sincerely,

Tom Gehring Vice Chairman Idaho County Soil and Water District

Norman Wright
Chairman SWCC
Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission

Norman

I'm taking this opportunity to address some of the issues that were discussed at the listening session at the Idaho Association of Conservation Districts (IASCD)2014 annual conference in Lewiston in particular the work I participated with on the Technical Assistance Work Group (TWAG).

My understanding is no concerns were mentioned about the TAWG during the fall 2014 IASCD Division meetings. I didn't bring up my concerns during the fall IASD division meeting s as I was under the impression that a meeting would be held at the fall conference to discuss the TAWG. Delwyne (SWCC staff) attempted to organize such a meeting by e-mail on October 8 2014, however only one person responded, myself. For these reasons I addressed my concerns at the SWCC listening session and why am also writing this letter.

I will attempt to address four main topics

- Allocated of TA exclusively within specialized level
- Technical Assistance to be allocated by the SWCC Leadership Team
- Ranking criteria continuing to be a work in progress for the TAWG
- Feedback loop to measuring district satisfaction with SWCC Technical Assistance

I have taken the liberty to included a attachment of the Report to District on the TAWG Progress June 29 2012 and have taken sections (italicized text) from this report to help highlight my arrears of concerns and recommendation to the SWCC

It is my opinion that this document is a fair representation of the work that was conducted by the TAWG.

The Technical Assistance Work Group membership includes:

<u>Representing</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
IASCD:	Bret Rumbeck	_Executive Director
	Rick Rodgers	Division 4 Director
IDEA:	Karma Bragg	_President
SWC Staff:	Teri Murrison	Administrator
	Chuck Pentzer	_Technical Assistance Field Staff Supervisor
	Delwyne Trefz	District Support Services Specialist
SWC Commissioners:	Dick Bronson	_Chair
	Roger Stutzman	Secretary
Panhandle Region:	Billie Brown	Benewah SWCD Chair

Clearwater Region:	Kyle Wilson	_Nez Perce SWCD Treasurer
Southwest Region:	Julie Burkhardt	_Adams SWCD Secretary
South Central Region:	Terry Halbert	North Side SWCD District Manager
Southeast Region:	Chris Wride	South Bingham SCD Chair
Northeast Region:	Matt Woodard	East Side SWCD Chair

I believe that we need to revisit some of the past work as a means to streamline and strengthen the delivery systems for TA to the districts. I will attempt this by incorporating some of the highlights and noting diversions from the report's recommendations.

The commission's interest in convening the TAWG has largely been driven by their desire to implement state policy as defined in statute. Specifically, the commission desires the TAWG to recommend "...policies for cooperative working relationships between local conservation districts, [and] the state soil and water conservation commission..." (Section 22-2716(3)(d), Idaho Code), and processes which can assist the commission to "...deliver services fairly and equitably, [and] strengthen the conservation district delivery system..." (Section 22-2716(4)(e), Idaho Code).

Thus, the TAWG was established to develop and recommend:

- An overall strategy to guide the equitable allocation of TA over time.
- A ranking tool which SWC can use to objectively prioritize annual district TA needs requests from across the state.

Commissioners and TAWG members are striving for transparency as well as objectivity in this process.

The TAWG also put forth the concept of defining the categories of TA listed below

Defining Categories of Assistance

Before developing an overall strategy, or the ranking tool which will facilitate implementation of that strategy, the TAWG first needed to define exactly what it is referring to when it uses the term "assistance" within the context of the commission-conservation district relationship. They determined that all the different forms of assistance conservation districts require in order to implement their various programs and projects can be categorized as either specialized technical assistance, or comprehensive district assistance. Districts rely upon a variety of sources to meet their assistance needs including district staff, the Commission, IASCD, IDEA, NRCS and other local, state and federal governmental and non-governmental entities.

Specialized technical assistance is defined as: That assistance used to support districts in the wise use and enhancement of natural resources which can only be provided by someone possessing a specialized, science-based skill set and an ability to integrate local knowledge of the site-specific interactions between environmental, economic, cultural and social concerns into the assistance provided.

Examples of Specialized Technical Assistance may include but are not limited to:

- Conservation planning
- Engineering services
- Project implementation and construction inspections
- BMP effectiveness monitoring
- Watershed planning and riparian assessments
- Development of a district needs assessment

Comprehensive district assistance is defined as: That assistance which supports the independent and collective strengthening of conservation districts by providing services which: a) expand resources or otherwise enhance district capacity to assist private landowners and land users in the conservation, sustainment, improvement and enhancement of Idaho's natural resources, or; b) support routine district activities or projects.

Examples of comprehensive assistance may include but are not limited to:

- District information and outreach activities
- Administration of district-sponsored cost-share programs
- Grant writing assistance
- Development of 5-year and annual work plans

Where did the wagon come unhitched?

As I recall the number one objective for Technical Assistance (TA) recommended by the TAWG fell completely in the categories of Specialized TA. I believe at this time that a large portion of the TA currently provided to Conservation District doesn't fall into this category. My opinion of this is based on comments by SWCC staff at our fall division meeting in Genesee and reviewing the "Technical Assistance Request" section of the ISWCC web site.

It is my hope that as the IASCD continues to grow and increase its capacity building programs for conservation districts that the Comprehensive (administrative) assistance is provided at the association level. The 2016 FY budget of the IASCD has \$8000 dedicated for district outreach and support and \$3500 for Idaho District Employee Association (IDEA) assistance This represents a significant contribution towards conservation district development at the association level.

Allocation of Assistance

The commission will allocate assistance to districts based on the recommendations of the evaluation committee and the availability of commission resources. The commissioner's assessment of available commission resources will include an inventory of available staff hours, consideration of logistical factors, and the existence of current and on-going commitments.

THE RANKING TOOL

The TAWG recommends that lists of weighted criteria be used to evaluate requests for assistance.

The decision to allocate TA at the Division level instead at the SWCC leadership team was a mistake in my opinion. While it may have had good intentions the result has been that the objectives of the TAWG have not been fully achieved.

The result of this decision, individual districts are directly competing with each other. It has allowed approximately 40 percent ,by my evaluation, of the 40 conservation district that have submitted requested for TA as outlined in the 2015 Technical Assistance Request to be allocated SWCC TA without providing a detailed request of job task's. This has not raised the bar for district planning and rewords the status-quo. This also limits the particular deliverables that the SWCC leadership teams has to perform staff performance evaluations and targeted training planes for individual staff members based upon their TA requests workload.

In summary

I believe that the original intent of the TAWG is still relevant and has significant merit in meeting the long term goals and objectives of the SWCC and individual conservation districts. The ranking criteria developed by the TAWG will continually be a work in progress and represents a strong starting point to help the SWCC leadership team allocate TA for individual conservation districts. SWCC TA should be prioritized within the Specialized TA category and Comprehensive (administrative) TA should be prioritized and facilitated within the IASCD. TA needs to be allocated at the leadership level of the SWCC and not at the District level of IASCD. A simple one page request outlying the specific TA request by individual districts accompanied by any pertinent support documentation should be all that is needed from the conservation districts in order for the SWCC to implement these strategies.

As the legislature, governor and citizens continue to scrutinize the expenditure of public funds these recommendations will help achieve the goals of the TWAG while helping to address questions and concerns from the public and private sector.

After participating and working within this process I believe that a feed-back loop needs to be developed and added to the report's recommendations, with the intent of measuring district satisfaction with SWCC TA.

I realize that there will be criticism and concerns in regards to these recommendations if implemented by the SWCC. I also believe that the positive results of increase transparency and accountability will continue the positive direction of the SWCC.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kyle J Wilson