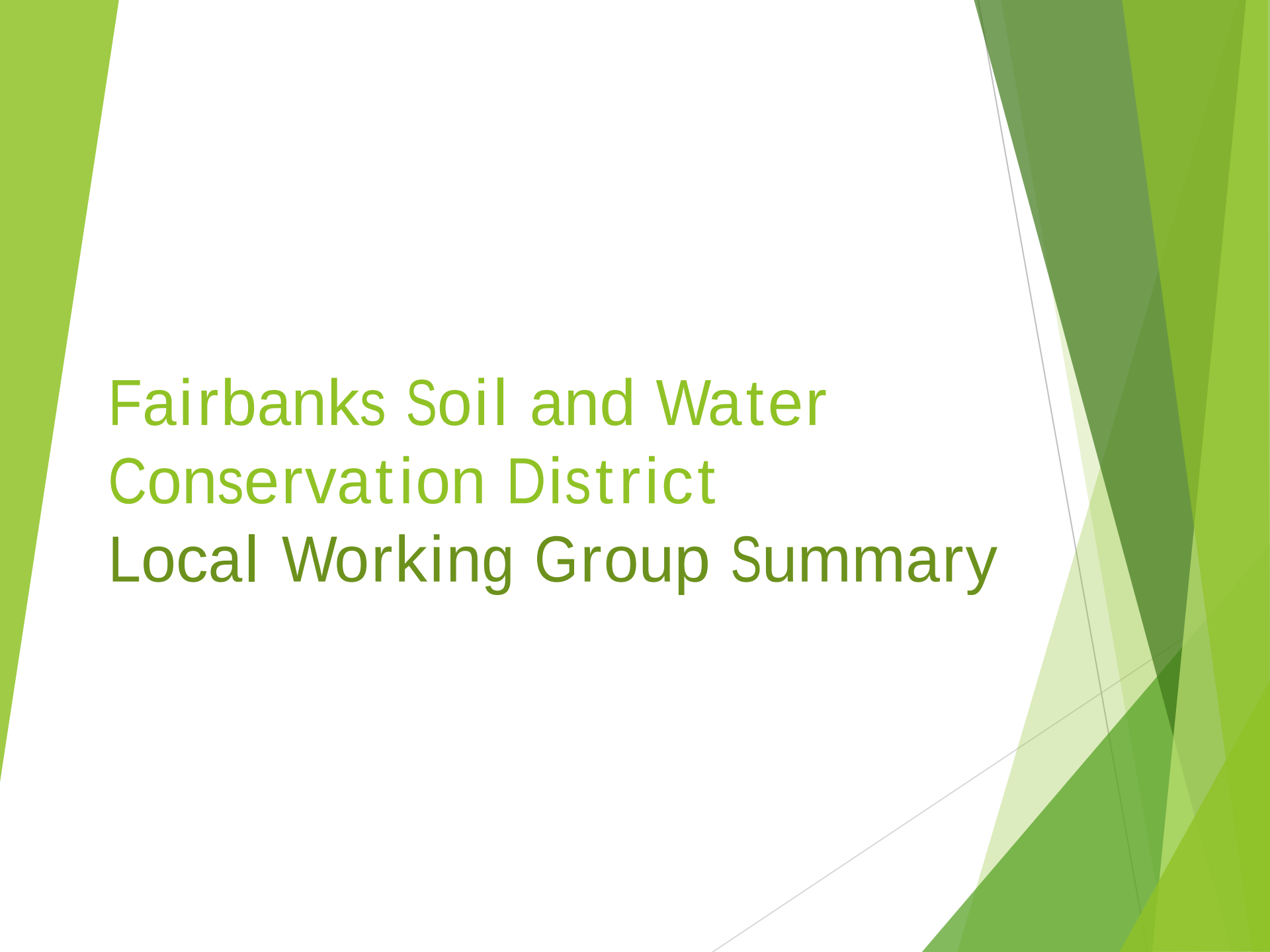


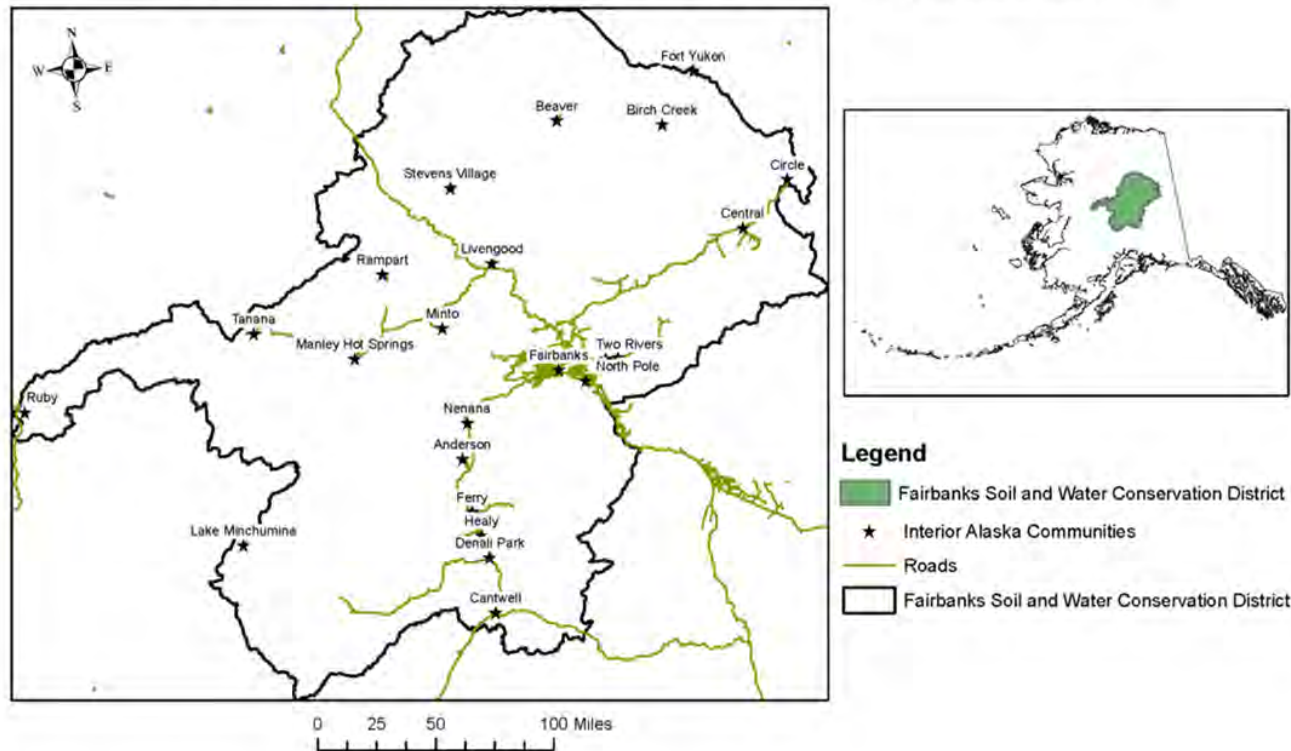
The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District Local Working Group Summary

Background

- ▶ Local Working Group has not been held in Fairbanks by FSWCD or NRCS consistently
- ▶ Last meeting in Fairbanks was held in 2021
- ▶ Starting 'from scratch'

Location of Communities Within Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District



Goals of Our Local Working Group

- ▶ Agricultural producers were our main focus this year
- ▶ Natural resource concerns
- ▶ Conservation priorities
- ▶ Establish contacts to build on for next year to expand LWG purpose and scope

Outreach

- ▶ Two meetings offered, in-person and on Zoom
- ▶ Conservation Priorities in Your Community Survey
- ▶ Multiple invitations were sent by email, announcements were posted on FSWCD social media, and posted on NRCS website, newsletter

Agricultural producers, FSWCD cooperators

Environmental agencies

University staff and cooperative extension

Federal, state, borough, Tribal, and local government representatives

Attendance in-person: 5

Attendance online: 1

Survey responses: 31

Summary of Natural Resource Concerns

1. **Water quality-** petroleum, heavy metals, and other pollutants transported to groundwater and surface water
2. **Soil organic matter depletion**
3. **Fire management-** wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation
4. **Habitat for fish and wildlife-** salmon, pollinator species, and subsistence hunting
5. **Excess water-** ponding and flooding
6. **Plant pest pressure**

Water Quality

- ▶ PFAS/PFOS were the main concern
- ▶ Arsenic, iron, heavy metals, and microplastics were also identified
- ▶ Financial assistance was a main point brought up since most filtration systems are cost-prohibitive

Recommended action- Identify programs that offer financial assistance for water filtration systems.

Aeration to precipitate iron and arsenic out of the water, the use of greensand filters to remove iron

Soil Organic Matter Depletion

1. Land clearing practices on new agricultural developments
 - Bulldozing is most cost-effective, but removes topsoil
2. Identifying and improving availability of new sources of organic matter
 - Not enough compost available to small-scale producers
 - Not many sources of organic matter in and around Fairbanks

Recommended action-

1. Explore new land-clearing practices that preserve topsoil
2. Biochar testing and guideline development

Fire Management

- ▶ Spruce bark beetle moving north
- ▶ Spruce bark beetle kill, removal of dead and dying trees for fire prevention, and creating defensible space around homes and cabins
- ▶ Beetle-kill will increase wildfire risk in our forests

Recommended action- Financial assistance to clear dead and dying trees from spruce bark beetle kill

- ▶ One idea presented is to create a program to remove trees, turn them into usable firewood to be sold and burned within the harvest area; root wads could be available for use in stream restoration programs.

Habitat for Fish and Wildlife

- ▶ In our survey, wildlife habitat was ranked as 2nd most important conservation priority
- ▶ Aquatic habitat for salmon
- ▶ Terrestrial habitat for pollinator species and subsistence hunting

Recommended action- Preserve and increase important pollinator habitat and wildlife habitat that supports subsistence species like moose and caribou and aquatic habitat that supports salmon populations.

Excess Water

- ▶ Increased rainfall in summer and fall months
- ▶ Fairbanks area is projected to receive 2x average rainfall by 2050
- ▶ Culverts may not be meeting water flow needs in new development areas, such as Nenana-Totchaket Agriculture Project area

Recommended action- ensure culverts in new developments and roads are built to standards for current and expected water flow. Replace culverts found to be restricting water flow.

Plant Pest Pressure

Invasive species

- ▶ Thrips (peonies)
- ▶ Bird vetch
- ▶ Spruce bark beetle
- ▶ Elodea

Recommended action- Continue to detect new infestations early. Education and outreach for public on invasive species in our area to help efforts of early detection and control.

Additional Feedback and Input for NRCS from Participants

- ▶ NRCS is not well-known
- ▶ 7 of 31 survey-takers indicated they had never heard of the NRCS
- ▶ Feels less approachable to producers as an agency, it is more difficult to go into the office and ask questions and make personal connections
- ▶ Feel there is less technical/information assistance available than in the past

Conclusion

We recommend focusing on programs or conservation practices that

- preserve or improve water quality
- identify new sources of organic matter
- focus forestry management on preparing for spruce bark beetle infestations and increased fire risk
- ensure new developments/roads have sufficient drainage
- detect invasive species infestations early

Our focus will be on reaching more participants in outlying communities and more NRCS program participants to take part in our meeting next year.

Questions?