UPPER BIG BLUE NRD
WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Stakeholder Meeting #2
January 20, 2021
Project Team

Andrea Gebhart  
JEO

Marie Krausnick  
UBBNRD  
Water Dept Manager

Jack Wergin  
UBBNRD  
Projects Dept Manager

Adam Rupe  
JEO

Elbert Traylor  
NE Dept. Environment & Energy (NDEE)
Agenda

• Welcome
• Project Overview
• Stakeholder Hellos
• Existing Resources and Programs (Non-NRD)
• Stakeholder Discussion
• Next Steps
Virtual Meeting Overview

Add to the chat box at anytime

Mute if not actively participating

Turn/keep your camera on

Will break for questions and discussion

Meeting is being recorded
Project Overview
Purpose of Stakeholder Group

Following EPA approval of the WQMP, the Upper Big Blue NRD sought stakeholder participation to help identify and prioritize implementation practices that will be supported by landowners within the targeted areas.
Website

upperbigblue.org/wqmp
# Website Resources

## Stakeholder Meeting Materials

- Technical Resources for WQMP Implementation
- Stakeholder Meeting 1 Agenda
- Stakeholder Meeting 1 Summary
- Stakeholder Meeting 1 Presentation
- Stakeholder Meeting 2 Agenda

## Additional Resources & Links

- Buffer Strips
- Land Treatment Program
- Water Quality Management Plan
- Nebraska Department of Agriculture
- Rainwater Basin Joint Venture
- Pheasants Forever
- Watershed Area Map
- Recharge Lake: Management Strategies and Objectives
Stakeholder Hellos
Stakeholders
Stakeholder Hellos

Please introduce yourself:
- Name
- What are you still thinking about from last meeting? Or what resonated most for you?

David Cast  Landowner/Operator
Adam Darbro  Municipality
Tena Ehlers  Landowner/Operator
Anthony Kreifels  Landowner/Operator
Gayle Marsh  Landowner/Operator
John Mittman  Agri-Business
Gary Moody  Landowner/Operator
Patty Morner  Landowner/Operator
Steve Moseley  Recreation
Doyle Onnen  Land Management
Leslie Pohl  Landowner/Operator
Aaron Sindelar  Agri-Business
Jess Spotanski  Landowner/Operator
Brent Swartzendruber  Landowner/Operator
Also here
Meeting Panel

Josh Bowers
NRCS

Andy Bishop
Rainwater Basin

Nathan Pflueger
Pheasants Forever

John Bush
Nature Conservancy
Additional Technical Resources

- Matthew Perrion, Nebraska Game and Parks
- Jennifer Swanson, Nebraska Association of Resource Districts
- Jenny Rees, UNL Extension Educator for York County
- Steve Melvin, UNL Extension Educator for Hamilton County

Contact list available on website
NRD Board Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paul Bethune</th>
<th>Rodney Grotz</th>
<th>Rhonda Rich</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Bohaty</td>
<td>Kendall Siebert</td>
<td>Micheal Nuss</td>
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<td>Richard Bohaty</td>
<td>Bill Kuehner</td>
<td>William Stahly</td>
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<td>John Miller</td>
<td>David Robotham</td>
<td>Paul Weiss</td>
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<td>Larry Moore</td>
<td>Doug Dickinson</td>
<td>Lynn Yates</td>
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<td>Linda Luebbe</td>
<td>Roger Houdersheldt</td>
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Planning for Water Quality Improvements
Planning for Water Quality Improvements

- Multiple BMPs can be adopted or installed in each field, for a “layering effect”
- We want to maximize the number of BMPs each landowner or producer uses
  - Provide the best “menu” of BMPs possible
  - Ensure funding and technical assistance is targeted
Planning for Water Quality Improvements

• If the goal is improved water quality in the Beaver Creek Watershed....

• Strategy is to assist landowners and producers to voluntarily adopt BMPs using two resources:
  1. Existing resources and programs
  2. New grant funds through EPA/NDEE Section 319

Do existing programs need modified to improve use?

What needs can be met, or program gaps supplemented, by the 319 funding?
Existing Resources and Programs

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Rainwater Basin
Pheasants Forever
Nature Conservancy
NRCS Planning Process and Programs Available
NRCS Programs

• **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**
  offers financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to install or implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land to protect water, air and soil quality as well as wildlife habitat.

• **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**
  provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to actively manage and maintain existing conservation systems and to implement additional conservation activities on land in agricultural production. Authorizes the enrollment of an additional 10,000,000 acres each of fiscal years 2014 through 2022.

• **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**
  consolidates the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) easement options, and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) into one program. The program enrolls wetland easements and facilitates partner purchases of agricultural land easements.

• **Regional Conservation Practice Program (RCPP)**
  combines the purposes of the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI), and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to create a single regional partnership program.
Other Programs

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
  FSA Program - NRCS completes Technical Assistance

- NRD cost share programs
  NRCS completes planning and gives producers their options and assists with finding best program for them.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Common Practices

• Cover Crops
• Field Borders
• Convert to No Till
• Irrigation Water Management
• Convert Gravity Irrigation to Pivot or SDI
Takeaway Thought

• Come to the NRCS office first!
  • We’ll go through planning process to address resource concerns
Discussion
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture

• Public Private Partnership
  • Wetland focus to support 8.6 million waterfowl that use the Rainwater Basin
  • 72% of the wetlands intersected by pivot irrigation systems
  • Leverage partner programs to address multiple natural resource concerns
  • Integrate projects into working farm and ranch operations
Rainwater basin Wetlands are ephemeral in function and pond water as a result of precipitation & surface runoff.
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture

• Whole Field Solution
  • Leverage partner programs to complete multiple elements
    • Wetland restoration
    • Variable Rate Irrigation
    • Floatation solution
    • Grazing infrastructure

• Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership
  • 85% cost-share
  • Pivot can cross enrolled acres
Takeaway Thoughts

• New Program Manual
• Multiple options available to uniquely address each landowner’s issue individually
• New research that each acre of playa wetlands can recharge 3.61 acre/ft. of water annually
Discussion
Pheasants Forever

- Pathway For Wildlife Program
  - Precision Ag Conservation
  - Grasslands
  - Community Habitat

- Nebraska Environmental Trust Funding
PF Precision Ag Conservation in NE

- Goal – Work within a row crop dominated landscape and make a difference for wildlife by diversifying the landscape

Potential benefits for cover crops

- **Erosion Control**
  - Ground cover during high rain and wind (i.e., Spring)
  - Root biomass to anchor soil
  - Increased soil organic C to improve aggregate soil stability

- **Compaction Management**
  - Tap-rooted species can open compacted soil layers
  - High root biomass species can reduce bulk density
  - Tap-rooted species create bio-pores

- **Soil Nutrient**
  - Legume crops can fix atmospheric N and decompose rapidly
  - Reduce N leaching
  - Increase soil organic matter
  - Reduce nutrient loss through erosion

- **Other**
  - Weed suppression
  - Biodiversity and wildlife habitat
  - Grazing and haying
  - Crop production
  - Pest or disease control

Cover Crops

- Contact me by phone and/or email
  - We will discuss your operation

- Seed cost share
  - 75% of diverse seed mixture

- Winter cereal incentive
  - $10/ac on acres taken to harvest
  - Must be followed with cover crop

- Foregone Income Payments
  - $40/ac on cover crops left standing until following spring
  - 10% of small grain planting must remain standing
Takeaway Thoughts

• **Pheasants Forever is more than CRP**
  - If you have a project that doesn’t fit within CRP reach out to a PF biologist

• **My position is more based around soil health and linking that to a wildlife benefit**
  - Just because we work together doesn’t mean you’re going to plant perennial vegetation
  - Return on investment (ROI) mindset

• **NRCS is a great first stop for producers new to cover crops and other soil health practices**
Discussion
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
PROJECT COMPONENTS

100,000 ACRES
of new soil health practices in central Nebraska croplands.

3 PRACTICES
NO TILL, DIVERSIFIED ROTATIONS, AND COVER CROPS.

100 FARMERS

5 YEARS

$8.8 MILLION
TOTAL BUDGET
NRCS practices for financial assistance

• Cover Crops
  • Applicant must not have planted cover crops in past, or make a significant difference in planned cover crop

• Residue and Tillage Management
  • Practice involves conversion from conventional tilled or strip tilled system to no-till system

• Conservation Crop Rotation

Applicant will be approved through NRCS ranking process.
Producers must farm in the Upper Big Blue or Central Platte NRD
Ecosystem Services Market Consortium (ESMC)

- One of the many entities quantifying soil carbon
- Program pays for practices adopted, not carbon storage
  - Because carbon outcomes are still fairly unknown, paying producers for enrolled acres will remove risk
- Producers will be encouraged to enroll in both the NRCS RCPP and the ESMC pilot program, but will have the option of just enrolling in one of these components and not the other
Takeaway Thought

• Start date unknown, program details still TBD
Discussion
Stakeholder Discussion
# Contact Information

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<tr>
<th>NAME, TITLE</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>CONTACT INFORMATION</th>
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| Josh Bowers, District Conservationist | Natural Resources Conservation Service - York Field Office | 402-362-5700, ext. 3 402-641-6482  
joshua.bowers@ne.usda.gov |
| Andy Bishop, Coordinator          | Rainwater Basin Joint Venture                      | 308-380-8691  
andy_bishop@fws.gov |
| Nathan Pflueger, Precision Ag Coordinator | Pheasants Forever                               | Office: 402-362-5700  
Cell (402) 646-5426  
pflueger@pheasantsforever.org |
| John Bush, Water Resources Technician | Upper Big Blue NRD                                | (402) 362-6601  
jbush@upperbigblue.org |
Next Steps

• Stakeholder Meeting #3
  Wednesday, February 17, 2021, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
  *Is there anything you would like to see on the agenda?*

• Public Meeting/Input
  March 2021