

Sandhills Task Force

"Where the people and land are one"

P.O. Box 787

Wood Lake, NE 69221

Next Task Force Meeting:

The next Task Force meeting is on Wednesday, May 18th at Thedford. The meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Cowpoke Bar.

Agenda Items:

9:30 Meeting called to order

- Introductions
- Approval of minutes
- Financial report (Barb Cooksley)
- Audit Update
- Project Coordinator update (Van Winkle)
 - Legacy Innovation Grant Project
 - FRPP / NETF Report
 - Environmental Review / Permitting
- VFD Award Program
- Discuss and fill board vacancies

12:00 Lunch

- Website expansion / update (Graham)
- NETF funding options
 - Two pending easements projects
 - Project funding for 2012
- Update on recent meetings with Heather Johnson / Matt Hogan / Partners Strategic Planning

3:30 Adjourn

NETF revaluating Grant County Conservation Easement.

In April, the STF received notice that the application to fund a Grant County Conservation Easement was unsuccessful. Jim has since been notified that potential funding may exist. The NETF board will review the project and make a decision regarding the available funding at the July NET board meeting.

STF awarded \$15,000 from Legacy Innovation Grant Committee.

The STF submitted an application for the "Upper Niobrara Riparian Restoration Project" in March of 2011. The granting committee approved the project which will consist of fencing and the establishment of riparian vegetation along Box Butte Creek and the Upper Niobrara River. Project work is expected to begin on May 16.

May 2011

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RC&D directs funds to VFD Award Project.

North Central RC&D board recently contributed \$4,000 to help support the STF VFD Award program. Sandhills VFD's continue to show increasing interest in assisting landowners use fire on privately owned lands.

Board Vacancies

RC&D has been defunded at the national level, potentially limiting future involvement with the STF. Additional board vacancies needing to be filled include, Rob Ravenscroft's (Rancher) position, and Gene Mack's (USFWS) board position, created by Gene's retirement.

FRPP application approved, but not confirmed.

The FRPP funding requests for Nebraska exceeded the available funds for 2011. A request has been sent to the National NRCS office for additional funds. It is expected that the status of the STF application will be known by our Thedford meeting date.

Leopold Award Update.

Jim participated in the judging process for the statewide Leopold Award held at Nebraska Cattlemen's headquarters in Lincoln. The STF has contributed \$3,000 in 2010 and 2011 in support of the monetary award. STF board member Ted LaGrange attended the Governor's Award Ceremony at the State Capital on Earth Day.

Jim Van Winkle attends several partnership building meetings and tours.

Jim attended meetings throughout the state ranging from expanding partnerships to streamlining the permitting and environmental review process. Barb Cooksley, Mike Kelly and Jim recently met with FWS Partners Coordinator Heather Johnson and discussed potential funding options for the STF.



Prescribed fire conducted by Cody VFD on Timmerman Ranch