

NRCS Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

January 22, 2026 (rescheduled meeting from October 2025 due to shut down)

Attendees:

NRCS:

Janice Kolvet; Kenneth Sowers; Thad Heater; Joe Noyes; Mary Cassinelli, Jim Gifford; Allen Moody; Todd Allai; Cory Lytle; LaKeisha, Barber; Carson Hicks; Chris Bernau; Madi Stout; Chris Rose; Heather Emmons; Mark Martini; Trina Johnson; Ari DeLara; Chris Savastion;

Public in the room: Cody Hussla, Crop Production Coord., UNR Extension; Liz Munn, The Nature Conservancy; Kayla Jackson, FSA; Phil Cowee, FSA; Melany Aten, DCNR; Heather Geiger, The Nature Conservancy; Meghan Brown, Nevada Dept. of Ag; Samantha Wagner, Nevada Land Trust; Alicia Reban, Nevada Land Trust; Susan Abel, USFWS

Public on Teams:

Jake Tibbitts, Natural Resource Mgr., Eureka County and Supervisor, Eureka Conservation District; Mark Damron, President, NvACD Board; Kevin Piper, Exec. Dir., NvACD; Chris Fritsen, Nonpoint source pollution branch supervisor, NDEP; Maggie Orr, Lincoln County CD/ SCC; Brenda Hunt, Carson Water Subconservancy District; Cole Vlot; Leana Carey, UNR Extension/Progressive Rancher; Becky DeForest; Laurel Saito; Anna Farb; Staci K Emm, Extension; Scott Clifford

Welcome/Introductions

Heidi Ramsey, NRCS Nevada State Conservationist, introduced Jan Kolvet, new Chief of Staff for Field Operations. Jan introduced herself and talked about her role. Heidi gave a budget and programs update mentioning the Jan. 15 sign up and possible March 6 batch 2 sign up. She talked about virtual fencing, and that we have three projects: 2 public and one private on 200,000 acres. She also mentioned that there is a lot of CSP money available.

She provided a staffing update, stating that we have 42 employees. We have 14 field staff and she stated where we have staff. We are going through a reorganization, but it hasn't been approved yet. Thanks to our partners who help support us – NvACD: administrative assistants in Elko and Fallon, and technician new hires in Elko and Ely. Pheasants Forever: biologist position in Elko and hiring a position in Winnemucca. Intermountain West Joint Venture: coordinator to administrative oversight PF positions. Nevada-Tahoe CD providing engineering assistance. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribe in Duck Valley hired a new technician. Talking to NvACD and PF on more positions.

We're making progress on engineering despite having just two engineers. She provided how many projects need to be done.

Lastly, she shared the Chief's priorities.

- **Questions/comments:**

Meghan Brown: asked if the programs deadlines will always be now one national deadline. Heidi doesn't know. **Meghan wonders if those deadlines work or not for Nevada. *Something to discuss in the next STAC meeting. Jan said she'd take that back to NHQ to get an answer.***

Meghan asked about contacts who could help get the word out about CSP. Heidi noted a strategy meeting would help. Chris Rose mentioned the CSP campaign NRCS is working on. Meghan volunteered to put information about our programs in their NDA newsletters. Heidi mentioned that CSP contracts are no longer deferred and customers now need to turn in new applications each year.

Susan Abel: with the new Duck Valley Technician position – how does that work? Is Idaho involved – how do we coordinate with them? Heidi: the MOU was updated in Dec., 2024 that lays out how we (NRCS) service the Tribe. Everything comes through Nevada for payments and it's funded for three years. With the new RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA), their engineer is helping us. Jan stated with FSA, due to producers going to Elko or Mountain Home in Idaho depending on their preference, they had differing feelings on what was easiest for them and were permitted to go where they felt comfortable.

Leana Carey: When the Extension High Tunnel Workshop was presented in Churchill County, Albert stated soils in high tunnels must be native soils – not raised beds, to qualify for NRCS assistance. This is a huge concern if you have a pH factor, not being allowed to bring in compost to raised beds to high tunnels. – *question addressed later in meeting.*

Tribal Advisory Committee Update

Chris Rose described what was discussed in the September meeting; weed control, water efficiency, drought resilience, wildlife concerns (wolf impacts), CSP, CIG, training technical assistance, virtual fencing, engineering coordination and assistance, partnership agreements, broader use of existing practices and interim practices on native materials, Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Heidi: Tribes are trying to use their native plants for medicinal use and we are looking into using the Plant Materials Center to help Tribes with their concerns and grow outs. PMCs

around the country already work with Tribes. Looking into what data exists already and how we can help.

NRCS Minimal Effect Procedures

Trina Johnson and Todd Allai are part of the wetland cadre. They presented about the Food Security Act, wetland compliance background, and the national bulletin released this year. They then presented on the minimal effect procedures and asked the STAC for recommendations. They asked for folks to participate.

Meghan: does this encompass prior converted wetlands or is it exempt (before 1986)?

Answer: If wetland was converted but no record of it, we'd still have to go through the process of wetland compliance. But if before 1986, then yes, exempt.

Who would like to work on subgroup:

Susan A. volunteered to participate. Suggested we engage NV Div. of Natural Heritage.

Melany A: NV Div. of Natural Heritage: if you have a wetland. They are going through the wetland classification process. Also suggested we reach out to Sherm Swanson for historical knowledge.

Chris F: Yes, Heritage does have staff and should be interested. NDEP might have someone too.

Melany: would the subgroup's recommendations come back to the STAC?

Todd: Yes. We'd work in the subgroup then come back to the STAC.

Chris F.: How does the Army Corps of Engineers intersect with their processes on this?

Todd: Client's responsible to seek permitting, NRCS doesn't reach out to the Corps. Client has to initiate it.

Heidi: FSA handles the eligibility and that's why we have the 1026 form with them.

Susan A.: On the eligibility determination: does the producer do it once or by each application, or only if in a wetland?

Trina: It's part of each application, particularly if it's a ground disturbing action.

Kayla: If they already have an established determination on that land, they don't have to do it again.

Todd: We'll contact those who expressed interest and set up a meeting in the near future.

Ecological Site Determinations

Presentation on what ESDs are and how they can help you by Chris Savastio, Acting State Soil Scientist

Chris showed participants how to locate ESDs and explained that Nevada's ESDs are now provisional in status, which is an achievement.

Brenda: How are the water quality and water holding capacity integrated into ESDs?

Chris S.: From soil surveys in Web Soil Survey. Some soil properties are in the ESDs as well.

Melany: The connection to Jornada – will it exist still? Now connect to EDIT?

Chris: Jordana link will still work after it's migrated.

Chris will work with Melany on broken links.

Cody: It's challenging to use SoilWeb app on a tablet. Desktop is fine. Is there a mobile version of it? Is the migration going on?

Chris: It works for where you're standing.

Heidi: I'm thinking about putting a work group together. It's a great product. How do we make it useful and accessible for people, making sure people know about it and how to use it? Maybe think about it for the next meeting.

Melany: put it on Onyx

Chris S.: He mentioned he will be hosting a state Cooperative Soil Survey Meeting soon and asked for presenters.

Question: is Chris open to presenting at local forums? Yes.

Public Comment Section

Cole Viot from the public spoke about Conservation Practice 815 and why adoption would be a good idea. He's a Smith Valley farmer. He's experienced residential growth in the area. One out of every 4-7 years there's a flood event. His request to NRCS to consider is to be able to store excess water by putting ponds in to return the water back to the ground.

Does this practice exist in other states? Yes. Trina is going to put this proposal through the State Technical Committee (meeting tomorrow, Jan. 23).

Question in chat: Is there any difficulties with water rights downstream?

Answer: No. Only used in flood events and won't impact downstream.

Susan A.: USFWS does practices. Pond and plug, for example. There's an agency that works on projects like this in Nevada. Susan will follow up with Cole and wants to see the ponds he has in CA.

Leana C.: Is there conversation about early thaw and runoff (Gardnerville, Reno area)? We have climate change. The Lahontan Dam. Concerned it would stop water that should run to others.

Cole: There are multiple classifications of flood water. This is for a short-term event and could not affect downstream users.

Question in chat: Could this be incorporated into wetland projects?

Trina: Yes, potentially. Heidi: Depends on the purpose of the practice.

Melany: Would the water retention be temporary?

Cole: Pond is not temporary – it's constructing a below grade holding basin. We'd be constructing a holding structure. Yes, water is temporary, in places with higher concentrations of gravel, so it goes into the ground.

Melany: Would there be flow gauge measurement?

Cole: There could be. We'd be watching the groundwater table.

Jim G.: How we'd evaluate this practice – "Interim conservation practice" – a test conservation practice. CA and ID adopted this practice to try it out. We would plan all these out – site specific. Are the water rights ok, etc.

Question in chat: Is there an intention to use the water?

Cole: No – not seeking any recovery. Just trying to put more water back into the ground.

Melany: Do you look at wind erosion, etc. with the practice?

Trina: Yes, we'd go through the conservation planning process to ensure it's not negatively affecting any other resource concern.

Leana's question re: details on high tunnels.

Jim G.: Crops need to be grown in the ground, or people can put them in raised beds up to 12 inches high deep.

Chris R.: Soil amendment practices can be done.

Ari: Yes, even compost

Chris R.: Who installs the raised beds?

Jim G.: The producer puts them in. There is another interim practice for raised beds – when soil is really contaminated.

Heidi: It's pivotal for people in rural areas. People need that to improve food quality.

Programs Update

Is there a limit for CSP?

Ari: No, not for CSP or EQIP, but CSP is a 5 year commitment

Heidi: this is the second year we have no Farm Bill limitation. You can have an EQIP contract and CSP contract at the same time.

Can they stack projects?

Heidi: You could have multiple EQIP contracts.

Susan: In offices not staffed, are shared positions helping with producer sign ups?

RPP –

Brenda: Working with NDEP on 319 funding on a farm in Fallon. Could a producer apply for it, get a farm assessment, see what is covered by 319 versus NRCS?

Does he need to wait until the NDEP grant is over?

Ari: No – apply now! What we're cost-sharing on can be worked out.

Can Qualified Individuals work with the conservation districts?

Ari: Yes – you just need to meet the requirements.

Cody: Works like a pest control license.

Ari: National is working on RPP guidance. Chris Savastion and the MLRA staff will be assisting.

Meghan: Could NRCS train QIs?

Ari: Yes, that's coming.

Susan: Is the payment lumped in?

Ari: It's a line item. We still need to pay on it. We're working out details.

Is the 25% nationwide? Yes.

We don't know what happens if we can't pay the 25% - whether it goes back to the general pot.

Trina clarified that the soil health testing is not just general soil testing. A whole farm assessment is required. But the contracting is not the whole farm – focus on one spot/area.

Meghan: Can we provide periodic updates as we proceed?

Susan: Happy to do pilots to assist.

Heidi: Soil health is what we should be doing as the driest state in the union!

Meghan: Soil health on range, too.

Are we separating out RPP to see how it's faring?

Ari: Yes, sectioning it out in fund pools as subcategories to show demand.

QI: Brenda recommends Chuck Schembre. We have a little bit of interest – Regen labs do soil testing.

Ari: Assembling a list of names for QIs. National will provide a list of approved labs.

Brenda: This is awesome for floodplain/ravine areas.

Susan: Does a producer have to have a whole plan with RPP when they come in?

Ari: No. It will be developed before ranking and before obligation.

Lena C.: How are we providing to the socially disadvantaged? Are we interfacing with UNR extension programs with folks?

Yes, we're meeting with UNR on Feb. 6 to train them up.