

Nebraska Soil/Water Health Group

On Monday Dec 16th, a subcommittee of the Initiative Committee met at the direction of the full committee to begin the process of laying a foundation for the formation of a Nebraska Soil and Water Health entity. Present at the meeting were Keith Berns, Mike McDonald, Sen Tim Graggert, Alan Moeller, Laura Fields, Kim Davis and Alex Brechbill.

- Other state entities were reviewed, particularly the New York State Soil Health Roadmap, the Indiana Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative Strategic Plan and the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition
- Possible Names for a Soil/Water Health Group were discussed with the following variations brought forward
 - Nebraska Healthy Soil and Water:
 - Hub
 - Coalition
 - Alliance
 - Initiative
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- Purpose and Functions of a Soil/Water Health Group were discussed including
 - Education
 - Water quality
 - Soil Health
 - Erosion prevention
 - Demonstration sites and farms
 - Youth
 - 4-H
 - FFA
 - Ag in the Classroom
 - Teacher training
 - Coordination
 - “One conservation program” delivered by many agencies
 - On the same page but not overlapping
 - Consistent message
 - Common terms and language
 - Larger scale “Buy-In”
 - Inventory of existing S&W work and programs
 - Identify gaps in existing programming and research
 - Marketing and Communication (Outreach and Awareness)
 - Web site

- Social Media
- Publications
- Demonstration sites and farms
- Case studies
- Economic research studies
- Media training
- Outreach to consumers
- Outreach to absentee landlords
- Program Funding for Producers
 - Incentives vs discounts vs rebates
 - Assistance in grant writing
 - Assistance in signing up for ecosystem programs
 - Solicitation of industry sustainability programs
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- Technical assistance
 - Publicize partner resources
 - Supplemental to other offerings
 - Certification process for industry consultants
- Policy
 - Development
 - Consultation
 - Engagement
 - Education
 - Research priorities
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- Leadership development
 - Board members
 - Mentorships
 - SH Champions
 - Media training
- Evaluation and Measurement
 - Benchmark measurements
 - KPI - Key Performance Indexes - unique to each goal or area
 - Measurement standards
 - Annual evaluation of progress
- Structure and MakeUp of a Soil/Water Health Group were discussed
 - 501C3 YES
 - By-laws will be needed - refer to SD Soil Health Coalition as reference
 - Board of Directors
 - 9 or 11 or 13 members
 - UNL

- NARD/NRD
 - NRCS
 - State Government
 - Dept of Ag, Dept of NR, Dept of EE
 - Governor's office, Legislature
 - Environmental Trust
 - Conservation group
 - Agribusiness (Suppliers, Banking, Land Management)
 - Farm Groups (Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Commodity Groups, NE Cattlemen)
 - Producers
 - Urban representation
 - Urban Water districts
 - Foundations
- Advisory Board (representatives from above)
 - Local SW learning/support groups or hubs (possibly based on NRD's) (facilitated by Extension?)
 - Membership
 - Producers (low cost but need to have benefits)
 - Would vote for producer members on the BOD
 - Associate or affiliate members (higher cost than producers)
 - Would vote on representatives for Agribusiness and Farm groups
- Potential Staffing and Budget were discussed briefly but nothing definitive was concluded