

STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, APRIL 16TH, 2025

9am – Nate Goodrich, NRCS Acting State Conservationist, welcomes us to the meeting.

- He explained why Scott Edwards is not in attendance – Scott is currently on detail in Washington, DC, as the Acting Deputy Chief for Management & Strategy for NRCS – due to the transition to the new administration. Scott wishes he could be in attendance, but he will be back by the end of May, at the latest (hopefully).
- Nate invites everyone to introduce themselves to the group.
- Nate discusses our current reorganization, the target from our superiors is moving as all the numbers are crunched, but NRCS expects to have a firm final staffing number in the very near future, and what plans we will pursue to meet those goals. NRCS has already lost many employees across the state to both sections of the Designated Resignation Program and other programs ending their funding or going on pause for the foreseeable future.
 - The question was asked, are the losses concentrated anywhere, or have they been spread across the agency? From what we have observed, they have been spread across the agency – newer and older employees, all sections of NRCS.
- We still have VERA, VSIP, and the RIF upcoming, the last only if the other measures don't meet our new staffing goals. We are restructuring our staff and offices, and looking at what level of program and technical assistance delivery we can support with our new staffing numbers.
- IRA is still being evaluated at the Department level, both payments and funding. Payments on existing producer contracts with IRA dollars have already resumed. For agreements with partners, we are working with those producers so that we can still honor those contracts, just from different funding sources if available.
- Climate Smart Commodities projects have been on hold, but those funds are opening back up for existing contracts and changed the name to Advancing Markets for Producers. Frank Oberle says his CSC contract was canceled as it did not meet the requirements to continue.
- Rumors abound of our field offices closing, but those are not true. What is true is that the lease for the State Office (to include NRCS, FSA, RD, and the Boone County field office) has been terminated, effective end of the fiscal year, and we are still working through that.
- All Federal employees have had telework and remote work contracts terminated, and everyone is coming back into office.
- Lisa Potter asked if we know of any holes in the new staffing across the state? We do not currently know, as we don't have final numbers, and just don't know what we will look like when all is said and done.
- The group expressed their dismay and disappointment at the current state of affairs, which we greatly appreciate the support. We are a farmer-facing organization, and we will continue to support our producers as best we can.

9:28am – Drew Walters, FSA, thanks Nate for his speech.

- Looking at CRP for the past year, please see slides for those numbers.
- Frank Oberle asked if you could graze on CRP acres? Yes, a producer can graze on CRP acres.
- Where, geographically, has the growth occurred this past year? Mostly in the northern counties of the state.
- CRP, no updates on current policy and no current signups available. Only about 2 million acres available for CRP signup this year, so there will be tough competition for those when they do open up.
- For ECP, we had November flooding, March/April tornadoes, and an ice storm in January, see slides for affected counties.
- EFRP is like ECP, but for non-industrialized private forests, haven't utilized it much in the past, but with the March/April tornadoes, we have 14 counties that are requesting EFRP.

9:37am – Selma Mascaro, NRCS, introduces herself.

- Had some difficulties with the Field Office Tech Guide, but we have fixed most of those and we can now post to Section 4.
- We have hired a new State Forester, Angela George, and she has been working hard on updating our Forestry practices, see slides for those details.
- We have updated our Wildlife Implementation Requirements as well, our wildlife biologist Jason Sykes has been driving that for us.
- In Agronomy, we are focused on Cover Crops, and in Pasture, there is a lot of buzz about Virtual Fencing, and Missouri is looking to add it to EQIP in 2026.
 - The question is, what is virtual fencing, is it like the buried wire dog fencing? Yes, same concept.
- Plant Materials Center in Elsberry, which serves Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri, run by Ron Cordsiemon. The PMC is hosting a Cover Crop Training on May 7th, contact Selma if you wish to participate as there are only so many seats available. The PMC has many projects they are working on, please see the slides for more information on those.
- Many projects in the works by the NRCS Ecological Sciences section, see the slide for information on those.
- Did the Climate Smart Practice list for the Prescribed Burn get affected by the recent funding changes? Yes, those funding changes did affect those projects. We are still pushing Prescribed Burns as a good option to consider for producers. We also have options to offer funding to promote producers. Tyler Preston at NRCS is our Technical Service Provider POC, and he has some TSP training upcoming.

10:02am – Paul McDonald, NRCS, talks to us about EQIP and what was accomplished in FY24.

- These numbers come several months after the end of the fiscal year, see slides for that information.
- Rolled wetland initiatives into wildlife funding to meet our goals. Didn't quite meet our wildlife and livestock numbers desired, but that was mostly due to not enough applications and too many of the submitted applications not getting picked up.
- On slides, Planned by Obligation is ranked by dollar amount, and Planned by Instance is ranked by number of times those contracts were submitted (most popular).

10:17am – Susan Mammen, NRCS, talks to us about CSP and what was accomplished in FY24.

- EQIP looks at the smaller details of a producer's operation, while CSP looks at the producer's entire production, and which conservation and resource concerns you are facing.
- EQIP was originally a stepping stone going into CSP, but it no longer operates as that, our producers now go straight to CSP, if they so desire. See slides for pertinent details and numbers.
- Find enhancements on NRCS National website.
- Do you produce a map of where the funds are going in the state? We have not in the past, but we can and will pass that out when we do.

10:33am – Ally Travlos, NRCS, talks to us about RCPP and what was accomplished in FY24.

- See the slides for a map of what projects are ongoing and for the numbers detailing those projects.
- Is there going to be an RFP this year? We have not heard due to the budget issues, but will gladly let everyone know if we do get funding.

10:38am – Break.

10:56am – Nate Goodrich, NRCS, talks to us about Locally Led Conservation.

- We want to get back to our locally led workgroups and conservation. Working with the Conservation Districts, but not tied exclusively to them.
- Here is the survey link for this program, please direct any questions to Jennifer Long, NRCS, who will be heading this initiative.
https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=5zZb7e4BvE6GfuA8-g1Gl43PR82WnwIDh_TCHDpJcpZUQ0JDSU1TNVVRWU1KRFAxMFJXMVFCVTg4UC4u
- We foresee putting the QR code at the front desk of every one of our field offices to better engage our producers.



11:15am – Rex McAliley presents the Water Quality & Source Water Protection Subcommittee.

- We have MRBI, NWQI, and SWPA going on. MRBI is our big focus, NWQI hasn't changed much in the past 2 years, and SWPA only covers about 22% of Missouri's waterways.
- NRCS is developing the HUC (Hydrological Unit Code) Identification Tool to more easily and accurately identify water resources that are heavily impacted, and the subcommittee is utilizing it to guide our efforts.
- The subcommittee is focusing on the Lower Grand HUC8 watershed as it ranked highest for greatest impact over many factors (see slides for more details).
- NWQI and SWPA are focusing on Southwest Missouri around the Joplin area.

11:55am – Chris Boeckmann with Lincoln University gave us a presentation on their Cole County projects. <https://www.lincolnu.edu/cooperative-extension-and-research/university-farms/g-w-carver-farm.html>

- Lincoln University is an 1890 Land Grant Institution – Research, Extension, Education.
- They will be holding a field day Wednesday June 11th at Carver Farm.
- Contained within the Lincoln University agricultural program are Carver Farm at 150 acres, Busby Farm at 280 acres, fully organic, and Freeman Farms, animal science farm, at 350 acres.
- Greenhouses utilized for hydroponics at Carver Farm, but other projects in the greenhouses at the other 2 farms.
- Eight high tunnels between all 3 farms.
- Sheep barn at Carver farm focusing on artificial insemination of small ruminants, computerized system to identify fertile semen.
- Total of 600 ewes between the 3 farms, and lambing has begun.
- 100 goats between 3 farms, mostly used at Busby to help with the organic status.
- Lincoln and MU are both Land Grant institutions and there is an AMOU between them so there isn't any significant overlap on research topics.
- Lincoln U utilizes multi-species grazing.
- Aquaculture research going on at Carver Farm, many species of fish and shellfish being grown.
- Lincoln U is working with Prairie View A&M in Texas, and LU is studying their meat processing plant to create their own plant, construction to be started this summer, hopefully.
- LU is working with Noble Research Institute out of Oklahoma, offering 5 courses at LU this coming Fall and into next year, may be able to train FPAC staff in these certifications.