

State Technical Committee Meeting Notes  
December 8, 2016  
Lexington, Kentucky

Note: A copy of the agenda, participants and the referenced presentations may be found at the end of these notes.

State Conservationist Karen Woodrich opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. welcoming everyone and thanking them for their attendance. She asked everyone to introduce themselves. A list of attendees is found at the end of these meeting notes.

She mentioned that Farm Service Agency State Director John McCauley and Rural Development State Director Tom Fern would be leaving USDA. She said that they may come into the meeting and if so, she would give them the opportunity to speak to the group. She also said that there was an addition to the prepared agenda – Scott Ray from US Forest Service had a presentation he would like to make.

Ms. Woodrich talked about Local Working Groups (LWG) by saying that a lot of what NRCS does revolves around local needs. NRCS relies on Conservation District partners to assist in identifying those needs, resource concerns, and priorities. This may include things that NRCS doesn't deal with. Input from LWGs is to be funneled up to State Technical Committee to help NRCS and other USDA agencies make decisions. She said she wants to reengage LWGs and stakeholders at the local level. LWG meetings are open to everyone; they serve as kind of sounding board and gathers information. She said to look for meetings to be announced in the near future and she encouraged the attendees to participate in these.

She also said that the agency has a reemphasis on urban conservation. In October, Kentucky NRCS established an urban conservationist position that will be filled by former Louisville District Conservationist Kurt Mason. He will work in Louisville urban conservation and will eventually expand to other urban areas. Through his position, NRCS is looking to address resource concerns on a smaller scale for those kind of needs.

Ms. Woodrich made an acknowledgement of change in administration and said that several of USDA agencies are politically appointed including FSA and RD. She said that NRCS is not a politically appointed position, so she will remain in her position.

She mentioned that Bill Lorenz, a career US Forest Service (USFS) employee, is going to retire and she wished him well. She said NRCS appreciates the partnership effort the agency has with USFS.

#### **Update on NRCS Conservation Practice Standards**

Mrs. Woodrich then introduced Sonya Keith to speak about the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide Standards. She said that sometimes they change and she wanted the Committee to understand the process of developing and maintaining NRCS's conservation practice standards.

Ms. Keith said that State Conservation Engineer Coleman Gusler was out of the country and she was presenting on his behalf. She said that state conservation practice standards are based off the NRCS National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP) and are developed over time to conserve or improve natural resources. A state can adopt applicable national standards, and if needed standards can be modified within guidelines to fit specific conditions in state. The Kentucky NRCS conservation

practice standards can be found in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) which is available online, Kentucky eFOTG ([https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg\\_locator.aspx](https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx))

She said that the standards evolve based on farming and ranching techniques and new standards are added as needed (Energy, High Tunnels, etc.), and “old” standards are deleted when no longer applicable or needed. NRCS policy is to review all standards (engineering and agronomic) on a five year rotation and they can be updated more frequently if needed (new technology or methodology.)

She said during fiscal year 2016 there were 31 engineering and agronomic standards that were revised or added. She reviewed several of the changes to the engineering standards. (See attached slides for additional details.) Most of the other changes were minor in nature.

Ms. Keith asked if there were any questions and there were none. Mrs. Woodrich said that major changes to standards could be presented to partners and work groups, including the State Technical Committee or sub committees, for feedback on the modifications.

### **Updates on Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)**

Next, Mrs. Woodrich introduced State Resource Conservationist Mark Ferguson. She mentioned that the state nutrient management standard (conservation practice standard 590) was revised about six years ago and asked Mr. Ferguson to provide updates as well as discuss the new Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) opportunities.

There is both a national CIG opportunity as well as a state level CIG opportunity. He said that the CIG announcement got moved up to November when normally it's announced in the spring. The state CIG announcement was also announced earlier than usual.

Mr. Ferguson stated that the purpose of CIGs is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies and that CIG included pilot projects, field demonstrations, and now some on-farm conservation research.

He first discussed the state level CIG saying that the “topics” were water quality and water quantity. He said that NRCS is open to any type of water proposals, and that some of NRCS’s interests include edge-of-field monitoring. NRCS is especially interested in quantifying what type of nutrient reduction is being achieved through conservation practice implementation. He said projects should be innovative, but doesn’t mean it has to be a completely new technology; just one that has not been adopted in the state or a certain area. He said research was added last year - it was not previously allowed - but it's specific to conservation research. (See his slide presentation for additional details.)

He said that the funding is through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and that there would be \$300,000 available for state level grants for fiscal year 2017. The maximum state grant is \$75,000, and recipients must provide match funding. He discussed the selection process and said that Kentucky CIG applications are due by March 10, 2017. He said NRCS typically funds three to four a year and that they are not always at the full \$75,000 level.

He then reviewed a sample of the current state CIGs including ones with UK, Grow Appalachia, WFAN, and KSU (see slides for more information.)

Next, Mr. Ferguson discussed the six national CIG topics which include projects that describe innovative environmental enhancement and protection approaches and technologies for the primary benefit of historically underserved producers; data analytics for natural resources conservation; pay-for-success models to stimulate conservation adoption; precision conservation approaches; projects that demonstrate the cost effectiveness of leveraged public and private impact investments in working lands conservation; and water management technologies and approaches to maximize agricultural production efficiency and minimize off-site impacts.

He said that there is \$25 million available for the national CIG for fiscal year 2017, with a \$2 million maximum per project. Like the state CIG, matching funds are required. The national CIG application deadline is January 9, 2017.

He said for more information to contact him ([mark.ferguson@ky.usda.gov](mailto:mark.ferguson@ky.usda.gov)), or visit the state CIG website at <http://www.ky.nrcs.usda.gov> then navigate to Programs/Financial Assistance/CIG. The request for proposals may also be found on [grants.gov](http://grants.gov).

### **FSA State Director John McCauley Remarks**

At this point in the meeting FSA State Director John McCauley joined the group, so Mrs. Woodrich introduced Mr. McCauley. She said how much NRCS has enjoyed the partnership effort between NRCS and FSA during his tenure.

Mr. McCauley thanked Mrs. Woodrich and her NRCS staff for their partnership and great technical resources they provided to FSA. He said his last day was today and he has been in the State Director position for 7 years, 2 months. He submitted his letter of resignation in November. He said leaving was bittersweet, but will be joining Kentucky Department of Agriculture as the Director of Ag Policy in the Commissioners office. He will be working on policy, regulations, and farm bill. He said he looks forward to working with folks in his new capacity. He said his email address will be [john.mccauley@ky.gov](mailto:john.mccauley@ky.gov)

### **Updates on Nutrient Management Planning**

Following Mr. McCauley's comments, Mr. Ferguson took the floor again to discuss nutrient management.

He said that the national Nutrient Management conservation practice standard (CPS 590) would be updated during fiscal year 2017. He said that from fiscal year 2014 through 2016, 17 Nutrient Management Plans were written on approximately 8,000 acres by Technical Service Providers (TSPs) and that Nutrient Management was applied through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) on approximately 3,000 acres.

Mr. Ferguson discussed the training effort NRCS is conducting regarding NRCS Nutrient Management Planner/Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planner Certification Training. NRCS currently has six NRCS employees certified and six additional employees are in process of being certified. They will be writing Nutrient Management Plans in Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) focus areas and National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) areas. (See presentation for a map of these areas.) These employees will be assisting in review of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans written by Technical Service Providers (TSP).

He then asked the group if there were any questions.

Q: Regarding Nutrient Management Plans – how does that tie back in to the Ag Water Quality (AWQ) plan?

A: The ag water quality plan is a state required plan and a nutrient management plan may be a part of that plan. The “Kentucky Nutrient Management” plan (which does not meet NRCS Nutrient Management Plan conservation practice code 590) is allowed for an AWQ plan, but an NRCS NMP (meeting the 590 practice standard) would also meet the Kentucky NMP requirement.

Mrs. Woodrich clarified that the AWQ plan is an online, self-certified plan. If it needs a nutrient management plan in order to meet the requirements, the landuser can do a nutrient balancing worksheet (“Kentucky Nutrient Management plan”) to meet the state requirement. However, if a landuser wants to get funding through NRCS, they will need a NRCS NMP (590) (the "Cadillac plan") either completed by NRCS in the focus areas or by a TSP. If the landuser chooses not to do that, they can do less with the farmer developed nutrient balancing worksheet. Conservation practice standard 590 is not a requirement for AWQ plan, but it is for EQIP funding.

Q: Re: CIGs - as a result of all the rains we've had in the spring, in the karst areas, there are a lot of sink holes that have broken in. Are there any programs that can help with this? Many are open holes. They need to be dealt with. Is there a program to address this, maybe to fill them up with rock?

A: Could do a fence/buffer around them through EQIP. Would not recommend filling them in with rocks. If someone wants to do some research for the proper way to treat these that might be a CIG. Maybe CAIP has something? Recommend fence to protect livestock and/or equipment from falling in.

Jacob Bowman mentioned that FSA has a couple of conservation practices - may be eligible for buffers through their programs in certain areas.

Comment from a TSP: If a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) is being developed, a sink hole would be a resource concern and would need to be identified as needing a practice. Agreed that one could do a fence/buffer to address this.

Mrs. Woodrich agreed that in certain areas it's a big deal and that this is a good thing for a local workgroup to identify the issue and the region it affects in case there are special funds for special projects, etc. Maybe the whole state doesn't need this, but some areas.

Q: Could this possible be a water quality state CIG? Looking at covering it over versus leaving it as is. Would this be a research kind of thing?

A: Yes, possibly.

## **Programs Updates**

### **2016 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Accomplishments**

Next on the agenda was Assistant State Conservationists for Programs Deena Wheby. She gave updates on EQIP and CSP fiscal year 2016 accomplishments saying that it was a record breaking year for EQIP dollars (not number of contracts) and a very good year for CSP acres obligations. She asked that the numbers in her presentation not be published as they were not certified/official numbers. If anyone needed official numbers, they should contact Ms. Wheby.

She said that more than 700 EQIP contracts for nearly \$16 million were obligated. She discussed the importance of Kentucky StrikeForce efforts and the extra funding it brought to those counties. She said the state exceeded both of the minimum expenditure statutory requirements for livestock and wildlife. She showed maps of where EQIP contracts were obligated and where unfunded applications still existed. She said no matter how much EQIP funding the state got, Kentucky would always have a backlog of unfunded applications.

She then went through all of the fund accounts to show where the state allocation went. See her presentation for the details. Some highlights include that both seasonal high tunnels and the energy account received more funding than ever before. This was due in part to receiving late funds that were to be dedicated to StrikeForce counties and for climate change management. She also told the Committee that practices were being implemented and paid at a rate higher than in the past. As of the meeting date, more than \$5.1 million of fiscal year 2016's obligations had been paid out (almost 33 percent.) She attributed this to better planning, and willing and ready-to-go participants.

Following the 2016 fiscal year update, she provided some insight on what to expect in fiscal year 2017. This included having three "batching" period (rather than the two that has been standard for a number of years), that there is a new funding pool for manure management, and that seasonal high tunnels were added as an eligible practice to the socially disadvantaged and limited resource producer groups. These groups have always been eligible to apply for seasonal high tunnels, but had to compete in general EQIP for them. If approved, they received a higher payment rate, but still had to compete with a larger pool of applicants. By adding the practice to the two historically underserved groups, the competition won't be as great and more historically underserved participants should receive contracts.

Ms. Wheby also briefly discussed needing to update the state EQIP funding formula and asked if anyone had ideas or a system to do so, to please contact her. She said that Kentucky was beginning the year with a larger allocation than was received for all of last year and that there was still opportunity to earn more financial assistance to distribute to farmers. She said that there could be additional funds for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Joint Chief's Partnership (USFS and NRCS), and potentially for edge-of-field monitoring.

She then gave a brief summary of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) 2016 accomplishments, again showing maps of where contracts were entered and where unfunded applications remained. She said it was a good year for CSP, having entered almost 90 contracts in 26 counties on nearly 46,000 acres. She also said there were 45 renewal contracts on over 22,000 acres (five-year contracts that were entered in 2011 had the opportunity to "renew" for five additional years.)

She showed a photograph from a CSP participant's webpage that showed a young couple in a field of flowers. The farm has an agritourism business including hosting weddings and engagement photoshoots. The caption on the photograph said, "Visit our USDA Pollinators – Kentucky wildflowers and native grasses attract wild bees and other pollinators – contributing to our commitment to sustainability." She said that while CSP may not be for everyone, it's also for some she never expected it would be. She said she was pleased that the CSP participant was thankful enough for the assistance from NRCS that it was mentioned with an engagement photo on the farm's webpage.

Briefly, Ms. Wheby spoke about the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP) and its accomplishments from 1996 through 2013. This program provided matching funds to eligible entities to

acquire perpetual conservation easements to protect farms from development. She said it was repealed in the 2014 Farm Bill, and that a new program – the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Ag Land Easements (ALE) performs many of the same functions as FRPP did. She also said that the Grassland Reserves Program (GRP) also was repealed and ACEP-ALE-Grasslands of Special Significance (GSS) is similar, but has several significant differences, to that program. ACEP-ALE and ALE-GSS both require partnering entities. She said there will be an informational meeting for entities interested in ACEP-ALE and ALE-GSS in late January (the date has since been set for January 24, 2017.)

Ms. Wheby then introduced Matt Hutchison, resource conservationist on her staff. Matt works primarily with CSP and ACEP. He said that CSP had been “reinvented” for fiscal year 2017 in order to make it more flexible and to include some improvements. He discussed the major changes. (See his presentation for details.) He said that the changes are not retroactive to existing contracts; that they are only for new contracts. He said the updated program gives more flexibility in how NRCS can administer contracts (modifications that used to be difficult) and that it is more like EQIP now.

He said that there is a new evaluation tool. The old evaluation tool was a “black box” that was hard to understand. Now CSP is based on how many natural resource concerns are addressed. NRCS wants to include operators who have done good conservation and will do even more. He said that the evaluation will now have state and local input on how the applications are ranked and will be more understandable.

Mr. Hutchison said that there will be more conservation activities than before including 45 conservation practices, 127 enhancements that go above and beyond the conservation practice standards, as well as 13 bundles (which are groups of enhancements that together do more than the individual enhancements.)

He went on to discuss payment types, and maintaining or exceeding resource concern needs. He said in the past that contract modifications were difficult (it was all or nothing, often resulting in contract termination) but that there are now built-in flexibilities that will help when farming changes need to be made.

He said that the new CSP philosophy is that the program is now more flexible, transparent, understandable, measureable, aligned with NRCS’s focus on conservation planning and addressing resource concerns, and is streamlined and more in line with EQIP.

He asked the group if there were any questions.

Q: Does a participant have to go through EQIP before they can get CSP?

A: No, anyone who is doing good conservation, including beginning farmers, are eligible.

### **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

#### **Ag Land Easements (ALE) and Grasslands of Special Significance (GSS)**

Mr. Hutchison then discussed the ACEP-ALE-GSS. He said the program is new, and he was going to talk about a specific piece of it, Grasslands of Special Significance. He said it combines the purposes and functions of Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP).

Through this program, NRCS provides matching funds to eligible entities for the purchase of agricultural land easements. GSS is a component of ACEP-ALE. In ACEP-ALE-GSS, a perpetual conservation easement is purchased; annual rentals are not available in GSS. The cooperating entity purchases and holds the easement and NRCS provides matching funding to the cooperating entity to purchase the easement. The cooperating entity is responsible for monitoring the easement.

He discussed the definition of GSS as grasslands that contain little or no noxious or invasive species; are subject to the threat of conversion to nongrassland uses or fragmentation; and the land is: (1)(i) rangeland, pastureland, or shrubland on which the vegetation is dominated by native grasses, grass-like plants, shrubs, or forbs, or (ii) Improved, naturalized pastureland and rangeland; and (2)(i) Provides, or could provide, habitat for threatened or endangered species or at-risk species, (ii) Protects sensitive or declining native prairie or grassland types, or (iii) Provides protection of highly sensitive natural resources.

He said that USDA can pay up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement in most cases but that USDA can potentially pay up to 75 percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement for GSS Easements with a voluntary landowner contribution/donation can make up half of the entity contribution.

Next, he discussed Kentucky NRCS's GSS strategy which includes spatially identifying focus areas with possible GSS, defining specific features or criteria for GSS determination (such as T&E/at risk species, habitat, etc.), and prioritizing GSS features in a state ranking criteria. He said that currently under consideration for potential GSS focus were prairies, barrens and glades. He added that NRCS is seeking input to help with implementing the strategy (identify, locate, ideas for most important features) and that suggestions and feedback should be sent to Deena Wheby by January 15, 2017.

He asked if there were any questions.

Q: Have you identified any portions of the state for GSS yet?

A: NRCS has access to limited GIS maps, but they are not comprehensive enough to use effectively.

Brent Harrel, USFWS, said that most of the Barrens are pretty well mapped out and that TNC and USFWS may potentially share that information with NRCS.

Q: There is some pretty specific management required for some species. How would this be addressed?

A: Part of the program requirement is for the entity to manage the easements. There is a requirement for an ag easement plan in place prior to closing that covers how it will be managed. That plan would address the needs of species of interest identified on the parcel.

Q: On existing easements, is there some workability for the T&E?

A: There are no restoration funds available, but other program practices are available (EQIP) on these lands.

Q: You are developing criteria, but are there any interested entities?

A: NRCS is not working with a specific entity now, but there could be interest, so criteria have to be in place. There has been interest, but the entities have not had funding. Mr. Hutchison reiterated that the entity match amount is smaller than "regular" ACEP-ALE.

### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Updates**

Jacob Bowman of the USDA – Farm Service Agency (FSA), then discussed the Conservation Reserve Program.

At the time of the last State Technical Committee meeting, CRP Grasslands sign-up (SU200) had just completed its first ranking period in which Kentucky had submitted 201 offers. Of those submitted offers, one offer was accepted by the FSA National Office. Most recently, SU200 has just completed its second ranking period in which Kentucky submitted 199 offers. Of those submitted offers, 18 offers were accepted by the FSA National Office, accepting a total of 540.1 acres. There will be a third ranking period where producers may be re-ranked for SU200 or modify their current offer to be competitive in a parallel ranking under the Small Scale Livestock Grazing Initiative (SSLGI). This third and final SU200 ranking period will close December 16, 2016.

Most recent change is how FSA handles their continuous CRP offers. There are now two options for which producers may enroll. Option 1: Producers may request a contract effective date deferral until October 1, 2017 (FY18). Option 2: Producers may request contracts with an effective date during FY17. However, these offers will be batched and approved by the FSA National Office.

The FSA National Office announced a new conservation initiative known as Clean Lakes, Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) on December 7, 2016. The FSA National Office will allocate additional acreage for environmentally sensitive needs to improve water quality and restore wildlife habitat. The announcement also came with the notification that states with active State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) programs will receive additional acreage in the near future. It also announced that, effective for FY18 enrollments, a \$25 reduction in sign-up incentives, as well as a cap on soil rental rates of \$300 per acre would also be imposed. Most of Kentucky's is less than that, except maybe CREP.

Crop reporting deadlines changed. With the change in administration, there may be some additional changes until the next farm bill.

The group was asked if they had any questions, and there were none.

### **ACEP – Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) Updates**

Next on the agenda was Reed Cripps who is now managing the ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements and the repealed Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). He provided a status update of WRP, Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE) and ACEP-WRE in Kentucky.

For these programs, he said that between 1995 - 2016, there have been a combined 290 easements on over 35,500 acres. (See his presentation for details on where the easements are located.) He discussed WRE enrollment for fiscal year 2016 and gave a funding overview for fiscal year 2017. (Details in presentation.)

He provided a slide that showed the baseline funding as identified in the 2014 farm bill, which has a significant decrease in fiscal year 2018. He said that January 18, 2017, is the first ranking cut-off

deadline for applications this year. He said he hopes to get the funding we have gotten in the past, with hopes for more.

Another issue, affecting NRCS internally, is that nationally, NRCS is implementing an Easement Implementation Strategy to become more audit friendly - concentrating on consistent financial side - moving towards national teams for easement acquisition. Kentucky will be included in this starting January 2018. It could affect the rate at which we close easements.

Q: Given the national allocation, will Kentucky get less next year?

A: Possibly, but not necessarily. If states can show you can do the work, the state generally gets another piece of the pie. Our history may help us maintain what we've been getting.

### **WRE Geographical Area Rate Cap**

Doug Hines discussed the FY 2017 ACEP-WRE Geographical Area Rate Caps (GARCs), handing out a map of the fiscal year 2017 GARC map (see presentation for copy of the map.) The 36 counties shown in green will use a market analysis. Each offer will be looked at for cropland/tillable acres, other acres, and an easement value will be calculated. The benefit is that landowner knows what the offer will be (no appraisal needed). Most states use either a market analysis or appraisals for entire states. Kentucky, using both, is different. NRCS is looking at lands that used to be wetlands, so the need for market analysis doesn't apply to entire state. One of the challenges of using GARCs, is that land values are not uniform values across the state. The range is \$2,000 to \$8,000. Woodland areas range from \$800 to \$2,800 per acre.

This year there were some strong cropland values. Since crop prices are down it might spur interest, but recreational values are down some. Different development pressures, access to market, different producers - this may be more dramatic in Kentucky than other states.

If you know of any interested persons, send them to the field office to make application by January 18, 2017.

For fiscal year 2018 GARC, NRCS is soliciting input for compensation. Send any ideas to Dr. Cripps, Mr. Hines, or Mrs. Woodrich.

The group was asked if there were any questions. There being none, Mrs. Woodrich commented on the slide that showed where the easements are locate that they seem to snowball around where easements are already entered - neighbors get interested. She also stated that partners are great asset to this program and that the West Kentucky easement team includes number of partners.

### **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Updates**

The last presentations of the day were regarding the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Established in the 2014 Farm Bill, RCPP promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements. A Request for Proposals is published annually and project submissions come from various groups/entities.

Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of EQIP, CSP, ACEP and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP); and in certain areas, the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.

First, Dr. Cripps discussed the history of RCPP in Kentucky. He said the agency let states pick the best project in the first year, and Kentucky picked a large one. In the next year, each state was given \$1 million and could select more than one. That year, two projects were selected, one from UK and one from Scott County Conservation district that together totaled about \$1 million.

In the third year, Kentucky receive \$1 million but it was identified as \$400,000 EQIP, \$30,000 CSP, \$100,000 ACEP, and the rest as wildcard RCPP (which can be used as any eligible program.)

This year, there were five preproposals submitted, and four were asked back for full proposals. Those proposals came from Grow Appalachia for seasonal high tunnel efforts, UK for forestry activities, Wayne County Conservation District for cover crops and livestock work, and Compatible Lands Foundation for ACEP-ALE. These projects have a total request between three and four million dollars. Kentucky only has \$1 million and it's identified in specific programs. NRCS Kentucky wants to enter agreements with all four, but may not be as large as requested. Kentucky NRCS has also asked for additional funding in case there are states who are not able to obligate their allocation.

Deena Wheby gave an update of existing projects including the statewide "Managing Poo", the multi-state/Eastern Kentucky "Cerulean Warbler", multi-state Illinois Corn Growers "Precision Conservation Management", Scott County Conservation District's "Ground Cover on Marginal Lands", and UK's "Horse Overgrazing". See her slides for detailed updates on each of these existing projects.

### **Closing Comments**

Karen asked others who had not earlier introduced themselves to do so. She thanked everyone for their attendance and participation. She summarized some of the meeting high points including reiteration of wanting to get local working groups reengaged and encouraged State Technical Committee members to be an active part of this reengagement. She reminded the group to submit suggestions for funding formulas for EQIP and be sure that they were supported by data. She briefly mentioned State Technical Committee subcommittees and said they would meet as needed and encouraged participation in these. During the subcommittee meetings, more detailed information is provided and discussed. There are subcommittees for EQIP, CSP, CRP, ACEP, etc. When a subcommittee meeting is held, notice will be sent to the entire State Technical Committee to encourage as much participation in programs/resource needs that you are interested in. She also reminded the group that NRCS is seeking input for ACEP-ALE-GSS as discussed earlier and that your input is requested by January 15, 2017. Also, there will be a ACEP-ALE meeting in late January (24<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 am at the NRCS State Office in Lexington.) The agency is also seeking your input for fiscal year 2018 GARC.

The next full State Technical Committee meeting is tentatively planned for March 30 (Thursday) beginning at 9:30 a.m. She said that she welcomes anyone to present to Committee and that she is now requiring CIG partners to report to the State Technical Committee.

She asked the group if there were any final comments, questions, or announcements. Jacob Bowman, FSA, asked if anyone knew of any focus groups on Cumberland Plateau and their needs? Mrs. Woodrich said that NRCS has been working with other groups including TNC and the Cumberland Compact and

would be glad to loop FSA in. She suggested he connect with Dr. Cripps to learn what has been discussed so far.

There being no more announcements, questions or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:21 p.m.

## Attendees

Name	Representing
Karen Woodrich	Natural Resources Conservation Service
John McCauley	Farm Service Agency
Mark Walden	Grow Appalachia
Jennifer Hickerson	Kentucky Dairy Development Council
Meredith Scales	Kentucky Dairy Development Council
Jim Roe	Kentucky Division of Water
David Chinn	Monty's Plant Food Co.
Brent Harrel	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Hugh Lumpkin	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Pam Snyder	Kentucky Division of Forestry
Steve Kull	Kentucky Division of Forestry
Dana Baxley	The Nature Conservancy
David Rowlett	Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts
Ben Koostra	Limestone & Cooper/TSP
Ray Smith	University of Kentucky
Nathan Routt	Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development
Harold Duckworth	TASK, Inc/TSP
Elizabeth Gordon	Kentucky Department of Ag
Bill Steele	Kentucky Division of Forestry
Henry Duncan	Kentucky Woodland Owners Association
Dan Figert	Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Scott Ray	US Forest Service
Jacob T. Bowman	Farm Service Agency
Mark Ferguson	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Reed Cripps	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Sonya Keith	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Matt Hutchison	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Doug Hines	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Deena Wheby	Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Kentucky USDA State Technical Committee Agenda

December 8, 2016

9:30 am

771 Corporate Drive, Lexington, Kentucky

9:30 am – 9:45 am

**Welcome and Introductions**

Karen Woodrich  
NRCS State Conservationist

9:45 am – 10:00 am

**Update on NRCS Conservation Practice Standards**

Sonya Keith  
NRCS Engineer

10:00 am – 10:30 am

**Updates on Nutrient Management Planning & Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)**

Mark Ferguson  
NRCS State Resource Conservationist

10:30 am – 10:45 am

**Break**

10:45 am – 12:00 pm

**Programs Updates**

Deena Wheby  
NRCS Assistant State Conservationist  
for Programs

- 2016 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Accomplishments
- 2017 Updates and Input

**Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)**

- Ag Land Easements (ALE) and Grasslands of Special Significance (GSS)
- ACEP – Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) Updates
- WRE Geographical Area Rate Cap

Matt Hutchison  
NRCS Resource Conservationist

Reed Cripps  
NRCS Assistant State Conservationist  
for Partnerships

Doug Hines  
NRCS Easement Specialist

**Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Updates**

Jacob Bowman  
FSA Agricultural Program Specialist

12:00 pm – 12:20 pm

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Updates**

- New projects/upcoming opportunities
- Prior year approved project updates

Reed Cripps  
Deena Wheby

12:20 pm – 12:30 pm

**Comments and Announcements**  
**Closing Comments**

Group  
Karen Woodrich