**Meeting Minutes**

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February 8th, 2017

5:00 PM

USDA Service Center, 4014 Lake St Homer, AK

1. Call to order: 5:35
2. Roll call Chris Rainwater, Gena Grobarek, Otto Kilcher, Catherine Knott, Devony Lehner, Jared Worthington, Jen Chauvet
3. Approval of the Agenda -Unanimous consent
4. Approval of the Minutes –Unanimous consent
5. NRCS Report
   1. Meet and greet: Jen Chauvet- the new Admin assistant - left Park Service in Seward, been working three weeks. Welcome Jen!
   2. Conservation Planning and Programs: Alaska NRCS received over $7M for EQIP contracting. Offices are processing EQIP applications that had participant and land eligibility by 11/18. Approximately 70 applications moving forward in Homer. Heavier engineering workload than in the past.
   3. Working Lands for Wildlife Proposal – Met with USFWS field office staff at their annual meeting in Anchorage to discuss NRCS projects, in general, and some WLFW. NRCS may be able to assist with an already, or nearly designed project this summer. WLFW funds don’t follow regular EQIP timeframes. An application could come in now and be considered for FY2017.
   4. CSP sign-up 14 Nov – 3 Feb. Two forestry applications in Kodiak. Five ag applications up north. Conservation Client Gateway is available to entities and individuals. Participants can electronically view, sign and send documents and track payments. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/cgate/>
   5. Homer office –NRCS advertised for space. Anticipate a move – within 6 months? Unoccupied federal facility received highest priority. Process for acquiring space is now with admin team.
   6. Hired an Administrative Program Assistant position in Homer FO – Jen Chauvet. She is thorough and organized.
   7. New Assistant State Conservationist for Programs coming from North Dakota, Amanda Crowe. New Hub Leader in Wasilla with unofficial selection, Joanne (North Hub Leader) will fill in.
   8. Ryan unofficially selected for Delta Junction GS-11 Soil Conservationist. Unofficially selected are in hiring freeze gray area. State Resource Conservationist position to be filled, Scott Crockett acting. Two Soil Conservationists to be advertised for Homer. ACES funding and agreements are in budget and NHQ review circumstance. States anticipated to lose 10% of discretionary funding from 2016 levels.
   9. Training in 2017-Snow Survey and Winter/Wilderness Survival – Cancelled due to budget. Soil Health – August 28 th still on schedule
   10. Annual Civil Rights and EEO Policy Statements review -see Attachment
   11. Meg Out of Office: Sometime in March, spring break week?
6. Financial Report
   1. CIRI-can we get a breakdown of the expenditures we would be paying for with SCA?
   2. Approved: Motion by Gena, seconded by Otto
7. Manager’s Report
   1. **CIRI/Watermelon Trail**: We will be putting $10,000 towards the SCA (Student Conservation Assoc.) to help fund the workers who will be doing the revegetation and reroute project this summer. They are still $15,000 short of their budget, so we will see if this can work…
   2. **School Yard Habitat**: Matt is heading the design and implement stages at Homer Middle School and Brad is taking on McNeil Canyon Elementary. Both schools will need to identify their top choice of project out of all the options that have been brainstormed. We hope to have lots of student input and teacher buy-in throughout the process so we will be tapping into schools and volunteer labor a great deal from now through the summer. This project (and its funding) ends in September.
   3. **Invasive Plant Program**: We got funding! I think. Word from Fish & Wildlife is that they are budgeting $40,000 to our CWMA (Cooperative Weed Management Area) program each year for the next three years (this year for sure\* with the next two years being dependent on future funding). Therefore Matt is shooting ahead with permits for DOT right of way projects and the spring CWMA weed conference here in Homer. It will be focused on public education rather than agency education, so any ideas or feedback on what we can do to get the community to participate will be appreciated.
   4. **NRCS Soil Health Study**: Brad is back and ramping up for the second year of the soil health study, meeting with the producers who are participating as well as conducting a video conference with others around the state who will be beginning the study this year. His first year had little guidance so he will be able to tell others what pitfalls to consider and what to avoid or make sure to include.
   5. **NRCS Tech Support**: Matt has finally gotten through the first stages of NRCS security passes so he can work on compliance work that Brad has been doing. He has completed his first HEL determination. Yahoo! But since this was all in an attempt to get some of this workload off of Brad, it is looking more doubtful. If Matt's security pass had come through while Brad was gone for over a month during the slowest, darkest days of winter, Matt could have done quite a bit of work for him. Now Matt's own plate is getting rather full so we shall see how much help he can give Brad.
   6. Caribou Lake Trail: Just FYI, the Snomads have lost their trails coordinator Adam Depeza.

\*is anything from the Federal government certain these days?

1. Old Business
   1. Elections: new positions
      1. Chair: Chris Rainwater
      2. Vice Chair: Otto Kilcher
      3. Secretary: Catherine Knott
      4. Treasurer: Gena Grobarek
      5. Alternate Pro Tem: Tim Alzheimer :)
   2. Employee Raises: Brad would like to be considered for a raise. Discussion around whether or not to implement an across the board raise ensued. If certain grants didn't allow for that in the middle of the grant cycle, would HSWCD have to fill in the extra pay? Can't afford that. As new grants come on, could the Manager decide if it is appropriate to write in a higher pay grade? No, the Board has always discussed and approved pay raises. Recognizing a desire to make Brad happy and grantors happy, more information is needed. The Board is receptive to the idea, but motion to table to the next meeting by Gena and seconded by Otto.
2. New Business
   1. Rhodiola Equipment – Answering questions posed by Al Poindexter, owner of Anchor Point Greenhouse where the District's rhodiola equipment is housed. Al has pulled out of the rhodiola cooperative. 1. Can he use it if none of the cooperative folks are using it? 2. Could he put in a bid for it if the District plans to sell it? Al offered to cover it with his liability insurance. He is still offering it up for the cooperative folks to use. Discussion leaned more toward renting it out to rhodiola growers rather than sale. Gena doesn't like the idea of selling it out of the coop, Otto likes the idea of building a relationship for rentals. Can we even sell it? More understanding of the original agreement needed. Chris suggested that a rewrite of the MOU may be necessary. Tabled till next meeting.
   2. Future Scenarios: Possible Grants
      1. ATV/RTP: Suggestions from the Board: Get one with a gear drive that fits over the bridges, under 60 inches for wheel width. Otto will look at the old wheeler to see if he can get it going. The idea of going out with just one machine rather than two didn't sit well so a side-by-side may not be the best option.
      2. ACWA –Ideas from the Board: maybe other funding from NRCS or even Ducks Unlimited, there are lots of different players in that area. What is everyone doing?
      3. FMPP/LFPP - Feedback from the Board: sounds like a good way to fund some of the ideas we have talked about, but don't give all the funds away to other organizations in an attempt to collaborate.
      4. Rope not Dope – Update from Chris: Div Ag Director Arthur Keyes says that industrial hemp is becoming legal in the state: legal if it is a research plot, overseen by a land-grant university. Maybe they could extend that to the Plant Materials Center, maybe we could provide our agronomist to do experiments down here. Kyra will offer assistance to the PMC to do plant trials in the Homer area.
   3. Future Scenarios: Possible Employees
      1. the Board in favor of hiring Devony Lehner to fill any time she may be free between the end of her ASIS position March 3rd and the new soil conservationist position she will be applying for with NRCS once the hiring freeze ends.
   4. Borough Land Leases and Sales
      1. Ag title should be attached for perpetuity for so that the land is affordable so young families and young farmers can get into the industry.
      2. Leases should be long enough that farmers can safely invest in infrastructure.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:38pm.**

**Next Meeting March 8th, 2017**