

**Fact Sheet:**

**Nebraska State Technical Committee**

December 2009

**Overview**

The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorizes the State Technical Committee to provide recommendations for establishing technical guidelines, program criteria and priorities to carry out conservation provisions of the Farm Bill. The 1996 and 2008 Farm Bills slightly changed the committee membership. All meetings are open to the public.

**Role of the Committee**

The State Technical Committee's role is to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to the NRCS State Conservationist on issues related to Farm Bill conservation legislation. It is purely an advisory committee that allows the State Conservationist to seek the advice, ideas and recommendations from those with an interest in natural resource management.

As various tasks occur, members may organize into sub-committees to provide NRCS more detailed information. For example, there are a sub-committee on buffer strips, establishing program ranking criteria, conservation practices and cost share rates and others.

Other program issues that may be addressed include, but not limited to, are:

- State program management policies and procedures;
- Technical programmatic recommendations;
- Statewide public information and outreach campaigns;
- Identifying significant statewide natural resource concerns;
- Guidelines for developing ranking criteria for evaluating applications;
- Guidance on eligible conservation practices;
- Technical guidance on conservation practices, including new, innovative practices;
- Cost-share rates and incentive payment limits and methods of payment;

- Identifying, monitoring and analyzing performance indicators;
- Evaluating and reporting program impacts on natural resources and the environment; and
- Coordinating with other Federal, State, tribal, and local public and private activities.

**Who Are the Committee Members?**

Each State Conservationist is the chair of the State Committee and there is a nucleus of organizations that are required to be invited to participate. In Nebraska, the State Conservationist welcomes the participation of any organization or agencies desiring to participate.

State Technical Committees are composed of individuals who represent a variety of natural resource sciences and occupations. To participate on the Committee, individuals or groups may submit to the State Conservationist a request that explains their interest and outlines their natural resource credentials. Representatives on the committee may include:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service;
- Farm Service Agency;
- FSA State Committee;
- Extension;
- Forest Service;
- Each of the Tribal Governments;
- Nebraska Game & Parks Commission;
- Nebraska Forest Service;
- Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality;
- Nebraska Department of Agriculture;
- Nebraska Department of Natural Resources;
- Nebraska Association of Resources Districts and individual NRDs;
- Other agency personnel with expertise in soil, water, wetland and wildlife management;
- Agricultural producers with demonstrable conservation expertise;
- Non profit organizations with demonstrable conservation expertise;

- Persons knowledgeable about conservation techniques; and
- Agribusiness.

In Nebraska, that required nucleus is about 20 organizations. However, meeting notices are sent to about 180 people, some within the same organization.

***How do I find out about meetings?***

Meeting notices are published 7-10 days in the Sunday paper of the Omaha World-Herald. A letter is also sent to all committee members. Meetings are not scheduled but are rather at the call of the State Conservationist or other USDA agencies.

***Is there a way for me to be involved locally?***

Yes, you can express your natural resource concerns two ways. There is a “local working group” made up of various agencies, including NRCS, the natural resources district and others. You can express your comments at these locally set meetings. Or, you can express your concerns to the local natural resources district board of directors, who have responsibility for natural resources protection within their district.

***What are Local Working Groups?***

Local working groups are organized on NRD boundaries and are comprised of similar representation as the State Technical Committee. The local working group provides advice/recommendation to the NRCS District Conservationist or NRD representative serving as chair. The meetings are open discussion with a focus on identifying local natural resource concerns that can be treated with Farm Bill programs and activities. Local Working Groups, which may only meet annually, review State Technical Committee actions and priorities, and return their recommendations with the local input and/or priorities back to the State Technical Committee. The State Technical Committee will review these recommendations and develop the conservation programs, special initiatives, etc., for that year.

***How Can I Get More Information?***

Contact either the: State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 100 Centennial Mall N., Rm. 152, Lincoln NE., 68508-3866 or any local NRCS office listed in the telephone book under U.S. Government, U.S Department of Agriculture, or visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/StateTech/>.

