

Tennessee State Technical Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 13, 2024

Hybrid meeting. In-person at TSU/Virtual on Teams

Starting time: 9:30 a.m.

Members and Guests Present:

Bratcher, Caleb - Panther Creek Forestry
Daniel, Kurt – TN Association Conservation Districts
Daniels, Roger - USDA NRCS
Edwards, Jordan – USDA NRCS
Engle, Joshua – USDA NRCS
Fay, Conor - USDA NRCS
Feno, Matt - USDA NRCS
Friend, Aaron – USDA NRCS
Goff, Hannah - USDA FSA
Hawkins, Arthur – USDA NRCS
Honicker, Leslie – USDA NRCS
Jones, Daniel – USDA NRCS
Lebron, Acevedo - USDA NRCS
Lincicome, David – TDEC Natural Heritage Inventory Program
Litz, John – FPAC FSA
Marshall, Reggie – TN Fruit and Vegetable Association
McAfee, Jason – USDA NRCS
McDaniel, Curt – USDA NRCS
Miller, Alton - USDA NRCS
Moore Williams, Renee – Moore Family Century Farm
Morris, Garrett – USDA NRCS
Nelson, Christopher – USDA NRCS
Ortiz, Linda - USDA NRCS
Pate, Greg – TN Forestry Association
Pettigrew, Harold - USDA NRCS
Pitchay, Dharma – College of Agriculture, TSU
Powelson, Jeff – American Bird Conservancy
Stefanick, Emily – Panther Creek Forestry
Walker, Kristin – TN Farm Bureau Federation
Woodcock, John - TDA

Starting at 9:35 a.m.

Welcome/Opening Remarks Curt McDaniel – Acting State Conservationist

Linda Ortiz – State Resource Conservationist - NRCS

- Good morning, everyone, I am Linda Ortiz and I currently serve as the State Resource Conservationist, Ecological Science Division with NRCS Tennessee.
- Today we want to recap and regroup as a State Technical Committee (STC). Who can serve on the Tennessee State Technical Committee? The STC is chaired by the State Conservationist, in this case our Acting State Conservationist Curt McDaniel. The State Conservationist is also a member of the committee. We have a diverse group of members from State agencies, federal agencies, non-profit organizations, individuals who are interested in nature resources in Tennessee and farmers. That is a comprehensive list of the roles and responsibilities of the STC members.
- I am going to focus on one of the roles, that being identifying emerging natural resource concerns and program needs. In 2021 the STC established the priority resource concerns for Tennessee. We evaluated them by land uses. I have provided a PowerPoint showing the roles of committee members.
- Now is the time for our committee members to help NRCS to establish a new set of priority resource concerns for the state. We have provided a survey so if you don't mind, take out your phones and scan the QR code. This will take you to the survey and we will provide real time updates.
- I went through the slides quickly, but the goal is to give you an idea of how NRCS established priority resource concerns that we have currently from 2021. This survey will highlight what concerns are out there and give our stakeholders a chance to make recommendations.



STAC
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John Litz – FPAC – FSA

- Good morning and thank you for inviting TDA to the State Technical Committee meeting today. We appreciate all the great work being done and we are honored to be a part of this committee. We want to go hand in hand and be a substantial partner with NRCS and Rural Development across the state to help farmers to succeed and sustain agriculture for centuries and generations down the line.
- We must educate the public on what NRCS and Rural Development does for agriculture across the state of Tennessee and all across the United States. It is our responsibility to help our organizations assist farmers to be able to make a decent profit, protect our environment, and be able to feed a hungry world.
- It has been an honor to be here, thank you. I will be in and out when I have a break in my soybean meeting.

Garrett Morris – Assistant State Conservationist for Programs - NRCS

- Good morning, everyone, I am Garrett Morris and I currently serve as the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs with NRCS Tennessee.
- **Fiscal Year 2024 Programs Accomplishments**
 - FY24 Financial Assistance Allocation and Budget
 - FY24 Quarterly Spending Actions
- **Fiscal Year 2025 Programs Recommendations**
 - FY25 Financial Assistance Allocation and Budget

- 91.2 Million is the initial allocation for Fiscal Year 2024, this includes the amount allocated for each of the following: EQIP, CSP, ACEP, and RCPP
- The EQIP allocation is budgeted across General and IRA, along with the fund pools listed to address the allocation completely and spend those funds on the resource concerns of the state and our conservation partner.
- CSP allocation
 - The CSP allocation is budgeted across General and IRA, along with the fund pools listed to address the allocation completely and spend those funds to address the concerns of the state and our partners.
 - The introduction of ACT NOW as a funding approach in Tennessee took place in FY2024 to assist in faster and continuous funding of applications.
- The associated graph tells the story of spending decisions throughout each part of FY24 for the following:
 - CSP Renewals
 - CSP and EQIP ACT NOW
 - CSP and EQIP General funds
- The associated graph looks at the broader picture for funds that NRCS has obligated versus what has been preapproved (essentially, the total amount of what has been allocated).
- This also shows the additional funds requests made by NRCS TN in Q2 and Q3, along with near \$750K for Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Project.
- The charts for both EQIP and CSP show a working draft of how programmatic funding for FY2025 may be budgeted for FY2025.
- The QR code provides an opportunity for the State Technical Advisory Committee to contribute to the decision on how the FY2025 funding may be budgeted; this will be open for use until the end of August 2024.



Programs

Update_August



PROGRAMS

202-UPDATE_FULL STAC.

John Woodcock – Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA)

- Good morning and thank you for inviting TDA to the State Technical Committee meeting today. We appreciate all the great work being done and we are honored to be a part of this committee.
- I want to remind everyone that it is time to order tree seedling for the 2024/2025 planting season. Officially orders will not be accepted until September 3, however, you can go to the seedling store and see the updated prices.
- Division of Forestry, share programs that are available. The southern Pine Beetle Initiative, which provides 50% cost share up to a maximum of \$20, 000 per year per entity. The Tennessee Age Enhancement Program which provides 50% to 75% cost share up to \$20,000 per entity for state fiscal year minimum. The Tennessee Division of Forestry is part of the Tennessee State Fair, located in Wilson County at the Tennessee State Fairgrounds. There are some great exhibits that both the Department of Agriculture and Division of Forestry are providing. Smokey Bear will be there celebrating his 80th birthday. August 15th through August 24th.



1.

SeedlingOrderForm



2. 24_25 Initial

Seedling Inventory



3. TDF Cost Share

Assistance SPBI & TA



4. Area Foresters

2024 0629.pdf

Question and Answer:

- Emily Stefanick asked: Is there a statutory requirement for what percentage of funding has to be allocated to an individual funding pool such as wildlife or local working groups?
- Garrett – Yes, we do have mandatory requirements, it does not take up our entire allocation or each fiscal year. Most allocations are geared towards our general funding that comes from the Farm Bill and IRA Fund. Wildlife 10% of our funds within the state must go towards that before we look at anything else. We do have statutory requirements for livestock 50%, we have some requirements for historically underserved groups, beginning farmers, 5%, again, that's general funds and IRA and 15% must go toward our social disadvantage farmers.
- Jeff Powelson – What's been the interest in the native forage production? Second part of the question, is NRCS going to mandate monitoring?
- Garrett – From a financial standpoint there are different reports in our basic tools. If someone can pull their information and see the money is being used by EQIP and how we are spending that money. On both programs we work with Ecological Sciences and collaborate throughout the fiscal year.
- Jeff Powelson – Is Tennessee looking into monitoring as a practice with potential AR units to track birds after forest management?
- Linda – We do have monitoring in place for the species but not particularly for insects, birds, or pollinators. We do have conservation, evaluation, and management plans that serve as a monitoring tool for some practices, but I am interested to hear more about your ideas and other states doing this type of monitoring.
- Emily Stefanick – ACT NOW is it going to continue into FY25?
- Garrett – I don't see it stopping here, especially with the large influx of funds coming from the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Dr. Dharma Pitchay – Conserving land that is not properly used, is there an incentive to upgrade? Other than just covered so additional EQIP program is this available and then something that is available or whether it can be looking to the future programs let's say you have a lot of highways, and those highways can be turned into not just green but maybe pollinators. So that down the road we are not only green, but we are also green in terms of functionality.
- Garrett – NRCS is a Federal Agency that works with private landowners. Our focus is working with those private landowners on their farms, however, there are other federal agencies that can help promote some of our conservation practices in public land. We also have agreements, opportunities, and contribution agreements with other agencies and partners to conserve those public green areas.

Curt McDaniel – Acting State Conservationist NRCS

Closing Remarks

- I just want to say thank you to everybody today for a great meeting. If there are no more questions, comments, or suggestions then we will adjourn. Our next meeting is scheduled for November 12th, 2024.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:38 am

Meeting Minutes Prepared By: Tina Rapaport, Executive Assistant to the State Conservationist