

Healthy Soils Task Force Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 19, 2019
Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture
301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor
Lincoln, NE 68509

Members Present: Jerry Allemann, Rich Bartek, Keith Berns, Senator Tim Gragert, Lisa Lunz, Jeff Steffen, Charles Shapiro, Steve Tucker, Greg Whitmore, Ray Ward, Bob Bettger and Steve Wellman

Members Present by Phone: Mike McDonald, Hannah Birge

Members Absent: Ron Bolze, Senator Julie Slama

Staff and Audience Attending: Steve Roth, Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture; Aaron Hird, USDA-NRCS, Nathan Pflueger, Pheasants Forever; Kristi Block, Nebraska Grain and Feed Assoc.; Alex Brechbill, Senator Gragert's staff; Kim Davis, Senator Gragert's staff; Alan Moeller, Nebraska Elder Climatology Legacy; Keith Byerly, Soil Health Partnership; Dustin Wilcox, Nebraska Association of Resource Districts; Ashley Kohls, Nebraska Cattlemen; Edison McDonald, GC Resolve; Gary Lesoing, UNL; Andrew Pierson, Audubon Nebraska; Clay Govier, Nebraska Soybean Board; and Ansley Mick, Nebraska Farm Bureau

Meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

Chairman Berns reported that the meeting was being operated under the Open Meetings Act and that a copy of the Open Meetings Act was posted on the wall of the meeting room.

Berns also noted that a Public Meeting Notice was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on November 1, 2019. An affidavit of the notice was available for review.

The minutes for the September 25, 2019, meeting were accepted as presented. The agenda was accepted as previously presented.

NDA Director Wellman presented the financial report as maintained by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. As of the meeting date, \$471.46 had been reimbursed to Task Force members for expenses incurred. A balance of \$9,528.54 remains from the maximum amount allocated by statute. Wellman stated that Task Force members should think about how they will want a final Healthy Soils Task Force Plan written and presented to the Legislature, and if funds will need to be allocated to complete that task.

Chairman Berns said he would take it up for consideration and present it up for discussion among Task Force members at a later date.

Berns presented a draft of a mission statement intended for use by the Task Force as a guideline.

Page 2 – Healthy Soils Task Force November 19, 2019 Minutes

After discussion, the following was accepted as the mission statement along with action steps and intended outcomes:

Healthy Soils Task Force Mission Statement

The Nebraska Healthy Soils Task Force will develop a positive, proactive plan for soil and water health to ensure an enriched, resilient, and sustainable future for the state of Nebraska.

This will be done through:

- Strategic research and planning
- Input and involvement of key soil health stakeholders
- Development and delivery of a final report to the Governor

Our outcomes will be:

- Formation of an on-going soil health initiative to drive soil health education and adoption in Nebraska
- Creative education and funding solutions
- Increased profitability and efficiencies for Nebraska farmers and ranchers
- Water quality and quantity benefits for all Nebraska citizens
- Nebraska will be recognized as a national leader in regenerative soil health education and adoption
- Measurable increases in soil retention (no erosion), organic matter, infiltration rates, water holding capacity, biological activity and other measurement standards
- Soil health adoption and practices that continue after incentive programs are over

Lisa Lunz gave the following report from the *Education Committee*:

Education Committee Task Force Members:

- Lisa Lunz
- Charles Shapiro
- Keith Berns
- Rich Bartek

Guests in attendance:

- Paul Jasa, UNL Extension
- Keith Glewen, UNL Extension
- Katja Koehler-Cole, UNL
- Gary Lesoing, UNL Extension
- Tim Arkebauer, UNL Extension
- Boone McAfee, Nebr. Corn Board

Goals

- Identify resources – complete comprehensive report by December 19
- Missing Areas – Ag lenders, urban, private industry (ag and food), youth

Next steps?

Page 3 – Healthy Soils Task Force November 19, 2019 Minutes

Themes

Field demonstration
Mentors
Resource list
Champion farmers

Objectives

Communication
Partnerships
Coordinated research and demonstration projects

The committee is consolidating information on education and will report back in January.

Next step: Education Conference

Bob Bettger and Jeff Steffen gave a PowerPoint presentation on the *Economics Committee* meeting. That PowerPoint is available on the Healthy Soils Task Force webpage at:

<https://nda.nebraska.gov/healthysouils/index.html>.

Steffen mentioned that the presentation provided suggestions to a possible template for proving the economics of soil health practices in Nebraska.

Hannah Birge attended the meeting via phone and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the *Ecosystems Committee* meeting.

Ecosystem Services Committee Task Force Members:

- Steve Tucker
- Hannah Birge
- Ron Bolze

Guests in attendance:

- Clay Govier, Farmer
- Alex Brechbill, Sen. Gragert's Office
- Aldyen Donnelly, Nori
- Andrea Basche, UNL Agronomy and Horticulture Dept.

Birge's PowerPoint is available on the Healthy Soils Task Force webpage at:

<https://nda.nebraska.gov/healthysouils/index.html>

Page 4 – Healthy Soils Task Force November 19, 2019 Minutes

Chairman Berns presented the following report on the *Initiative Committee*:

Initiative Committee Task Force Members:

- Senator Julie Slama
- Keith Berns
- Greg Whitmore
- Mike McDonald

Guests in attendance:

- Jacy Spencer, on behalf of Steve Wellman, Nebraska Department of Agriculture
- Dustin Wilcox, on behalf of Dean Edson, Nebraska Assoc. of Resource Districts
- Alex Brechbil, on behalf of Senator Tim Gragert
- Alan Mueller (Elder Climate Legacy Group)
- Ron Yoder – UNL
- Craig Derrickson – USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

- Structure
 - Longevity – where will this be housed?
 - Independent 501c3 nonprofit – members
 - Quasi-governmental agency (like the Nebraska Corn Board or Nebraska Natural Resource Districts)
 - University of Nebraska involvement
 - Coordinate people from different audiences
 - Coalition/Board of Directors, 9 or 11 members would be ideal
 - Full-time staff, like South Dakota
 - Membership based
- Leadership
 - Find the “mayors” - most vocal and influential
 - Gain credibility immediately through marketing, outreach and spokespersons
 - Finding buy-in with people who are not involved with healthy soil programs
- Funding
 - What are we funding?
 - Hiring people
 - Technical assistance
 - Marketing/communications, education and outreach
 - Office, computers, transportation
 - Not poaching funds from other organizations that are doing similar work
 - Partnership with Natural Resources Conservation Service – cooperative grants, problem is if the grant is not fulfilled, the coalition dies
 - Incentives – cautious, assist transitions
 - Leverage existing funding
 - Environmental markets – consideration to the establishment of activities, might generate funds for program participants, so it’s not funded off the top
 - Grant writing
 - Philanthropy and Foundations
 - Fertilizer check-off or Luxury Tax
 - Membership/Dues
 - Larger events – corporate sponsors

Page 5 – Healthy Soils Task Force November 19, 2019 Minutes

- Partners
 - Producers
 - Land managers
 - Bankers – enhancing the bottom line (farm credit)
 - Crop consultants
 - Involve ranchers and cattlemen
 - Students – FFA chapters
 - Fertilizer manufacturers

The next meeting of the HSTF will be Thursday, Feb. 6, 2020, at the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, 301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor, Lincoln, Nebraska, beginning at 1 p.m. CST.

Meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.