

# Local Working Groups



## What is a Local Working Group?

No one knows more about a community's natural resource problems than the people who live and work there. That's why it's so important to give local landowners and partners a voice in how best to prioritize and address these issues through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Local Working Groups (LWG).

The LWG is the foundation of NRCS' conservation program delivery process. It supports locally led conservation efforts by coordinating USDA programs with other federal, state, and local conservation programs to provide an integrated solution to addressing natural resource concerns.

## Responsibilities

The role of the LWG is advisory in nature, and has no implementation or enforcement authority. However, the USDA shall give strong consideration to the recommendations of the LWG in administering the programs under Title II.

Responsibilities may include:

- Developing a conservation needs assessment
- Identifying priority resource concerns that can be addressed by USDA programs
- Recommending USDA conservation program application and funding criteria, eligible practices, and payment rates
- Assisting NRCS and the conservation district with public outreach and information efforts
- Recommending program policy to the State Technical Committee based on resource data

## Membership

Local Working Group membership should be diverse and focus on agricultural interests and natural resource issues in the area.

Membership of the Local Working Group may include but is not limited to Federal, State, county or local government representatives.

Examples of members include:

- Members of the agricultural community
- Members of Natural Resources District (NRD) boards
- Members of the county FSA committee and the county executive director
- Members of agricultural groups, environmental organizations, and other agencies carrying out natural resource conservation programs
- State or locally elected or appointed officials
- Other Federal and State government representatives

## Meetings

Local Working Groups are typically conducted once a year in advance of the following fiscal year, and are conducted in the North, Central and South areas. They will be:

- Open to the public
- Conducted as an open discussion among members
- Individuals attending the local working group meetings will be given the opportunity to address the local working group

## How to Join

Annual meetings are advertised by NRCS and conducted by both the agency and partners. Those who wish to attend can contact NRCS for additional information. An in-person and virtual meeting option will be available.

## LWG Benefits

- Ensures conservation needs are developed using community stakeholder input.
- Conservation needs are assessed and used to help identify program funding needs and conservation practices at the local level.
- Priority resource concerns and high priority areas needing assistance are identified.
- Recommendations are gathered for USDA conservation program application and funding criteria, eligible practices, and payment rates.
- Multi-county cooperation and partnership building.
- Recommendations for state and national program policy to the State Technical Committee are gathered.

New Jersey

Natural Resources Conservation Service

