

On February 20th Curtis Elke, Idaho's NRCS State Conservationist, met with the board of supervisors of the Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (VSWCD) regarding the letter sent by the board to Sen. Crapo, Sen. Risch and Rep. Fulcher opposing the NRCS consolidation of their offices across the state.

Curtis addressed the myriad reasons why his consolidation proposal makes sense and is the right thing to do. He acknowledged the VSWCD concern that NRCS services to Valley County might be impacted by having the district conservationist stationed in Emmett serving a larger geographical area should the consolidation proposal be implemented. The district conservationist currently serves Gem, Boise and Valley counties; following the proposed consolidation Adams and Washington counties would be added. He argued that field going staff would "ultimately" be added so that there would be one Team Leader (currently the district conservationist) and 5 field going staff.

Curtis further outlined various actions being planned in response to pressing questions from the VSWCD supervisors:

- NRCS will be adding a forester to staff to work more closely with US Forest Service on private forested lands
- NRCS will be adding a water quality specialist to staff
- on request, NRCS engineering assistance is available to the VSWCD
- the VSWCD will have the opportunity to review a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NRCS, the Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the states' conservation districts within the next 30 days
- within the next 6 months NRCS will pursue an MOA with US Forest Service
- within the next 6 months NRCS will pursue an MOA with Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality

The meeting was cordial but skepticism remains at the VSWCD. Curtis acknowledged the feeling. In closing, he said he would be looking into other "scenarios" for the district.