

A Local Working Group that provides advice on the priorities for many U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs will meet June 6 at 10 a.m. at the Upper Republican Natural Resources District in Imperial. The meeting will be in the board room.

The public is encouraged to attend and express their natural resource concerns. Ideas generated from the public will help the U.S. Department of Agriculture tailor its natural resource programs to meet the needs identified locally.

There is a Local Working Group in each Natural Resources District (NRD). Membership on the Local Working Group includes federal, state, county, tribal or local government representatives, according to Andy Keep, District Conservationist, for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), whose agency guides the Local Working Group.

“The Local Working Group recommends to the NRCS State Conservationist how conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) would be used most effectively in their area.

“These recommendations can include special target areas, cost share rates on conservation programs, which conservation practices should have cost assistance, or how many dollars could be needed,” said Keep.

This work group allows local input into how federal dollars are spent, he said.

For example, in 2012, over \$75 million were committed to farmers and ranchers statewide through NRCS conservation programs. These programs helped landowners and operators make natural resource improvements to their land, water or wildlife. This funding was allocated according to the priorities set by the Local Working Groups.

For more information about the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the programs and services they provide, visit the local USDA Service Center or www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.