USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
Mississippi State Technical Committee Meeting
November 14, 2024, 9 AM – Noon
MS Farm Bureau Building – Auditorium
6311 Ridgewood Rd., Jackson, MS 39211

Agenda

Moderator - Earl McMillian, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS

Welcome	Kurt Readus
Rural Development	Dr. Trina George
Farm Service Agency Program	Thaddeus Fairley / Lesle Joi Peavie
Risk Management Agency	Cody Adkins
U.S. Forest Service	C. J. Woodard
National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research-MSU	Dr. Drew Gholson
Agricultural Research Service	Dr. Jason A. Taylor
National Association of Conservation Districts	Gary Blair
Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team	Ron Howard
Break – 5 minutes	
Soils Tools and Technology - NRCS	James Curtis
Soil and Plant Science Division – NRCS	D. Charles Stemmans II
Ecological Sciences – NRCS	Rogerick Thompson
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality	Natalie Segrest
Engineering – NRCS	Scott Coleman
Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission	Nick Ivy
Easement Programs - NRCS	Janeiro Smith
Farm Bill / IRA Programs	Ashley Kellum
Q&A / Closing Comments	Kurt Readus / Earl McMillian

Presenters

Kurt Readus, State Conservationist, NRCS
Dr. Trina George, State Director, Rural Development
Thaddeus Fairley, Mississippi State Executive Director, FSA
Lesle Joi Peavie, Supervisory Agricultural Program Specialist, FSA
Cody Adkins, Deputy Director RMA
C. J. Woodard, Deputy Forest Supervisor, National Forests in Mississippi, U.S. Forest Service
Dr. Drew Gholson, Assistant Professor & Extension Irrigation Specialist; MSU Coordinator National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research
Dr. Jason A. Taylor, Research Ecologist, USDA-ARS, National Sedimentation Laboratory
Gary Blair, NACD President-Elect
Ron Howard, Senior Advisor, Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team
James Curtis, State Soil Scientist, NRCS
D. Charles Stemmans II, Region Ecological Site Specialist, Soil and Plant Science Division, Southeast Region
Rogerick Thompson, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS
Natalie Segrest, MDEQ, Chief, Basin Management and Nonpoint Source Branch Surface Water Division
Scott Coleman, Acting State Conservation Engineer, NRCS
Nick Ivy, Executive Director, MS Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Janeiro Smith, Assistant State Conservationist, NRCS, Easements
Ashley Kellum, Resource Conservationist, CSP Program Manager, NRCS

Minutes - 11.14.24 at 9 AM, the meeting was called to order.

Mr. Earl McMillian was present as the meeting's moderator and introduced the presenters during the meeting. He provided housekeeping information, asked that all silence their cell phones during the meeting, and noted that Cody Adkins would present for Risk Management Agency and C.J. Woodard would present for the U.S. Forest Service.

Mr. Kurt Readus, opened the meeting and welcomed the presenters and attendees. Many in attendance today are contributors to our success. You saw our recruitment video; we are recruiting staff and students interested in working for NRCS. Please encourage any candidates, that you know, to apply for our positions at usajobs.gov.

We are under a Continuing Resolution (CR) until 12/20/2024. We have made strides to increase staffing to assist landowners in the field. We are trying to get the field staffed with those that can assist our landowner, to get enough boots on the ground to keep up with the demand put upon us. We've had a significant increase in assistance funding in FY 24. In the past, our areas would send out a significant number of refusal letters to landowners. Because of our funding increase, our refusal letters were significantly lower this year. We hope to continue that trend, and we expect FY 25 to have our funding on par with 2024 or increased to continue to assist our landowners.

Rural Development (RD) – Dr. Trina George

Dr. George expressed thanks for the invitation to present at the meeting and recognized Ms. Nicole Barnes, as the Deputy State Director.

RD has over 70 programs to serve rural MS, providing grants, loans, and technical support for rural communities. Program areas include Rural Utility Service, Rural Housing and Community Facilities, Rural Business and Cooperative Service.

Under the Rural Utility Service, we have the Electric Program, Water and Environmental Program, and Telecommunications and Broadband programs.

Under the Rural Housing and Community Facilities, are home ownership loans, home repair loans and grants, mutual self-help technical assistance grants, multifamily housing loans, farm labor housing loans and grants, housing preservation grants, and community facilities loans and grants.

Under the Rural Business and Cooperative service, we have the rural business development grants, and Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). In REAP, there are program qualification that must be met.

Obligations overview- Fiscal year 2023 was a historic year in housing program, over 47 million. In fiscal year 2024, $371.8 million in total funding was obligated to Mississippi communities this included 1,863 obligations.

USDA's housing programs help rural communities and individuals by funding low interest single family home loans, apartments for low-income persons or the elderly, housing for farm laborers and more. These single-family housing direct home loans are handled in our local offices. The maximum 502 direct loan limit has recently increased to $398,600 dollars. Interest rates are 4.375% effective November 1st, 2024, but when modified by payment assistance can be as low as 1%.

We offer disaster repair grants, Section 504, for presidentially declared disasters. Maximum grant assistance of $15,000, the damage must be directly associated with related storms, and it is good for one year from the disaster declaration date.

Community facilities-We offer loans and grants to help rural communities finance critical community facilities such as:
Hospitals, clinics, assisted living facilities. Town halls, courthouses, street improvements, airport facilities, childcare centers, community centers, schools. Police and fire departments, public works equipment, and vehicles. Schools, public or private, telemedicine, community gardens, community kitchens and food banks. Entities that can apply for this program are local governments, or public bodies, federally recognized tribes, nonprofits, or communities with 20,000 or less in population.

Water Programs-We fund numerous water associations. Loans and grants are available for water and wastewater systems. SEARCH grants provide funding for feasibility studies, design, and technical assistance in rural areas with populations less than or equal to 2,500. In some projects the population must be less than 10,000. sWater wells, treatment facilities, sewer/ stormwater collection, legal and engineering fees, land acquisitions, permits and equipment.

Business and Cooperative programs- The rural business development grant, helps boost and save businesses or hire people to work in those businesses; public bodies/ and federally recognized tribes can apply. We loan to emerging businesses. Value added producer grant, adds values to farmers products. Revolving loan funds (IRP, capital REDLG) help fund planning districts. Due to the time constraints for my presentation today, details concerning these programs can be found on our website.
www.rd.usda.gov/ms

Network Rural Partners Network. These collaborations comprised of three networks, serve 9 counties Washington County Economic Alliance, Lake District Partnership, North Delta Planning and Development districts. We partner with other federal governmental agencies to bring resources together to our customers. In this network we have numerous interagency partners and bring the government to the counties in a workshop format. Visit rural.gov to learn more about participating.

MS Area Office Contacts were provided for further assistance:

Area 1 - Brookhaven Area Office
Phone: 601-833-9321 Fax: 1-844-325-7040

Area 2 - Decatur Area Office
Phone: 601-635-2556 Fax: 1-844-325-7045

Area 3 - Grenada Area Office
Phone: 662-226-4441 Fax: 1-844-325-7047

Area 4 - Hattiesburg Area Office
Phone: 601-261-3293 Fax: 1-844-325-7050

Area 5 - Batesville Area Office
Phone: 662-578-7008 Fax: 1-844-325-7037

Area 6 - Starkville Area Office
Phone: 662-323-8031 Fax: 1-844-325-7037

Contact Information: Dr. Trina N. George, State Director
601-965-4316

For additional information, please visit:
www.rd.usda.gov/ms or
www.rd.usda.gov
Twitter: @rd_mississippi

Farm Service Agency – Thaddeus Fairley introduced presenter Lesle Joi Peavie.

Ms. Peavie acknowledged, Demetrice Evans, Deputy SED and Thaddeus Fairley SED of MS FSA.

Fiscal year 2024 was busy, we tackled CRP batching periods, EFRP sign-up and acreage reporting with grasses. The goal is to provide quality customer service to our landowners and partners. Other divisions within FSA that contribute to the agency's efforts are: Admin Division, Safety Net Division, Price Support Division, Farm Loan, and the Urban Ag.

In Nov. 2023, President Biden signed the Further Continuing Appropriation and other Extensions Act, which extended the 2018 Farm Bill through Sept. 30, 2024. This extension allows authorized programs, including CRP, to continue operating. With the ability to continue operating CRP, our National Office also had to prioritize acres for CRP enrollment and ensure that acreage enrolled does not exceed the statutory limitation. We utilized Batching Periods to do this.
March Batching Period – Jan. 12th – Mar. 15th
April Batching Period – Mar. 18th – Apr. 12th
May Batching Period – Apr. 15th – May 10th / May 13th – June 7th
June Batching Period – June 10th – July 12th

Acres were priorities, to not exceed the acreage statutory cap. We had four batching periods this year to accomplish this. To ensure enrollment did not exceed the cap of 27 million acres. CRP is the largest private land conservation programs in the U.S.

With CRP being one of the largest private lands conservation programs in the United States, CRP offers a range of conservation options for farmers, ranchers, and landowners. One of these options is FMI, Forest Management Initiative. MS has gained interest with FMI for many of CRP participants to help with forest management practices, such as prescribed burning and thinning for wildlife health to name a few. In 2024 we had 141 total applications, with $4,223,014, cost-share approved. We paid on 72 FMI applications with $2,563,081, cost-share approved. The current active FMI applications are 69 with

$1,594,854 cost-share approved.

The 2018 Farm Bill was extended through Sept. 30, 2024. As of this date, legislation has not been enacted to reauthorize or extend this authority beyond Sept. 30, 2024.
No new enrollments for re-enrollments will be processed or approved after September 30, 2024, until we receive authorization to do so.

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) sign up - We experienced drought conditions in 2023 that impacted livestock and tree producers. All 82 counties in Mississippi were approved for FSA to accept applications for EFRP. The sign up was open for enrollment from April 15th through August 15th, 2024. We continue to process those applications.

Acreage reporting regarding to grasses LFP – We are working to provide better clarification to our offices, and the new national policy changes received, pertaining to acreage reporting with grasses. Mississippi has gone to a 365-day grazing period for overseeded rye grass where the perennial forage is not disturbed. Rye grass and mixed forage (PP 21) grasses ARD is now 12/15/24. Rye grass grazing period will remain the same (December 1st through May 15th), with a carrying capacity of 1.0 acres per animal units. Rye grass planted into existing perennials forage (mixed forage IGS PP 21) grazing period, is January 1st through December 31st.

Risk Management Agency (RMA) – Cody Adkins

Federal Crop Insurance update. RMA is the smallest of USDA agencies; we administer the federal crop insurance program for a five-state region. Crop insurance, although mainly the focus is on typical row crops, we are now reaching the smaller specialty crop market. We set the yields, the parameters, and rate that the insurance companies that issue the policies follow.

Agency statistics were reviewed. Fiscal responsibility, our improper payment rate is less than 3% for eight consecutive years. One of the lowest improper payment rates in government. We expand America's farm safety net by offering crop insurance on 134 crops, and 604 varieties are insured. The federal employee viewpoint survey, RMA was voted as one of the best places to work at USDA. We invest in customer service, our turnaround times were reduced by 35% for individualized coverage applications during the pandemic.

In 2024, the soybeans commodity was our top crop, we had 3,874 policies, covering 2,227,000 acres with liabilities exceeding $1 billion. Our total policies covered over 4,100,000 acres in Mississippi.

The Hurricane Insurance Protection (HIP-WI) was first available for purchase in the 2020 hurricane season. When hurricane force winds from a named hurricane, based on National Hurricane Center at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the crop insurance policy will go into effect in that county, or an adjacent county. RMA added the Tropical Storm Endorsement for damaged caused by strong weather systems not categorized as hurricanes. The option would cover named tropical storms, as reported by NOAA with maximum sustained winds exceeding 34 knots and precipitation exceeding 6 inches over a four-day period. Both the wind trigger and precipitation trigger must occur for an indemnity to be paid. Hurricane Francine, in 2024 triggered the HIP-WI endorsement in Louisiana parishes, but not in Mississippi counties. Under the tropical storm endorsement, Mississippi counties were also triggered. When a county triggers, adjacent counties pay out too.

The Shellfish Insurance Program provides a yield-based product for containerized oysters commercially produced for the half-shell market it provides coverage against 4 perils:
Named storms
Excessive heat during a low tide
Freeze during a low tide event
Low salinity caused by excessive rainfall
Coverage for immature oysters is not available at this time. On May 19, 2024, Harrison County Mississippi triggered for low salinity.

Risk Management Education- In 2024, RMA awarded about $4.1 million to 15 organizations to educate underserved, small scale, and/or organic producers on farm risk management and climate smart farm practices. Other education initiatives included underserved agent licensures and agent loss adjuster training program. RMA has established a pilot program to identify, recruit, train, help certify and help place trained and certified candidates within targeted underserved communities with crop insurance agencies. This pilot program is being implemented by four partners, Alcorn State University, Intertribal Agriculture Council, Annie's project, and Rural Coalition.

RMA Navigator program-The University of Arkansas, system division of agriculture, will lead the development of a pilot project to strengthen outreach and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers through the development of a cohort of risk management program navigators. Program specialists are trained by project collaborators to strategically and intentionally engage and serve all participants across the crop insurance sector.

The RMA Ambassador program is new, Dr. Cindy Ayers Elliott of Footprint Farms is our new ambassador. She attends outreach meetings and interacts with producers.

RMA contact information was provided to the attendees.
Roddic Bell, roddic.bell@usda.gov, www.rma.usda.gov.
ph: 601.965.4771 or 601.331.4228

U. S. Forest Service – C.J. Woodard

U.S. Forest Service is the largest USDA agency, responsible for 193 million acres across the nation. We have 154 national forest and 20 grasslands. There are 1.2 million acres of national forest lands in Mississippi. We work with timber producers and timber sales and have sold about 516 tons of timber last year. We are actively addressing the southern pine beetle epidemic and removed over 200 tons of beetle infested timber in the Bienville National Forest. We continue to deal with the risk of our forest lands adjacent to private lands. We prioritize our work where there are threatened or endangered species present.

We have working forests in Mississippi and utilize prescribed burning. Many forests don't produce timber, but in MS we do, and we utilize prescribed burning. With 195K acres burned this year, we also utilized drone technology on 78K acres in this effort. With prescribed burning, we also partner with private landowners adjacent to our forests.

National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research (NCAAR)- MSU - Dr. Drew Gholson

NCAAR is a partnership between MSU and USDA ARS. Our mission is the sustainability of the lower Mississippi river basin, and our focus is on the Mississippi river alluvial aquifer. That encompasses the sustainability of that aquifer through irrigation practices, increasing efficiency, looking at alternate water supplies. We have scientists from USDA ARS that are conducting research projects with a variety of disciplines working together on this research.

Our approach with extension and outreach is to deliver proven tools and techniques directly to producers to promote water use efficiency. We host workshops, field days, and demonstrations to support adoption of these irrigation practices.

Our research and innovation evaluates emerging technologies and new innovations to gather research data. To explore irrigation techniques that benefit both farm productivity and water conservation. We look at proven tools from research, and the ways to deliver them for adoption in the field. For several years we have been evaluating irrigation scheduling methods and telemetry services with soil moisture sensors. Research is being conducted with soil sensor monitoring; the next irrigation time based on water use. This is a practice we stand behind. We can save between 20 – 25% water and increase profitability for the landowner. New companies have come online to offer these services, and we wanted to compare

these side-by-side at our research stations to see how well they work compared to each other. We've put the data out there and some companies welcome our feedback.

We're looking at scheduling furrow irrigation using Sentek drill and drip probes. We are evaluating wide space furrow irrigation in vertisols (heavy clay soils). We are looking at increasing furrow infiltration in non-subsoiled loam soils and how water, tillage and residue management, and how additives are applied.

We're conducting research on conservation and alternative agriculture practices, such as cropping systems and the timing of planting species and agronomic performance, to the evaluation of agronomic performance soil quality, water use efficiency, and water infiltration, run off, and retention.

In cover crops, we look at different tillage mechanisms, and row rice. A lot of growers are looking at irrigating rice in a row irrigating system instead of a flooding field system. We're looking at a new tool; circulating pumps, so we can capture that water and recirculate it to the crops. From a water use standpoint and economic standpoint to determine if we can keep the top of the field wetter without using new water. We are evaluating crop nutrient use efficiency, nutrient losses, and water nutrient interactions.

Other areas of research include remote sensing to qualify abiotic stresses and crops. Leading Infiltration Reduction Act (IRA) methane emissions monitoring for Mississippi delta. Impact of multi-use cover crops on infiltration and runoff quantity and quality. Groundwater modeling to understand impact of current and proposed practices. We focus on water efficiency and are looking for the greenhouse gas benefit standpoint.

Another project supported by MS-NRCS, is the on-farm validation of cover cropping as a climate smart agriculture practice in the Mississippi delta. The objectives include leveraging producer networks to identify opportunities for and challenge with cover crop and climate smart agricultural practice adoption specific to the Mississippi delta. And increase producer engagement through uniform research efforts.

The research at NCAAR also looks at the economic sustainability of irrigation. Profitable farming that conserves groundwater increases profitability. The economics of double cropping is more money per acre per year. Water conservation practices equate to less groundwater per acre and more dollars per acre. Practices that improve irrigation performance, and the capturing, storing, and reuse of run off in irrigation have economic impacts.

Last year we started the Mississippi Master Irrigator program, to provide growers with technical training on practices with economic benefits when they are adopted. Two hurdles for adoption of practices, is education, understanding how it works, and the financial implications. Our partnership has assisted with this program. The course is a 24-hour course, designed as a hybrid system with online modules and in-person training activities. We welcome partnerships opportunities.

Questions:
Pete Hunter - I am involved with the irrigation taskforce at DEQ for years. Should the master irrigation program be a pre- requisite of receiving a permit, or having an active permit? Or have at least three active conservation practices?
Dr. Gholson – We've had conversation about that. I agree.

Agricultural Research Service (ARS) – Dr. Jason A. Taylor

USDA ARS scientists are located at the National Sedimentation Laboratory in Oxford, MS and in the Sustainable Water Management Unit (SWMRU) in Stoneville, MS. These scientists are working on a variety of projects.

National Sedimentation Laboratory, Oxford, MS
Ron Bingner
Lucas Heintzman

Frank Johnson
Eddy Langendoen
Richard Lizotte
Martin Locke
Matt Moore
Andy O'Reilly
Jason Taylor
Rob Wells
Lindsey Witthaus
Daniel Wren

Sustainable Water Management -Unit (SWMRU), Stoneville, MS
Chris Delhom
Mahesh Maskey
Amanda Nelson
Zachary Simpson

Long-Term Agroecosystem Research (LTAR) projects are in 18 sites in Mississippi.
Projects include - Experimental Plot Research, addressing crop productivity, soil health, and water conservation. The 21-Gun Project assesses effects of tillage practices, irrigation management, and cover crop. Field scale research with producer partnerships. The LTAR Project assesses aspirational practices such as conservation tillage, cover crops, and irrigation management on system sustainability. This is a long-term project.

CEAP Beasley Lake watershed, we have monitored for 30 years. Agricultural Best Management Practices such as CRP and edge-of-field buffers help reduce lake nutrients and cyanobacteria harmful algal blooms. We have seen a decrease in phosphorus and nitrates over time.

CEAP Algae Cross-Site project has 9 locations across the country. Algal nutrient bioassays determine nutrient limitation and target concentrations for Agricultural Best Management Practices to limit eutrophication and harmful algal blooms.

CEAP Legacy Sediment – A major challenge with conservation planning is legacy sediments and nutrients. Watershed assessments to understand sources and processes of legacy sediment to sediment load and yield in medium to large watersheds. Watershed modeling and forecasting to improve representation of legacy sediment in watershed models. Develop conservation strategies for legacy sediment and associated legacy P and N mitigation.

CEAP Legacy Phosphorus is across nine regions in the U.S. Soil characterization to quantify legacy P pools and potential sources. Watershed simulations and model development to extrapolate findings to larger watersheds and improve representation of legacy P in watershed models.

Edible Cover Crop Plot Experiment. This is a new project, partnering with Alcorn State University. Proof-of-concept study of growing edible greens as cover crops. Measuring benefits: soil health, crop productivity, greenhouse gas emissions.

New Biological Tools for Monitoring Water Quality Improvements in Ag. Streams. We are working with DEQ and USGS on this project. Developing indices for nutrient changes in response to management practices in the short term.

Soil, water and wildlife conservation looks at how timing and duration of shallow water habitat (EQIP 644) affect nutrient and erosion loss and migratory stopover habitat for shorebirds on corn and soybean farms. Findings: Flooding enhances nitrogen removal through denitrification (36 kg ha-1 in flooded field). Lower nitrate runoff from flooded versus unflooded fields.

Technology to mitigate crop water stress, reduce runoff through increased infiltration, and understand

nutrient mobility and GHG emissions.

Irrigation and technology and water storage research includes:
Tailwater recovery systems to reduce water use and downstream nutrient load.
Improving furrow irrigation efficiency on irregularly shaped fields.
Irrigation automation for efficiency.

Irrigation reservoir levee erosion and protection is a challenge. Our research utilizes laboratory wave tanks experiments, computer modeling and measurements in the field to test wave impacts on erosion. We are implementing in the field floating barriers to reduce wave energy.

Soil erosion models are a main tool that NRCS uses to identify where conservation practices need to be implemented. CEAP Ephemeral Gully project studies how we can assess, quantify and predict formation of ephermeral gullies. In the field, gullies are identified, monitored, evaluated and modeled. Prediction tools (AnnAGNPA, CONCEPTS, RUSLE2) are enhanced and validated.

Groundwater Transfer and Injection Pilot project studies can groundwater injection reverse regional aquifer declines. The current pilot study extracts groundwater of improved quality via riverbank filtration, transfer, and inject water in area of groundwater depletion. At conclusion of two experimental injection periods, findings indicate:
Groundwater levels increased, no negative impact on water quality.
Tested technology is “fit for purpose” per engineering consulting firm’s review.
Potential phase 2 expansion under discussion.

Integrated Water Management Modeling strategies studies show how we can manage surface and subsurface water resources as part of a regional water management strategy. Provide an irrigation water management tool integrated with the Mississippi Embayment Regional Aquifer System (MERAS).

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)- Gary Blair

NACD advocates for conservation districts with a unified voice and we communicate the value of conservation districts. We advocate for conservation districts with a unified voice on Capitol Hill for conservation programs, policy, and funding. Communicate the value of conservation districts through our advocacy, programs, convenings, and publications. Educate and develop conservation leaders of all ages through stewardship and education activities and through opportunities for our members to participate in events and special programs, and serve on our board, committees and subcommittees.
Provide grants and services to conservation districts.

We educate and develop conservation leaders, and we are locally led by volunteers. We also provide grants and services to conservation districts. Our brand of conservation: locally lead, voluntary, incentive based, nonpartisan, conservation for all lands and all people.

Your NACD officers are folks from across the country who serve on their local conservation district and have taken that passion on up to the national level to represent you.
President Kim LaFleur is from Massachusetts
First Vice-President Gary Blair is from Mississippi
Second Vice-President Bill Simshauser is from Kansas
Secretary-Treasurer Mark Masters is from Georgia
Our Immediate Past President is Michael Crowder from Washington State
Our CEO Jeremy Peters leads our staff team from our NACD Headquarters in Washington, D.C.
Representing you on NACD’s Board of Directors are Pete Hunter and Anita Cowan.
Your designated NACD staff member is Marquita Hall, your Southeast Region Representative.

NACD speaks on behalf of conservation districts with one voice, and we work with NRCS. NACD's Legislative Committee and Government Affairs Team develops and supports policy requests.

NACD's Spring Fly-In provides an opportunity for members to meet with their legislators on Capitol Hill.

The Farm Bill expired on September 30th. We're advocating to integrate all remaining IRA conservation investments into the conservation title of the Farm Bill. FY25 Appropriations -Congress passed a CR to extend current levels of federal funding until December 20. NACD leads the conservation community in calling on Congress to increase funding for NRCS Conservation Operations in FY 2025.

District employees play a large part in youth education and outreach activities. NACD invests in leadership development with younger generations in our conservation programs to create future conservation leaders.

Our outreach and technical assistance grants bring in new people to our districts. The goal for our Urban and Community Conservation grants is to provide urban technical assistance and small-scale conservation in both urban and rural areas. The Friends of NACD District grant program's mission is to conduct new activities or test novel approaches to district operations. Member conservation districts are eligible to participate, the funding opportunity is up to $2,500.

The Perimeter Fencing for Feral Swine grant program offers cost-share for technical and financial assistance to conservation districts, state and territory associations and agencies, RC&DCs, Indian Tribal Governments, and intertribal consortia. Historically Underserved Farmer-to-Farmer Outreach grant program has funding awarding up to $2.7 million for outreach and projects that mitigate hypoxic conditions in the Gulf of Mexico. The Climate-Smart Commodities grant program goal is to foster private-public partnerships, implement climate-smart practices, support participation in markets. It offers public and private entities, with the involvement of conservation districts, funding for outreach, technical, financial and marketing assistance.

NACD has communications and publications available for you to sign up to receive. You can join us at our 2025 Annual Meeting. It is scheduled to take place February 18 – 12, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency in Salt Lake City, Utah. I encourage all to get involved, attend our meetings and encourage districts to get involved with our grants. I would like to see more sharing of our success stories.

Contact information: Gary Blair, President Elect.
Gary-Blair@nacdnet.org PH: 602.757.3345

The floor was opened for questions -
Deborah Hendrix – Stated that she is a farmer in Rankin county, and that in the Rankin Co. SWCD, she is requesting to be nominated for one of the appointed positions. Currently there is no female representation. The Rankin Co. SWCD does not have an open-door policy, if you're not one of them.

Mr. Blair thanked her for her comment and will look into that. That is a concern of mine as well and would like to speak with her more on that in the future, or after this meeting. Let's get together and discuss this.

Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Team (GCERT) – Ron Howard

On April 20, 2010, an explosion occurred on the *Deepwater Horizon* drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico. Before it was capped three months later, approximately 134 million gallons of oil had spilled into the Gulf. On April 4, 2016, the court approved an $8.8 billion settlement with BP for natural resource injuries stemming from the spill. The Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act) was signed into law in July 2012: established a Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund.

Our role is to help landowners accelerate the adoption of restoration conservation practices that have an environmental impact. Our restoration projects can include sand dunes on the beach, projects in the gulf, on watersheds and on private lands.

We are no longer in the Madison office location and are awaiting new office space. Noller Herbert is the Acting Director of GCERT. Reviewed the GCERT organizational chart.

We partner with U.S. Forest Service in our gulf coast restoration work. We partner with NRCS to bring on restoration planners to work with local gulf issues. We have planners in FL, MS, LA and TX, and are looking to fill the position in AL.

We have three major funding streams. Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act (RESTORE Act), Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund (GEBF): National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Partnership. We are at the halfway point for our funding years. Last payment from BP is in 2031. Will expect it to take conservation from this funding about 5 years to be put on the ground, and there will be a closeout period.

A 3-billion-dollar milestone was reached in 2023 reached with gulf restoration and the funding streams to get work on the ground. We are part of the planning, project approvals, but the state's NRCS and Forest Service get the projects on the ground. NFWF is working to get success project videos produced in the five gulf states we are working with.

Also, we are able to work with the state office to request funding for identified resource concerns for landowners across the gulf states. Engage in adoption of conservation practices to restore these concerns while the funding is available. We are close to 85 million in funding with NRDA, RESTORE dollars for technical assistance and projects. Upper Pascagoula water enhancement project was the first USDA project to be funded, it is still being implemented. A new MS nutrient reduction project is being developed.

Long leaf pine habit restoration is also a project for GCERT, and we are involved in watershed projects in southern MS.

Soils Tools and Technology (NRCS) – James Curtis

There are updated tools for partners to utilize. Web soil survey, Oct 1st data was refreshed.
4-Band High-Res (Leaf-Off) Imagery data for the central part of the state, contracted by MDEQ, will be available in December. Four-band imaging with infrared. It will be available on the MARIS website.
This year they are flying the northern part of the state when leaf off conditions exist.

LiDAR, the last flight was approximately 10 years ago, elevation data was QL2, will obtain new data beginning in the southern part of the state at QL1. Will get more points and better accuracy of tree heights, and ground measurements in high density areas.

Soil and Plant Science Division – NRCS- D. Charles Stemmans II

The SE Regional Soil Survey offices cover the southeast and Puerto Rico.
We have 20 offices in 10 states in the SE region. Or regional staff consists of:

Kevin Norwood - Regional Director
Alison Steglich – Senior Regional Soil Scientist
Charles Stemmans - Senior Regional Ecologist
Matthew Duvall - Ecological Data Quality Specialist
Dean Shields - Soil Data Quality Specialist
Mark Van Lear - Soil Data Quality Specialist
Joe Norris - GIS Specialist
Mark Roloff - GIS Specialist
Camellia Lipscomb - Administrative Assistant

Web soil survey refreshed in Oct. our data quality specialists review those data points for accuracy.

Soil survey offices and project leaders that service Mississippi:
Milan, TN – Ryan Winchester
Tupelo, MS – Mike Williams
Greenwood, MS – Mike Williams, Acting
Meridian, MS – Chris Hatcher
Denham Springs, LA – Joey Koptis, Acting
Loxley, AL – Joey Koptis

We have a Direct Hire position that was selected for Loxley. And Pathways Intern positions in Meridian and Milan we are working to fill.

Our priorities include:
Dynamic Soil Survey – Initiative to improve the modeling ability of our soil's data.

Soil Inventory - Our typical soil survey work that we have been doing.

Soil Services and Information Delivery - National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) and IRA; greenhouse gas monitoring. NRCS' soil division is playing an important role in this. In the NCSS data base, there will be a change in the naming convention of our projects. The work will not change, just the naming of the projects, will focus more on progressive milestone updates to the projects.

NRCS is mandated through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to quantify carbon sequestration and carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide emissions. Our team will work with states to collect data on private lands to collect carbon and bulk density data in soil sample collections.

Ecological Sites - The basics of the definition is:
A Conceptual Division of the Landscape with:
Similar characteristics
Similar productivity and
The ability to respond to disturbance and management.

Similar characteristics
- Soils
- Geomorphology
- Climate

The ability to respond to disturbance and activities.
- Fire
- Herbivory - Wildlife or Domestic animals
- Drought
- Or others

These are things that can help conservation planners and decision makers know what areas should respond similarly.

The Ecological Site Description (ESD)- They are simply documents to provide information on similar landscapes. All the information is included in one document that can be accessed by those that need it. These are evolving documents, and as new information is provided, they can be updated and corrected. This group will help with the refinement and prioritization of these for the MLRA's.

SE region Ecological staff. Our field Ecologist include:
Yogev Erez in Greensboro SSO
George Otto in Tuskegee SSO
Peyton Fralick in Tupelo SSO
Barry Hart in Milan SSO
Gilberto Santiago in Mayaguez SSO
Miles Tolbert is an Intern in the Normal SSO

Our EDQS Matt Duvall in Raleigh RO
And myself Charles Stemmans in Opelousas

I was a DC for 20 years prior to moving to an ES position. I spent some time developing conservation plans, I did it back when we inked maps and had to make multiple inked copies to have in the case files as well as provide to the producer. We spent time to provide a plan. When I began working on ESDs I knew they would be beneficial for Conservation planning, so I have strived to improve them for this purpose.

Collection and Analysis: ESD should be one source to look towards to help understand what are the potentials.
Decision support: ESDs can help show alternatives and help to explain them.

ESDs in conservation planning -
Inventory: Determine Soil, Ecological Site, and State
Analyze: Determine Community / Phase
Formulate: Which States / Communities / Phases that you can get to from where you are.
Evaluate: Determine what it takes to get there
Implement: Conservation Practice Implementation Requirements with Ecological Context

The ESDs are linked to the Soil Components so they are provided at the same scale as the soils survey. They will be as relevant as the soil maps.

State and transition models try to describe how things can change over time, and with different inputs. Discussed how varied ecosystem states, woodland suitability groups and other site groups can impact the model's outcome. Discussed different sources that data for ESDs can originate from. We receive ESD information from our technical teams. We are looking for input to improve the products and ask for involvement in this process. We plan to implement staff training on data collection.

Ecological Sciences (ECS) - NRCS – Rogerick Thompson

The ECS staff members attending the meeting were acknowledged. Marion Reed, Tamara Campbell, Jordan Roberts Hudson and Taffari Jenkins.

Forestry updates to MS EFOTG
Adopting national standards for:
384-Woody Residue Treatment – a management practice to remove downed timber, after a catastrophic event.
394 – Firebreak – to protect timber from fire and restrict fire when it's prescribed.
655 – Forest Trails and Landings -intended to create those areas prior to harvesting. Implementation requirements are being added to the IR documentation.

Adding implementation dates to the IR documents. Also adding a description document to 384 to clarify when and why we plan that practice.
The MFC wood products industry map will be added into to CD for planners to refer to for considerations.

Forestry updates – General and CSP
The CSP enhancements listed, will receive addendums for further guidance:
E666I – Crop Tree Management for Mass Production
E666K – Create Structural Diversity with Patch Openings
E666O – Snags, Dens, Wood Debris for Wildlife
E666P – Summer Roosts for Bat Species
E612B – Planting for Carbon Sequestration and Storage

We are working with partners to maximize the clarity of enhancements before the landowner makes the

commitment. For example, to find out the maximum number of species we plant and to consider a two year or three-year rotation and there are other considerations we are looking at.
Adding implementation dates to the IR documents. Also adding a description document to 384 to clarify when and why we plan that practice.

Revised Conservation Practice Standards for:
Hedgerow Planting Code 422
Season Water Management of Wildlife Code 646
Wetland Restoration Code 657

Those that have wildlife interests, we would like input, we will be looking at these practice standards.

Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) – Natalie Segrest

Leveraging program resources to improve water quality. We are funded by an EPA program but are not a regulatory program of EPA. The Basin Management and Nonpoint Source Branch is responsible for:
Manage and Implement the Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Program funded via Section 319 of Clean Water Act.
Coastal Nonpoint Source Program Implementation via Section 6217 Coastal Zone Reauthorization Amendments.
Implement MDEQ's Basin Management Approach.
Statewide Nutrient Reduction Strategy Implementation.
Gulf Hypoxia Program and Hypoxia Task Force.

Our basin management approach includes:

Dedicated staff to serve as "coordinators" for major river basins.
Identify and prioritize water quality issues of concern.
Establish priority areas for implementation.
Identify and encourage collaboration and leveraging opportunities.
Seek solutions at the local level.
Seek measurable benefits.
Focus on success.
Hydrologically based.

Funding information:

Section 319 of the Clean Water Act provides funding to states to help manage Nonpoint Sources of Pollution.
Active program in MS since 1989.
Annual grants from EPA.
- Around $3M/year.
- Requires 40% match.

$15M in funds with $9M spent on projects over last 5 years.
- 15-20 projects per grant
- 5 concurrent grants

Education, Outreach, Guidance, Tool development, and Implementation.
Implementation (BMPs) only in Priority Watersheds.

What makes us different:

Non-Regulatory Program.
Focus on consensus building and partnerships.

Combines watershed planning with implementation to achieve watershed improvements.
Success depends on voluntary participation from local stakeholders, landowners, NGOs, agencies and other entities.
Diversity of eligible projects: Planning, Education, Outreach, Capacity Building, Guidance, Management Tools, On the Ground Projects.

Eligible activities for funding under the 319 Program:
Agriculture
Construction
Silviculture
Urban Stormwater
Mining
Hydromodification
Onsite Disposal Systems

We leverage 319 funding with NRCS programs to provide support to help develop watershed plans and/or assessments. Help prioritize watersheds for implementation. We can use 319 to fill the funding gap. Perform monitoring to show success of practices through improved water quality. Use models to estimate load reductions achieved through practices implemented by NRCS.

EPA - Nine key elements for watershed plans include:
Identify causes/sources, estimate load reductions, describe implementation actions, estimate technical and financial assistance needed, information/education plan, the implementation schedule, measurable milestones, criteria to evaluate success, and monitoring.

NRCS watershed assessment- National Planning Procedures 180-NPPH-600-F include:
Background and purpose, watershed characterization, hydrology and water quality, resource analysis and source assessment, implementation goals, budget, measuring progress, success, and follow up.
NRCS requires more discussion of soils, geology, climate, rainfall, than in EPA compliance. EPA requires more information on milestones, schedules, monitoring, and criteria to determine success.

Some examples of 319 projects:
Restoration project in the Owl Creek watershed
$1.2 million which included grade stabilization, stream bank, fencing, alternative water supply, heavy use area.

Restoration project in Sherman Creek watershed
$1 million which included grade stabilization, stream bank, fencing, alternative water supply, heavy use area.

Restoration project in Platner Bayou watershed
$700,000 which included grade stabilization, stream bank, fencing, alternative water supply, heavy use area.

We leverage resources to show programmatic success by modeling baseline conditions using SPARROW model for nutrient trends. Implementing actions with best management practices (BMP) and nutrient reduction strategy updates. We estimate the load reduction outcomes and monitor the responses.

Nonpoint Source Reduction Estimation Tool (NRET). This is a model to estimate the benefits of practices. We build a database to store BMP information and run models to estimate load reductions (Sediment, TN, and TP). We report reductions at multiple scales by practice, or by program, in watersheds, basins, regions, practice and year. Results are to be published to publicly accessible dashboards to communicate the environmental impacts of NRCS programs. It's model specific enough to estimate reductions and the benefit of these practices and measuring outcomes.

These waters have been successfully restored and are no longer impaired:

North Tippah Creek Watershed - Tippah County
Grade Stabilization, Fencing, Cover Crops, Streambank Stabilization
BMPs funded through EQIP and NWQI

Bahala Creek Watershed-Copiah County
Grade Stabilization, Critical Area Planting, Fencing, Heavy Use Areas
BMPs funded through EQIP

McCall Creek Watershed-Lincoln County
Fencing, Heavy Use Areas, Watering Facilities, Pasture and Hayland Planting
BMPs funded through EQIP

What's next:
Building a tool to help determine success in Yazoo Delta watersheds
- Diatoms and Sediment Bacteria
- Partnering with USGS and ARS National Sedimentation Laboratory
- Other States are looking at what we are doing in MS: AR and AL

Real Time Nitrate Monitoring
- Partnering with USGS
- 6 Major Tributaries into MS River

Long Term Status and Trends: TN and TP
- Approximately 40 locations
- Measure success of programs

Updated State Scale SPARROW
- USGS Model
- Background Loads for Sediment, TN, and TP

Phase 2 of Gulf Hypoxia Program is to begin next year, please contact me with ideas.
We will reengage our stakeholder group for our nutrient reduction strategies.

Engineering (NRCS) – Scott Coleman

Engineering updates for FY 25 (EQIP)
New Practices:
- NONE

New Scenarios:
- NONE

Changes or clarifications: "Energy Practices"
- (672) Energy Efficient Building Envelope
- (670) Energy Efficient Lighting System
- (374) Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation

Many of these energy practices are installed in poultry houses. Practices 374, 670 and 672 changes are the same. The practices installed will be based on the type and amount identified in the on-farm energy audit. The check out sheets will be signed by the producer and installer certifying that the practices were installed as identified in the audit.

Practice 561 – Heavy Use Area
Scenario: Rock/Gravel on Geotextile, 6-inches thick
Washed gravel will not be used
Must use crushed limestone or steel slag aggregates
Material shall range in size from 3/8" to 3/4"

Practice 430 Irrigation Water Conveyance
Scenario: All
Pipe lengths can include length for risers and open standpipes.

Practice 580 Streambank Stabilization
Scenario: All
These practices can be included in the Forestry resource concern.

Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission (MSWCC) – Nick Ivy

The Mississippi Soil and Water Conservation Commission was founded in 1938. We provide district assistance and help 82 soil and water conservation districts to implement their programs and budgets. We provide natural resource education, local projects, elections and appointments of commissioners, financial reporting, and 319 NPS project administration.

District programs support locally led voluntary conservation is the way to go. The districts in the local counties know their conservation needs.

Program	Beginning Balance	Funds Remaining	End Date
CTA	$ 1,150,000.00	$ 672,470.03	9/30/2024
District Technician	$ 1,000,000.00	$ 446,624.57	9/30/2024
CRP	$ 3,250,000.00	$ 2,280,648.34	2/28/2025

Water quality non-point source pollution programs include the 319 funds. We utilize NRCS specifications for the program's projects such as:
Streambank and shoreline protection
Stream crossing new line ponds
Check dams

Watershed rehabilitation-We use NRCS on the PL-566 watershed dams and ask for legislative funds to provide the matching funds. We are working on 13 of these type projects. Watershed rehabilitation can include dam pipe inspection, and it helps project sponsors rehabilitate aging dams that are reaching the end of their design life and/or no longer meet federal or state safety criteria or performance standards.

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) program provides technical and financial assistance to states, local governments and tribal organizations to help plan and implement authorized watershed projects for the purposes of flood prevention, watershed protection, public recreation, public fish and wildlife, agricultural water management, municipal and industrial water supply, and water quality management. We are working on environmental assessments on numerous projects with NRCS.

We work to partner with anyone that wishes to further conservation efforts in Mississippi.

Easement Programs (NRCS)- Janeiro Smith

Most of the NRCS easements are perpetual, they are forever. Our main easement program is the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
ACEP consolidates three conservation easement programs:
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

ACEP has two components –
Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE)
Agricultural Lands Easements (ALE)

ALE overview –This is a working land program where you would have pressure from development, this easement would protect the land from this type of development. Now our focus is grasslands of special significance, these are located in our Black Land Prairie and our Mississippi coast.

Land Eligibility
Private or Tribal Land that is at least one of the following:
- Prime, unique, or other productive soil
- Historical or archaeological resources
- Protect grazing uses and related conservation values by restoration and conservation
- Will further a State or local policy consistent with ACEP

And is:
- In an area with access to agricultural markets/ infrastructure
- Land with development pressure or grasslands subject to threat of conversion
- Pending offer for easement purchase

WRE Overview - The objectives of ACEP-WRE are to protect, restore and enhance the functions and values of wetland ecosystems to attain:
- Habitat for migratory birds, T&E species, and other wetland-dependent wildlife
- Protection and improvement of water quality
- Attenuation of floodwater
- Recharge of ground water
- Protection and enhancement of open spaces
- Protection of native flora and fauna
- Contribution to educational and scientific scholarship
- Provide producers a viable option for marginal lands

Land Eligibility:

- The land must have been a wetland prior to manipulation
- The land must have been manipulated for production of food or fiber
- The land must be restorable
- Farmed or Converted
- Former or Degraded Wetlands
- Lands Substantially Altered by Flooding
- Riparian Areas
- Restored Wetlands Not Yet Permanently Protected
- Adjacent Lands
- CRP Lands (Active or Expired)
- CRP land planted to bottomland hardwood trees are a portion of an eligible WRE offer and offered CRP acres are less than 50% of entire offered acres
- CRP land planted to bottomland hardwood trees are adjoining an existing WRP/WRE easement or other permanently protected area (WMA, NWR, NF, SP, etc.)
- Failed CRP bottomland hardwood tree planting as determined by MS Forestry Commission
- CRP land planted to grass

Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easement – EWPP-FPE
Floodplain lands damaged by flooding at least once within the previous calendar year or subject to flood damage at least twice within the previous 10 years. Other lands within the floodplain are eligible, provided the lands will contribute to the restoration of the flood storage and flow, provide for control of erosion, or will improve the practical management of the floodplain easement. Lands inundated or adversely impacted because of a dam breach.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – RCPP
RCPP-Upper Pearl
- Mirrors the Health Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Eligible land is within ½ mile buffer of the Pearl River in Neshoba and Leake County

RCPP – KKAC Organization MS/AR Conservation Easements
- Mirrors ACEP-WRE

Eligible land is focus is on historically underserved producers

The easement support staff, added 21 easements, over 7,700 acres, almost $25.8 million dollars last fiscal year.

State Office Easement Staff members and contact information:
J.J. Smith – ASTC Easements
Ronald McCain – Easement Coordinator
Ariel Hollins – Administrative Assistant
Sara Vinson – Realty Specialist
Vacant – Management & Program Analyst

Easement Field Team:
Ben Naron – Natural Resource Specialist/ Field Team Lead
Rick Hagar – Easement Specialist
Alec Conrad – Forester
Jason Makamson – Soil Conservationist
Vacant – Biologist

Office: 662-271-3140 (Greenwood AO)
Office: 601-863-3947 (Jackson SO)
Email: janeiro.smith@usda.gov
Additional Resources- www.nrcs.usda.gov/ms

Farm Bill / IRA Programs (NRCS) – Ashley Kellum

Mississippi Financial Assistance Programs we administer include:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
Urban Agriculture

Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Program Obligations overview:
CSP - $55,417,691 the contracts total 396, acres 234,253
EQIP - $109,946,094 the contracts total 2,475, acres 225,983
Total of $163,985,030 obligated on 460,236 acres.

Our field office worked with our participants with conservation planning and contracting functions.
FY 2024 was a record year for obligations.

FY 2024 update on four Historically Underserved (HU) contracting information:

1,457 contracts totaling $67,514,309, acres 135,915. Of our total obligations 50.7% benefitted our HU landowners.
986 Beginning Farmer contracts, $45,149,005 obligated, on 88,304 acres.
121 Limited Resource contracts, $3,510,836 obligated on 7,359 acres.
766 Socially Disadvantaged contracts, $36,162,575 on 65,734 acres.
103 Veteran Farmer contracts, $3,046,361 on 6,609 acres. We don't have a separate veteran funding pool, but our veteran farmers do receive special considerations throughout the assessment and ranking process.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that assists producers to make conservation work for them. NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while also improving agricultural operations. In EQIP we have Farm Bill contracts that use mandatory funding and

also contracts that were funded through IRA. Farm Bill dollars, we had 1,648 contracts in which $67,000,000 was allocated.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
CSP encourages producers to address priority resource concerns and improve and conserve the quality and condition of natural resources in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities. In this NRCS program we allocated $39 million on 303 contracts.

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – Focuses on mitigation.
The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 will provide assistance to agricultural and forestland producers to invest in climate and clean energy solutions and promote climate-related benefits through NRCS programs. IRA is not a new administered program. It's a funding vehicle to support programs EQIP, CSP, RCPP and ACEP to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities.
IRA-EQIP obligations for FY 24 were approximately 42 million dollars.
IRA-CSP obligations for FY 24 were approximately 15 million dollars.

The IRA directs NRCS to use the additional funds specifically for climate change mitigation.
Mitigation activities reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve carbon storage.
FY25 list of NRCS climate-smart mitigation activities: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/NRCS-CSAF-Mitigation-Activities-List.pdf

NRCS is continually evaluating mitigation activities and IRA implementation approach and will update them as appropriate. Federal Register notice (Nov. 21, 2022).

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
Our RCPP program manager is Mr. Benjamin Allen. The RCPP program promotes coordination of NRCS activities with partners that offer value added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

FY2024 Approved Agreement
Managing Native Vegetation for Climate Mitigation through Grassland Bird Conservation in Georgia and Mississippi

FY2025 – 3 Approved Agreements
Pending Approvals

FY 2025 Program Timelines
Can be accessed online**:**
https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/nrcs_mississippi/program/Lists/Announcements/Attachments/9/FY2025%20Programs%20Timeline_10032024.pdf

Fiscal Year 2025 EQIP Sign-Up

EQIP Classic including State and National Initiatives:
2025 Sign-up Deadline: November 1, 2024
Eligibility Deadline: November 29, 2024
Obligation Deadline: August 29, 2025
Fiscal Year 2025 CSP Sign-Up

CSP Renewals:
Application Deadline: March 29, 2024
Assessment and Ranking Deadline: November 22, 2024

Obligation Deadline: December 13, 2024

CSP Classic including State and National Initiatives:
2025 Sign-up Deadline: November 1, 2024
Eligibility Deadline: November 29, 2024
Obligation Deadline: August 29, 2025

FY2025 Allocations we expect to receive:

Program	Initial Allocation
CSP	**$66,876,691.00**
Farm Bill	$41,205,691.00
IRAS	$25,671,000.00
EQIP	**$103,372,828.00**
Farm Bill	$45,741,675.00
IRAE	$57,631,153.00
Totals	**$170,249,519.00**

FY 2025 Changes **-** MS Water Conservation Program FY2025, formerly known as Mississippi Service Water Conservation Program. It will be offered as an initiative this year.

The Mississippi Water Conservation Management Project is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving groundwater through the enhanced use of water conservation and surface water. As part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), this project operates through program contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in eligible counties.

Closing Comments - Kurt Readus
Thanked the speakers, agency leadership, and those responsible for assisting with the organization of this meeting.

He opened the floor for any final questions:

Deborah Hendrix – A farmer in Rankin County. Acknowledged Area Conservationist Jamie Keith, stating that she is one of the best NRCS employees, she is smart, knowledgeable, and is persistent and professional. She has high qualities that I admire to strive for.
Okay, I come to you Mr. Readus and the State Technical Committee meeting to ask a question. I would like for you all to adopt Standard Practice 372, adoption of this practice, or an initiative, for energy efficiency. Help the people to help the land. The states that have already adopted this practice for example, California, Washington, Texas, Colorado, Michigan, etc. Replacing old high emitting tractors with an on-farm equipment with new low emitting or electric equipment has tangible on and off-farm impacts by improving air quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving the energy efficiency of on-farm equipment.

Mr. Readus thank her for her request. States like California, Texas, Washington, Michigan, our programs address resource concerns. And that resource concern they are addressing, is particulate matter of 2.5, or 10 microns or less. We don't have that issue here in the state of Mississippi. So, at this time we will not be offering practice code 372. In the event there is a need to do so, the State Technical Committee will always consider that.

Deborah Hendrix - With all due respect Mr. Readus, and you know I respect you highly. And I understand what you said about particulate matter, that has not been across the board criteria. I think that's particular for Mississippi only.

Mr. Readus – No mam, I was the state of California's, Deputy State Conservationist when practice code

372 was created. And it was created in order to address air quality, particulate matter is why they did it. They were the first state. Whether you believe me or not, I promise you I'm telling you what God loves, and that's the truth.

Attorney Andrea Barnes with The Center for Justice, Director of Heirs Property introduced herself to the meeting audience and provided information on the assistance and collaborative efforts they can provide.

RCPP recipients of the Northern Bobwhite and Grassland initiative update was provided by John Grucchi. It will feature a HU component and prescribed fire component. Soft roll out in January, this is an alternative funding arrangement.

Pete Hunter - Appreciates that partners come together and gave an example of remembering when CSP program was initiated. Over the years, CSP has brought more people in their office to start conservation efforts. Also, MDEQ he has found out how much they work with us to get problems solved. This meeting educated me well over the years.

Kurt Readus – CSP helps maintain those conservation practices they put on the ground. Thank you all for coming. Handouts will be posted on the website.

Meeting adjourned at 12:47 PM