

May 7, 2024

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

In attendance – see list from sign in sheets.

9:06am Welcome and greetings – Nate Goodrich, NRCS ASTC-Partnerships

- we will continue to have 2 virtual meetings and 2 face-to-face meetings (with no virtual options) each year
- everyone introduces themselves
- apologies for Joe Aull, FSA, we would have had him give a speech virtually but we are suffering technical difficulties and cannot get any sound out of our equipment (even with NRCS State Engineer trouble shooting for us)

9:12am Welcome and Greetings – Scott Edwards, NRCS State Conservationist

- hand out is from the NRCS Fly In visit to Congressional members, shows State Cost Share with SWCD-we are double the funding this year over last, and next year we will see triple that funding from last year, due to Inflation Reduction Act alone. There is still no Farm Bill, but we did receive our full funding budget in April of 2024
- Little Otter Creek Reservoir and Roy Blunt Reservoir have current year funding, but until new Farm Bill is passed, we have no new funding for watershed projects in Missouri
- NRCS has been suffering from connectivity issues on the computers that handle all of our contracts and applications, so in January we had to extend all of our deadlines and timelines for the FY, and we are now behind where we normally are in terms of obligations made
- ACT NOW, added to move funding out the door quicker, and Missouri has been stressing Nutrient Management and a 5 county pilot for pond cleanouts and other water projects outside of the Farm Bill. With this program we must publish our thresholds and how much total funding is available. \$6.5 million into over 14,000 acres.
- Urban Ag programs, already started in STL but starting soon in KC, have been wildly successful. We are still trying to nail down an office location for the KC Urban Ag program, but until then, they are working out of the Liberty, MO field office.
- We have been funding 30 to 35% of all applications in the past, but with the new IRA, we look to fund up to 50% of all applications.
- Questions – to get help from our partners on lobbying for projects (like the decrease in watershed projects), is there a way that NRCS can pass that information along to others who can lobby on our behalf? We can continue to provide technical information to our partners.

9:32am FSA – Drew Walters standing in for Joe Aull

- not much new for FSA's programs, paid out over a million dollars in drought relief last year on 185 applications
- short notice to State Technical Committee for Grasslands CRP State Zone, only about 10 days to create proposal and submit, but FSA did get one generated and submitted

9:39am ACEP and Watershed Program Update – Chris Hamilton, NRCS ASTC-Water Resources & Easements

- currently performing an area wide market analysis, due in July
- full appraisals being made across the state instead of being region restricted, \$5,000 still rate cap per proposal
- see briefing slides for the total ACEP FY24 allocation

- PL 83-566 Watershed Program, to include Little Otter Creek and Roy Blunt Reservoirs, very popular with Missouri producers, but funding has come and gone over the years, causing environmental impact statements to expire and have to be re-done before moving forward on many long term projects. See briefing slides for the priorities in this program here in Missouri. Total of 26 projects in Missouri in various phases of completion (PIFR, Pending Planning Authorization, Planning, Design, and Construction), covering many purposes, including Water Supply, Flooding, Recreation, and Agriculture Water Management.
 - Questions – Little Otter Creek, on time and on budget? On budget, yes. Expected to be completed in Spring 2025, which is a little behind schedule. PL-566 program, USACE said they looked at a watershed project in Kansas, how is that impacting the Missouri River and KC District? Is NRCS looking at building another reservoir in the KC area? NRCS does work with USACE closely, and will continue to work together on watershed projects in Missouri. We are looking at projects across all of Missouri, including the KC area, but we need to do over the environmental impact statements on all of them.

9:58am Programs Update

- **Paul McDonald for EQIP, NRCS**
 - EQIP signups have all ended except for the Native Forage Grass Initiative which is due by May 31
 - see briefing slides for EQIP FY24 totals to date
 - please make sure to look at the How EQIP Works pamphlet provided
 - not a lot of forestry applications, so we are shifting the funds to cover applications in other programs, also a lack of foresters, technical service providers
 - are we looking at more field demonstrations? Folks learn better when they are “standing in the middle of it”.
- **Susan Mammen for CSP, NRCS**
 - CSP signup deadlines already passed (CSP Classic and CSP IRA 1st was October 3, 2023, and 2nd was March 15, 2024, and renewal deadline was May 3, 2024)
 - see briefing slides for CSP signup allocations to date
 - please make sure to look at the How CSP Works pamphlet provided
- **Ally Travlos for RCPP, NRCS**
 - please see briefing slides for our active RCPP projects, and what the results of the FY24 sign ups have been
 - 2 new projects coming online, Meramec River Basin Restoration (\$1.7million available), and Increasing On-Farm Resilience to Drought and Flood in Missouri (available statewide not just region)
 - notice of funding opportunity, \$1.5 billion (with a “b”) open for proposals, deadline is July 2, 2024, multiple webinars occurring online, as well as more information online - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program/how-to-apply>

10:38am – Break

10:58am Ecological Sciences Conservation Practice Standards – Selma Mascaro, NRCS State Resource Conservationist

- Soil Carbon Amendment, CPS 336, adopted December 2023, available in eFOTG, Section 4 (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/conservation-practices>)
- Guidance Document is coming soon for CPS 336
- see briefing slides for overview of the Soil Carbon Amendment
- raw manure and biosolids are covered under a different program
- available thru EQIP, and tied in closely to the Biochar Initiative

- Questions – Where are we at with the calculator? National office is finishing up last details, should see it within the next couple of weeks.

11:12am Outreach, Technical Assistance, and Conservation Innovation Grant Proposal Input – Nate Goodrich, NRCS ASTC-Partnerships

- we need our producers/partners to provide input for priorities in FY25 for our grants and agreements – send any thoughts or ideas on this to Nate Goodrich, nate.goodrich@usda.gov
- 3 areas annually in Missouri – Outreach and Education (\$1.5 million), Technical Assistance (\$2.5 million), and Conservation Innovation Grants (\$500k, out of EQIP funding)
- getting a new Forester on staff to help with Forest Management Planning and Practice Implementation
 - suggested:
 - open up more informational/training conferences to all producers, not just urban ag
 - keep reaching out to folks we aren't already working with, and be wary of "climate smart practices" wording
 - don't leave outreach to industry
 - does NRCS work with virtual fencing? Not currently, but we are having discussions, and CIGs are still open for FY24 as well as going into FY25.

11:28am Subcommittee Reports

- **Programs-Lena Hoover, NRCS Acting ASTC-Programs**
 - discussed much of what is coming up in FY25
 - see briefing slides for FY25 EQIP Classic/IRA allocations
 - discussed FY24 un-utilized fund redistribution
- **Water Quality and Source Water Protection-Lena Hoover, NRCS Acting ASTC-Programs**
 - HUC tool overview
 - 2024 MRBI Watershed Proposal
- **Soil Health-Lena Hoover, NRCS Acting ASTC-Programs**
 - erosion and ephemeral gullies were the majority of the meeting
 - an objective calculator for ephemeral gullies is being developed
- **CRP-Drew Walters, FSA**
 - CRP subcommittee has been formed, but have not met yet
- **Remainder of Subcommittees**
 - we will look over the next quarter on how to refresh the subcommittees
 - no reports from the other subcommittees

11:42am Local Work Group Surveys-Scott Edwards, NRCS State Conservationist

- lost a lot of these during COVID, but we need to bring them back so that NRCS can get the thoughts and ideas from all of our partners, producers, at every level in every part of the state
- Rex McAliley has developed a survey to pass to the local working groups, see briefing slides for QR code to access the survey
- will discuss the finalization of this survey at next virtual State Technical Committee meeting
- once we deploy the survey, we ask our partners take the survey to every meeting of producers and share it with them so that we get as wide of a view of what the producers in Missouri are doing and how they feel about NRCS/FSA/RD and our programs

12:05pm Adjourn

- please go tour Sandborne Field on MU Campus
- next meeting is September 3rd