

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
April 9, 2020
Andy Bohnenkamp, District Conservationist

Greetings Board of Directors and General Manager Winkler! I sincerely hope that my report finds you all well and that you stay well considering the strange times we are living through. I keep reminding my kids (all 6 of them that are now homeschooled!) that they are living and contributing to a major part of our history right now, and if they don't shape up and listen to their teacher (Mom) I'll make them history! All kidding aside despite the pandemic and its effects in just about all facets of life NRCS Field Offices throughout the state are managing to function well and provide a service to our customers albeit somewhat limited now.

I just wanted to give you an update locally on how the field offices are operating within the NRD. We are staffing every office in the NRD with one NRCS employee on a telework/office rotation except for the Walthill Field Office. Walthill currently has zero NRCS employees, but we have two very dedicated individuals there, an NRD Program Assistant, Teresa Murphy, and contract employee Davin French. Both individuals are doing a great job keeping the office functioning and customer service moving. I thought it best to prevent other NRCS employees from traveling and staffing that office considering the virus and potential spread from other communities to Walthill. All NRD field office staff, partners and contract employees can come to the office or work in the field. I have been working closely with Terry Schumacher to ensure that staff are kept safe and have what they need to do their job with the resources we currently have. Currently the front doors on all our Field Offices are locked and face-to-face communication with our customers is basically zero with one exception. NRCS and NRD field staff are still meeting customers in the field over the bed of a pick-up truck in order to maintain a certain level of essential customer service and it seems to be working just fine. Telework has proven to be an essential part of NRCS operations and it too is working amazingly well considering the circumstances. Our agency is in uncharted territory as are many other agencies and businesses, but we are learning to adapt, and we are continuing to serve our farmers, ranchers and landowners throughout the NRD. Spring field work and construction of conservation practices has not been affected by this pandemic and application of needed conservation will continue thanks to the hardworking field office staff in our NRD.

Staffing:

I am working hard to recruit and advertise new NRCS positions within the NRD and will be requesting that my agency advertise for a Soil Conservation Technician in Walthill as well as a Soil Conservationist in Walthill as soon as possible.

I am still patiently waiting for the advertisement of a Soil Conservation Technician in Blair however my patience is wearing thin! I plan to make that a priority in the next few days to come.

The Soil Conservationist position advertisement in Tekamah just recently closed on April 6th and I am anxiously awaiting a list of qualified applicants for that position.

Lastly, Jessica Howe, our Soil Conservationist in Dakota City has accepted a Soil Conservationist position with Texas NRCS. Jessica is originally from New Mexico and has been with NRCS for 10 years and she was happy to get an opportunity to move closer to home. Jessica has been a Soil Conservationist in Dakota City Nebraska for about 5 years and served the customers in Dakota County and surrounding counties well. We wish her all the best in her new position!

Respectfully,

Andy Bohnenkamp
P-MRNRD District Conservationist

P.S: I wanted to include the most recent program related news release regarding the Conservation Stewardship Program our agency has released.



United States Department of Agriculture

NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Announces Sign-Up Period for Conservation Stewardship Program Funds

LINCOLN, Neb., April 3, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is currently accepting applications for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the nation’s largest conservation program. Applications for funding this year need to be completed by May 29, 2020.

The Conservation Stewardship Program helps agricultural producers take the conservation activities on their farm or ranch to the next level. There are over 150 enhancement and conservation practices available to make Nebraska farms and ranches more resilient and sustainable.

“CSP continues to be a very effective tool for private landowners working to achieve their conservation and management goals,” said Craig Derickson, Nebraska NRCS state conservationist. “It is the largest conservation program in the United States with more than 70 million acres of productive agricultural and forest land enrolled.”

CSP is a popular program for Nebraska’s ag producers. Over 5 million acres are currently under contract in Nebraska.

While applications are accepted throughout the year, interested producers should submit applications to their local NRCS office by May 29 to ensure their applications are considered for 2020 funding.

Due to recent public health concerns all USDA Service Centers are not open to the public. While employees continue to staff USDA Service Centers, they are currently only available for phone appointments.

For more information and assistance with applying for CSP, visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ne/programs/financial/csp/> or call your local NRCS office. USDA Service Center contact information is available at <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

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