

NRCS Nevada STAC Meeting Minutes  
6/11/24

## 061124 STAC Back-to-Basics

### 1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Time: 30 minutes

- Purpose: Information • If we have more than 20 people participating in the meeting, we will limit introductions to appointed STAC members and NRCS Staff.
- Presenter: Heidi Ramsey, Chris Rose

Attendees: Heidi Ramsey, NRCS  
Susan Abele, US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Samantha Wagner, NV Land Trust  
Meghan Brown, NDA  
Kaelie Pena, Pheasants Forever  
Melany Aten, DCNR  
Jim Gifford, NRCS  
Ari DeLara, NRCS  
Dan Locke, NRCS  
Arlo Stock  
Doug Busselman, Nevada Farm Bureau  
Brian (tribal member)  
Alicia Reban, NV Land Trust  
Allen Moody, NRCS  
Rachel Larue, NRCS  
Maggie Sandeen, NRCS

Online:

Reggie Premo, UNR-Extension (Duck Valley Cons Dist)  
LaKeisha Barber, ASTC-M&S, NRCS  
Dr. Bill Payne, UNR  
Jake DeDecker, UNR  
Joey Davis, NRCS, Lovelock  
Jake Tibbits, Eureka, NVACD  
Trina Johnson, NRCS  
John George, NRCS  
Kathleen Steele, Sagebrush  
Kevin Piper, NVACD  
Leanna Cary, Progressive Rancher Magazine  
Cory Lytle, ASTC-FO, NRCS  
Maggie Orr, Lincoln county  
Marley Jenkins, NVCD  
Nicole Bitsilly, Intertribal Ag Council  
Skyler Monahan, NDA Sagebrush  
Ken Sowers, Outreach, NRCS  
Jasmine Wilson, Urban Ag, NRCS  
Mark Damron,

Janice Kolvet, FSA  
Kayla Jackson, FSA  
Dirk Netz, FS  
Justin Barrett, FWS  
Shawn Espinosa, NDOW  
Jasmine Kleiber, NDOW  
Alan Shepherd, BLM  
JJ Goicoechea, NDA  
James Settelmeyer, DCNR  
Charlie Clements, ARS  
Joe Sicking

## 2. Locally Led Conservation, Local Work Group

Locally Led Conservation, Local Work Groups (LWG), and the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

- Time: 30 minutes
- Goal: Information/Discussion
- Purpose: The overall goal of this item is to provide background to STAC members on how the STAC is supposed to function based on the 440 Programs Manual parts 500 (Locally Led Conservation) and 501 (USDA Conservation Program Delivery).

Part 500 provides the framework for locally led conservation, development of needs assessments and action plans at the conservation district level.

Part 501 talks about the responsibilities of the Local Working Groups and State Technical Committee and their roles in providing recommendations to NRCS.

- Presenter: Chris Rose

Step 1-4: See slides

Melanie Aten:

28 Conservation Districts

Working through the steps in various ways

Needs Assessments taken on by CDs that go through the issues specific to their location

Most should be looked at again to revamp what's needed

NVACD website hosts the current and complete needs assessment

How does NRCS work with the CD programs?

NRCS Works hand in hand with CD

Still need more coordination with NRCS

Qt: (Leanna Carey) How are CDs notification of meetings being sent out? There are more interested parties that are not getting notified.

A: Post online and at the meeting location as per State guidelines; sometimes at the local Post Office, various email lists

Interested party should request access and notification from each CD

LWG Membership: We need to increase input and participation from Producers--especially ranchers  
Melanie: LWG is required to meet annually (and encouraged to meet bi-annually)--Priorities change throughout the year with the seasons

Doug: How many LWGs are there right now? Would like to see better communication with meeting schedules--better announcements; we want the money to be available to folks

Melanie: four areas are not functional; challenges include connectivity between the CDs and Producers

Reggie: DVCD recognize it's in the outer boundaries of the reservation; original maps included the entire reservation; 1/2 the Tribe is not covered

Melanie: State money is held to the boundary of state lines and does not include the Idaho portion; It would take congressional changes to include Idaho

Meghan: **Action items need a response in a more timely manner**; enable DCs/Field Offices to bring the questions and priorities of "walk-ins"

Chris: possible reports to producers; need to balance conservation with the money available

**Reminder:** Policy is posted on STAC website--we need to work with people to continue to build trust; it is about conservation as much as producing food

**Caliente, Yerington, Winnemucca District Conservationist positions are open NOW!!!**

Leanna:

Dr. Bill Payne: meeting with Heidi soon;

STAC membership

### 3. Ranking Criteria and Payment Schedules

- Time: 45 minutes
- Goal: Information/Discussion
- Purpose: To provide information to STAC members on fund pools, payment schedules, state priority resource concerns, and CSP state priority resource concerns, the role that LWGs and the STAC play in providing recommendations, and the timeframes for submitting recommendations.
- Presenters: Trina Johnson, Ari DeLara

**See slides**

NRCS Mission

NRCS Vision

Farm Bill Programs: EQIP, EQIP IRA, AMA, CSP, RCPP, CIG, ACEP

Program 2024 Allocation Summary

Meghan: What is the LWG money?

Trina: Based on service area; Landowners within the service area apply through that funding source

All applications are placed into and ranked by each fund pool depending on eligibility

MaggieO: Can they get paid out of more than one fund pool?

Trina: Potentially, yes.

Heidi: where are the fund pools explained? The way it **should** be is the applicant should be aware of the fund pools and request their application goes into the fund pool that they want. This is not a decision that NRCS should be making--it's up to the applicant.

**NRCS needs to explain the fund pools and give more education to beginning/new farmers**

Liz: Can we report on how funds were spent in the past? Where are we getting the most applications? If we spend it all, can we get more?

Heidi: Yes! We want to spend the money and usually get allocated more if we keep spending

Trina will present criteria for IRA dollars later

Why is Sage Grouse Initiative in red? Ans: lack of Sage Grouse Initiative applicants

Online comment: socially disadvantaged (?)

Reggie: **Does NRCS have any fact sheets on the fund pools?** This could be helpful to give to producers.

Doug: What is EQIP CIC?

Ari: Conservation Incentive Contract

Heidi: CSP needs to be better publicized and a bigger education to the public

CIC is a stepping stone to stewardship that needs to be more widely publicized

Leanna: Hearing plenty of failure-type words; Would like to hear solutions to any of our "failures"; without solutions there will be no success

Trina: **Ranking Criteria**

Resource Concerns are tied to projects on the ground; reportable to Congress; part of eligibility criteria

Eligibility: Applicant, Land, Resource

2024 CSP State Priority Concerns

EQIP State Priority Resource Concern Practices--**see slides for 7 concerns; we could have 10 so we're missing the mark**

Cost list labels

Payment Scenarios:

Regional scale

Does not dictate technical requirements

Arlo: EQIP reimbursement rates are not keeping up with inflation

Weed control and fencing

Riparian spring would be a better idea

***We could use receipts and contract information so we could pass it higher; where are producers getting their supplies?***

Leanna: We stand alone and should not be compared to states that have a larger abundance of water-- what approach do we take to show these disparities?

Ari: IRA

IRA projects need to involve climate smart ag and forestry practices

**See slides for examples**

Meghan: NV Native Seed production needs a "silo" in the IRA while needing to have the seed harvested  
Deadlines: Need recommendations for these from CDs

2025 Opportunities include:

EQIP Urban Funds

State Conservation Innovation Grants

Resource Concerns:

What is the best bang for the buck? We need to justify the money being spent and see how the NRCS is meeting objectives.

How does EQIP Priority (Pr) go hand in hand with the spending?

#### **PARKING LOT**

Discuss adding three more practices

LWG feedback (agenda item #7)

Discuss recommendations for longer STAC in fall--2-full days?

Current eligibility requirements: such as WHIP

#### **5. Tribal Advisory Committee**

- Time: 30 minutes
- Goal: Information/Discussion
- Purpose: To introduce the idea of a separate body, whether an advisory committee or subcommittee, dedicated specifically to addressing tribal concerns and issues.
- Presenter: Heidi Ramsey, John George

Held payment scenario discussion with the Tribe in February

Are the tools in the toolbox meeting the needs of the Tribes?

Tribes would like to have more meaningful discussions which led to the recommendation of a Tribal Advisory Committee

Do the Tribes see this as value added?

Does the STAC believe this is value added?

This effort is not consultation--that is only available between the individual Tribal governments and the STC

**Recommend:**

Quarterly or bi-annual meetings with set agendas

A Charter and other criteria will need to be established

Letter to each Tribal Council requesting representation from each Tribe

Would like to see Nicole Bitsilly a permanent member of the Council

How many Tribal Council members should be added to the STAC?

Currently 100,000 acre Tribes are represented automatically (this is not the requirement for a Tribal Technical Committee)

This recommendation is for an additional Council that integrates with the STAC?

Why does it have to be joined to the STAC? MT runs parallel; WI runs as sub-committee.

**Recommend the Tribal Council meets 1 week prior to the regular STAC to give time for consolidation of ideas/notes/etc**

**Will STAC go forward with a recommendation for creating a Tribal Technical Committee that will run parallel to the STAC. -- YES**

Quickly done with much expediency!

Letter from STC requesting representation

Anyone can attend meetings in an open forum but "members" will be the voting body

**6. Urban Ag Working Group**

- Time: 30 minutes
- Goal: Information
- Purpose: To provide an overview of the Urban Ag program in Nevada and an update on the activities of the Urban Ag working group.
- Presenter: Jasmine Wilson, Urban Conservationist

Stood up December 2023

Would like to see a Urban Work Group

Jasmine, Trina, Max, Members are agricultural producers who care withing the urban/suburban settings located throughout the state

Meeting April 8, 2024 -- **See slides**

Goals and Objectives

Funding sources

Urban Ag working definition--used Idaho's as template

1. Applies to any parcel (as recorded by the county assessor) of land:
  - i. Inside city limits

**See slides for further information**

Round Table Discussion

People's Garden Initiative-- nation-wide collaboration and networking

Planning meeting in fall will take place prior to the STAC meeting

Plant productivity

Wind effects

Living fences

Would like to see more indoor growing as priority

1. Develop Urban fund pool ranking questions for FY25
2. Discuss what priorities to address with a State CIG
3. Does the STAC have recommendations / future considerations
4. Should this be as an advisory to the STAC or more like a LWG?

Leanna: Very important to have a seat on this committee; Idea for school gardens

Dr. Bill Payne: would like to work together

Reggie:

Megan: Recommend having each section of the land parcels represented -- the "or's"

Doug: What are the practices that fit within the Urban Ag profile?

High tunnels

Raised beds (eligibility is difficult)

Composting

Aquaponics

Leanna Carey: suggest raised beds -- they are water conservation "happy"

Heidi: Is there anything being proposed at this time for Urban Ag to be included as a sub-committee to the STAC?

**After polling the STAC, there are no opponents to adding the Urban Ag as a sub-committee**

### **7. Local Work Group Input to Date •**

Time: 45 minutes

- Goal: Information/Discussion
- Purpose: To present the information developed at FY24 Local Work Group meetings regarding priorities and resource concerns and talk about how that information is used by the STAC and NRCS.
- Presenter: Melany Aten, Chris Rose

1. Communication is a priority
2. DCNR's website will list LWG meeting schedules soon as well as POC
3. Rely on CDs for outreach
4. Always comes back to SWAPA -- we want feedback concerns
5. LWG Input
  - a. **See slides from Melany Aten**
1. Leanna: Is the information on the soil degradation coming from the off-road folks?
  - a. Melany: reported impacts by ATVs and landowners
  - b. Not trying to kick anyone off the land, just figure out how to mitigate the issues caused by people not using approved roads, etc.
2. How to speak NRCS? How much of a language course do we need to give so that conversations are understandable?

### **8. Combustion System Improvement Practice**

- Time: 20 minutes
- Goal: Information
- Purpose: To provide information on conservation practice 372, Combustion System Improvement. Information will include how it will be incorporated in Nevada and what the program does and does not provide.

- Presenters: Jim Gifford, Allen Moody

SWAPA+HE (Human / Energy)

Two avenues for cost sharing:

EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NAQI: National Air Quality Initiative

Primary purpose is to address reduction in ozone, etc.

Reducing emissions helps achieve and maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards

Reggie: Do the new tractors still burn diesel fuel?

Most are, yes. Some are now electric.

### **9. Recommendations**

- Time: 20 minutes
- Goal: Information/Discussion/Tasking
- Purpose: To review the process for submitting recommendation to NRCS through the STAC. This would include information provided by subcommittees and STAC members.

This would also include a tasking and due date for STAC members to submit recommendations on items including:

o Priorities and Resource Concerns

o Payment Schedules

o Subcommittee formation

o Fall Meeting dates and topics

- Presenter: Chris Rose

### **10. Public Comment Period**

- Public comments will be limited to three minutes per person. Written comments will not be read out loud but will be available on the STAC website.
- Time: 30 minutes

Reggie Premo: Thanks to Jaime Jasmine for setting up sign-up table at tribal meetings--it is proving to be valuable to increasing sign-ups!

Leana Carey: What is the status of the Lovelock vacancy? How many state vacancies are there across the state?

Elected supervisory position

Request for Staffing Update for NRCS

There are Engineering vacancies that are impacting sign-ups since lack of Engineers definitely affects the timeframe getting practices in place

## 11. Parking Lot items and Adjournment

- Time: 30 minutes
- Goal: Discussion
- Purpose: This is time allotted to revisit items that may have been placed in the parking lot during the meeting and additional questions or discussion by members on agenda items.
- Presenter: Chris Rose

Allowed up to 10 EQIP High Priority Practices eligible for increased payment  
High priority practices (Pr) are coded differently from Source Water Protection practices (Wp) in the payment schedules

**Computer froze. The following are taken from word document.**

Watering facilities including troughs and tanks (614)

Livestock pipeline on rangelands (516)

Are pipes separate from solar panels?

550 for post fire (range seeding)

Planting practice – hedgerow, windbreak—code that includes trees

Brush management

Prescribed grazing (528)

314—PJ removal??

**Add ??? Remove ???? why should we drop an item? How frequently are they used? Is it useful on a broad scale or more localized? How do we include more Urban Ag?**

Leana: you do not need to do NEPA if *replacing* water systems; water distribution for livestock; reduce ground disturbance

Is nutrient management removable?

Why are we not seeing streambank protection/erosion techniques?

Comment: wild horses are the most destructive to streambank protection; until we get rid of the horses we are fighting a losing battle

It would be beneficial to have a Wildlife Biologist in attendance at the LWG meetings

Can RCPP be used for paying CD resource needs assessment costs? – short answer is no.

Current eligibility for former WHIP customers? Is acreage eligibility changing due to Urban Ag?