



Subject: Utah State Technical Committee (STC)
Meeting Minutes

Date: July 26, 2023

To: Utah State Technical Committee

The Utah State State Technical Committee Meeting was held on July 12, 2023 at 10:00AM – 12:00PM.

Presenters: Emily Fife, NRCS, State Conservationist
Scott Morton, NRCS, Assistant State Conservationist – Easement
Travis Mote, NRCS, Assistant State Conservationist – Programs
Bir Thapa, NRCS, State Soil Scientist

Questions addressed during meeting:

Q: How is NRCS advertising programs to get new producers in the door?

A: The field offices are doing outreach to the local communities. NRCS has help from UDAF and UACD partners to broaden outreach relating to programs. The new outreach coordinator (Jolene Lau) has assisted with creating outreach plans for each county for employees to attend events.

Q: How many easement applications does NRCS get a year, and how many of those gets funded out of the applications?

A: This year 7 applications were received – 7 million in funding. Last year 12 application – 12 million in funding. Almost double the initial allocation. Ask for additional funding in the latter part of the year depending on the applications.

Q: How would the easement value estimation methodology report compare to the report required for RCPP easement value estimation methodology? Could these be similar or made the same?

A: It can be similar. We do not require NHQ to review the methodology report. We look to see if it is in reason at the state level.

Local Work Group Review:

Emily Fife, State Conservationist

State Technical Committee is essentially a board of directors for NRCS. It is a chance for the partners to provide input and feedback for the priorities NRCS has set. The Local Working Groups are a subcomponent of the State Technical Committee to elevate resource concerns from the local level. The LWG are hosted by the Conservation Districts and meet annually, usually at the beginning of the year (January – March).

Highlights/Concerns Addressed at the LWG Meeting:

- Land protection (Conservation easement tool)



- Cache-Rich team
 - Weber team
 - Northwest team
 - South Bonneville team
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- Requesting more funds for land protection
 - NRCS gets an initial allocation and could request additional funding in support to the concerns elevated by the LWG
 - Partnership with DNR and UDAF to get easements executed.
 - AG water – ties in with ag water optimization – looking at conveyance systems
 - Replacement systems – looking more towards upgrades to conserve as much water as possible
 - Soil health – NOF opportunity to prioritize soil health and the IRA funds are geared towards Climate Smart Ag.
 - Urban Agriculture
 - Logan Area and along the Wasatch Front
 - Range land is a priority because it is elevated through the strategic fund pools.

ACEP/ALE:

Scott Morton, Assistant State Conservationist – Easement

Since October 2021, a screening package has been shared with partners to look at for ACEP/ALE and applications. The process on screening the applications will change. NRCS Utah has discussed with other states to see how they are doing their screening. Decided to mimic Colorado's application package to determine the main items needed to make the NRCS application successful project.

Have had some difficulty in the past years where the estimated value is significantly different than the appraised value. Looking to ask for an appraisal report or a methodology report to identify how that value was determined. Would like to be as precise as possible to avoid adding additional money or we lose out on funding additional contracts. Provided an overview of ranking sheet and questions to determine priority.

Area Wide Market Analysis /GARC:

Scott Morton, Assistant State Conservationist – Eastment

Will mostly apply to the northern area. Looking for a way to increase the \$5,000 cap or the 85% Fair Market Value (FMV). Working with appraiser to provide an AWMA for the northern region of Utah.

Sentinel Landscape:

Scott Morton, Assistant State Conservationist – Easement

Area that has been identified as significant that can benefit the military. The funds are target for easements and land restoration. While they are federal funds, they can be matched with NRCS funds.



Overview of Resource Concerns/Frequently Used Practices/Payment Rates and Caps:

Travis Mote, Assistant State Conservationist – Programs

Provided an overview of the resource concerns over the last 3 years.

SFP: Strategic Fund Pool is a prioritized project area to target a specific resource problem to dedicate funding to that area so it is not competing against other projects.

Will be able to see SFPs in Utah through the interactive map.

The State Biologist have been working with national team to help with Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) practices. Beaver Dam Analogs was suggested as a priority concern to consider. The November State Technical Committee meeting will review in what happened in FY2023.

The next State Technical Committee meeting will be held on November 14, 2023. The meeting will be held virtually on the Zoom Platform and in person at the Utah Department of Food and Agriculture (4315 S 2700 W, Taylorsville, UT 84129.) Please contact Kia Earl at zakivvah.earl@usda.gov or 801-524-4555 with any questions.