

Bylaws of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Virginia Civil Rights Advisory Committee

PREAMBLE

The Virginia Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) serves as an advisory body to the State Conservationist (STC) in Virginia. The Committee will work in the following capacities:

1. Helping develop and implement the state Affirmative Employment Plan (AEP) and monitoring its overall effectiveness in enhancing recruitment, hiring, promotion and retention.
2. Educating the workforce about management efforts to achieve and operate a realistic ongoing EEO/CR program.
3. Serving as a forum for exchanging ideas and supporting the development of projects or activities to address recognized needs/issues.
4. Identifying personnel practices that are producing or could produce dissension and dissatisfaction among employees (e.g., training opportunities, merit promotion, etc.)
5. Participating in civil rights compliance reviews to spot trends, problem areas and training needs.
6. Providing educational resources for use at civil rights workshops, seminars and meetings.
7. Contributing to the development and implementation of strategies designed to improve underserved groups' awareness of and participation in NRCS program and activities.
8. Monitoring recruitment practices and making recommendations to ensure underrepresented groups are aware of employment opportunities for career positions, temporary summer employment or special appointment.

ARTICLE I - RESPONSIBILITY*

1. Advise the STC and management on all matters related to civil rights, EEO and program delivery.
2. Offer assistance in the areas of policy formulation, program direction and administration to help management and employees fulfill their EEO and program delivery responsibilities.
3. Provide feedback to management on program performance by identifying strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.
4. Facilitate open lines of communication to bring employee views on EEO/CR issues to management attention.

5. Work to ensure equal access to and participation in NRCS programs, activities and initiatives within their jurisdictional areas.
6. Ensure Virginia NRCS adheres to policies and procedures as outlined in General Manual (GM), Title 230-Equal Opportunity, Part 404-Civil Rights Advisory Committee; and Part 405-Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery.
7. Meet no less than quarterly and maintain copies of minutes, which are forwarded to the STC.
8. Develop and maintain a business plan with goals, objectives, and actions.

*The Committee does not receive, investigate, or in any way adjudicate individual or class complaints of discrimination. Specific roles are listed under the preamble.

ARTICLE II – MEMBERS

The CRAC's membership will consist of nine (9) members from the state to serve as employee representatives on the Committee, eight (8) of these members chosen from within the boundaries of each of the Areas, two (2) from each Area, and one (1) member from the State Office. To the extent practical, these members will consist of representatives of the workforce by occupation, grade levels, race, sex, national origin, disability status, sexual orientation and geographical location. In addition, the following Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) serve as members to the Committee:

Black Special Emphasis Program Manager
Disability and Veterans Special Emphasis Program Manager
Federal Women's Special Emphasis Program Manager
Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Manager
Asian/Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager
American Indian Special Emphasis Program Manager
Lesbian/Gay/Bi-Sexual/Transgender Special Emphasis Program Manager

Area members are selected by the representative Assistant State Conservationist for Field Office Operations. The State Office member is selected by the advising Assistant State Conservationist on the Committee. Interested employees may apply for the designated program specialist positions when announced. They are selected by the advising Assistant State Conservationist on the Committee. All members on the Committee are approved by the STC.

- A member shall be a permanent USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee and shall be willing to serve on the Committee.
- The term of membership shall be for three years and may be extended/re-appointed at the discretion of the STC for all members. Terms begin on October 1 of the year appointed. Appointments will be staggered to provide continuity to the Committee with no more than one-third to one-half of the membership being replaced each year.

- In the event a member leaves the Committee before serving a full term, the Chair with the approval from the appropriate Assistant State Conservationist will recommend a replacement to the STC.
- To remain on the committee, a member may not have more than two unexcused absences in any given year. Absences may be deemed unexcused or excused by the Committee Chair.

The following positions could be appointed by the STC as advisors to the Committee:

Outreach Coordinator
 Human Resources Manager
 State Volunteer Coordinator
 USDA/1890 Program Liaison
 Farm Service Agency Liaison
 Rural Development Liaison
 Assistant State Conservationist

ARTICLE III - OFFICERS

The officers of the Committee shall consist of a Chair, Vice Chair and a Secretary.

The Committee will elect the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. The STC will approve the Chair selection. Officers will serve a one-year term and will be eligible for reelection or re-appointment.

The Officers will perform the following duties:

Chair- The Chair manages and directs all committee functions including, but not limited to, setting meeting agendas, developing business plans, and coordinating activities/initiatives. The Chair ensures full participation in meetings with ample opportunities for discussion and guides decision-making on issues and projects undertaken.

Vice Chair- The Vice Chair is a member designated to act for and assist the Chair in conducting committee business. The Vice Chair will preside over meetings in the absence of the Chair and is his/her immediate successor at the conclusion of the Chair's term of office.

Secretary - The Secretary takes meeting notes and provides minutes to members to document all proposals, assignments, and action items. As the group's record keeper, the Secretary is a valued resource who can provide reference materials and clarification on past practices to inform future decisions.

ARTICLE IV - ADVISORS & SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM MANAGERS

Roles/responsibilities of Advisors and Special Emphasis Program Managers are:

Advisors:

- Provide leadership in their designated program area.
- Serve as advisors to the Committee, attending meetings to provide input on activities impacting their specific program area.
- Facilitate communication between employees, keeping the Committee informed of ongoing activities.

Special Emphasis Program Managers:

- Provide leadership in their designated program area.
- Serve as members and advisors to the Committee, attending meetings to provide input on activities impacting their specific program.
- Assist in developing and implementing AEP and Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) plans, and work with the Committee to help achieve yearly goals and objectives.
- Facilitate communication between employees and national SEPMs, keeping the Committee informed of ongoing activities and representing the state at SEPM meetings/programs.

ARTICLE V - SUBCOMMITTEE(S)

The Chair shall appoint Sub-Committee(s) as necessary. The Sub-Committee(s) shall carry out the specific task(s) of the Committee as directed by the Chair.

ARTICLE VI -REMOVAL OF MEMBERS

The Committee may recommend removal of a member(s) for cause to the STC. The STC shall make the final determination for removal.

A recommendation of removal can be made based on meeting attendance.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS

The first meeting of the Committee shall be held early in the first quarter of the fiscal year. The Chair shall set the exact date. During the first meeting, the Committee will schedule three more regular meetings for the fiscal year (one each quarter). Special meeting(s) will be called at the discretion of the Chair or STC. A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of the Committee.

ARTICLE VIII -AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

Suggestions to amend these bylaws may be submitted by any member or advisor to the Chair. Decisions to amend the bylaws shall be reached by consensus of the members at the meeting, in which a quorum is present.

All amendments to these bylaws are subject to the approval of the STC.

Date of last revision: December 15, 2021