

Process Assessment/ Program Review Report

of the

Soil and Water Conservation Program

Enhancing Science and Technology

Program Review Team

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

July 11, 2012

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I. Executive Summary

The department is undertaking program reviews with the goal of identifying improvements within each participating program to create efficiencies and free up staff time to concentrate on “science and technology” and other tasks related to the department’s mission. Through this “bottom-up” process, staff has the opportunity not only to make suggestions regarding their daily work but also to provide input on the priority of those suggestions. This report summarizes the review of the Soil and Water Conservation Program. It is limited to the department’s portion of the program and does not address district activities, except where those involve department staff.

Between eight and 11 individuals participated in each of four sessions, one of which was composed of stakeholders external to the program. The review was held in the department conference center at East Elm Street in Jefferson City on May 9-11, 2012. Each participant in the session was given one minute to present each of five ideas for improvement. The ideas were then sorted by two of the participants into groups of similar ideas. The group as a whole then reviewed the sorting, made appropriate changes and created summary statements of the similar ideas. The group discussed any ideas that needed clarification or enhancement to ensure that everyone understood the ideas and summary statements. The participants then individually voted on the summary statements to determine their priorities. The program review team recorded the issues and potential solutions discussed during the sessions.

This report contains a summary of the highest rated ideas, followed by an organized compilation and explanation of the highest rated ideas, then a list of the ideas as summarized during the sessions grouped by theme and indicating the number of votes by participants in each session. All participant ideas are recorded in Appendix A. Appendix B of this report contains the list of participants. Thus, the document gets more detailed in the latter sections.

Once this report is completed, the Program Manager will meet with the department directors to develop a plan to implement a subset of the actions identified in the report. The report will be shared with all participants in the program review once that implementation plan has been approved. While only some ideas are rated as being high priorities, other ideas may be implemented as well as many more ideas merit consideration.

The sorting and prioritization of the ideas produced the following 11 recommended improvements, with the first four having significantly greater support than the others. One of the recommended improvements is beyond the scope of this review and is included only to assure fidelity of the reporting process.

Idea #1 – Increase Training and Coordinate Training with Partners Better – Increased and better coordinated training for those in the department, the districts and our partner agencies was suggested as a way to promote greater understanding and more consistent application of practices. Many supported an approach based on training department program staff to a basic level befitting their role and then having those staff provide training to the district boards and staff.

Idea #2 – Strategic Planning – The existing strategic plan is dated and should be updated to reflect current goals and policies as a tool for building support for the upcoming tax renewal and to provide a set of success measures for the program.

Idea #3 – Structure of the Department Program – A better program structure is seen by many as being conducive to good business practices and efficient operations and communication. A number of individuals spoke in favor of reducing levels of management to streamline operations and approvals.

Idea #4 – District Employees – A number of participants expressed support for converting district employees into state employees to promote communications, consistency and providing better benefits to those employees. (**Editor’s Note:** This idea is beyond the scope of this exercise as the review was to focus only on those parts of the Soil and Water Conservation Program within the department. It is listed here only to assure completeness of the report.)

Idea #5 – Mapping tool – Technical staff expressed a desire for a better mapping tool through either the adoption of or the creation of an interface to the current NRCS mapping tool.

Idea #6 – Improve Communications within the Departmental Portion of the Program – Communication is viewed as an area for improvement with multiple benefits both internal to the department staff and to our partners and landowners. This is likely a prerequisite to the next two items on this list.

Idea #7 - Improve Communication with Partners – The diverse number and nature of our partners creates a demand for clear and consistent communications across multiple layers of interaction. Multiple methods could be used to improve communication at all levels.

Idea #8 - Improve Coordination with Partners on Funding of Practices – Good fiscal stewardship requires interaction and planning with our partner agencies. The department should examine potential ways to improve the delivery of conservation practices to stretch our dollars while providing better service to landowners.

Idea #9 – Correspondence – Streamlining the approval process for correspondence is critical to getting letters out in a timely manner.

Idea #10 – Greater Flexibility between Resource Concerns – The districts and landowners should benefit from greater flexibility in assigning cost share dollars.

Idea #11 – Do Practice Reviews Annually – More effective, orderly and timely practice reviews would provide clearer understanding and predictability to district staff.

II. Compilation of Ideas

This section contains more detailed descriptions of the concepts listed in the Executive Summary. The 118 individual ideas presented fell into 12 major categories with a small group that did not fit into any of those categories and were listed in a “miscellaneous” group. Four major actions were clearly identified as priorities based on the number of votes received (greater than 16 each). Seven other actions received at least 5 votes. The 11 actions described here come from seven of the 13 major categories. The first four are those receiving the most votes, but the latter ideas are grouped by logic of presentation as well as popularity.

Note that a different choice of topics for organization of the ideas presented might change the relative support for those ideas lower on this list and those not selected to be highlighted. Thus, reviewing the next section provides important context for how this list was created.

Idea #1 – Increase Training and Coordinate Training with Partners Better

The partnerships with both other agencies and the districts could be strengthened by more coordinated training of staff in the agencies and in the districts. While this need was addressed using different terminologies in the different sessions, the overarching goals were greater understanding of policies and practices and improved consistency in their application.

Participants supported creating a solid foundation of knowledge that is widely shared among department program staff and training similarly positioned staff to similar levels of preparation. The latter concept applies both within the department staff and, especially, to those staff in the districts who would benefit from a greater understanding of the program’s policies and other professional development opportunities.

District Coordinators were mentioned as critical to forming a common understanding of policies, operations and practices with district staff. They need to be trained to a common level of expertise to be prepared to train those in the districts.

One could consider breaking this idea into smaller parts, but an overall plan for training would provide the greatest benefit for both the department program staff, those with whom they work and landowners by creating a common basis for decision-making and implementation of the practices.

Idea #2 – Strategic Planning

The participants identified the need for a coherent and practical strategic plan and for methods to promote the program. The plan should be based on the program’s mission and be both realistic and have measurable benchmarks to determine success. During the sessions, multiple individuals expressed a need prepare for the upcoming sales tax renewal by increasing taxpayer awareness. The strategic plan would also serve as a common guide for the commission, department staff, district boards and those who work in the districts.

The creation and marketing of such a plan would also be likely to increase landowner awareness in order to recruit additional farmers into the sound land management practices promoted by the program.

Idea #3 – Structure of the department program

With the recent changes in the size and staffing of the program office, many participants felt that this would be a good time to examine the structure of the program and to seek ways to make it more efficient and more reflective of the current demands upon the program. The current structure is seen as ineffective as reflected in concerns about the multiple levels of approval required for many activities.

The issue of consistency arose multiple times over the four sessions and would likely also benefit from a cleaner organization with clearer lines of both authority and communication. This could be linked to strategic planning or approached separately to allow that process to focus on addressing relationships external to the department.

Idea #4 – District Employees

A considerable number of participants voiced support for making district employees state employees. The perceived benefits of such an action included improved communication and ensuring more consistent application of Commission policies. Increased retention through salary adjustments and a clearer payroll system were thought to be benefits to those in the districts. Those supporting such a move also cited greater accountability and consistency as likely benefits of this change. (**Editor's Note:** This topic is listed only to assure that the participants' thoughts were accurately recorded in this report. It is beyond the scope of the review.)

Idea #5 – Mapping tool

The strongest recommendation on a technical issue was to develop a better mapping tool for use in the program. The current mapping technology is not seen as adequate for program purposes, difficult to use and incompatible with the spatial data used and stored by our agency partners. The tool that most who shared this idea seemed to favor was the mapping tool currently in use at NRCS. Participants spoke in favor of adopting that tool or creating an interface to that tool. The advantages of such a change include not only ease of use, but also the sharing of data between the program and NRCS staff who are working with landowners and to provide a common map for landowners who may work with multiple agencies.

Idea #6 – Improve Communications within the Departmental Portion of the Program

While this idea was raised explicitly in only one session, it underlies a number of the other ideas presented during the four sessions. Clarity and consistency in communications are critical to advancing many of the other high priority ideas proposed and supported during the review. In addition, inconsistent messages from departmental staff can affect relationships with our partners and reduce program effectiveness across the state.

Improving internal communications is very likely a requirement for improving communications with the districts and with our partner agencies. Given the working relationships that exist at different levels of

the organizations providing consistency in messaging and understanding is going to be an on-going challenge, but is a necessary undertaking.

Idea #7 - Improve Communication with Partners

Participants presented a number of ideas for improving communication with the department's partners. With close ties to NRCS and MDC staff as well as to districts in every county of Missouri, communicating a clear and consistent message becomes difficult. Most of the comments focused on communications with district boards and their staff. Communication can be improved through additional meetings, more time together in training and through face-to-face or electronically hosted meetings.

Idea #8 - Improve Coordination with Partners on Funding of Practices

Participants recognize the close relationship between the SWCP, MDC and NRCS. They also recognize the financial limitations that each agency faces. Many expressed a desire to find ways to take better advantage of the common interests to provide better service to landowners who might be served by multiple agencies. While individual ideas did not rise to the top of the list, the range of related ideas and need to make the best use of resources warrants consideration of this group of ideas. The main advantages of such an approach include more effective use of taxpayer money and better service to landowners who may wish to implement multiple practices.

Idea #9 - Correspondence

A specific need that arose in all three staff sessions was the need to streamline the correspondence process to reduce delays. Even if no change is made in program structure, a change in the approval process for correspondence is needed to reduce turn-around times, particularly for more standard correspondence.

Idea #10 – Greater Flexibility Between Resource Concerns

External stakeholder, in particular, supported a way to allow districts greater flexibility in the use of cost share funds. Difficulties in precisely predicting needs at the start of the year and a desire to be more responsive to landowner needs were the major reasons for this idea.

Two possible approaches were mentioned were to allow a reallocation of funds once a year (perhaps in January) or to provide increased flexibility between categories or practices (perhaps as a percentage allotted). The former provides a formal process for consideration of each request while the latter may be less cumbersome for districts. The ease of incorporating these options into MoSWIMS should be considered.

Idea #11 – Do Practice Reviews Annually

Participants proposed a range of ideas for improving practices, their review and implementation. The one that received the greatest support was to choose a few practices for review and to complete the review of those practices on an annual basis. The benefits of this focus were to complete the practice reviews more quickly and to allow an orderly way to review multiple practices. By providing a quicker

review, the districts would have a clearer expectation of what will be completed each year and know how well each practice is being implemented.

III. Sorting of Ideas

This section is a compilation of the raw data in Appendix A into categories and groupings of similar ideas. This information was used to create the list of recommended improvements from the participants that are listed in Section II: Compilation of Ideas. The nomenclature (a-b [n]) is the session and idea number followed by the number of votes in brackets, if any. Any idea that received votes has the idea number and the votes in bold.

The thirteen sets of ideas were organized by the review team after hearing the ideas from all four sessions. These categories were selected to create a more easily understood compilation of ideas and comparability of the ideas from different sessions.

Set #1 – Strategic Planning and Marketing

- Strategic Planning for Sales Tax Renewal (keep mission in mind) [and for other proposals and districts] **(1-1 [7])**; Advertise and promote the program. **(1-6 [4])**; Better promote program awareness and accomplishments on a continuous basis **(3-12 [3])**; Coordinated evaluation of program progress and success for planning and marketing efforts **(3-25 [2])**; Develop a Strategic Plan for the program utilizing staff input with realistic and measurable objectives (provide direction for program director, who could communicate to staff and follow through with it). Have strategic plan from years ago – but should add that we should set goals that are achievable – set realistic objectives and goals; need to take program staff's input into consideration – and actually use SP to drive decision making. Needs to be measurable **(4-13)**; Develop comprehensive marketing program to increase taxpayer awareness and improve landowner awareness **(4-18 [6])**
- Focus marketing on landowners and taxpayers rather than info/education **(2-21 [1])**; Redirect info/education funding and reconsider target audience **(3-13 [3])**
- Develop strategy to evaluate land coming out of CRP, CSP and other programs. (1-24 [0])
- Consider expending resources to expand water quantity needs (dams, impoundments, etc.) **(1-26 [1])**
- Revise regulations (CSR) to reflect current program operations and issues (4-15 [0])
- Prioritize program cost share funds to 303(d) critical areas (target up to 50% of program cost share funds in critical areas of watersheds with 303(d) listed water bodies.) **(4-27 [2])**
- Document program effectiveness (practice effectiveness) through field monitoring and modeling (increase funding for edge of field water quality modeling and monitoring so we can ID measure success of practices. Also fits in with marketing) **(4-29 [4])**

Set #2 – Use of Technology Tools

- Develop and use a common set of IT tools (NRCS, UM-system/Ag Extension, MDC, SWCP) **(1-2 [4])**; Adopt NRCS mapping tool or create an interface to that tool **(2-6 [4])**; Integrate mapping system with USDA (NRCS)**(3-15 [1])**
- Use available technology for communication i.e. such as ITV and internet meetings **(2-15 [1])**; Better use of existing communication technologies **(3-14 [1])**; Increase efficiency by using conference calls and videoconferencing to reduce travel (4-20 [0])

- Improve methods for preparing meeting minutes through use of voice recognition software and other new technologies (4-19 [0])
- Convert delivery of newsletter to email/web (2-22 [2]); Utilize electronic and printed newsletter and social media to improve regular communication with districts (value in doing electronic newsletters, but audience can be folks who don't necessarily use electronic communications – in past could send to every supervisor in their mailbox – paper communication. Don't lose the paper copies altogether (4-21 [0])
- Give all staff the ability to scan and email documents (4-10 [0])
- Provide intranet opportunity for districts to share Info-Ed activities (4-5 [0])

Set #3 Coordination and Communication with Partners External to the Department

- Improve coordination so assistance is complementary, not competitive (1-3 [4]); Investigate opportunity to leverage funds for more technical assistance (1-25 [3]); Remove 75% cap when combining with other agencies to reach more landowners (2-24 [1]); Develop and implement strategies to improve cooperation and coordination with state and federal partners (3-26 [1])
- Learn from partners' strengths to strengthen this program (3-27 [0])
- Coordinate professional services with agency partners (1-10 [0]); Establish interagency working groups that include staff to address common issues (4-22 [1])
- [DNR] Communicate more with boards and supervisors (1-11 [4]); Improve communication and coordination with all the partners (1-12 [0]); Upper management hold two meetings a year with district supervisors and employees and separately with district employees using available technologies (2-13 [1]); Treat all within the program and partners of the program with respect and professionalism, valuing them (2-16 [1]); Program supervisors and managers need to travel to districts more often (2-17 [1])
- More efficiently buy and distribute materials to the Districts (1-4 [2])
- Create clear policy documents and share them publicly (program policy) (1-17[1])

Set #4 - Training

- Coordinate professional development with agency partners (NRCS, MU extension, etc.) (1-9 [3]); Improve and coordinate comprehensive training for department and district staff (includes certification) (1-13 [6]); Construct training and orientation program for district supervisors, district employees and district coordinator hosted by the program (2-5 [7]); Develop a standardized training for district board members and employees (3-1 [1]); Develop certification process to ensure district staff have the knowledge and skills to meet landowner needs (3-2 [2]); Greater consistency in district coordinator skills and duties (3-19 [6]); Promote cross-training of staff (3-20 [1]); Develop and train all program staff on the basic knowledge base related to program operations (3-21 [0]); Continue offering professional development opportunities to district employees and consider adding a compensation package (4-3 [0]); Develop effective policy training for program and district staff to improve consistency (4-7 [0])
- Create a contractor certification program (1-14 [2]);
- Create and maintain a district supervisor handbook (1-16 [2])

Set #5 – Funding

- Provide greater flexibility to move cost share funds (1-5 [5]); Provide greater flexibility between resource concerns (2-29 [1])

- Investigate opportunity to leverage funds for more technical assistance **(1-25 [3])**; Promote implementation of suites of conservation practices through additional incentive payments **(4-28 [1])**
- Provide incentives for districts reaching new land owners **(2-23[2])**
- Go back to paying actual cost on cost-share practices **(3-18 [1])**
- Set aside portion of funds to leverage federal grants and funding **(4-31 [0])**
- Create cost share liaison position with other agencies **(4-32 [0])**

Set #6 – Practices

- Evaluate the current system of contractor layout **(1-15 [1])**
- Continue to consider new practices [in agriculture, wildlife habitat, timber resources, rising prices] **(1-22 [0])**
- Reevaluate the pre-approval process for well-performing districts [the need for pre-approval] **(1-23 [1])**
- Do practice reviews annually and allow one year to complete **(2-1 [5])**
- Quicker transition to field reviews of all practices **(2-2 [0])**
- Review all contracts before board approval **(2-27 [0])**
- Eliminate per acre limit on DSP-3 practices **(2-28 [0])**
- Create a form to assess completion of DSP-3 practice per 528 specs **(2-30 [1])**; Create a process to verify that DSP-3 is complete in 3 years to spec **(3-32 [0])**
- Require a copy of deed to participate in cost share **(2-31 [2])**

Set #7 – Performance Evaluations

- Provide opportunity for partners to evaluate department staff **(1-7 [0])**
- Provide district performance data to the public **(2-3 [0])**
- Inform board supervisors of district employees performance **(2-4 [1])**
- Measure outcomes from district info/education programs **(2-23 [0])**
- Make Tech II test more rigorous and eliminate open book **(2-32 [1])**
- Reviews need to be done by someone other than the coordinator **(3-6 [0])**
- Involve coordinators in district employee performance evaluation **(3-7 [0])**
- Require supervisors involvement in board meetings with all staff i.e. training, performance **(3-8 [0])**

Set #8 – Correspondence

- Define a more timely response process for correspondence **(2-25 [3])**; Streamline the correspondence process **(3-16 [3])**; Streamline correspondence review and approval process to improve turn around **(4-11 [2])**

Set #9 – Audits

- Follow through with Audit recommendations **(1-18 [4])**
- Have in-house auditors spot-check quarterly reports **(1-19 [1])**

- Review and develop new strategy for auditing districts using program office staff (financial, grant usage, cost-share, practice implementation, district policies) **(3-4 [1])**; Create internal audit team with program employees to reduce cost by eliminating audit contractors (4-16 [0])
- Hold districts accountable with or without audit findings(3-5 [0])

Set #10 – Elections

- Simplify current election policy to reduce cost. (1-20 [0])
- All election expenses should come from one fund (3-23 [0])

Set #11- Program Structure

- Add more district coordinators and move to field offices (2-7 [0])
- Consolidate district offices **(2-8 [1])**; Consolidate district offices **(3-22 [3])**; Consolidate district offices to increase operational efficiencies (4-2 [0])
- Make district staff state employees **(2-9 [3])**; Change district employees to state employees **(3-17 [6])**; Make district employees state employees to improve retention, accountability, and address communication and payroll issues and ensure Commission policies are implemented **(4-1 [7]) (Editor’s Note: Please see comments on this topic above)**
- Assign SWCP to a division for better support **(2-10 [3])**
- Move district grants to district operations section (2-11 [0])
- Reduce layers of program management **(2-12 [5])**; Evaluate the organizational structure of the program office **(3-9 [6])**; Restructure organization so that both environmental manager band II positions report to the program director to eliminate bottlenecks **(4-17 [6])**

Set #12 Operations

- Have a designated district operations employee on duty at all times (8am-5pm) **(2-18 [2])**
- Listen to program staff needs for equipment (2-19 [0])
- Mandatory use of “Where are you” **(2-26 [1])**
- Clarify support staff duties (3-3 [0])
- Maximize use of current staff talents **(3-10 [2])**; Improve staff utilization to maximize efficiently and to distribute workload evenly (4-9 [0])
- Improve program communication internally **(3-11 [1])**
- Improve program delivery system to reduce inequities to landowners **(3-24 [1])**
- Develop SOPs and ensure implementation and accountability (4-8 [0])
- Improve program efficiency by empowering staff in decision making. (Management needs to establish boundaries to allow staff to implement. Need to have folks make a decision – it can take up to two weeks to get an answer and then it is too late. They need decisions made faster) **(4-12 [2])**
- Utilize our chain of command (relates to setting boundaries – even though we said to empower staff – there are routine correspondence responses – empower section chief, etc... just to respond to some stuff for the same letter – but boundaries can be established at different levels) **(4-14 [1])**
- Support willing participation by staff participation at program and department-sponsored events (State Fair, Earth Day, Envirothon, program and department events) (4-25 [0])

- Improve communication between sections and from management to staff **(4-26 [7])**
- Clarify current cost share policy (eliminate grey areas of cost share policy to reduce confusion between coordinators, techs, and landowners) **(4-30 [1])**

Set #13 - Miscellaneous

- Ensure district coordinators have an Agricultural background **(1-8 [1])**
- Create and implement policy for non-competition [with businesses] as in statute **(1-21 [3])**
- Program staff need fewer meetings (2-14 [0])
- Directly contract with MASWCD for deliverables and eliminate districts paying MASWCD fees **(4-4 [1])**
- Develop a speaker directory for the program (kids and adults, topics they can talk about, etc.) (4-23 [0])
- Develop a library of Info-Education and marketing resources (need a list of stuff that is available to all of us) (4-24 [0])

Appendix A

Full set of Ideas from Participants by Session

Session #1 – External Stakeholders

1. Strategic Planning for Sales Tax renewal (keep mission in mind) [and for other proposals and districts] (7)
2. Develop and use a common set of IT tools (NRCS, UM-system/Ag Extension, MDC, SWCP) (4)
3. Improve coordination so assistance is complementary, not competitive (4)
4. More efficiently buy and distribute materials to the Districts (2)
5. Provide greater flexibility to move cost share funds (5)
6. Advertise and promote the program (4)
7. Provide opportunity for partners to evaluate department staff (0)
8. Ensure district coordinators have an agricultural background (1)
9. Coordinate professional development with agency partners. (NRCS, MU Ext, etc.) (3)
10. Coordinate professional services with agency partners (0)
11. [DNR] Communicate more with boards and supervisors (4)
12. Improve communication and coordination with all the partners (0)
13. Improve and coordinate comprehensive training for department and district staff (includes certification) (6)
14. Create a contractor certification program (2)
15. Evaluate the current system of contractor layout (1)
16. Create and maintain a district supervisor handbook (2)
17. Create clear policy documents and share them publicly (program policy) (1)
18. Follow through with Audit recommendations (4)
19. Have in-house auditors spot-check quarterly reports (1)
20. Simplify current election policy to reduce cost (0)
21. Create and implement policy for non-competition [w/ businesses] as in statute (3)
22. Continue to consider new practices [in agriculture, wildlife habitat, timber resources, rising prices] (0)
23. Reevaluate the pre-approval process for well-performing districts [the need for pre-approval] (1)
24. Develop strategy to evaluate land coming out of CRP, CSP and other programs (0)
25. Investigate opportunity to leverage funds for more technical assistance (3)
26. Consider expending resources to expand water quantity needs (dams, impoundments, etc.) (1)

Session # 2

1. Do practice reviews annually and allow 1 year to complete (5)
2. Quicker transition to field reviews of all practices (0)
3. Provide district performance data to the public (0)
4. Inform board supervisors of district employees performance (1)
5. Construct training and orientation program for district supervisors, district employees and district coordinator hosted by the programs (7)
6. Adopt NRCS mapping tool or create an interface to that tool (4)
7. Add more district coordinators and move to field offices (0)
8. Consolidate district offices (1)
9. Make district staff state employees (3)
10. Assign SWCP to a division for better support (3)

11. Move district grants to district operations section (0)
12. Reduce layers of program management (5)
13. Upper management hold two meetings a year with district supervisors and employees and separately with district employees using available technologies (1)
14. Program staff need fewer meetings (0)
15. Use available technology for communication i.e. ITV and internet meetings (1)
16. Treat all within the program and partners of the program with respect and professionalism, valuing them (1)
17. Program supervisors and managers need to travel to districts more often (1)
18. Have a designated district operations employee on duty at all times (8am-5pm) (2)
19. Listen to program staff needs for equipment (0)
20. Provide incentives for districts reaching new landowners (2)
21. Focus marketing on landowners taxpayers rather than info/education (1)
22. Convert delivery of newsletter to email/web (2)
23. Measure outcomes from district info/education programs (0)
24. Remove 75% cap when combining with other agencies to reach more landowners (1)
25. Define a more timely response process for correspondence (3)
26. Mandatory use of "Where are you" (1)
27. Review all contracts before board approval (0)
28. Eliminate per acre limit on DSP-3 practices (0)
29. Provide greater flexibility between resource concerns (1)
30. Create a form to assess completion of DSP-3 practice per 528 specs (1)
31. Require a copy of deed to participate in cost share (2)
32. Make Tech II test more rigorous and eliminate open book (1)

Session #3

1. Develop a standardized training for district board members and employees [1]
2. Develop certification process to ensure district staff have the knowledge and skills to meet landowner needs [2]
3. Clarify support staff duties [0]
4. Review and develop new strategy for auditing districts using program office staff (financial, grant usage, cost-share, practice implementation, district policies) [1]
5. Hold districts accountable with or without audit findings [0]
6. Reviews need to be done by someone other than the coordinator [0]
7. Involve coordinators in district employee performance evaluation [0]
8. Require supervisors involvement in board meetings with all staff i.e. training, performance [0]
9. Evaluate the organizational structure of the program office [6]
10. Maximize use of current staff talents [2]
11. Improve program communication internally [1]
12. Better promote program awareness and accomplishments on a continuous basis [3]
13. Redirect info/education funding and reconsider target audience [3]
14. Better use of existing communication technologies [1]
15. Integrate mapping system with USDA (NRCS) [1]
16. Streamline the correspondence process [3]
17. Change district employees to state employees [6]

18. Go back to paying actual cost on cost-share practices [1]
19. Greater consistency in district coordinator skills and duties [6]
20. Promote cross-training of staff [1]
21. Develop and train all program staff on the basic knowledge base related to program operations[0]
22. Consolidate district offices [3]
23. All election expenses should come from one fund [0]
24. Improve program delivery system to reduce inequities to landowners [1]
25. Coordinated evaluation of program progress and success for planning and marketing efforts [2]
26. Develop and implement strategies to improve cooperation and coordination with state and federal partners [1]
27. Learn from partners' strengths to strengthen this program [0]
28. Create a process to verify that DSP-3 is complete in 3 years to spec [0]

Session #4

1. Make district employees state employees to improve retention, accountability, and address communication and payroll issues and ensure Commission policies are implemented (7)
2. Consolidate district offices to increase operational efficiencies (0)
3. Continue offering professional development opportunities to district employees and consider adding a compensation package (0)
4. Directly contract with MASWCD for deliverables and eliminate districts paying MASWCD fees (1)
5. Provide intranet opportunity for districts to share Info-Education activities (0)
6. Improve CMT system to make maps and contractor approval more accurate (0)
7. Develop effective policy training for program and district staff to improve consistency (4)
8. Develop SOPs and ensure implementation and accountability (0)
9. Improve staff utilization to maximize efficiently and to distribute workload evenly (0)
10. Give all staff the ability to scan and email documents (0)
11. Streamline correspondence review and approval process to improve turn-around (2)
12. Improve program efficiency by empowering staff in decision making. (Management needs to establish boundaries to allow staff to implement. Need to have folks make a decision – it can take up to two weeks to get an answer and then it is too late. They need decisions made faster) (2)
13. Develop a Strategic Plan for the program utilizing staff input with realistic and measurable objectives. (Provide direction for program director, who could communicate to staff and follow through with it. Have strategic plan from years ago – but should add that we should set goals that are achievable – set realistic objectives and goals; need to take program staff's input into consideration – and actually use the Strategic Plan to drive decision making. Needs to be measurable) (0)
14. Utilize our chain of command (relates to setting boundaries – even though we said to empower staff – there are routine correspondence responses – empower section chief, etc... just to respond to some stuff for the same letter – but boundaries can be established at different levels) (1)
15. Revise regulations (CSR) to reflect current program operations and issues.(0)
16. Create internal audit team with program employees to reduce cost by eliminating audit contractors. (0)
17. Restructure organization so that both Environmental Manager Band II positions report to the program director to eliminate bottlenecks (6)
18. Develop comprehensive marketing program to increase taxpayer awareness and improve landowner awareness (6)

19. Improve methods for preparing meeting minutes through use of voice recognition software and other new technologies (0)
20. Increase efficiency by using conference calls and videoconferencing to reduce travel (0)
21. Utilize electronic and printed newsletter and social media to improve regular communication with districts (value in doing electronic newsletters, but audience can be folks who don't necessarily use electronic communications – in past could send to every supervisor in their mailbox – paper communication). Don't lose the paper copies all together (0)
22. Establish interagency working groups that include staff to address common issues (1)
23. Develop a speaker directory for the program (kids and adults, topics they can talk about, etc.) (0)
24. Develop a library of Info-Education and marketing resources (need a list of stuff that is available to all of us) (0)
25. Support willing participation by staff at program and department-sponsored events (State Fair, Earth Day, Envirothon, program and department events) (0)
26. Improve communication between sections and from management to staff (7)
27. Prioritize program cost share funds to 303(d) critical areas (target up to 50% of program cost share funds in critical areas of watersheds with 303(d) listed water bodies.) (2)
28. Promote implementation of suites of conservation practices through additional incentive payments (1)
29. Document program effectiveness (practice effectiveness) through field monitoring and modeling (increase funding for edge of field water quality modeling and monitoring so we can ID measure success of practices. Also fits in with marketing) (4)
30. Clarify current cost share policy (eliminate grey areas of cost share policy to reduce confusion between coordinators, techs, and landowners) (1)
31. Set aside portion of funds to leverage federal grants and funding (0)
32. Create cost share liaison position with other agencies (0)

Appendix B Participants by Session

Session 1: External Stakeholders

Dave Baker
Kathryn Braden
Thomas Bradley
Clint Dalbom
JR Flores
Richard Fordyce
Judy Grundler

Sandy Hutchison
Jeff Lance
Steve Radcliff
Kelly Smith
Gary Vandavelde
Gary Vandiver

Session 2:

Milt Barr
Donna Clark
Allan Clarke
Kerry Cordray
Jesse Higginbotham

Katy Holmer
Jennifer Pellett
Jeremy Redden
Alice Schultz
Leon Thompson

Session 3:

Jim Boschert
Patty Chapman
Jeremia Markway
Christa Moody
Jim Plassmeyer

Josh Poynor
Cody Tebbenkamp
Collette Weckenborg
Bill Wilson

Session 4:

Lori Bax
Kurt Boeckman
April Brandt
Matt Elliott
Alan Freeman

Charlie Hansen
Judy Stimson
Ken Struempf
Steve Walker

