



Setting Up the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

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What is it?

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is a team of professionals who conduct resource inventories, evaluate the inventory data, and suggest management strategies that may meet the objectives identified by the Planning Committee.

When do we do it?

After the Planning Committee has identified their resource concerns and objectives during Steps 1 and 2, they can begin putting together a TAC.

How do we do it?

With assistance from NRCS-SWCD, the Planning Committee can identify possible TAC members by reviewing their list of the resource concerns and naming one or more individuals who have expertise in these areas. Typically, TAC members are drawn from local government, non-profit and private organizations, and state and federal agencies. Appropriate individuals are those who have experience with the resource issues and the willingness to assist with the planning effort. Local experts are particularly valuable because they have intimate knowledge of the project setting. Some Planning Committee members with expertise in the issues may wish to also serve on the TAC. The following are some of the organizations that may contribute TAC members.

Local Organizations

- Soil and Water Conservation District
- Planning and zoning office
- County Board
- Business and industrial groups
- Public works departments
- Financial Institutions
- Neighborhood & Homeowners Assc.
- Non-Profits

State Government

- University Cooperative Extension
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Natural Resources
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Commerce/Community Affairs

Federal Government

- USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA-Farm Service Agency
- USDA-Rural Development
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Army Corps of Engineers

Once people are identified, they should be personally contacted to ask if they are interested in serving as a technical advisor during the planning. Briefly describe the planning project and why technical advisors are needed. Follow this initial phone call with a formal letter of invitation on Soil and Water Conservation District or other organizational stationary. The letter typically states the nature of the problems motivating the planning project and the time, date, and place of the first

TAC meeting. The letter should be signed by the Planning Committee chairperson and sponsoring organizations, such as the SWCD.

Those invited to participate on the TAC have an initial meeting where they learn about the planning process, the resource concerns, and their role in the project. During this meeting NRCS or SWCD staff familiar with resource planning (for example, the Resource Planning Specialist or District Conservationist) can explain the TAC role in inventorying, evaluating, developing management strategies, and in some instances assisting with implementation. The first TAC meeting can be attended by the entire Planning Committee, to give the Planning Committee and TAC an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss the issues. The Chair of the Planning Committee should lead the first meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee. The NRCS District Conservationist and a SWCD representative should also be present.

Technical Advisory Committee members usually complete their work individually or as small teams, and periodically report results back to the entire TAC. To guide their work, the TAC may want to write a "Plan of Operations". This document spells out the resource concerns each TAC member (or team of TAC members) will work on, the various "Action Items" needing to be addressed during inventory and evaluation, and the anticipated completion dates. NRCS or SWCD staff can help the TAC write their work plan.

Sometime during the first couple TAC meetings, a Chair for the TAC should be named. The TAC Chair will coordinate the TAC activities, work closely with the Planning Committee Chair, and help facilitate communication among everyone involved in the planning project.

Communication is also enhanced by having NRCS/SWCD staff serve in a liaison role. The NRCS District Conservationist is well suited for this position as they have helped develop the Planning Committee at the outset and are usually part of the Technical Advisory Committee. An SWCD staff person or Board member is also good for this position. Between meetings, the liaison helps the Planning Committee and TAC Chairs relay problems, results and questions. Using phone, letters, or e-mail reduces the need during inventory and evaluation work for meetings of the entire TAC.

The Next Step

Once the Technical Advisory Committee is organized, they will begin collecting data about conditions in the planning area. The factsheet, "Conducting Resource Inventories" gives more information about inventorying.

