



SUBJECT: An open letter to State Technical Advisory Committee members

DATE: June 3, 2024

Dear STAC Members:

As the State Conservationist for NRCS in Nevada, I'd like to thank you for volunteering to serve as a member of our State Technical Advisory Committee, also known as the STAC. Over the past several years, management of the STAC has been inconsistent and has drifted away from its purpose.

STACs are important, since they serve to provide recommendations relating to the implementation of NRCS conservation activities and programs. They are made up of agricultural producers and professionals who represent a variety of interests and disciplines in the soil, water, wetlands, plant, and wildlife sciences including state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and conservation districts.

Responsibilities of the STAC include providing recommendations on conservation priorities, application and funding criteria, recommended practices, and program payment percentages; identifying emerging natural resource concerns and program needs; recommending conservation practice standards and specifications; reviewing activities of the Local Working Groups to ensure state priorities are being addressed locally; making recommendations to the State Conservationist on requests and recommendations from Local Working Groups; and assisting NRCS with outreach and information efforts and identifying educational and producer training needs.

Moving forward, we're going to be refreshing the STAC and looking for ways to ensure that you as members, the farming and ranching communities, and NRCS, utilize the committee as a tool to its fullest potential. Beginning with our meeting in June 2024, we are taking a back-to-basics approach that will provide education on some of the basic workings of the STAC, background on the development of payment scenarios, conservation practices, and other guidance like the formation of subcommittees and how to make recommendations to the State Conservationist that can result in beneficial changes. We will also be looking at ways to better serve Tribal nations and their members through the development of a Tribal Advisory Committee or tribal focused subcommittee for the STAC that will mirror the responsibilities of the STAC but will be focused on tribal producers.

Starting in Fiscal Year 2025, we will begin implementing things like: shifting the due dates for recommendations on programs and payment rates so Local Work Groups can plan meetings better suited to their schedules and that NRCS receives input in time to incorporate it into the next fiscal year, and working closely with LWGs, conservation districts, and other stakeholders to return to the foundation of locally led conservation that delivers conservation on the ground.



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As we approach the task of rebuilding the STAC in the coming years, I look forward to working together as a team and meeting face-to-face to strengthen relationships and build something that benefits not only the STAC and NRCS, but the entire agriculture and conservation community in Nevada.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Ramsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Heidi M. Ramsey
State Conservationist-Nevada