

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Written Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
March 11, 2021
Andy Bohnenkamp, District Conservationist**

NRCS Programs

“Houston we have a problem!” Technology is great when it works and for the last 2 to 3 weeks our main Conservation Planning Assessment Tools, Conservation Desktop (CD) and Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) have been in the repair shop. It feels like 2021 is becoming 2020’s broken record! This has caused a significant delay in terms of completing assessments and rankings for our EQIP applications and CSP applications. As a result, our ranking deadlines and obligation deadlines have been pushed back a few weeks. I should have a better idea on dates and just where we are at with new conservation contracts next month, but for now we are at a standstill with that.

Field Office staff have been busy working with CRP customers the last few weeks ensuring that customers have all necessary mid contract management guidance and plans for spring management work. Prescribed burning, inter-seeding, spraying are just a few examples of the type of work we have been planning with all of our CRP customers to ensure that the CRP cover is well established and suitable for wildlife.

Staffing

I have nothing new to report on staffing changes yet this month, except to say that we still have an open position in the Walthill Field Office for a Soil Conservationist. This advertisement is still on USAjobs.com and we are still reviewing applicants as they come in and hope to find a suitable candidate.

Local Working Group Meeting February 24

Our PMRNRD Local Working Group meeting was held virtually, on Wednesday February 24th. Terry Schumacher represented the PMRNRD and helped host the meeting along with myself. In attendance were Curt Becker with LENRD, Rob Gray Pheasants Forever Biologist, Robert Hall RC in the Blair FO, Ryan Johnson RC in the Tekamah FO and Jason McCauley in the Dakota City FO.

We discussed a number of items relative to priority Resource Concerns for the NRD as well as the current priority ranking system and potential changes to the EQIP ranking pools for the 2022 fiscal year. Over-all there were a few changes and updates recommended to our priority ranking system that will help us identify and sort higher priority EQIP applications within the PMRNRD. For details and more information on the meeting minutes please contact me: Andy Bohnenkamp, DC at (402) 426-2625 Ext 102 or at andrew.bohnenkamp@usda.gov.

Covid-19 USDA – Office Opening guidance

We are currently working through an update to the Covid-19 Office guidance for our USDA Field Offices throughout the Nation. As it stands right now there is a new Workplace Safety Plan in place from the new administration and the details are being worked out to interpret what that means for our offices locally here in the PMRNRD. It appears on the surface to be more restrictive than how we are currently operating and may require us to reduce office staff from current levels to maintain a safe environment for all employees within the USDA Service Center. Customers and Visitors alike are still not allowed in our USDA Service Centers.

NRCS and NRD staff have been adapting to these measures extremely well and have managed to continue the excellent work and deliver great customer service despite major changes in the way we operate and I know that no matter what new changes we encounter we will face them head-on and find new ways to continue to deliver great service to all of our farmers, ranchers and landowners in the NRD.

Respectfully,

Andy Bohnenkamp

(402) 426-2625 Ext 102

andrew.bohnenkamp@usda.gov

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