

Red River Valley Conservation Service Area – Conference Call – February 14, 2012

Conference call to discuss the establishment of a fee schedule for engineering and technical assistance plus expenses for Clean Water Legacy Grants for the RRVCSA staff and the concerns that were brought before the Executive Committee meeting on September 28, 2011.

Conference call included: Darren Newville, East OtterTail SWCD; Gary Lee, 2nd Host East Polk SWCD; Brian Dwight, Board Conservationist-BWSR; Chad Severts, Board Conservationist – BWSR; Jeff Haverland, Technician-RRVCSA; Jim Hest, Engineer-RRVCSA; Brad Grant, Host Dist. –Becker SWCD and Ginger Flynn, Host Dist.-Becker SWCD.

The object is to build this organization and for it to grow. Build a fund balance. Hire additional personnel.

Ginger and Chad reviewed what the actual cost for the engineer and engineering technician would be all inclusive of all costs. Engineer - \$116,276 per year divided by 2080 hours in a year = \$55.90; Engineering Technician - \$89,051 per year divided by 2080 hours in a year = \$42.81. These figures do not include replacement costs of vehicles and equipment.

Concerns were shouldn't be double dipping of State Funds.

Discussed: Technical ability of each district, Clean Water Legacy Grants – BCs has the authority to change workplan dollars, replacement cost for vehicles, etc. should be included in the actual costs to run the RRVCSA, should add 10-20% to the costs for inflationary purposes and for hiring addition staff, charge should be the same for either Engineer or Engineering Technician, wondering if some districts were making money on state grants with the technician fees.

With everyone agreeing, Chad, Brad and Ginger will come up with one CWL rate for all districts to use and they should include inflationary costs.

Also, reviewed things to work on from the September 28, 2011 Executive Committee meeting:

- Should the RRVCSA have a fee for supervision of projects –Fee schedule should be changed Engineering Design/Construction **Supervision** changed to **Stakeout**
- Have RRVCSA Board set a policy that when a district is applying for a grant and ask engineering and engineering technician how long it will take them that they cannot charge more. It should probably say not to exceed so many hours.
- When the Districts should be paid for their services. – It was determined that “When the plan is delivered to the requesting District Office. RRVCSA should set policy and include on the Fee Schedule
- Confusion on end of year reporting – Add a couple of columns to their monthly activity spread sheet of who is actually paying for RRVCSA services.
- Training on engineered software
- Additional staff for construction inspection.

The goal of our first meeting was twofold: 1) Provide a venue for the Host and Co-Host administrators to comfortably communicate the issues as they see it. 2) Develop a list of issues and compare the list to documents/procedures that are in place. This will allow for an analysis of the TSAs procedures and related documents to identify what needs to be adjusted or developed to assure for an objective operation of the TSA. It will become even more important to have a well managed operation as the need for more technical assistance is recognized to accomplish the increase of project installation as a result of CWF funds. The TSAs are going to be one obvious system to build upon to meet these increased technical needs.

BASIC CONCERNS:

The "New" MASWCD Area I is too big
North – South differences; past procedures, attitudes, Employee relationship to TSA area and how they (as individuals) relate to new.
Differences in NRCS Area office technical support (Fergus Falls vs. Thief River Falls)

Comments/Thoughts - Area I – 17 counties is way too large. We have to make an effort for this to work.

ATTENDANCE

Poor attendance at TSA meetings
SWCD representative
Staff vs. board member
TSA meeting in conjunction with MASWCD meeting (good or not so good)

Comments/thoughts: - Letters to members asking why they didn't have someone attend meeting. If employees can be members of the RRVCSA Board with voting privileges Video Conferences o.k., but you lose out on the personal interactions. Maybe we should have an organizational fee

PROCEDURES

Billing to SWCD for TSA services
When payment is due
Engineer vs. technician on site
SWCD assistance on site vs. no SWCD assistance on site (SWCD capacity to assist TSA staff)
Fee schedule for c/s (i.e. state cost share, equip) vs. Engineering rates for CWF grants/projects
Assistance request process (formal vs. in formal)
Prioritization of work load
Engineer vs. technician needed on site
SWCD past participation with TSA
SWCD pay to belong (related to need for more tech support)
Bird dogging progress

Comments/thoughts - Prioritizing of engineered projects, communication on engineered projects, districts have to be proactive on their engineered projects by contacting engineer or engineer technician to see the status of their projects.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Need more technical support (size of area, more and more demand because of CWF, disaster response, i.e.)
Engineer vs. technician
Funding?
SWCD in-house capacity
At present big users of the TSA; Becker, Norman, Mahnomens, East Polk, Red Lake

Comments/thoughts - Different levels of technical ability between districts. Pursue hiring another engineering technician. Future workload

COMMUNICATIONS

Host – Co-host

Engineer – Technician

Host/Co-host - Board

Documents such as position descriptions, evaluations

Policy documents (personnel, operating procedures, by-laws)

For the Board

Personnel

operations

Organizational chart

Comments/thoughts - Update the position descriptions and evaluations. What are the expectations? Evaluations should only be done by the districts that are working with the engineer or engineering technician or both. Consistence in reporting of projects.

Things to work on:

1. Organizational Chart – define roles and responsibilities

2. Update Position Descriptions *Back burner*

3. Develop a consistent reporting process for staff that meets BWSR's new requirements and the need of the Host District Managers. *OK*

4. Update the employee evaluation process. – April

5. Update Fee Schedule – Clearly state payment requirements (timing) and address CWF Direct costs issue.

6. Put all info into a policy manual.

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Comments/thoughts

Things to work on.

1. Organizational Chart - define roles + respons.
2. Update Position Descriptions
3. Develop Consistent Reporting process for staff the meets BWSR's new requirements and the needs of the Host District Managers.
4. Update the employee evaluation process.
5. Update Fee Schedule - clearly state payment requirements (timing), address CWF Direct Costs issue.
6. Put all info. into a policy Manual (one-stop shop)