

Natural Resources Conservation Service Louisiana Civil Rights Advisory Committee

BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) civil rights program encompasses all equal employment opportunity and program delivery-related matters. The Louisiana Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) is designed to provide the state conservationist and employees with counsel and advice that enhances and ensures compliance with their equal employment opportunity and program delivery responsibilities.

Members of the CRAC will carry out their responsibilities consistent with USDA policies, procedures, and practices regarding employment and program delivery, which are nondiscriminatory with regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, political beliefs, parental status, protected genetic information, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. The CRAC provides assistance for all matters related to program delivery and equal employment opportunity ensuring equality and participation in all NRCS programs, activities and initiatives.

ARTICLE I Name

Section 1

Name. The name of the Committee shall be the Louisiana Civil Rights Advisory Committee, hereinafter referred to as the Committee.

ARTICLE II Purpose

Section 1

Purpose. The purpose of the Committee shall be to serve as an advisor on employment and program delivery issues to the Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer of the Louisiana Natural Resources Conservation Service. The DEOO is the State Conservationist (STC).

Section 2

Functions. The Committee enacts the responsibilities outlined in the NRCS General Manual Title 230, Part 404 Civil Rights Advisory Committee, as amended, including but not limited to:

1. Serving as an advisory body to the DEOO, by acting as the communication liaison through which NRCS employees can bring matters to the attention of management.
2. Makes recommendations to the DEOO regarding policies, practices, and procedures that enhance the overall achievement of equal opportunity in the NRCS workforce.
3. Implement and monitor recruitment practices to make sure under-represented groups are aware of employment opportunities and/or summer appointments within NRCS Louisiana.
4. Identifies emerging areas of concerns regarding specific personnel practices or problems of an EEO nature, warranting special attention by DEOO and State Leadership Team (SLT).
5. Provides civil rights training resources for workshops, seminars, and meetings, as well as serving as a trainer as necessary.
6. Acts as a forum for an exchange of ideas and action proposals on sensitive issues, matters or concerns of a civil rights nature.
7. Compile and report data to assist in the completion of civil rights compliance reviews.

Section 3

Limited Scope. The Committee does not receive, investigate, and/or adjudicate individual or class complaints of discrimination.

ARTICLE III Members

Section 1

Membership. The Committee will be composed of twelve voting members and a Chairperson which include the special emphasis program managers: African American/Black Emphasis Program Manager; Asian American/Pacific Islander Program Manager, Hispanic Program Manager; Disabled Persons Program Manager; Federal Women's Program Manager; Veterans Program Manager; Native American/Alaskan Native Program Manager; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons Program Manager and Limited Resources and Small Scale Farmers and Social Disadvantaged Producers Coordinator and three at large members (one representative from each area). The DEOO will make the final selection and appointment of committee members. The Assistant State Conservationist for Field Development (ASTC-FD), Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO), Human Resources Manager/Administrative Support Assistant (HRM/ASA), and the State Public Affairs Specialist (PAS) shall serve as permanent advisors to the Committee.

The positions of Special Emphasis Program Manager will be advertised to provide the opportunity for employees to participate in the committee. The SEPMS will be selected from a pool of applicants by the State Conservationist.

The Committee's membership shall to the extent practicable be representative of various grade levels and classification series within NRCS Louisiana.

Section 2

Committee Chair. The chairperson will be selected by the State Conservationist. The selected individual will be appointed from the committee membership as the Chairperson-Designate at the beginning of the sitting chairperson's final year to ensure smooth transition of the chair. The chairperson-designate may be an employee completing their term on committee at time of selection or continuing their specific appointed term.

Section 3

Recorder. The Chairperson will select a member from the committee to serve as the recorder. The Recorder will keep minutes of the meetings and will forward the minutes to Chairperson within five business days.

Section 4

Term. The Chairperson and each Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) member shall be appointed to serve a three-year term, beginning on October 1 of the fiscal year. Individuals may apply for and be selected for successive terms as an SEPM.

The Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) will serve a one year term on a rotational basis in addition to the three representative member groups. Members are selected from the following groups of employee positions: District Conservationists, Area Staff members and Soil Conservationist/Civil Engineering Technicians. Members will be selected by the ASTC-FO on a rotational basis as shown in the table below.

	Area I	Area II	Area III
Year 1	Area staff	SC/CE Technician	District Conservationist
Year 2	District Conservationist	Area staff	SC/CE Technician
Year 3	SC/CE Technician	District Conservationist	Area staff

Section 6

Interim Appointment. In the event a member leaves the committee before their term expires, the State Conservationist may fill the term by vacancy announcement or appointment as deemed necessary.

Section 7

Eligibility. All members shall be permanent NRCS employees.

Section 8

Support Staff. The DEOO Officer shall provide appropriate support staff and related resources to the Committee as requested by the Committee.

ARTICLE IV
Responsibilities and Performance Appraisals

Section 1

Responsibility. In addition to serving as advisory body and communications liaison, the Committee shall provide management with feedback on the performance of the civil rights program, identify defects and shortcomings, and recommend program improvements. All recommendations are to be reported in writing to the DEOO for appropriate consideration and follow-up action.

Section 2

Participation. Members shall actively participate, engage, and support all activities, initiatives, outreach efforts and etcetera implemented and agreed-upon by the Committee. Meeting attendance is mandatory. Refer to Article V Section 3 for attendance policy.

Section 3

Training. In order to become familiar with the various aspects of equal employment opportunity, personnel policies and procedures, and civil rights compliance in program delivery, all members must complete the "Civil Rights Advisory Committee Orientation" course in Aglearn within six (6) months of their initial selection. In addition, SEPMS shall complete the specialized training course: "Special Emphasis Program Manager's Training" when offered.

Section 4

Collateral Duties. In accordance with GM 230 404.4, Committee membership should be documented in each member's official position description. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) must be signed by the employee, the employee's immediate supervisor, and the DEOO describing the position's duties, expectations and requirements.

Section 5

Performance. Employees' contributions to the Committee will be documented in their individual performance appraisals and rated by the DEOO annually.

The Chairperson's performance appraisal shall contain a stand-alone critical element addressing his or her committee responsibilities; the DEOO is also responsible for evaluating and rating the Chairperson.

ARTICLE V Meetings

Section 1

Regular Meetings. There shall be at least four regular meetings a year – one meeting per quarter. The exact dates shall be set by the Committee Chair in consultation with the Committee.

Section 2

Special Meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Chair as deemed necessary.

Section 3

Attendance. Committee members are expected to attend all Committee meetings each fiscal year. If unable to be physically present, members should notify the Chair to discuss teleconference options. The Chair will notify the DEOO of members who fail to attend at least two Committee meetings. The DEOO will use this information to conduct performance appraisals.

Section 4

Meeting Minutes. The Committee will maintain copies of the minutes and forward a copy to the DEOO. After the DEOO reviews and approves the minutes, a copy will be posted to the Civil Rights Sharepoint site.

ARTICLE VI Voting

Section 1

Decisions. Except as otherwise specifically provided for in these Bylaws, decisions shall be reached by majority vote of the members at meetings in which a quorum is present.

Two-thirds of active members shall constitute a quorum, whether physically present or by teleconference.

Section 2

Proxy. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted except on votes pertaining to amendment of the by-laws.

ARTICLE VII Removal of Members

Section 1

Membership Removal. Removal of a member from the Committee for cause shall be determined by the DEOO.

**ARTICLE VIII
Plans**

Section 1

Business Plan. The Committee will develop a fiscal year business plan that includes long term goals, objectives and planned actions. The Committee shall submit the business plan and budget proposal to the DEOO and State Leadership Team no later than two weeks following the first quarter Committee meeting date.

Section 2.

Affirmative Employment Plan. The Committee will review the Affirmative Employment Plan annually and will provide any requested input for civil rights related reporting requirements. The committee will use the AEP to develop outreach initiatives and activities to be included in the aforementioned business plan.

**ARTICLE IX
Amendment of Bylaws**

Section 1

Amending Bylaws. Motions to amend these Bylaws may be submitted by any voting member of the Committee to the Chair.

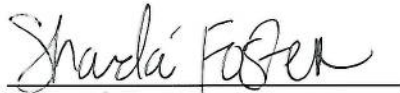
Section 2

Voting. Decisions to amend Bylaws shall be reached by majority vote of the members at the meetings in which a quorum is present.

Section 3

DEOO/STC Approval. All amendments to these by-laws are subject to the approval of the DEOO/STC.

Approval of By-Laws:



Shardá Foster

Chairperson, NRCS Louisiana Civil Rights Advisory Committee Chair

2/28/17
Date Approved



Kevin D. Norton

DEOO, NRCS Louisiana Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer

2/28/2017
Date Approved