

Tennessee State Technical Committee Meeting
(TEAMS) November 8, 2022

Members and Guests Present:

1. Acevedo, Lebron - USDA NRCS
2. Adkins, Josh - (Guest - UAS)
3. Barnes, Betty – USDA NRCS
4. Beatty, Renita - (Guest - UAS)
5. Boettcher, Robert - USDA NRCS
6. Brasher, Derrick – USDA NRCS
7. Broughton, Brandi – USDA FSA, Nashville
8. Burse, Katherine – USDA NRCS, Nashville
9. Carpenter, Jamie – USDA NRCS
10. Davis, Kevin – USDA NRCS
11. Dose, Mark – USDA NRCS
12. Engle, Joshua – FPAC - NRCS
13. Foster, Marlon - (Guest - UAS)
14. Friend, Aaron – USDA NRCS
15. Gibson, James (CTR) – USDA NRCS
16. Hawkins, Arthur – USDA NRCS
17. Hicklin, Nathaniel - USDA NRCS
18. Honicker, Leslie – USDA NRCS
19. Hoskins, Pamela - USDA NRCS
20. Jones, Danny – USDA NRCS
21. Kennon, Adam - Guest USFWS
22. Lebron, Acevedo - USDA NRCS
23. Leonard, Emily – USDA NRCS
24. Lovell, Janice E. (Guest)
25. Marlon, Foster (Guest)
26. Marshall, Reginald (Guest - UAS)
27. Mayberry, Robin – USDA NRCS
28. McClurkan, John – TDA
29. McAfee, Jason – USDA NRCS
30. Minnis, Mike (Guest - UAS)
31. Mitchell, Melanie – USDA NRCS
32. Moyers, Chris (CTR) - FPAC - NRCS
33. Nelson, Christopher – USDA NRCS
34. Norfleet, Bill – USDA NRCS
35. Oliver, Mike – USDA NRCS
36. Ortiz, Linda - USDA NRCS
37. Richardson, Joshua – USDA NRCS
38. Senecal, Suzanne - USDA NRCS
39. Smiley, Kyle – USDA NRCS
40. Swihart, Tammy – USDA NRCS
41. Walker, Fred - USDA NRCS
42. Williams, Vivian - (Guest - UAS)
43. Wolkonowski, Chris – USDA NRCS
44. Womack, John – USDA NRCS

John Womack, ASTC – NRCS

Welcome/Opening Remarks

- Good morning, I am filling in for Sheldon Hightower as the Acting State Conservationist for the remainder of this calendar year until he returns as he is on a detail at the National Headquarters, working with our programs. Thank you all for joining us.
- A few little housekeeping items, please make sure that you keep your microphones muted as we go through the agenda today. If you have any feedback or any questions, the best avenue is to use the chat feature. Of course we will take that feedback from you and address those questions as they come in. If you are not able to use the chat feature and are calling from a phone or something of that nature, by all means, please unmute and voice your question or feedback that way.
- This is an exciting time for us at NRCS. Most of you may be aware of the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) and the investment that came to NRCS. That is a substantial investment that Congress has made. A lot of people are referring to it as a generational, once in a lifetime and I would agree. They have invested \$20B dollars to Conservation, specifically to work on addressing Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Conservation. I think there is a great opportunity moving forward for us as an agency, specifically for Tennessee as a state, and for each of you all with us here today as partners addressing some of the things we can do to address practices and help farmers as they mitigate items associated with climate change.
- National Headquarters is still working through some allocations and how some of that funding is going to come down to the States. Within the next three to five years, I think we have got a lot of good work to accomplish and with that of course is going to come some accountability and some expectations to deliver. We are definitely going to rely on each other on how we can best help producers and help get this conservation on the ground and actually show some measurable, achievable results and outcomes from that. More on that to come as we move forward.
- Regarding the Climate Smart Commodity Partnerships that was given out by the Secretary; twenty of those impact Tennessee to include one with the University of Tennessee regarding warm season grasses. Moving forward, we will have more information on these partnership agreements once they are finalized.
- There are many exciting things going on and good opportunities for us in this partnership to truly get a lot of great work accomplished over the next three to five years. I hope you all are as excited as I am and looking forward to that.

Jamie Carpenter, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs - NRCS

EQIP

- Traditionally, we spend about \$8 - \$10M more than what we did this year. We have been successful in requesting those funds and receiving the additional funds to obligate

somewhere around \$35 - \$37M. So we see a bit of a reduction in the amount that we were able to obligate this year.

Coronavirus Agricultural Relief Payments (CARP)

- Referred to as CARP that is additional financial assistance that has been appropriated to help with those EQIP contracts; FY21 contracts and older. FY22 was not eligible for those payments, but it's an additional financial assistance that has been allocated for a certain list of practices to somewhat help with that inflation to include the cost of materials; pipelines, to convey water for livestock, watering troughs, roof and structures are examples of some of the practices that qualify for that additional financial assistance. So in order to fund this it did come from our national EQIP allocations.
- Every state received a reduced amount for FY22. We did request additional funds to keep Tennessee at that \$35-\$37M mark and financial systems dollars for EQIP. We, along with other states nationwide, took our share of the cut in order to be able to fund the CARP payment.
- Included in this report is a summary (snapshot) of FY22 Programs where we ended and implementation for FY23.

Robert Boettcher - NRCS

EQIP Report - FY22 Results

- Overview of: How did EQIP look in FY22? Where did our money go? What were some of our highlights?
 - We obligated 834 contracts for \$27.6M, this will put conservation on the ground for more than 82,000 acres.
 - Where did we start in FY22? We had over 3,000 applications after we obligated the 830 which left 1,500 or so that are going to roll over into the next year.
 - We also had a high number of applications that either cancelled or deferred and chose not to accept the contract or no longer wanting to move forward with their application.
 - What this number shows is in line with normal years. We rolled over about 1/3 of our contracts and fund about of 1/3 of our contracts, this year we funded less than 1/3 of our contracts.

FY 22 Results by Ranking Pool

- We sort our applications by applicable ranking pools, they compete within ranking pools that are most like those applications. We then start at the top based on the ranking score moving down the list based on available funds.

- Our local sub accounts is where we try to place about 50 percent of our funds.
- The local counties and area office leadership know best where that money can be utilized, where those targeted conservation efforts best utilize work and the best utilization of that money to achieve the best result.
- We attempted to place about 50 percent of our funds, after we have our statutory requirements, towards those local sub accounts. That is why local sub accounts are the highest and can fund any type of applications which could include high tunnels, grazing, infrastructure, wildlife, forestry, or any other offered practice we have.

Applications Remaining End of FY22

- Based on demand, there are roughly 1,500 applications that are rolling over showing where we still have that most interest or where were we unable to fund some of those applications. Some of the successes show where we fund all of the applications in some of our applicable pools.
- Looking forward to FY23, some of our pools have a 0 or a low number. We were able to get through if not all, almost all of the applications for those pools. Also, shown is where we also have a high amount of interest and where we still have a high demand for those conservation requests.
- If we had about \$50M more dollars, we could have got through all of them. \$50M worth of requests will roll over into FY23 as we don't have the funds available to meet the demands.

Successes

- Our success show that we were able to obligate 99.9 percent of our money that was allocated to us in March. We requested to receive an extra \$11.5M, but we received less than \$1M. That was a big hit as far as our number of contracts that we normally obligate. We received less than 10 percent of what we requested.
- We met all of our statutory requirements and are required to meet 10 percent in wildlife, 50 percent in livestock, and 5 percent each for our Historically Underserved groups of Beginning Farmer and Socially Disadvantaged.
 - Not only did we meet our requirements by statutory, but we also have to exceed our goals.
- National Headquarters gives us goals to exceed, we are trying to shoot a little bit higher on those wildlife and livestock members.
- Our Historically Underserved numbers hit 53.7 percent overall.
- We did return some funds for Golden Winged Warbler, one ranking pool that we did not have enough interest in, but there were no other funds returned.

EQIP FY22 Results

- Area 1, 2, 3 and 4, as far as contract numbers, were evenly split. The dollar amounts were not very far off. Shown is the breakdown of the obligations for FY22.
- Active EQIP contracts shown include the FY22 contracts as well as all other contracts that are still active. Showing our current workload spread out by area and where we still have those funds reserved in the conservation to still be implemented.

FY21 and FY22 Comparison

- In comparison, we try to target historically somewhere in the mid \$30M range. Shown is our comparison of FY21 and FY22 and the breakdown by area. Most importantly, this is going to show that \$10M cut that we did not receive.
 - It left a lot of applications on the table that we normally would have been able to process but were unable to.
 - If a higher number is heard of individuals mentioning they were not funded this year, most of that reasoning was due to our reduced funding.
 - Also seen is about 500 less contracts because of that.

Top 10 Scheduled Practices

- Ranked 1 through 10, and also included is a number of them due to high tunnels being a popular practice as it does fall right below the top 10.
- Shown is our comparison to FY21. Very consistent 1 through 7 are all the same, a slight switch in 8 and 9 and the water and sediment control basins at number 10.
 - A very standard year for us as far as the types of projects that we funded.

EQIP Conservation Incentives Contract (CIC)

- Last year, FY 22, was the first year that we had contracts for EQIP CIC. The State Technical Committee helped us decide on our priority resource concerns to include our priority areas.
- That is what EQIP CIC does, it allows us to focus on those priority areas and those priority resource concerns. It is a 5-year program that is similar to CSP in that aspect.
- It also provides annual payments as well as implementation payments along the years, and the stepping-stone from EQIP to CSP.
- It is also similar in that applicants are not required to enroll their entire property. They can have a 5-year contract focusing again on those priority areas.

- For EQIP CIC State Technical Committee, state leadership decided to focus on 2 distinct resource concerns first:
 - EQIP CIC with soil quality, focusing on soil quality resource concern. We expedited 13 contracts for \$650,000 on 1,900 acres.
 - The other focus was EQIP CIC wildlife, which was to be implemented on pasture and forest land, focusing on that terrestrial habitat resource concern.
 - We expedited 10 contracts for \$500,000 on 1200 acres.

EQIP FY23 Information

- An August 24, 2022, news release was published which mentioned our application cut off.
- The application deadline to be considered for FY23 is November 18th, 2022 which applies to EQIP, EQIP-CIC, and EQIP-RCPP.
- At this time, we have approximately 700 applications ready to move and are expecting another high workload year for FY23.
- We will be looking at processing our pre-approvals and giving those notices of selections for contracting in mid-March and complete this by June 2nd.

Local Working Group Processes for FY2023

- The local working group process was again implemented. Those were all held by October 13, 2022.
- Some of the main priorities are allowing those local work groups to select the 3-5 priority resource concerns and the weight will each of those resource concerns serve for that local county.
 - Every county had a local working group to provide input not only for the priority resource concerns, but also for all concerns in general.
 - It also allowed for each local work group to discuss what the ranking questions would be for their ranking pool.

EQIP FY2023 Allocations

- What do we know, so far, regarding how much money we will receive in FY23 for the IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) funds?

- We have been given our EQIP general which is very much in line with our normal years, maybe a few million higher, but we are planning to start the year with \$26M for EQIP general.
- Our landscape initiatives will be receiving those allocations later on after those are decided.

Administration Priority

- These are the same priorities that have been around for a couple years. We are required to address the administration's priorities related to Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry, continuing priorities with historically underserved and racial justice and social equity also implementing Urban Agriculture whenever practical.

Bill Norfleet - NRCS

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) - FY22 Renewal Status

- We have a lot of actions and renewals beginning FY22 regarding pre-approved and obligations. We pre-approved over \$2M in Ag Land, and almost over \$350,000 NIPF for a grand total of \$2.4M. The allocation was \$2.5M.
- We were able to get 43 contracts out of that \$2.4M which obligated us about 97 percent of the money received from headquarters.

CSP Classic

- We had over 219 contracts and obligated over \$12M, \$257,000 in obligated funds covering over 128,843 acres.
- We had approximately 234 applications total and about 14 applications left pending and eligible. We were close at obligating almost everything we had in the state for FY22 applications.

FY22 CSP Obligations

- A bigger breakdown shows how we spent those FY22 funds. Renewal funds came in as normal.
- Most the funds are allotted to Ag Land general at \$1.9M. NIPF comes in second with almost \$300,000.
- We also have the beginning farmer and socially disadvantaged farmer.
 - These applications received for those particular groups have their own fund codes. We try to fund those first before looking at any other applications.

Ag Land General

- We have it broken down by area across the state.
 - Area 1 in Jackson had a really good year this year at \$5.8M.
 - Area 3 came in second with \$1.6M.
 - Areas 2 and 4 right behind them.
- NIPF was similar. We did spend more funds evenly across the state with Area 3 in Cookeville, spending the most at \$631,000 on that non-industrial private forest land.

Beginning Farmer Ag Land

- Most of the applications were approved in Areas 3 and 4 going towards Cookeville and Knoxville with one or two applications in the social disadvantage area in Knoxville.
- At the beginning farmer for non-industrial private forest land. Over 1.5M spent in Area 3 and other areas around with the remainder of those funds.
- Our total allocation for FY22, CSP Classic, is the amount of \$12,340,000 obligated by the end of September \$12,257,000 for a total of 99 percent; 219 contracts over 128,000 acres for those particular fund codes.
- When the renewals plus the classic funding is added up, we almost hit the \$15M mark in FY22 for CSP and we keep climbing every year. It has been a good program for the last two to three years,

FY22 Versus FY21

- We had less in FY22 obligated amount versus FY21 but with the renewals added, FY22 exceeds that amount.
- With 219 contracts, we did not have as many contracts this past year but exceeded the acres; less contracts but more acres covered. The goal is to get those acres and help the farmers. We got a lot more acres this past year.

CSP FY23 Allocations

- CSP Classic \$11.8M that is a bump from last year.
- CSP MRBI over \$1M.
- CSP Classic Organic over \$200,000.

- We did not have a lot of interest in CSP Classic Organic for last year. If you know anyone that is interested in CSP Classic with an organic component, have them check with our local offices.
- We have about \$2.7M listed for renewals as well.

FY23 CSP Timeline

- We are hoping to have the obligation for renewals and GCI, which is our grassland program wrapped up by the end of this calendar year.
- Our standing date for CSP classic applications is going to be February 3, 2023.
- We're going to start releasing ranking pools sometime beginning of March.
- The renewal application deadline will be March 31, 2023.
- The CSP Classic ranking deadline will be June 23, 2023, which is after the EQIP obligation on June 2, 2023.
- The plan is to wrap up CSP obligations around the 1st of September for FY23.

Resource Concerns

- This group was formed a couple years ago as a very helpful tool as seen, we have covered a lot between our resource concerns for those times.

Question - Jason Atkins

What would the EQIP program look like in an urban context?

Answer - Robert Boettcher

Urban really is not going to look much different than it could anywhere else other than the scale of it. Some of our payments have changed from per acre to per square foot basis so that we're able to pay for those more appropriately. Some example of that might be a cover crop within a high tunnel. Those are, maybe at this point, some of our most common urban type practices that we're utilizing, but also some grazing infrastructure; urban also. Urban may not always be just downtown Memphis, downtown Nashville, etc. When we look at urban, we do somewhat include some of those food desert areas. We go outside of the city limits a little bit, more so of the urban areas than within the city. But a lot of the same practices just being able to pay for them at a smaller level. Pollinator practices, gardening, smaller grazing infrastructure type issues; still have some erosion control structures. Again, everything Ag Land based. We still have to focus on agricultural conservation.

Robert Boettcher - NRCS

EQIP RCPP

- In addition to EQIP General, we have EQIP RCPP

- The first project was for the grasslands. This is the last year for this project.
- The next map shows where those eligible counties for the easement.
- Our FY22 results shows EQIP side of things. We were able to obligate 11 contracts utilizing \$178,000 on 1,500 acres.
- This is going to leave us for our final year about \$144,000 for EQIP; \$57,000 for CSP and \$1.6M for some easements. We are attempting to get some of those easements wrapped up and utilize some of those funds as well.
- Another project that we have is the 1789 Advanced Precision Ag for Sustainable Conservation. This is the last year for this project.

FY22 Results

- We completed 9 contracts with EQIP for a little over \$300,000 on 3,800 acres and for the funds remaining, about \$50,000 for EQIP and a substantial amount of \$3.5 M to use up for CSP or to divert other ways.

The Nature Conservancy Clinch-Powell Watershed Partnership Project

- This is a Virginia as well as a Tennessee project with shown eligible counties focusing on some priority watersheds within those counties.
- Within this project last year, we had 7 contracts for \$450,000. It is going to leave about \$100,000 for us for FY23.

Our Newest RCPP is the Regis to Rivers Project

- This was approved this fall; the partner is the Tennessee Aquarium.
 - Tennessee is the only state involved here, and it was approved at the funding amount of \$10M.
 - The goal here is to protect the Cumberland Plateau and the Sequatchie Valley for Aquatic Resources Management.
 - It is going to have over 15 contributing partners involved and covers a 7-county area within the Tennessee River basin.
 - The goals are also to improve water quality and aid in the recovery of the imperiled aquatic species.
 - This project area is home to five threatened or endangered species of the most probably concerning for this project group is the Laurel dace.

- Land Management practices and conservation easements will be what the project is trying to accomplish, as well as restoring those degraded habitats and protecting the parcels critical to that stream health.
- As far as partner contributions, we will be looking for extensive producer and landowner outreach, as well as the development and use of geospatial tools to help target project activities. This is a new project.

Melanie Mitchell - NRCS

Payment Process for FY23

- We kicked off this first quarter reviewing payments starting on October 11, 2022.
- As of November 3, 2022, the payments team has processed;
 - 255 EQIP payments for a total of \$2.5M.
 - 350 CSP GCI payments for \$186,000.
 - 437 CSP payments for a little over \$2.5M.
- Total for FY23. So far we've processed 1,042 payments resulting in \$5,190,902.50.

Comment - Jamie Carpenter. Just in the context of what we do each year, around \$32M from the payments from all of our Farm Bill programs, except for Easements, speaking just for the financial assistance programs. We really appreciate everyone's work. There's about 5-6 people that we have who review payments in the first quarter, so a very busy time and I really appreciate all their efforts getting this money out to our producers.

Question - Dustin Bowels. Is the TNC RCPP in the last year of funding?

Answer - Robert Boettcher. The TNC, RCPP, Upper Clinch Powell, is actually a renewal. That was a project that has been around for a while. We renewed it for five more years. It started in 2021 and will expire in 2026. We will probably be out of funding by the time we get to that point. It is not in its last year, we have up until 2026 to finish that one up with most RCPP. We try to leave that last year open since it is just a management year, we will probably see as 2025 being the last funding year.

Pam Hoskins - NRCS

2022 Easement Programs Summary Obligations

- We ended up with eight new easements, which covers 1,043 acres. That was a little over \$3.8M. Like the rest of the programs that was just a little bit shy of what we normally do but hopefully we're anticipating more in FY23.

- For our FY23 program rollout. We did make an announcement for easements on August 22, 2022 and our application cutoff just ended last Friday, November 4, 2022.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) FY23 Funding Opportunities

- Our funding for FY23, the way it's going to look for ACEP WRE funding is a little over \$4M and that's available statewide.
- Also, our Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) for working lands allocation is also statewide, and it is \$600,000.
- We will also have two partnership enhancement projects this year, one with the Mississippi River Trust for the Batture Area, and one with The Nature Conservancy, which is in northwest Tennessee. We are still unsure on the funding levels for that, but we should be getting that information soon.
- A bit of background on those two partnership areas.
 - The Batcher area is in very close proximity to the Mississippi River and the levee system, so it's those lands that are most vulnerable from impact from the Mississippi River.
 - The Nature Conservancy partnership that we have for easements, it does cover areas in Tennessee and Kentucky. It's in northwest Tennessee that is in the Obion River watershed and the North Fork of the Forked Deer River.

ACEP Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)

- Our ranking questions that we have for ACEP was emailed to State Technical Committee (STC) for input on July the 29, 2022.
- Moving forward, those questions stand as is and are finalized and on the NRCS web page.
- The same with the Agricultural Land Easement ranking questions for FY23. Also sent to the STC on July 29, 2022 and will stand as is and are also on the NRCS web page.

Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC) Map

- Sent to the STC on August 29, 2022. We did not receive any comments or suggestions, so the map is now final and considered as approved along with the supporting documents to the Easements Program Division on October 7, 2022 for their approval.
 - As of yet, we've not received that approval, but once we receive the approval from the easements program division, that GARC map will be shared with the committee and published for public use.
- Background of the GARC Map Process

- The GARC map is the geographical area rate cap, and it is used to create a basis for the purchase of our Agricultural Easements through our ACEP WRE by placing a value per acre in the different geographical areas of the state.
- We start off with an area market wide analysis that is conducted by a private certified appraiser, and they gather property sales data over the last 12 months. Once that data is collected, the appraiser will then summarize and give an average value for each geographical area.
- Tennessee has decided to provide compensation based on that 95 percent of that value. Then we round that down to \$50.00.

Easements Compensation Considerations

- Currently, we use the Geographical Area Rate Cap, which is our GARC map to calculate compensation for our easement purchases.
- There are eight states that border Tennessee, four of those states use the GARC method that we use, and four states use individual appraisals for their easement purchases.
- Some of those states use a combination of those methods on the county location. Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama use the GARC map for their easement purchases.
- Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia use individual appraisals for their easement purchases.
- My question for the TNSTC is do you think Tennessee should consider using individual appraisals for some or all of their easement purchases in the future? Comments could be provided by next Friday, December 18, 2022 on any kind of comments or suggestions.

Comment - Emily Leonard

Perhaps for some projects on a case-by-case basis, I would fear having to get individual appraisals would slow projects down too much. It is hard to find qualified appraisers in this state and they have a huge backlog of projects.

Comment - Jamie Carpenter

I have accepted a position with Performance, Accountability, and Risk Management with the FPAC division and will start my new position on the 21st of November. So this would be my last State Technical Committee with you. I've really enjoyed working with the partnership here in Tennessee in the capacity and have been in this job as Assistant State Conservationist for Programs for the last six years and the opportunity to serve as Acting State Conservationist as well. I want to say thank you for a great partnership in Tennessee. We have something here that not all states have. It's great partnership.

Robin Mayberry - NRCS

We heard just a little bit of intro about the Tennessee ridges to rivers RCPP project and now we want to take a little bit deeper dive into that. Adam Kennon will be our first speaker and he's with the Tennessee aquariums as their Conservation Manager. He advances the aquariums conservation science mission by managing the Conservation Institute and the supporting staff with field and lab work. He also works with the other State, Federal and nonprofit partners to focus conservation efforts in key areas of the southeast to preserve biodiversity. Adam has worked in the field conservation for the last 15 years and before working with the aquarium, he worked as the Director of Resource Conservation and Development Council of Georgia on an RCPP project as well. He has lots of experience coordinating with NRCS staff all across the country, and then we will have another speaker, Doctor Bernie. Doctor Bernie joined the Tennessee Aquarium in May of 2012 after 25 years at the University of Alabama where he managed a museum collection of over a million species of preserved fishes from all around the world. Three studies of fisheries and other aquatic organisms have taken them throughout the United States, Mexico, and Central Asia. His expertise is monitoring aquatic threatened and endangered species in the southeast.

Adam Kennon - Conservation Manager - Tennessee Aquariums Conservation Institute

We will give you an overview our RCPP project that we applied for this year. We're calling it the Ridges to Rivers protecting the Cumberland Plateau and the Sequatchie Valley for Aquatic Resources Management.

- You may be wondering, how did the Tennessee Aquarium become involved with farmers agriculture producers get involved in these sort of on the ground conservation practices.
- Our mission here at the Tennessee Aquarium is to connect people with nature and empower them to make informed decisions of wildlife.
- The aquarium did a study a few years ago where they looked at the visitors and asked them, what do you like about the Tennessee Aquarium? Some of the feedback was that they liked that the Tennessee Aquarium has put conservation efforts on the ground in their communities.
- In getting that feedback, we knew that we were already out there putting conservation dollars on the ground and looking to improve habitat for aquatic species. We really wanted to get more into that work and working with farmers and producers.
- As a result, the Tennessee Aquarium has the Conservation Institute. The mission of the Conservation Institute is to preserve the conservation of the native aquatic animals and their habitats.
- A few years ago we received funding for a National Fish and Wildlife funding grant and that grant let us somewhat focus on one of the fish that we have in particular, worked on for years; that is the Laurel dace fish.
- We received funding to work in those watersheds and started engaging the community and those watersheds and working with those NRCS offices.

- We bought a crimper and allowed the office in Pikeville to house that.
- We hired a contractor who has since been interacting with the community and producers and helping really support that in our NRCS office in Pikeville.
- That is how we connected with wanting to interact with farmers and take that approach to the ground and put the money on the ground in those watersheds where we saw the Laurel dace and other species were in decline.

Thrive Regional Partnerships

- The Thrive Regional Partnership is an unprecedented, collaborative organization that unites people across the growing tri-state region to preserve community and natural character for generations to come.
- We started looking for ways to act on those projects and talking to different partners. We have come to meet a lot of different partners in our community through this Thrive Regional Partnership, which is a three state, sixteen county partnership that works on protecting natural areas.
- This is the impetus for us getting into the RCPP and wanting to put conservation dollars on the ground. Our partners with THRIVE, our local community leaders, different organizations, community planners and their mission really fits into the Conservation Institute and the Tennessee Aquariums Mission.
- Thrive Regional Partnership really focuses on conservation, protection, and restoration and focusing mainly, on freshwater conservation and biodiversity and that fits in with the mission of the Conservation Institute here.
- Some of the things they work on are habitat anchors and connection. That is looking at protecting wildlife and the habitat that it needs to flourish. They also look at working farms and forest lands and promote a sustainable regional economy that is built around value and appreciation for local produced foods, materials, and goods.
- Through this regional partnership, we really started to look at aquatic diversity, aquatic species, working farms, and forest lands in a specific area in our region.
- Through our partnerships for this RCPP, for years we've been working with the Land Trust for Tennessee, Tennessee Department of Ag, TennGreen Land Conservancy, TDEC, the Open Spaces Institute, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and many of the different partners in our area that have connected us and help us target conservation and put that money on the ground where our partners see the need for that funding.
- Through this RCPP we have over \$11M in contributions that allowed us to ask for the full amount for the RCPP so that we could put that money on the ground in the next five years.

Overall Goal of the Project

- The overall goal of this Ridges to Rivers project is to protect and restore water quality and habitat to conserve aquatic animals from the head water streams of the Walden Ridge to the valleys of the Sequatchie and Tennessee rivers.
- This is displayed in our map the Cumberland Plateau.
 - This is a unique geological feature here in Chattanooga. There are farms and lot of different types of producers on the Ridge.
 - The other area that we really wanted to focus on was the Sequatchie River. There are a lot of farms and producers there that we wanted to work with.
 - This is just a general breakdown of the area and an overview of where we are in Tennessee and why we chose the specific areas to target.
- We will be working with five different NRCS offices. In Cumberland County, we will be working with Cody Franklin. In Bledsoe County, we have started to work in the Pikeville office with Justin Howard. Down in Marion County, we will start working with Cody Brown and in Hamilton County, we hope to work with Cameron Delligatti.
 - Hamilton County is one of those areas that we're hoping to put some of our Urban Agriculture FA funding dollars to work.
 - That is just a breakdown of the different counties that this RCPP will be taking place in and some of the different NRCS offices that will be working with.

Resource Concerns

The resource concerns for us at the Tennessee Aquarium through our work with threatening endangered species, we inevitably interact with partners that are working on water quality improvement projects.

- Shown on the map are TDEC 303-D listed waters. The red streams are listed in the state typically for bacteria and sediment in our area.
- In Chattanooga, there are a different set of listings there based on the legacy of the coal industry and the steel industry. There are listings in the urban areas of Chattanooga for heavy metals, PCBs, and those types of things.
- We want to focus on these areas in the headwaters of the Sequatchie and these areas where we can see a lot of these water quality resource concerns.

Priority Areas

- This priority map of 303-D map has been put together by the Land Trust for Tennessee; this is a listed waters in the state of Tennessee.
- The orange layer is somewhat the priority area for this particular RCPP and the Tennessee Aquarium in that there are a high concentration of listed streams in those orange watersheds. In particular, the headwater of the Sequatchie is really one of the areas that we focus a lot of that Land Management/Best management practice work in and putting conservation dollars on the ground. A lot of these streams up here in the headwaters are listed for bacteria and that's usually livestock grazing. If we can go in those areas and improve and help farmers and producers in those areas with some of their cross fencing, alternative watering sources, maybe we can see an impact there in the water quality improvements
- Another area that we really want to focus on is in and around Chattanooga, we see water resource concerns there. There are some urban farms in Chattanooga that we would like to start working with and maybe put pilot projects on the ground with some of those urban farms possibly looking at green infrastructure, stormwater management, and those farms taking a different approach here in the Chattanooga and the urban areas than we may in these headwater areas.
- Although we want to focus on these priority areas that doesn't mean funding in these other areas, where water quality may be a concern, we can't put funding there.
- We really wanted to try to draw a bigger map around those. Those are our two priority areas, the headwaters of the Sequatchie River and in and around Chattanooga and in Hamilton County, working with urban farms.

Critical Habitat-Threatened and Endangered Species

- The two species that we've been focused on and that we have listed critical habitat for are the Laurel dace, which is only found on the Cumberland Plateau, and the Slabside Pearly Mussel, which is only found in the Sequatchie River.
- This is the reason why our map is drawn the way it is. We have the Sequatchie River encompassed by our map, and we wanted to put all of the ridge and valley in there so that we could protect and start to work on water quality issues from the ridge to the river.
- We also included Hamilton County in this area because of the legacy water resource concerns there and wanting to work with those urban farmers in that area.
- We pushed the boundary over a little to the West because our partner Land Trust for Tennessee has some projects they're working on in these areas to the West of the Sequatchie River and the Little Sequatchie River. Also, they have projects working there with some unique natural feature.

- We really wanted to gently push that boundary out to help partners with some of the work they're doing, and we also wanted to expand it to the east so that we could work with the urban farms.
- The headwaters of the Sequatchie River are overlapped with probably Slabside Pearly Mussel habitat and water quality issues.
- These are really the areas that we want to focus. They're currently working with the muscles and the fish and focusing on those areas gives us some priority targets to work at.

Dr. Bernie Kuhajda, Ichthyologist Tennessee Aquariums Conservation Institute

Diving A Little Deeper Into Laurel dace

- This was really the impetus for us getting deeply involved with the NRCS office in Pikeville to try to create a game plan. Several of the state and federal agencies assembled six or seven years ago and they really didn't make any progress towards real, on the ground, conservation for this species.
- When I started 10 years ago, the Laurel dace was found in five streams. It's stronghold now is in two populations: the northern population, Bumby, and Young's, and Moxen Creeks. There is a genetically distinct southern population: Cup, Horne, and Soddy.
- The stronghold in Bumby Creek and Young's Creek.
 - In the last six years we found three juveniles in Horn Branch, so the species is barely hanging on and is on the brink of extinction.
 - The map showed there's not a lot of listed streams up here. They're all downstream, this is a head water fish.
- The typical EQIP and other programs wouldn't rank high for this. There's not a lot of biodiversity here and some of the streams; the Laurel dace and in another minnows, the Black Nose Dace, are the only two native fish in these headwater streams.
- With this RCPP we'll be able to focus on this narrow endemic species.
- So this is the stronghold for the Laurel dace, Bumby Creek. The headwater stream on Walden Ridge of the Cumberland Plateau was supposed to look like: to include boulders, bedrock, Cobble, a nice riparian zone, very little silt. Unfortunately most places do not look well.
- In most places, the Laurel dace are nonexistent but still exist in Youngs Creek.
- One of the worst places is Saudi Creek. There is one single agriculture development area up there that is a vegetable crops and it has just created a dead stream.

- There are no crayfish, there are no macroinvertebrates other than chironomids. Blue Gill and frogs are the only thing we find in this stream now due to one poorly managed agriculture system.
- Even though there's a big riparian zone with the ephemeral connections, when it rains it takes all that bare soil and dumps it into Saudi Creek. Sediment is the biggest issue for Laurel dace but there are other things that are not thought of.
- There are a lot of fish passage issues, as this is a headwater fish and the culverts that drop down to the surface of the water cuts off the upstream habitation of the fish.
- Another problem is the Brim and Bass escaping from farm ponds. Most of these native streams for Laurel dace did not historically have Bass and Brim; they did not occur there. These fish were put in farm ponds and escape and get in the systems and consume the majority of the Laurel dace and the other native minnow to include the Black Nose Dace.
- We've found another problem from farm ponds. In 2020, we found Laurel dace and Young's Creek covered in yellow grubs.
- The life history for this is a wading bird eats an infected fish, the yellow grubs metamorphose into an adult. They shed their eggs in the feces of the wading bird into the pond, the intermediate host is a snail that releases thousands of sic aria that swim around and infect the fish and Youngs Creek is a small head water stream densely covered in mountain Laurel. The wading birds are not here but are in the ponds along with the snails.
- It is all tied to agriculture, most of these ponds are put in to help with drip agriculture underneath the plastic in these vegetable crops. And they're also sediment traps, which is great thing. But now they're a source of a serious disease for one of the two strongholds for Laurel dace.
- Today, we added a new species to the endangered and threatened list at the federal level. The Sickie Darter. The species status assessment took place a couple of years ago and shows, in the Sequatchie River, the physical habitat for the Sickie Darter and other aquatic animals is moderate. The water quality is low which yields low reproduction for the Sickie Darter.
- The Sickie Darter are basically found at one spot in Pikeville, if we can really improve water quality down in the Sequatchie Valley, it is really going to turn around the status of the current condition for this threatened species, as well as many other species.
- The snail Darter was just taken off the endangered species list a couple months ago. Its population in the Sequatchie is not great, so improved water quality would help that, as well as the Anthony's river snail, and the Slabside Pearly Mussell.
- The Pristine Crayfish is a crayfish being considered for listing. It's found in the head waters of the Squashy River.

- We are working on those headwaters in the Sequatchie which will help the Pristine Crayfish and all those other main stem species further downstream.
- This is the resource as an Aquatic Biologist from my point of view that we're trying to protect and enhance their habitat through this RCPP.

Adam Kennon

Outputs - Land Management BMP'S

- With this RCPP, we are focusing Best Management Practices and will do some easements.
- Some of the resource concerns for us that we highlighted, looking at soil resource concerns and in the form of erosion, water resource nutrients, pesticides, pathogens, and sediment.
- We are also looking at animal resource concerns.
 - Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms, that's looking at stream bank stabilization, and possibly looking at those culverts and attempting to look at culvert replacements.
 - We are mainly looking at Best Management Practices as one of our main outputs for the RCPP.
- Another thing that we are hoping to do with RCPP is to put in entity held easements and we have to do that with our partner Land Trust for Tennessee.
 - They have been working in our area for years and have ongoing projects in our particular RCPP boundary area. We are working with them to continue to put those entity held easements on the ground.

Financial Assistance (FA) Funding Allocation

- This is basically a summary of how we hope to allocate those financial assistance funds over five years. We're hoping to put most of that into Best Management Practices with just over \$5M. We hope to put entity held easements on the ground with around \$1M and then we'll also do some rental contracts with that at \$125,000.
- Some of the outcomes that we're hoping fall out from this RCPP are:
 - An improved index of biological integrity scores with TBA. We're hoping to use some of their biological data to show those scores improved with some of the practices that we put on the ground.
 - Again, also wanting to improve water quality and delist those 303 delisted streams, TDEC will be taking water quality and has thousands of water quality monitoring stations throughout our area and so hoping to use that data to sort of show that we've improved water quality and we're delisting those streams.

- We also want to improve upland habitat again in those head water areas. Those areas are critical for threatening endangered narrow endemics putting 10,000 acres on the ground and improved upland habitat, improve soil retention, on agricultural lands.
- Sediment being one of the big issues, attempting to retain that sediment on the mountain, improve landowner knowledge of the Farm Bill programs. So in our outreach efforts, we hope to have landowner engagement within our NRCS offices and improve the knowledge that they have the programs in our area.
- We also hope to improve the community knowledge of the natural resources.

Brandy Broughton – USDA FSA

CRP Sign Up Enrollment Options.

- We are in a new FY23, and some upcoming sign ups regarding our FY23 journal sign up. That sign date has not been announced, but we are anticipating that to happen within the next month or so.
- We have FY23 CRP grassland sign up 205 and that would typically be announced and anticipated in the spring of next year.
- We also still have the Forest Management Incentive Program, which is extended to the end of this fiscal year or until funds are depleted, whichever comes first. But this will be the last fiscal year according to the new the recent Farm Bill for the Forest Management Incentive Program.
- We have FY23 continuous CRP Sign Up 59 which includes all of our continuous practices. This sign up has been announced and is open and ongoing. This is available to producers.
- The Transition Incentive Program which is an ongoing program as well.

Conservation and Reserve Program (CRP)

- This is just an overview of the program itself. CRP is a voluntary land conservation program and our goal with is to, at minimum, protect the nation's soil, water, and wildlife resources, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat.
- We have three options for sign up under CRP;
 - The General CRP
 - Continuous CRP
 - Grassland CRP

- These programs contracts are from 10 to 15-years depending on the producer's preference. Each program offers an annual rental payment for the life of that contract and at the end of this Farm Bill we are extended through the FY23.
- Recently, we had submitted the proposal of our FY22, Soil Rental Rates that can be found at this website as well for each county within Tennessee.
- We have not been approved for those yet, but we're anticipating that to happen very soon. These are just what the proposed rental rates are for at this point.

General CRP

- We have an annual sign up with a deadline. This is competitive bidding which is based on our EBI (Environmental Benefit Index) score.
- We also have the opportunity with CRP general where it must meet these following criteria to be eligible.
 - Have an erosion index of eight or greater.
 - Expiring CRP acres that are currently enrolled but want to reenroll are located in our national state CRP conservation priority areas.
- Recently, at our last sign up, we had 29 counties that submitted offers across the state, which was a little over 250 offers. A total of 7 practices and approximately 4,100 acres accepted. Based on all of the submitted offers Tennessee had at least a 99 percent acceptance rate.

Continuous CRP Signup

- An ongoing sign-up, excluding re-enrollment acres which is somewhat different, but has included regular continuous HELI, SAFE, and CLEAR30.
- This is not subject to competitive bidding, but it's geared towards land devoted to practices such as waterways, filter strips, riparian buffer, some of our smaller targeted areas within conservation.

CRP Grasslands

- This is a working lands program that we support grazing operations as well as plant and animal biodiversity. The minimal rental rate at this point is \$15 per acre and could be more depending on the county.
- The grasslands CRP offers that are located within the grassland national priority zone could receive an additional 50 ranking points.
- This program is ranked similar to our general CRP program where producers have to submit an offer based on their land and eligibility as well.

- Beginning Farmers or farmers considered as socially disadvantaged or as a Veteran farmer or rancher could receive an additional 10 points to add to those ranking points to make their offer more competitive.
- Recently, in our last sign up, we had six counties that submitted offers for 131.2 acres that was accepted.

CRP Transition Incentive Program (TIP)

- This is a program for current CRP participants in case they are looking to retire out of farming, and this is an opportunity for them to provide landowner operators with incentives to return land to production on these expiring CRP contracts.
- Based on this opportunity, the producer that is transitioning their farm over to a socially disadvantaged farmer or beginning farmer to receive an incentive based on this program, as well as the opportunity for the new beginning farmer or social disadvantage farmer to have the opportunity to continue on to preserve these conservation practices.

CRP Forest Management Incentive Program

- We are only authorized to the end of this fiscal year, which ends September 30th of next year.
- As of right now, we still have funding available for this incentive program. Many producers across the state have taken advantage of this incentive program.
- The FMI payments are based on the lesser of the actual cost or 85 percent of the NRCS national payment scenarios that we do utilize for this payment process.

CRP Updates and Reminders

- FY22 was a great year for Tennessee. We have issued our annual rental payments for our current contract holders around \$11.5M in rental payments and that includes all of our conservation programs within CRP for 6,000 contracts.
- For FY23, we have continuous CRP Sign Up 59 that is available. This is an opportunity for producers to participate in CRP.
- Some incentives that go along with the continuous CRP sign up for new land offers is to sign up for the Incentive Program payment which is SIP and that's the opportunity for incentive.
- We have a Practice Incentive Payment referred to as PIP. We also have some Water and Air Quality Incentives along with that on top of some cost share opportunities as well.
- For those that do have those interim conservation plans, that deadline to have a traditional conservation plan completed is December 16, 2022.

STAC Conservation Subcommittee Updates

- Notice CRP-980 gave information about establishing, review, and or modifying state grassland priority zones that has been submitted and waiting for National office approval.
- Based on our information that we've gathered, the state grasslands zone is limited, per national status, is only limited to 25 percent of your total hay pasture and rangeland, which for this state is five \$5.3M acres.
- The proposed Tennessee Grassland priority zones that were established included a list of 13 counties which average a total of 1.3 grassland acres. Of these 13 counties that were selected were based on participation, threat of conversion, development, and historical underserved producers, just to name a few.
- We are still waiting for approval from the National Office on these priorities' zones within the state.

SAFE Proposals Updates

- We submitted an initial approval but had to make some modifications based on the National office's recommendations. We are in the process of working on that as well. Once submitted it will be reviewed and approved.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)-Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)

- We currently do not have active signups for ECP or EFRP. This is just an overview that these programs are available once there is an emergency that occurs within the state or counties based on disasters.
- Typically, the ECP program covers more of our farmers and ranchers for farmland purposes and EFRP covers more about forest lands producers and ranchers.
- Eligible for 75 percent or 90 percent for limited resource or socially disadvantaged farmers.

ECP Updates/Reminders

- FY22 Tennessee implemented ECP in 17 counties across the state with a total of \$2.9M in damage however, Tennessee has issued around \$1.6M in cost share to those eligible producers. This is still ongoing as an ECP producers typically has up to a year or a year and a half depending on completion of these practices.
- As a reminder, the ECP program did shift starting last year where we are implementing CSP payment scenarios as cost share components.

- This will continue on for this new fiscal year as well and ECP will continue to pay 75 to 90 percent for a cost shared depending on the eligibility of social disadvantage or limited resource producers.

Arthur Hawkins - NRCS

Urban Agriculture Subcommittee

- As you all know, nationally, a growing Urban Agricultural economy is emerging to really address the needs of underserved and low-income communities. Urban Agriculture is also getting increased attention because of initiatives to create more resilient local and regional food systems to promote Climate Smart Agriculture practices.
- The office of Urban Agriculture came out of the 2018 Farm Bill, and it was established to promote urban indoor and other emerging agricultural practices to support urban and suburban and urban cluster agriculture programs and services related to Urban Agriculture across the full USDA spectrum.

NRCS Urban Agriculture Office Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP)

- The core activities of the office that I mentioned in the statute includes:
 - Creating a federal advisory committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.
 - Creating urban and suburban county committees through the Farm Service Agency offering community compost and food waste reduction, cooperative grants and offering broader Urban Agriculture and innovative production competitive grants.
 - Additionally, the office is working to revive the Peoples Gardening Initiative, which was started during Secretary Tom Vilsack first term.
- This leads us to the information of our Urban Agriculture Subcommittee.
- The promotion of Urban Agriculture is one of the priorities of our current administration and our NRCS conservation programs do support this priority at the local level.
- For these reasons a National directive was issued in September of 2021 to encourage states and State Conservationists to establish subcommittees to their State Technical Committees to focus on gathering input from stakeholders on planning and implementing Urban Agriculture Conservation.
- The Urban Agriculture subcommittee will focus on Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production issues that may emerge and the implementation of Farm Bill conservation programs.

- The primary purpose of this new committee will be to foster and promote Urban Ag within the state by supporting urban farmers and partners who are working to develop, implement, and promote new and innovative practices and concerns on urban and small subcommittee will support the local, regional, and national objectives.

Subcommittee Responsibilities

1. We will identify local Urban Agriculture needs, emerging practices, resource concerns and promote partnering entities to support Urban Agriculture, small scale, and innovative production.
2. We will identify local barriers that are standing in the way of us being successful of the implementation of conservation strategies by urban small scale and innovative agriculture. Especially for our new and beginning famers.
3. We look to build statewide partnerships of experts to discuss and examine technical or programmatic topics related to resource concerns and conservation strategies and urban small scale and innovative production.
4. Will work towards evaluating and reviving ongoing innovations in agriculture, production and conservation and extension activities related to Urban Agriculture and Community agriculture.
 - This includes composting, food, waste reduction and other innovative production.
5. We will be developing recommendations on outreach strategies that will meet the unique and complex conservation issues facing our urban producers and these environments.
6. We will assess natural resource priorities for Urban Agriculture, providing recommendations for conservation practices to help NRCS meet the needs of local, urban, and small-scale producers.
7. Advising the State Conservationist on policies to improve participation in NRCS conservation programs and this includes innovative small-scale producers locally, regionally and in some cases nationally.
8. We will support local pilot project missions and deliverables by offering advice and facilitating connections with experts and partners who can lend assistance and generally by providing any additional relevant assistance and advice to the State Conservationist.
 - For the past over the past six months, we've been sending out request for folks that are interested in serving on the committee. We had a marketing flyer that was broadcast throughout the state. We talked about it on the subcommittee here earlier and through those efforts, so we were able to pull together our subcommittee that will consist of:
 - Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, Nashville
 - Linda Ortiz, State Resource Conservationist, Nashville
 - Leslie Honicker, State Agronomist, Nashville

- Katherine Burse, State Public Affairs Officer, Nashville
 - Fred Walker, District Conservationist, Memphis
 - Renita (Shorty) Beaty – Soil and Water Conservation District, Hamilton County
 - Vivian Williams - Women in Agriculture, Eastern Knoxville Representative
 - Reginald Marshall - Reggie's Veggies, Nashville
 - Marlon Foster - Knowledge Quest, Memphis
 - Mike Minnis - Landmark Farms, Memphis
 - Jason Atkins and Janice Lovell of Trevecca Urban Farm, they are in Nashville as well.
- We have a nice cross section of producers and people who have deep experience within the Urban Agriculture sector to pour into our Urban Agriculture Subcommittee.
 - I will serve as the Chairperson for this committee.
 - Our first meeting is scheduled for today, a foundational meeting going over all of the roles and responsibilities, making some introductions, making sure we're all familiar and comfortable with one another to know each other's area of expertise and how we all plan to contribute.
 - We will have some presentations from the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.
 - We will then hear from Harold Pettigrew, the Tennessee State Outreach Coordinator. He will speak on the Urban Agriculture technical and financial assistance available and hear from Delta Bell. A Soil Scientist out of Mississippi, who is participating in our Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee Southern Leadership Development Program. Her group has been tasked with developing an Urban Agriculture outreach project that is supposed to target the local level.
 - Finally, we will hear from Joshua Beniston, the Regional Soil Health Specialist for the Soil Health Division, and he will talk to us about the work he's been doing over the past several years and Urban Soil Health. There are some tech notes that he's preparing to release shortly, and also, he will talk to us about some adaptive management opportunities to work with producers.
 - We want to be able to touch all communities that are operating on a small scale that are kind of a cluster operational situation, community gardens or you know suburbs and suburbia.
 - My office is out of Cookeville. The plan is to have some Urban Agriculture participation in the Cookeville area. Urban Agriculture definitely means more than just our downtown areas.
 - NRCS has a broad range of best management practices that we offer for our urban producers from high tunnels to micro irrigation, helping establish pollinator habitat, cover crops as well

as a few interim practices that we have this year by way of low tunnels and raised beds. So we also want to continue to expand our scope of partnerships.

- We are looking forward to continuing the work with the Tennessee Aquarium through the RCPP effort the Ridges to Rivers project to make sure that we are connecting with the appropriate urban producers to leverage those resources as well.
- To ensure all are aware some of our Urban Ag subcommittee members are on this call today, which is great. They get to see that Urban Agriculture is indeed a priority in the state, and that our programs are actively taking into consideration.

Nathan Hicklin - NRCS (Acting State Agronomist)

FY2023 Interim Conservation Practice Standards

- Raised Beds and Low tunnel Systems.
- Tennessee has adopted, these two practices for interim basis for one year and after that year, they'll be evaluated on implementation and could possibly move forward with making it a permanent practice.
- Overview was provided on the criteria, purpose, and specifications for these two interim practices.

Comment - Arthur Hawkins

I just wanted to show appreciation to the Urban Ag Subcommittee members who joined the conversation here today. Hopefully they received an understanding of the fuller purpose of the State Technical Committee and what they'll be expected to contribute on the subcommittee.

John Womack - Closing Remarks

- As you see there in the chat for those that had slides, please e-mail those to Betty and her e-mail is there in the chat. We would appreciate that in order to get them with today's meeting for others to see offline. I appreciate you all's attendance this morning and especially to those that presented information that was given. A lot of good information was shared.
- As we move forward in the next three to five years, it is going to be a great time for us with a lot of opportunities to address some concerns with Climate, Smart Ag and Forestry to work within our urban environment and address some of those needs there and to work with all individuals.
- That is hitting the three main priorities and I think with the IRA and the funding that it has been provided, there is going to be some truly good opportunities. I look forward to working with you all and this committee and the partnerships that are developed.
- With that, I believe the next State Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for February the 14th. We will get prepared for that day. Thank you everyone.