

Healthy Soils Task Force Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2019

Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District
319 E 25th Street, York, NE 68467

Members Present: Jerry Allemann, Rich Bartek, Keith Berns, Hannah Birge, Senator Tim Gragert, Lisa Lunz, Mike McDonald, Senator Julie Slama, Jeff Steffen, Charles Shapiro, Steven Tucker, Greg Whitmore, Amelia Breinig

Members Absent: Ron Bolze, Ray Ward, Bob Bettger

Staff and Audience Attending: Steve Roth, Nebr. Dept. of Ag; Aaron Hird, USDA-NRCS, Nathan Pflueger, Pheasants Forever; Laura Dwyer, Nebr. Grain and Feed Assoc.; Alex Brechbill, Senator Gragert's staff; Kim Davis, Senator Gragert's staff; Rick Leonard, Legislature Agriculture Committee; Alan Moeller, Nebr. Elder Climatology Legacy; Boone McAfee, Nebr. Corn Board; Aaron Hird, USDA-NRCS; Keith Byerly, Soil Health Partnership

Meeting was called to order 1:06 p.m.

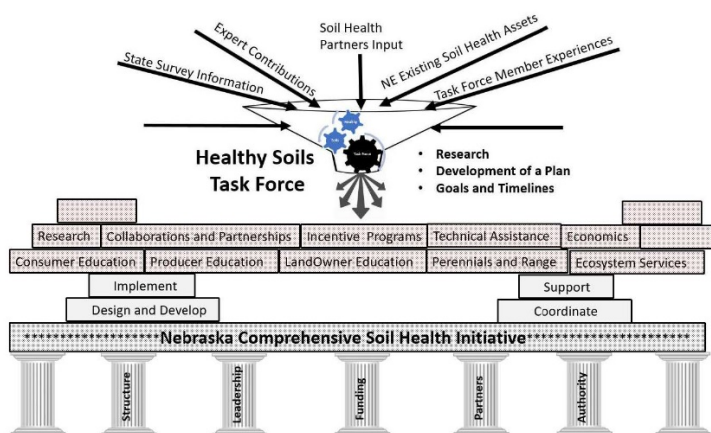
Chairman Berns accounted that the meeting was being operated under the Open Meetings Act and a copy of the Open Meetings Act was available at his table.

Berns also noted that a Public Meeting Notice was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on Sept. 13, 2019. An affidavit of the notice was available for review.

The agenda was accepted as previously presented.

Members reviewed and discussed LB243, the statute that created the Healthy Soils Task Force (HSTF), to clarify what the group feels are the priorities and duties of the Task Force.

Chairman Berns presented a graphic depicting a process that could be used by the HSTF in developing a mission statement, initiative and action plan as required by statute:



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After input and discussion by HSTF members, they agreed to implement the process that was outlined and begin working on tasks through committees that would be assigned later in the meeting.

HSTF members provided several key points that they felt should be included in the development of a mission statement for the group. Those points included but were not limited to:

- Keep a positive voice
- Stress that the HSTF force is seeking non-regulatory solutions
- Water quality benefits all aspects of society
- Leverage opportunities for farmers
- Sell the benefits of healthy soils
- Promote and support farming and ranching systems
- Stress the role of livestock and importance of rangeland and grazing
- Provide soil health info to individual farmers
- Encourage community based and soil health groups to be involved in the process
- Demonstrate how healthy soils can increase profitability
- Enable Nebr. farmers to build the healthiest soils in the nations
- Include a message that healthy soils are essential for future generations

Berns, Slama and Tucker agreed to develop a three to five sentence draft of a Mission Statement that can be presented to the entire group for review and editing.

The HSTF agreed to continue using Google Groups to develop drafts of materials in order to edit and share information. Final documents will be posted on the HSTF public webpage hosted on the Nebraska Department of Agriculture website.

In order to assist some members in use the communications platforms utilized by the group, Hannah Birge was appointed as technology consultant. Birge stated that she plans to hold a webinar to review technology processes for interested persons.

At the last HSTF meeting, members were assigned to research healthy soils activities taking place in other states across the country. Members presented findings they gathered from phone calls to various healthy soils experts they had contacted in their assigned regions. Research information will eventually be placed in a centralized document for review.

As Berns began to assign HSTF members to committees, he encouraged them to seek outside sources/stakeholders to participate in their meetings to provide input as a plan is developed.

The following committees were assigned:

- Economics: Steffen, Bettger and Alleman
- Education: Bartek, Lunz, Shapiro
- Eco-Systems Services: Birge, Tucker, Ward and Bolze
- HSTF Initiative: McDonald, Tucker, Wellman, Whitmore, Berns, Gragert, Slama

The next meeting of the HSTF will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 19, at the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 301, Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor, Lincoln, Nebraska beginning at 1 p.m. CST.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.