

**Blaine SWCD and Butte SWCD Local Work Group Meeting Minutes**  
**December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**Craters of the Moon National Monument Visitor's Center, 9:00 A.M.**

The Blaine SWCD and Butte SWCD hosted a joint local work group meeting on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the Craters of the Moon National Monument Visitor's Center. The meeting was advertised in the Arco Advertiser, on the Butte SWCD website and social media, as well as hanging flyers in Arco and Mackay. Twenty-nine people were present representing board supervisors, landowners, and partner agencies. The meeting was conducted by facilitator David Nichols.

**Opening comments:** Butte SWCD Board Chairman Randy Purser welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated the purpose of the meeting to assist the NRCS in determining funding priorities for 2020. Introductions of those in attendance were made (see attachment for list of attendees).

**NRCS report:** Mark Olson, NRCS Area Conservationist, reported that changes were being made on how EQIP funding is determined, provided an update on the NRCS reorganization within the state, and how local work group meetings will help determine funding categories for the coming year. Discussion was made on state versus federal funding categories. Lara Fondow, NRCS Soil Conservationist in Arco provided an update on the number of EQIP contracts in the Blaine SWCD and Butte SWCD for the last three years. She also provided examples of the types of contracts for each county.

**Natural Resource Conservation Priorities:** Small groups were formed, and each group came up with their top five resource concerns based on a list provided by the NRCS. Discussion was made on NRCS definitions of what is covered in each category. After each group provided their top five concerns, discussion was made until the top five concerns were listed for the entire group. These concerns were 1) insufficient water, 2) soil quality degradation, 3) degraded plant condition, 4) livestock production limitation, and 5) inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife.

**Distribution of EQIP Funds in the LWG:** Small groups next discussed recommendation for distribution of EQIP funds by creating four ranking pool categories and allocating a percentage of funds to each category. After each group reported their results, discussion was made in the larger group to finalize the top four categories and the percent of funding for each category. These included: 1) cropland: 50%, 2) Rangeland: 30%, 3) Wildlife habitat: 15%, and 4) irrigated pasture: 5%.

Discussion was made on how to reallocate unused funds. It was decided that any unclaimed funds would enter the top ranked category and fund applications until all in that category were funded. If any funds remained after that, the funds would move down the list until all funds were exhausted.

**EQIP Local Ranking:** Discussion was made in small groups what the desired qualities should be for each of the LWG Ranking Pool Categories (Cropland, Rangeland, Wildlife Habitat and Irrigated Pasture). After small group discussion, a large group discussion was made to finalize the qualities (see attached LWG recommendation worksheet for qualities).

**Next Steps, Closing Comments and Adjourn:** The minutes and finalized LWG meeting sheet will be approved by the Blaine SWCD and Butte SWCD boards at their upcoming meetings. The finalized minutes and worksheet will be sent to the NRCS, posted on the Butte SWCD's website and e-mailed out to the group of attendees.

Discussion was made that the next LWG meeting will be held after the funding cycle.