

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

South Dakota State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2025 | 10 a.m. Central Time

Hybrid meeting on Teams and Federal Building, Room 300, 4th Street SW, Huron, SD

[LINK TO THE RECORDING ON THE NRCS SOUTH DAKOTA YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#)

- **Welcome and Opening Remarks: Colette Kessler and Tony Sunseri**
 - Purpose of the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)
 - Advisory committee of the NRCS required by the Food Security Act of 1985 to advise the NRCS State Conservationist and other USDA agencies regarding constituent concerns and statewide priorities. The meetings are an opportunity for input on how to do something or make something better.
 - Reviewed the role of subcommittees for the STAC.
- **Partner Update: Bill Smith - Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources**
 - Had Conservation Commission grant round on April 8.
 - Approved 10 grant applications totaling \$249,854.00
 - Have a call out for loan applications that are due the end of June for Conservation Districts.
 - Getting ready to start the field season for watershed protection.
 - For the forestry end we are getting calls in on drought stress on trees
 - Detection of emerald ash borer in Brookings last year so checking on those areas so no surprises like in North Dakota late last summer when found 20 miles north of Aberdeen at a rest stop.
 - Coming up on the end of state fiscal year
 - Mid-June the fiscal systems will be shut down
 - No vouchers processed until June 30.
- **NRCS Update: Tony Sunseri**
 - Started with roughly 330 for staff and down to about 270 today.
 - USDA will share a reorganization plan and waiting to see what the impact will have on NRCS at the state level.
 - Comments regarding status of Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds for EQIP, CSP and ACEP. NRCS SD has funded applications with a backlog of requests for assistance. NRCS SD will have the ability to request additional funds, if they become available.
 - No news on new Farm Bill yet.
 - Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) is our “hands on support” that NRCS provides to farmers, ranchers and landowners to help them conserve natural resources while maintaining productive operations. The one-on-one on farm advice offers discussions with producers which are confidential.
 - Reorganization plan coming
 - Consistency across all the states

- During this time, the agency is looking for producer input on what they think needs to be changed or could be improved upon.
- **NRCS Engineering Update – Jim Reedy**
 - Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program
 - Two active projects in the state
 - One with Game, Fish & Parks on spillway erosion repair on Dimock Lake south of Mitchell.
 - Other with FEMA on the 319th street bridge in Clay County that crosses the Vermillion River.
 - Engineering Assistance
 - 400-450 active assistance requests across the state
 - Heavy on livestock watering systems (pipelines, tanks, wells), grass waterways and other erosion control, and small scale.
 - Always have way more need than we have funding for
 - Briefing of Conservation Practice 634 – Waste Transfer and discussion for use of this practice in South Dakota
 - From storage to final application in the field
 - Right now, existing operations with no runoff containment and operations with mortality containment take up most of the funding.
 - Currently NRCS and South Dakota regulatory agencies (DANR, county/local zoning, etc.) do not have policy or regulations that mandate how to get manure from storage to field.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** activate a subcommittee for discussion regarding addressing the problem with the storage to field process.
 - NRCS, SD DANR, SD Pork, SD Dairy; interested partners should contact Jim Reedy at james.reedy@usda.gov or (605) 352-1200.
 - Planning for the subcommittee to meet in early summer with a report prepared by August timeframe for agency practice and FY2026 programmatic decisions.
- **Farm Service Agency – Ryan Vanden Berge**
 - Implementing ECAP
 - Comments regarding activity of farm loans
 - Lost about 30 employees to the DRP
 - No new state executive director has been announced yet
- **NRCS Ecological Sciences – Jessica Michalski**
 - Updates to conservation practices of the field office technical guides are performed in April and October. The Handout in packet outlined specific practices for small scale agriculture and soil carbon amendment
 - Grasslands Forage Condition Drought news release

- **NRCS Compliance – Deke Hobbick**
 - Review of outstanding Wetland Determinations, Highly Erodible Land Determinations and the workload of Number of Certified Determinations. Provided a map showing general numbers of wetland determinations completed throughout the state. It was questioned as to why certain counties specifically Hamlin County did not seem to be consistent with neighboring counties for wetland work completed. After working with GIS staff, it was found that the data for that county did not draw out entirely. The void in the data created a void in the map. A new map will be provided for the next State Tech.
- **CRP – Owen Fagerhaug**
 - CRP sign-up availability again
 - Six notices published (slides are in the handout)
 - Announcing Continuous CRP Signup 63
 - Processing HELI Re-enrollment Offers
 - Announcing General CRP Signup 64
 - Soil Rental Rate Update for FY 2025
 - Continuous CRP Signup Through Approved CREP Agreements
 - CRP Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) Re-enrollment Eligibility Criteria for General, Continuous, or Grasslands CRP and CREP
- **NRCS Programs – Val Dupraz**
 - **CSP & EQIP**
 - 2,673 total applications
 - Spread out throughout state
 - CSP – 123 obligations
 - EQIP – 172 obligations
 - **RCPP – Matt Morlock**
 - RCPP individual projects update; eight projects still paused
 - National Funding Opportunities – no date yet
 - **Easements – David Flannery**
 - National ACEP ALE program was approved.
 - Highest ranking application was going to cost around \$2.5 million and was approved.
 - Experiencing challenges with process of getting title work through the system right now
 - **ACTION ITEM –** NRCS Conservation Programs of the Farm Bill Subcommittee will be convening for feedback. Contact is Val Dupraz, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs valorie.dupraz@usda.gov or call (605) 352-1200.
 - Preparing for new Farm Bill
- **NRCS Partnerships – Colette Kessler**
 - Use Conservation Technical Assistance currently with partners and other members

- Grant and Agreement holders are encourage to use EZFedGrants manage the administration of their agreements such as upload reports and claims.
 - EZFedGrants has an email address helpdesk if you are having issues: ezFedGrants-cfo@usda.gov
 - With loss of staff, NRCS South Dakota add shared email mailbox for agreements communications and program contact to email so we are aware of the activity: sm.fpac.nrcs.sd.agreement@usda.gov
- **Partners Update**
 - **South Dakota Soybean Association – Johnna Ringkob**
 - Preparing for next fiscal year, wrapping up current year.
 - See For Yourself to Mexico in July
 - Huron Shop Talk on July 9 and Faulkton Shop Talk July 10
 - Golf tournament July 21 in Brandon
 - Just opened up yield contest
 - **South Dakota School of Mines – Lisa Kunza**
 - Through an agreement of SDSMT with NRCS SD, they are developing a toolkit to help support ranchers in Western SD – naming it after the late NRCS Rangeland Management Specialist Mitch Faulkner
 - Hosting staff from NRCS this late summer to show results of the toolkit.
 - **South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts – Angela Ehlers**
 - Senate Ag meeting yesterday on conservation in the farm bill.
 - Continuing to work on the Dakota Conservation Network
 - Looking for opportunities to expand the outreach effort in both the Dakota Conservation Network and the Non-Operating Landowner projects.
 - Working on collecting natural resource concerns through our local work groups.
 - **Ducks Unlimited – Bruce Toay**
 - Update on RCPP project we call Working Grasslands Partnership
 - There have about 34 signed landowner agreements across SD working with our partners. Will obligate about \$2.4 million to cooperators and plant approximately 8775 acres of marginal crop land back into grass.
 - **South Dakota State University – Sushant Mehan**
 - There will be a Tri-State Drainage Research Forum (Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota)
 - Will be 24th year of the forum and will be held in SD after being in other states the last 10 years.
 - Will talk about drainage as a system and not as a single practice.
- **Closing**
 - State Conservationist summarized importance of constituent input to NRCS. The Locally Led work groups are important for gaining feedback of farmers and ranchers through conservation districts.

- Next meeting will be September 10, location TBD

Respectfully submitted

Randi Papka, Secretary

USDA NRCS SD Partnerships and Public Affairs