



Voluntary Stewardship Program

Work Group Meeting, Tuesday, July 21, 2020

Attendees: Ben Floyd, Elsa Bowen, Mark Stedman, Connor Nikkola, Jason Kunz, Leslie Michel, Pete Wyborney, Levi Keesecker, Val Vissia, Rex Harder, Jon Small, Jeff Schibel, Ron Mielke and Nikole Stout. This meeting was web/call-in only.

Meeting started at 2:30 p.m. with Ben Floyd providing a brief overview of the agenda items; 2020 project implementation update with Connor Nickola including additional replacement project ideas.

Connor Nikkola, LCCD's Natural Resource Planner opened the meeting with a review of the current/originally approved VSP cost share projects and cancellations. The **Dreger** project has been cancelled due to funding issues with the owner. **McKay** project cancelled with the uncertainty of Covid-19 and what the future financial implications will be. **Hubbard** project cancelled due to this project being too expensive on BLM property and WSCC was not able to offer the 75% cost share for a project on public lands.

Rodriguez project (Waterway Cleanout) all permits have been cleared and project is cleared to begin. **Bahr** project (Sediment Dam Removal), is complete and total cost was \$11,448. Project already appears to be preventing more erosion and better drainage. Final pictures of project will be taken in the next week or 2. **Westly** project (Exclusion Fencing) all clear to begin on project. This project excludes livestock from wetlands and critical areas. **Stolp** project (Livestock Watering Facility) to prevent cows watering into the wetlands. This project is also clear to get started.

Connor also presented on additional replacement project(s) with the timeline of June 2021, less than a year to complete, in mind. Some of these projects may be too time consuming and/or expensive.

- Grass waterway cleanout – could be expensive and time consuming due to permitting requirements and engineering
- Watering facility – no permit required but would require wells being drilled. Could be expensive
- Exclusion fencing project – no permitting required and there are (3) critical areas on the property

Connor recommended going with the Exclusion Fencing project based on being able to complete before 2021 as funding is “use it or lose it”. Ben asked if there were comments or feedback in moving forward with Connor's project of choice? Jeff Schibel and Ron Mielke both commented that the project made sense and we should move forward on it. This project was approved by consensus. Connor will contact the landowner and will keep the Water Facility project as a back-up.

Outreach Update –

Covid-19 has been affecting most scheduled outreach plans including *Coffee and Conversation* meetings that were originally planned for this Spring. The USDA Service center is still closed, and no customers are allowed in at this time.

Landowners are gearing up for harvest, but Connor has been meeting with producers in the field who are interested in VSP and those who are interested or are already doing projects with the District. Val still has several producers who are still interested in doing meetings in their local areas. The district is ready to move forward with that as soon as we are allowed to meet as a group again.

Connor will be emailing the workgroup with project updates along with photos.

Next Steps:

Jon Small reviewed the upcoming 5 yr performance report and 2 yr status report. Webinar with the WSCC this Thursday 7-23 to review the 5 yr performance report. Work will start after this week's guidance on the 5 yr performance report moving into the next meeting. Will also be spot checking the workplan of anything that would be trending. The 5yr report will be judged on meeting the requirements set in the workplan and the 2 yr will be straight forward based on work done. Mark Stedman questioned with Covid-19 and overall decreased budget will VSP get defund? Levi K. with WSCC said there is no special session planned but the budget ask is \$250,000 up from \$240,000, if we wanted more information Bill Eller or Ron Shultz should be contacted.

Next meetings: October 20, 2:30 PM - WebEx or in person at Public Works depending on content

The meeting ended at 3:30 PM