



MISSISSIPPI

State Technical Committee

December 12, 2018

10:00 a.m.

Mississippi Cattlemen's Foundation Conference Room 680

Monroe Street, Suite A

Jackson, MS 39205

USDA - NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Comments

Kurt Readus

2. Farm Service Agency Program Update

Bobby Carson
Patty Roberts

3. Risk Management Agency Update

Rodrick Bell

4. Agricultural Research Service/ Mississippi State University - Water Management Center

Dr. Martin Locke

5. Soils Tools and Technology

- Ecological Site Descriptions – Data Collection
- Soil Health Efforts
- Color Infrared Imagery Availability and Use
- LiDAR Imagery Coverage

Delaney Johnson

James Curtis

6. Ecological Sciences & MDEQ

- National Water Quality Initiative
- Current Watersheds
- Future FA Watersheds
- Prioritization & Characterizations

Rogerick Thompson
Natalie Segrest

7. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

- 2019 Ranking WRE
- 2019 Ranking ALE
- HFRP-RCPP
- 2019 GARC Rates

Jason Keenan

8. NRCS Programs for FY 2019

- CSP & EQIP Program Changes
- FY18 Accomplishments
- Local Work Group Meetings

Clarence Finley

9. Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team

Ron Howard

10. Closing Comments

Kurt Readus

Adjourn at Noon

Additional Information

Presenters & Associated Staff:

Kurt Readus, State Conservationist, NRCS

Bobby Carson, State Executive Director, FSA

Patty Roberts, Agriculture Program Specialist, FSA

Ron Howard, Program Specialist, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team

Delaney Johnson, State Soil Scientist, NRCS

James Curtis, Assistant State Soil Scientist, NRCS

Scott Coleman, Acting State Engineer, NRCS

Rogerick Thompson, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS

Natalie Segrest, MDEQ Basin Coordinator

Jason Keenan, Assistant State Conservationist – Easements, NRCS

Clarence Finley, Assistant State Conservationist – Programs, NRCS

Special note: Please give all changes in address and membership of the State Technical Committee to Clarence Finley before or after the meeting.

2018 State Technical Committee Minutes

Date: December 12, 2018

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Mississippi Cattlemen's Association, Jackson, MS

The State Technical Committee Meeting was called to order by Kurt Readus, State Conservationist of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at 10:05 a.m.

Mr. Readus opened by welcoming all guests and acknowledging Jack Winstead, Mississippi Department of Ag and Commerce, Rodrick Bell, Director Risk Management (RMA) Bobby Carson, Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Martin Locke, Ph.D., USDA-Agriculture Research Service (ARS).

The Federal Government is still on a Continue Resolution until December 21st. This mean NRCS is operating on bare bones, but we will get the business done as appropriately.

NRCS has a new Chief - Matthew J. "Matt" Lohr. He is farmer out of Virginia. He has participated in NRCS programs CSP and EQIP. He also has a Ag Working Management Group on his farm. He come with a lot of knowledge. From the internal side hopefully, we want to keep the business of conservation going. I want to thank our Acting Chief Leonard Jordan who went out of that position due to the Chief being named. Leonard Jordan is now the Assist. Chief and Kevin Norton is the Associate Chief for Conservation NRCS. James Tillman has returned to the position of Southeastern Regional Conservationist.

The Senate passed the Farm Bill for 8317 and today it is going to the House hopefully we will have a Farm Bill soon.

Kurt introduced the first speaker, Bobby Carson, FSA State Executive Director.,

Bobby Carson started by introducing his staff, Patty Roberts, Conservation Chief, Lori Holmes, Nick Hancock and James Smith. This staff do a tremendous job working with NRCS on conservation and GIS issues. Mr. Carson stated he appreciated all they do. He stated that is has been a tremendous busy year for FSA. FSA not only had CRP sign-up they also had WHIP, Seed Cotton sign-up and Market Facilitation Program for growers. Mr. Carson spoke about the working relationship between FSA and NRCS by going out to the field and meet and work with the farmers. It has been a busy year and with the new Farm Bill coming up we are expecting another busy year. We look forward to working with NRCS and RMA as we move forward.

Rodrick Bell, Director, Risk Management Agency (RMA), Jackson Regional Office. This office is responsible for crop insurance in five states, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. With the new FPAC set up RMA, NRCS and FSA will be working closer together. Rodrick gave a brief overview of the structure of RMA. They are responsible for setting the rates, providing actuary structures, and making sure the programs meet the needs of the growers in our region. RMS provides crop insurance in five states. RMA plans to continue to work more with FSA and NRCS and provide more education for all the programs. Three projects were awarded for our region and they all affect Mississippi. No changes as far as the concern about the Farm Bill or the crop insurance program, if anything there will be expansions.

Patty Roberts, FSA, Ag Program Specialist, Supervisor. Thanks goes to the state technical committee for helping FSA meet the CRP delivery goals. She provided updates on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). There were 1500+ contracts expired from CRP on 9/30/2018. Fifty-six thousand acres expired from CRP and 40,000 of those acres were enrolled in environmental practices. Mississippi acreage enrollment statewide = 612,729 by July 2018. Annual Payments = \$44.5M, Average amount Acre = \$72.6/acre. Looking ahead for FY19, new Farm Bill provisions, changes in rules and regulations. There is a higher number of counties with expiring acreage this year, 960+/- contracts expiring from CRP on 9/30/2019; 36,000 acres expiring from CRP in 2019 and 16,000 of those acres are enrolled in environmental priority practices.

Dr. Martin Locke with USDA-Agriculture Research Service (ARS), director of the National Sedimentation Laboratory in Oxford, MS. Dr. Locke is affiliated with establishing the water center in Stoneville, MS. Because of the decline in the aquifers and a lot of water resource concerns, in FY17 and FY18 Congress appropriated \$4 million to establish the water center. Half the funds will be directed toward ARS, and the other half will be directed toward MSU, this is a joint operation. There are four new positions for ARS and 4 for MSU. Once the new hires are on staff, they will start addressing the issues at hand.

Delaney Johnson, NRCS State Soil Scientist, gave his presentations on Soil Tools and Technology for Conservation. The first tool was Ecological Site Descriptions, where NRCS and the Mississippi Soil & Water Conservation Commission (MSWCC) are one year into a Cooperative Agreement to collect data for the development of ESDs. MLRA Maps of Mississippi is information collected and based on real-time info to help future farmers. Another project was discussed, the Soil Health Strike Force Agreement, is a tool to be developed measure and track soil health and improvement. NRCS and MSU are in the final year, 2019, in the development of the tool. This tool will help determine the benefits of using recommended soil health practices.

James Curtis, NRCS Assistant State Soil Scientist, covered Color Infrared Imagery availability and usage, as well as LiDAR Imagery Coverage.

Rogerick Thompson, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, provided information on the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). This initiative began in 2012 and has been extended to 2023. This initiative has a partnership between NRCS, MDEQ, EPA, and the MSWCC. All organizations come together to identify the Watersheds that have issues. Then they must start planning and assessing. Then Implementation Phase, identify the benefits of agricultural practices. These practices could be ready by FY19.

Natalie Segrest, MDEQ Basin Coordinator, addressed the minimum requirements of a Watershed. Their goal is to address impaired waters through voluntary conservation. Requirements include: impaired waters, monitoring information, conservation needs, FY19 expands to source water, watershed assessment and willing partners.

Jason Keenan, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist – Easements, proceeded by reviewing contracts for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) for FY18. Mississippi ranked number four in the nation for contracts submitted. For FY19, rankings will stay the same, GARC added more counties to the higher valued land and increased land value. There are now five FRPs around Camp Shelby.

Clarence Finley, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist – Programs, recognized that the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) enrolled over \$20 million and over 700,000 acres. CSP is extending contracts

to make payments for next year. Environmental Quality Incentives Program EQIP ranked 3rd in the nation for obligating money. Partnership in action for FY18: GoMI, NWQI, LLPI, WLFW, MRBI, RCPP – total dollars obligated with the partners = \$18,395,686.39. Finley discussed that there are five easy steps to assistance to get started with NRCS and asked everyone to encourage partners to obtain a conservation farm plan.

Homer Wilkes, Ph.D. with the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team, stated the purpose for GCERT as they restore the gulf in response to the Deepwater Horizon occurrence, which is to restore wildlife habitats and improve the water quality.

Kurt Readus finished the meeting by inviting the audience members to join the State Technical Committee's sub-committee. Kurt asked everyone around the room to introduce themselves as well as the agency with which they are affiliated. Afterward, he thanked everyone that has made a huge difference with the State of Mississippi.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.