



United States Department of Agriculture

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

JUNE 14, 2023



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Resources
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Housekeeping

Introductions

Please enter your name, title, organization/agency in the chat.

Questions/Comments

Enter question/comment in chat

Raise hand to make a verbal comment

Mute

Please keep yourself muted so that we can hear presenters and attendees.

Agenda and Meeting Minutes

Posted on NRCS Florida website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-state/florida/technical-committee

The meeting is being recorded.





Natural Resources Conservation Service Florida State Technical Committee Meeting



June 14, 2023; 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Time	Agenda Item
9:00-9:10 a.m.	Welcome and Opening Remarks, State Updates, <i>Nathan Fikkert, Acting Florida State Conservationist</i>
State Technical Committee Report	
9:10-9:20 a.m.	Financial Assistance Programs Updates, <i>Diana Avellanet, Acting ASTC-Programs</i>
9:20-10:05 a.m.	Hurricane Ian EWP, <i>Jason Strenth, State Conservation Engineer</i>
	Ecological Sciences Update, <i>Roberto Luciana, State Resource Conservationist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scenarios of Practice Code 666- Forest Stand Improvement ▪ Scenarios of Practice Code 338- Prescribed Burning ▪ Scenario/Rates for Practice Code 314 Brush Management
	Partnerships Updates, <i>Hilary Barnhart, ASTC-Partnerships</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State Conservation Innovation Grants NFO ▪ Regional Conservation Partnership Program NFO ▪ Local Working Group Updates
	Conservation Easements, <i>Marcus Shorter, ASTC-Easements</i>
10:05-10:15 Break	
State Technical Committee Input and Discussion	
10:15-10:30	Source Water Protection Watersheds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paul Thorpe, North Florida Water Management District
10:30-11:50 a.m.	General Discussion Reports, Comments, Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aquaculture Subcommittee, <i>Hilary Barnhart, ASTC-Partnerships</i> ▪ AFCD Updates, <i>Buck Carpenter, President</i>
11:50 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Closing Remarks, <i>Nathan Fikkert, Acting State Conservationist</i>

Participant Instructions (this meeting will be recorded)

Join the conference:

<https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1606121533> By Phone: +1 646 828 7666 Meeting ID: 160 612 1533



Welcome and Opening Remarks

Nathan Fikkert
Acting NRCS Florida State
Conservationist



Financial Assistance Program Updates

Diana Avellanet
Acting Assistant State
Conservationist
for Programs



Financial Assistance Program

Program	Initial Allocations
CSP Renewals	\$895,595 (final)
CSP Grasslands Conservation Initiative (GCI)	\$23,265 (final)
CSP Classic	\$8,000,000
CSP Organic	\$200,000
CSP Long Leaf Pine Initiative	\$350,000
Total CSP Initial Allocation	\$9,468,860.00
EQIP Disaster	\$12,000,000
EQIP Classic	\$21,664,000
EQIP Initiatives	\$3,823,800
EQIP CIG	\$900,000
Total EQIP Initial Allocation	\$38,387,800
Total FA Programs Initial Full Year Allocation	\$48,856,660



EQIP Classic

- 80% of EQIP Classic targeted to local-level
 - Ø Field office funding to address locally-led priorities
 - Ø Area-wide funding for livestock, wildlife, water conservation
- 20% of EQIP Classic targeted to state-level priorities
 - Ø Historically Underserved, Organic, On-Farm Energy, Urban, Tribal, Conservation Planning Activities



Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

Available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to adopt climate-smart practices

Fiscal Year 2023 Initial Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) allocations for Florida State

IRA-EQIP	IRA-CSP
\$ 3,158,881.00	\$ 4,026,167.00

[Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry \(CSAF\) Mitigation Activities List FY2023 \(usda.gov\)](#)





Fiscal Year 2023 New Initiatives



Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)

The OTI provides funding to support producers transitioning to organic production by providing financial assistance (FA) and technical assistance (TA) to implement conservation practices that support organic production.

Application cutoff day June 15, 2023

Organic Transition Initiative Practices	
Practice Code	Core Practice
823	Organic Management



Hurricane Ian Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Update

Hilary Barnhart ,in lieu of
Jason Strenth, State Conservation Engineer



Hurricane Ian EWP

- Received requests for assistance from 27 different sponsors
- These sponsors are located in 15 different counties
- Two sponsors have declined participation in the program
- Two sponsors had no eligible sites



Hurricane Ian EWP

- A damage survey report (DSR) is utilized to document the damage, propose action to correct damage and document estimated cost for proposed action
- 56 DSR's have been approved for estimated construction cost of \$89.4 million (\$67.1 million financial assistance)
- Approved DSR's are for 19 sponsors



Hurricane Ian EWP

- EWP program operates via a locally-led cooperative agreement where the sponsor either does the work themselves or contracts the work
- Entered into 10 agreements with nine sponsors for estimated construction cost of \$58.6 million (\$44 million FA)
- Four additional agreements waiting on sponsor's signature



Ecological Sciences Updates

Nathan Fikkert, Acting State
Conservationist
in lieu of Roberto Luciano
Acting State Resource
Conservationist



NRCS Payment Schedule Timeline and Overview

- Payment schedules are how NRCS ultimately provide financial assistance for the completion of conservation practices
- Payment schedules are a list of payment scenarios
- Conservation Practices (activities) typically have one or more payment scenarios associated with them
- Payment scenarios are developed for specific financial assistance programs every year on the fiscal year timeframe



How payment scenarios are built

- Conservation Practice Standards are evaluated to determine desired outcomes and how to achieve those outcomes
- Payment scenarios are developed at a regional level to achieve consistencies within a region
- Once a desired outcome is determined, NRCS staff begin to piece together “components” to build a payment scenario
- Examples of components are:
 - Equipment mobilization per hour
 - Labor per hour
 - Concrete per cubic yard
 - Seed per pound



How payment scenarios are built (cont.)

- The overall implementation requirements of applying a conservation practice are also evaluated and components are put together to form the scenario
- Example: To build a foot of 4-strand barbed wire fence, NRCS may research the cost of commercially available materials and/or how much a contractor charges to complete a practice:
 - Wire-"X dollars" for 5,280 of wire (quarter mile of fence)
 - Posts-number of posts for a quarter mile times "X" dollars per post
 - Labor
 - Pick up truck
 - Auger for posts by hour



How payment scenarios are built (cont.)

- Once the overall component amounts are put together we divide that by the amount of fence installed to get our price per foot rate
- Once that rate is established, NRCS determines the percentage payment rate for the practice based on the program and that is the flat rate paid to the participant after the practice has been installed according to NRCS standards and specifications
- For example, EQIP payment rates are typically 75 and 90% (historically underserved)



Payment Schedule Calendar

- General dates, does change a bit from year to year
 - Component change – March/April
 - Example-cost of fence wire goes up drastically. NRCS staff submits data showing the increase and the component gets increased
 - New scenarios or edits – June/July
 - A new scenario is needed to come up with a different way to address a resource concern, or circumstances have changed and edits need to be made.
 - Examples:
 - Individual Plant Covers (IPCs) scenario developed under Pest Management Systems (CPS 595). To protect young trees from the cygid that carries and spreads citrus greening
 - Labor amounts were underestimated for the completion of a practice so NRCS adds “X” hours of labor to an existing scenario



Payment Schedule Calendar

- July-final scenarios submitted to NRCS national payment schedule team for review and approval.
- October-NRCS state staff and ultimately the State Conservationist make the decision on what scenarios will be included on final payment schedules by program.
- November-Payment schedules go through a quality assurance process and are imported to NRCS business tools for use.



Possible Florida Specific Updates

- Prescribed Burning (338)
 - This practice seems to need continual evaluation to ensure payment rates are relevant with current costs
 - Any actual data showing actual costs can help NRCS justify increasing rates
- Forest Stand Improvement (666) and Woody Residue Treatment (384)
 - New forestry management practices and techniques require NRCS to evaluate current rates to ensure we have adequate scenarios and rates to properly apply the practice. Additionally increased cost of equipment, labor, etc.



How you can help

- Review payment schedules at www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules
- Let NRCS know if you think something is redundant or missing
- Provide data that shows rates have gone up or down – NRCS cannot justify changes without solid, actual data showing the change is required
- If you have that information, email Nathan Fikkert, Acting Florida State Conservationist at nathan.fikkert@usda.gov by **COB Friday, June 23** for consideration in FY 2024
- If that deadline is missed, PLEASE send anyway, its never to early to begin work on FY 2025



Finally...

BIG THANKS to our partners and individuals who have already shared good cost data for NRCS to work with.

Without these contributions, payment schedule rates can quickly become obsolete given current price pressures of everything from materials to labor.





Partnerships Updates

Hilary Barnhart
Assistant State Conservationist
Partnerships & Initiatives

Florida Conservation Innovation Grants

Hilary Barnhart, Assistant State
Conservationist- Partnerships & Initiatives



FL Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) 2023

- Application submission deadline: July 14, 2023
- State CIG priorities: urban agriculture, water conservation, soil health and carbon sequestration
- Eligible applicants:
 - All U.S.-based non-federal entities (NFE) and individuals are eligible to apply for projects carried out in Florida
- Total available: \$1,000,000
 - Individual award floor: \$50,000
 - Individual award ceiling: \$250,000
- Cost-share:
 - Applicants contribute 1:1 match. HU applicants may provide 25% of total project costs
- Project can be between 1-3 years in duration



State CIG Priorities 2024

Requesting input from State Technical Committee for 2024 Florida CIG priorities

Past years priorities have included:

- Ø Urban agriculture
- Ø Water conservation
- Ø Carbon sequestration
- Ø Climate resilience
- Ø Soil health
- Ø Grazing conservation practices
- Ø High tunnel systems





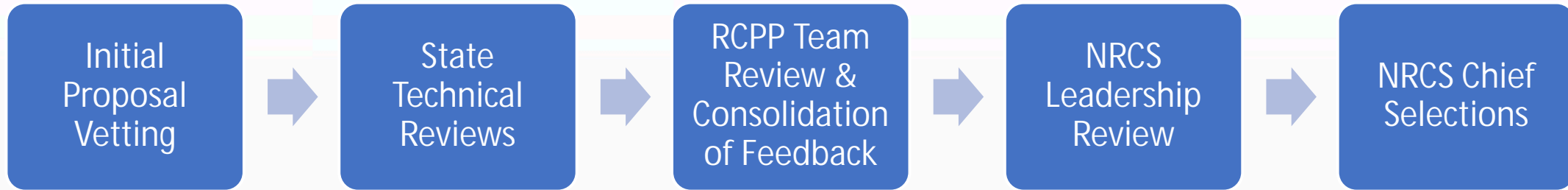
Denise Liggett,
RCPP Coordinator

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) 2023 NFO Highlights

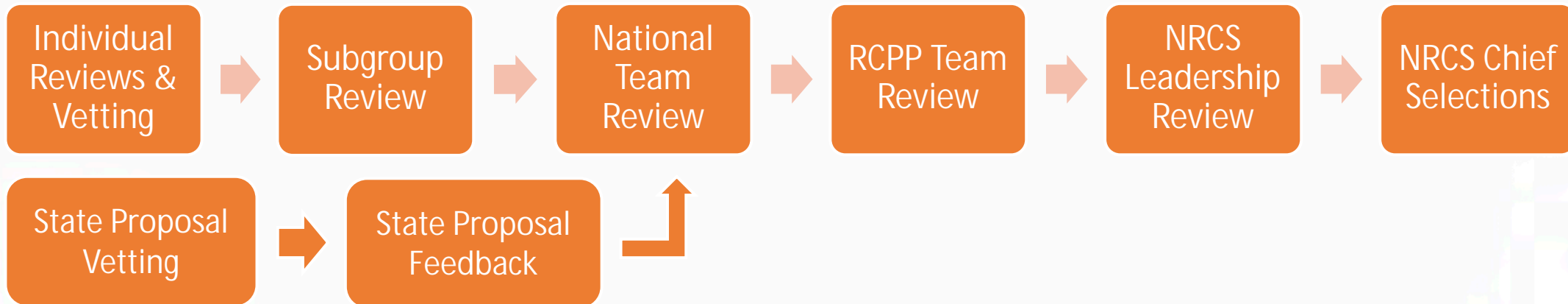
- \$500M total for Classic and AFA projects
- \$50M set-aside for Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) with tribal entities
- Individual project maximum increased to \$25M
- Replaced 70/30 FA & TA split with a 25% cap for TA
- Entity-held easement maximum federal share is 25/50/75, based on US ROE and benefit to HU landowners
- Allows use of covered program deeds
 - US-held easements may use WRE, HFRP or other deed templates for US-held easements
 - Entity-held easements may use ACEP-ALE template
- Proposal submission deadline: August 18, 2023
- State webinar slated for July, date TBD. Link will be posted on NRCS Florida website at www.fl.nrcs.usda.gov.



RCPP Classic Process



AFA Review Process



State Technical Committee Role

The State Technical Committee may provide input on the state evaluation process.

Process will be emailed out to STAC for input.

Does not provide input on specific proposals.

Proposals are evaluated:

- Impact (50%) – How will the project address resource concerns in the proposed geographic area?
- Partner contributions (15%) – How will contributions amplify the impact of NRCS funding?
- Partnership & project management (35%) – How effectively can the experience and resources of the partners support this project?



Local Working Group Updates

- Recommend state and national program policy to the State Technical Committee (STC) based on resource data.
- Identify high-priority areas needing assistance.
- Participate in multi-county coordination.
- Assist NRCS and the SWCD with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs.



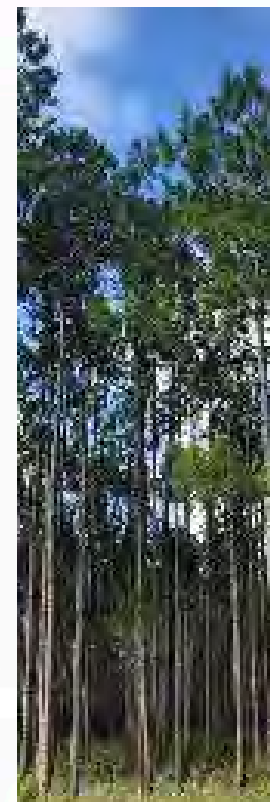
Updates to LWG Process for FY2025

- Ø FY25 Meetings will tentatively be scheduled for late spring/early summer 2024
- Ø Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) will be required to notify NRCS if they will be scheduling, organizing, and hosting the FY 2025 LWG meetings
- Ø NRCS District Conservationist (DC) will be responsible for submitting LWG responses (date TBD)
- Ø Survey Monkey will no longer be used



Conservation Easement Updates

Marcus Shorter
Assistant State Conservationist
for Easements



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Source Water Protection Watersheds

Paul Thorpe, Deputy Director,
Resource Management Division
North Florida Water
Management District



Aquaculture/Oyster Restoration Subcommittee Update

Hilary Barnhart, Assistant State
Conservationist-Partnerships



Partners Reports

Buck Carpenter
President

Association of Florida Conservation Districts



- General Discussion and Questions

Closing Remarks

Contact Information: Hilary.Barnhart@usda.gov

Next STAC meeting date:
Tentatively January 10, 2024



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- (1) Mail to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250
- (2) Fax 202-690-7442 or
- (3) Email at program.intake@usda.gov

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