



United States Department of Agriculture

2023 Minnesota State Technical Committee Standard Operating Procedure

Minnesota State Technical Advisory Committee

Overview

The Minnesota State Technical Advisory Committee (MNSTAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the implementation of conservation technical assistance and programs. The Committee is intended to include members from a wide variety of conservation and agricultural interests. Chaired by the State Conservationist, the MNSTAC is composed of representatives from Federal and State agencies, American Indian Tribes, agricultural and conservation groups, and agricultural and forestry producers.

Responsibilities of the State Technical Committee

The MNSTAC convenes twice per year to discuss and make recommendations to NRCS for delivering conservation technical and program assistance. The role of the Committee is advisory in nature and has no implementation or enforcement authority. However, NRCS gives strong consideration to the recommendations of the STAC.

It is the responsibility of the STAC to:

1. Provide information, analysis, and recommendations to NRCS on conservation priorities for natural resources conservation activities and programs.
2. Identify emerging conservation concerns and program needs.
3. Provide feedback and recommendations for conservation practice standards and specifications.
4. Consider recommendations from local working groups to make recommendations to the State Conservationist.
5. Assist NRCS with public outreach and information efforts.

State Technical Advisory Committee Membership

The MN STAC will include agricultural producers, nonindustrial private forest landowners, and other professionals who represent a variety of conservation and agricultural interests. The STAC for MN will include representatives from among the following, if willing to serve:

1. NRCS
2. Farm Service Agency (FSA)
3. FSA State Committee
4. U.S. Forest Service
5. National Institute of Food and Agriculture
6. Each of the federally recognized American Indian Tribal Governments
7. Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

8. State departments and agencies within the State, including the following:
 - Agricultural agency
 - Fish and wildlife agency
 - Forestry agency
 - Soil and water conservation agency
 - Water resources agency
9. Agricultural producer representing the crops and livestock raised within Minnesota
10. Owners of nonindustrial private forest land
11. Nonprofit organizations (as defined under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) that demonstrate conservation expertise and experience working with agricultural producers in the State
12. Agribusiness
13. Other Federal agencies and persons knowledgeable about economic and environmental impacts of conservation techniques and programs may be invited to participate as determined by the State Conservationist.

The State Conservationist will invite other relevant government agencies, organizations, and persons, knowledgeable about economic and environmental impacts of conservation programs, to participate as needed.

New Membership

It is the responsibility of the State Conservationist to seek a balanced representation of interests among the membership on the STAC. The STAC should consider the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA. Membership will include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent the conservation and related technical concerns of historically underserved groups and individuals; as defined by the Farm Bill. Individuals or groups wanting to participate on the Committee within Minnesota may submit a request to the State Conservationist that explains their interest and outlines their credentials. Decisions regarding membership are at the discretion of the State Conservationist. State Conservationist decisions on membership are final and not appealable to any other individual or group within USDA.

Specialized Subcommittees

Specialized subcommittees composed of STAC members may be needed to analyze and refine specific issues or research topics. The State Conservationist may assemble certain committee members, including members of local working groups and other experts to discuss, examine, and focus on a technical or programmatic topic, or combination of such. The State Conservationist shall appoint one of the MNSTAC members as a chair, assign a NRCS consultant, and define the purpose, parameters, reporting frequency and lifespan of the committee. Recommendations of specialized subcommittees will be presented in general sessions of the STAC.

MNSTAC Subcommittees:

The following subcommittees have been identified. MNSTAC members are encouraged to participate on one or multiple subcommittees. The subcommittees can be comprised of non-members. Each Subcommittee will have an assigned non-NRCS lead and a NRCS Advisor. Please note that not all the subcommittees are active at any given time.

Conservation Easements

The roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Easements subcommittee is to provide input and direction for Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Application ranking criteria, geographic area rate caps, local and state priorities, compatible use agreements, restoration plans, management plans and management of easement acres.

Financial Assistance Programs (EQIP and CSP)

The roles and responsibilities of the FAP subcommittee is to provide input and direction for Financial Assistance Programs to include EQIP and CSP. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Local work group recommendations, state priorities application ranking criteria, EQIP initiatives and efforts, funding pools, program evaluation.

Forestry

The roles and responsibilities of the Forestry subcommittee is to provide input and direction for conservation delivery for private forest land. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Identifying and prioritizing forestland resource concerns, providing feedback on forestry standards and technical materials, developing priorities and delivery for forest land programs.

Grazing and Hay land

The roles and responsibilities of the Grazing and Hay land Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for conservation delivery for Grazing and Hay land. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Identifying and prioritizing pasture and hay land resource concerns, providing feedback on related standards and technical materials, developing priorities and delivery for programs.

Practice Standards and Technical Materials (As needed)

The roles and responsibilities of the Practice Standards and Technical Materials Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for technical delivery of conservation. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Providing feedback and direction for standards and technical material updates, developing state conservation planning priorities, identifying technical development needs.

Watershed

The roles and responsibilities of the Priority Watershed Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for technical delivery of watershed conservation planning. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Providing feedback and direction for watershed selection and prioritization, updates to watershed studies and watershed monitoring activities.

Wildlife and CRP

The roles and responsibilities of the Wildlife and CRP Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for conservation delivery for Wildlife and CRP. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following: Identifying and prioritizing CRP priority areas, providing feedback on related standards and technical materials, developing priorities and delivery for wildlife programs.

Others as Needed

Meetings and Frequency

The MNSTC will meet twice each fiscal year. Other meetings may be held at the discretion of the State Conservationist in a format of his or her choosing. The State Conservationist will call a meeting whenever he or she believes that there is business that should be brought before the committee for action. However, any USDA agency may make a request of the State Conservationist for a meeting.

USDA Fiscal Year	Bi-annual	Date	Location
2023	1	1/10/2023	St. Cloud, MN
2023	2	TBD	TBD
2024	1	TBD	TBD
2024	2	TBD	TBD

Minnesota State Technical Committee Meeting Process and Procedures

The MNSTC process and procedures are as follows:

Scheduling Meetings and Public Notice

- MNSTAC meetings will be scheduled on a bi-annual basis
- A public meeting notice at least 14 calendar days prior to the meetings will be posted in the Pioneer Press.
- The meeting notice will also be posted to the Minnesota NRCS Web site and will include meeting time, location (physical or virtual), agenda items, and point of contact.

Meeting Agenda and Content

- The meeting agenda will be developed to reflect the purpose and responsibilities of the MNSTAC.
- MNSTAC members will be e-mailed 30 days in advance of the meeting requesting agenda items.
- A meeting agenda will be prepared and provided to the committee members at least 7 calendar days prior to a scheduled meeting.
- The State Conservationist may amend the agenda, at any time, without notice.

Meeting Materials and Handouts

- Handouts will be provided to the MNSTAC at least 5 days before the meeting, when time and resources allow.
- Presenters are responsible for providing materials for their area of responsibility.
- Handouts and presentation materials will be sent to the MN State Office for distribution at least 5 days prior to the meeting.

Meeting Set Up and Communications (if there is a virtual option)

- Microsoft Teams or other virtual platform information will be sent out with the agenda.
- Presenters are responsible for contacting the MNSTAC coordinator 5 days in advance for equipment and presentation needs.
- Committee members and public participants shall notify the MNSTAC coordinator for coordination of virtual participation.
- Virtual host will set up invitation to join the meeting 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.

Virtual meetings are usually available to anyone with computer access (i.e. participant's office) with audio, microphone, and camera capabilities. If needed, participants can arrange to use the virtual technology at the state or one of the area offices.

Virtual Meeting Participation Locations (if there is a virtual option)	
NRCS NE Area Office	Baxter, MN
NRCS NW Area Office	Detroit Lakes, MN
NRCS SE Area Office	Faribault, MN
NRCS SW Area Office	Marshall, MN
NRCS State Office	St. Paul, MN

Conducting Business

The meetings will be conducted as an open discussion among members. Discussion will focus on the programs and activities identified in 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A, Section 501.0C. The following guidelines will govern meeting discussions:

- The State Conservationist or his or her designee will lead the discussion.
- Only one person may speak at a time in an open forum.
- The State Conservationist or his or her designee is responsible for recognizing speakers.
- State Technical Committees are advisory in nature and all reasonable recommendations are considered.
- Members may be polled but voting on issues is not appropriate.
- The State Conservationist, in consultation with those members present, may establish time limits for discussion on individual agenda items.
- The State Conservationist will defer those agenda items not covered because of time limits to another time.

Record of Meetings and Meeting Notes

- Summaries for all STAC meetings will be available within 30 calendar days of the committee meeting and distributed to committee members.
- The summaries will be filed at the NRCS State office and posted to the MN NRCS Web site: [Minnesota State Technical Advisory Committee](#)

Response to Committee Recommendations

- The State Conservationist will inform the State Technical Advisory Committee of the decisions made in response to all Committee recommendations within 90 days.
- Notification will be made in writing to all STAC members.

Annual Review of MNSTAC

- Members will be reviewed annually for changes to the roster.
- The MNSTAC SOP will be updated as needed to reflect any changes.