

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting*

* Final draft of these meeting minutes will be approved at the next STAC meeting

05/18/2022

Attendees

STAC Members:

U.S. Forest Service	Dirk Netz
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)	Dominique Etchegoyhen
Farm Service Agency (FSA)	Marilyn Jones
Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)	Ashley Jeppson
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP)	Birgit Widegren
Nevada Land Trust (NLT)	Alicia Reban
Nevada Department of Wildlife	Jasmine Kleiber
UNR Cooperative Extension Service (CABNR)	Dean Bill Payne
State Conservation Commission, Area 3 rep. (Conservation District of Southern Nevada)	Mark Damron

Known public in attendance:

Robin Peterson, Ely Shoshone Tribe
Elveda Martinez, Walker River Paiute Tribe
Brian Mason, Tribal Vice-Chairman, Shoshone Paiute Tribes
Abby Parker, Council Member, Shoshone Paiute Tribes
Pawan Upadhyay, Water Resources Director, Shoshone Paiute Tribes
Ross Rivera, Environmental Administrator for the Ely Shoshone Tribe
Reggie Premo, UNR Cooperative Extension

NRCS Employees:

Ray Dotson, State Conservationist
LaKeisha Barber, Acting ASTC for Management and Strategy
Dusty Jager, State Rangeland Specialist
Chris Rose, ASTC for Partnerships
Todd Allai, Acting ASTC for Field Ops
Jim Gifford, State Resource Conservationist
Mustapha Abouali, ASTC for Programs
Chris Bernau, Plant Materials Center Manager
Heather Emmons, Public Affairs Specialist

Introductions – Ray did roll call of STAC members and then other attendees. We'll have two updates and one important item the field brought up: having our locally led process start earlier in the year.

Chris Rose introduces himself as new ASTC for Partnerships and what his role is. He supervises three staff: Heather Emmons, PAS; John George, Tribal Liaison; and Kenneth Sowers, Outreach Coordinator. Chris shared his contact info.: christopher.rose@usda.gov; Cell: 775-386-7407; Office: 775-834-0890

Review of the minutes. No comments.

Ray discusses pests – talk of NRCS being able to assist with vermin, Mormon crickets, etc. We're still working through policy changes on this.

Locally Led Process – Mustapha Abouli - Handouts

Planning to roll this out this fiscal year. Input used for local ranking polls. We're trying to have consistency between field offices.

Goals of the Locally Led Process:

- Gather information that can be used to populate the ranking pools.
- Have a consistent locally led process.
- Finish Locally Led Meetings by August 31st to hold a STAC meeting early in the Fiscal Year (FY).
- Begin program implementation early in the FY.
- Finish ranking pools early in the FY.

We now have two Exhibits (A and B) to be used for ranking questions. Exhibit A – The Local Work Group will identify the 5 highest resource concern categories for the LWG area. Exhibit B is for additional input.

Ray: Opens the floor to public input or ideas. No input. We're standardizing our process. The LWGs are meeting and we're trying to follow policies. We're getting all types of information and inconsistencies when we're ranking applications with standard breaking points. Things are showing up repeatedly. Causes issues with us funding them. We're notorious for not being able to use first quarter money – whether because Congress hasn't given us money, but the field offices are saying if we can get them information quicker, they can obligate dollars faster, so we're not scrambling at the end of the fiscal year to get the dollars obligated.

Question from Mark: Jasmine would be leading these efforts (LWG)?

Ray: You all (Conservation Districts) would lead these efforts.

Question from Ashley: Looking at the document. The local offices hold the meeting – it's an open forum for the public to talk about these proposals and applications and go through the process?

Ray: Yes – just like what we're doing here at the STAC meeting, happens at the local level. Should be run by the conservation districts. Anyone who has anything to do with agricultural can sit down and discuss what the issues and opportunities are, as it relates to NRCS and its mission (or even others like BLM or NDA)– it's a solutions-oriented meeting.

Nevada Fence Policy – Mustapha Abouli – Fence Guidance Handout

NRCS Nevada will issue this guidance to the Field Offices in response to a change on Part 530 – Working Lands Conservation Programs Manual, specifically on section 530.403 EQIP Planning.

The example of ineligible fence or exterior fence (old language) was removed, which would imply that NRCS is currently paying for exterior fences. However, all other provisions listed below (new language) must be considered in addition to all applicable Nevada state, local, or other regulations as mentioned in contract appendix language "Obtain the authorities, permits, easements, or other approvals necessary for the implementation of the project" (APPENDIX TO FORM NRCS-CPA-1202).

The considerations are complicated, and there is no general instruction on exterior fences currently. As a result, NRCS NV will handle all exterior fence requests on an individual basis, with the field office contacting the appropriate area and state technical specialists before contracting any exterior fences.

Nevada state law is limiting use of wildlife friendly fence – clashes with our policy. *We want your input on this.* We can replace fences if they're outside their lifespan of 20 years.

Ray – this is informational. The policy has changed. Before it was clear, but now it allows our planners to be professional and allows them latitude. But it's preemptive to give state policy, so we'll be doing this on a case-by-case basis. Asks Dusty to provide examples of case-by-case basis.

Dusty – adding a pasture to current rotation which allows the ability to rest a pasture. Better ease for drought, wildfire.

Ray – asks STAC members for ideas.

Dominique – great to consider exterior fences for eligibility purposes. Clarifying – specific conflicts with state law or we need to look at state law to apply eligibility requirements?

Ray – our fences are required to be wildlife friendly, but state law, when it's close to roads or other places, fences have to have a certain spec to it. And with tribes – we need to look at it as government to government.

Ray – any input from public? No input.

National Water Quality Initiative – Jim Gifford – NWQI PPT

Update on NWQI process – USDA's premiere water quality initiative. It's a way to solve water quality concerns and accelerate voluntary on-farm conservation measures to benefit clean water. Partnership among NRCS and water quality agencies. Four watersheds selected as priorities, working with NDEP in Minden-Gardnerville area:

- Brockliss Slough
- Lower West Fork Carson River
- Town of Gardnerville-East Fork Carson River
- Town of Genoa-Carson River

Explains planning and implementation phases, four remaining items and next steps.

Jim opens floor to questions/comments.

Birgit – thanks Jim and staff and comments this project will remain a priority for her staff, since she is leaving NDEP.

Dirk – Fantastic opportunity. Forest Service has a Burned Area Restoration and Rehabilitation project to look at burned areas and look at ways to improve plant communities and watersheds. So hopefully this can line up with the NWQI priority areas. Will stay in touch with Jim to be good partners.

Ray thanks Birgit for her help working with us. STAC works as FS can look into working with us on NWQI. Jim Gifford has been working with Birgit to have success. And now we have Chris to help with outreach to get programs on the ground. Right people in the right place.

Wrap Up

Dirk – work with FWS and BLM. All agree we want to improve relationship with NRCS. Can he help with bringing folks to the table?

Ray – We’ve been working on Tribes and now need to refresh our list. That’s a role for Chris Rose who will be working on that.

Ashley – policy changes for invasive and grasshopper issues that are hurdles for NRCS?

Ray – through LWG process asked for help with pest issues. Concerted effort for us to understand weed districts and how we can help them, and what their hurdles and boundaries are. National policy has changed so we are working to figure this out and what it means for pest management. We will report back at the next meeting.

Reggie – irrigation pipeline question – tribe sent letter in 2013 to STC asking for irrigation pipeline be increased from 64 PSI to 80 PSI. Members had issue with soil crushing thin walls of 64 PSI pipe. Bruce (former STC) had approved 80 PSI. Now it’s back to 64 PSI. Was there consultation or tribal leadership informed?

Ray – There wasn’t consultation. I don’t have authority to allow higher pipe. It’s not written anywhere in policy. We have payment rates, and rates for historically underserved. If pipe needs to be higher based on needs, you can put in a higher pipe but we can’t just pay for it. Can do consultation and talk about this, but had an obligation to stop it as I don’t have authority to do it.