

The Steering Committee met 6/28/2023, completing these significant actions:

- Revised Operations Plan expanded our Delivery Area for flexibility;
- Outlined a process for a new Strategic Plan and priority habitat model;
- Recognized the 2-year leadership of Chair Andy McCrady;
- Transition of Vice Chair to Chair Reuben Gay;
- Approved the top 30 scored project proposals to develop HIP agreements;
- Offered idea of consolidation of the Red, Sulphur, and Big Cypress watershed work groups;
- Expanded Steering Committee Membership from 9 to 11; and
- Formally designated Alternates for SC members.

Our NETX CDN future will be better served by these adjustments, making for better successional planning, and improving our business discussions on touchy subjects. Case in point: there were 63 proposals to review, with funding to service only 20-30 projects. The SC also directed considerations to diversify our conservation efforts through the ad-hoc Watershed Work Group; engaging Texan by Nature's TX Water Action Collaborative; Julia Schmidt, from TX A&M Forest Service's Partnership for Forest and Water, attended the entire meeting and offered insight during discussions. Participation in the ad-hoc Watershed Group has been significant through the leadership of Robert Speight, NE Texas Municipal Water District, daylighting other watershed efforts with CLI. A recommendation by the Watershed Group is a proposal to merge our Red, Sulphur, and Cypress Work Groups. This proposal will be discussed further by the Steering Committee, and will be offered for formal approval in the future.

**Mark your calendars for September 13** – Boggy Slough Conservation Area CDN Membership Field Day.

Homework Questions – As discussed, we also want to ask you to ponder the questions and points raised yesterday, as follows below. Responses will soon be formally requested (perhaps in some other format) from those who participated in the discussion. We will summarize the responses, and convene a virtual meeting later this Summer or early Fall to review and agree on guidance for future RFPs.

**Questions raised, and options discussed, to deal with future project submissions:**

- Should we reduce \$40,000 project Cap (consider previous \$20,000 Cap)?
- Will the "Cap" extend to 1 ownership? Landowners; limit multiple properties/projects?
  - Landowner [LLC, Company] cannot submit multiple projects at "Cap".
- Do we restrict applications for landowners with open projects?
  - Extended or open projects could be considered ineligible for new project funds.
- Will future RFPs focus funding for initial treatment only?
  - HIP projects are short-term, and would not be longer than 18-month projects.
  - Focus for RFP would be for projects to be completed within 12-18 months.
- Do we allow negotiated payment (lower) rates for proposals at "Cap" \$20-40k?
- ID alternative funding incentive options for low-scoring and/or small ownerships.
  - Consider alternatives funds, develop process for options (meet with NRCS DC).
- Alternative Options for projects outside priority.
- Re-visit Scoring Criteria (motivate scoring for priority practices, i.e. points for Fire 10 - Chemical 5 - Mechanical 0); reduce mulching-mechanical rate?
- Re-evaluate Priority Habitat Model and extend to all East TX Counties (in progress).
- Develop formal notification to unselected projects, with suggestions to PM and Landowner on how to improve proposals.
- What constitutes an established conservation area (conservation estate) when scoring?