

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Contents

STAC Members:.....	3
Members of the Public in attendance:	3
STAC Information:.....	4
501.21 Responsibilities of State Technical Committees	4
Conducting Business	5
Record of Meetings.....	5
Resource Needs Assessments (RNA):	5
Local Work Groups (LWG):.....	6
Recommendation #1.....	6
Discussion:	7
Action Item:	8
Recommendation #2.....	8
Discussion:	8
Recommendation #3.....	8
Discussion:	8
Recommendation #4.....	8
Discussion:	9
Action Item:	9
Recommendation #5.....	9
Discussion:	9
Action Item:	10
Recommendation #6:.....	10
Discussion:	10
Recommendation #7.....	11
Discussion:	11
Action Item:	11
Program Updates	11
Source Water	11
Discussion:	12
CART	12

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

NRCS Funding Pools: 12

Mandatory Spending: 12

High Priority Practices: 12

Discussion: 12

Action Item: 13

Easements 13

Discussion..... 13

Action Item: 13

Result: 13

Ranking:..... 13

Action Item: 13

Nevada Division of Forestry 13

 Discussion: 14

Action Item: 14

Summary of Action Items: 14

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Meeting Held: 4/10/20

Attendees:

STAC Members:

Farm Service Agency (FSA)	Marilyn Jones
United States Forest Service (FS)	Kendall Young
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)	Kim Dow, Branch Chief for Renewable Resource
United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Leann Carranza
Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW)	Jasmine Kleiber, Reno
Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)	Ashley Jeppson
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)	Dominique Etchegoyhen
Nevada Association of Conservation Districts (NVACD)	Agee Smith, State President, Maggie Orr- Area 3, Joe Sicking- Chair of SCC, Area 1
Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP)	Birgit Widegrin
Nevada Land Trust (NLT)	Alisha Rebon, Renee Aldrich

The following members of the STAC Committee had no representative present:

Nevada Farm Bureau, Nevada Cattleman's Association, Battle Mountain, Carson Colony, Goshute Tribes, Dresslerville, Duck Valley, Duck Water, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

Members of the Public in attendance:

Connie Lee, Robert Adams- Southern Nye County District, Kirt Englehart- Senator Cortez-Mastos, Kim Rigdon- NDEP, Janet Valle- Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest, Kelly McGowan, Ethan Mower- Sagebrush Ecosystem Council, Jake Tibbits- Eureka CD, Jack Ormsby- NV Cons District Program, Ryan Shane- NDF, Susan Abele, William Katowsky, Michelle Hunt- United States Fish and Wildlife Service- Reno office

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

STAC Information:

NRCS has established a technical committee in each State to assist in making recommendations relating to the implementation and technical aspects of natural resource conservation activities and programs.

501.21 Responsibilities of State Technical Committees

It is the responsibility of the State Technical Committee to –

- (1) Provide information, analysis, and recommendations to USDA on conservation priorities and criteria for natural resources conservation activities and programs, including application and funding criteria, recommended practices, and program payment percentages.
- (2) Identify emerging natural resource concerns and program needs.
- (3) Recommend conservation practice standards and specifications.
- (4) Recommend State and national program policy based on resource data.
- (5) Review activities of the local working groups to ensure State priorities are being addressed locally.
- (6) Make recommendations to the State Conservationist on requests and recommendations from local working groups.
- (7) Assist NRCS with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs.

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Conducting Business

- (1) The meetings will be conducted as an open discussion among members. Discussion will focus on the programs and activities identified in 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A, Section 501.0C. All recommendations will be considered.
- (2) The following guidelines will govern meeting discussions:
 - (i) The State Conservationist or his or her designee will lead the discussion.
 - (ii) Only one person may speak at a time. Every participant should have an opportunity to speak.
 - (iii) The State Conservationist or his or her designee is responsible for recognizing speakers.
 - (iv) State Technical Committees are advisory in nature and all recommendations are considered.
 - (v) Members may be polled but voting on issues is not appropriate.
 - (vi) The State Conservationist, in consultation with those members present, may establish time limits for discussion on individual agenda items.
 - (vii) The State Conservationist will defer those agenda items not covered because of time limits to the next meeting.

Record of Meetings

Summaries for all State Technical Committee meetings must be available within 30 calendar days of the committee meeting and distributed to committee members. The summaries must be filed at the appropriate NRCS State office and posted to the NRCS State Web site.

Response to State Technical Committee Recommendations

The State Conservationist must inform the State Technical Committee as to the decisions made in response to all State Technical Committee recommendations within 90 days. This notification must be made in writing to all State Technical Committee members and posted to the NRCS State Web site.

Resource Needs Assessments (RNA):

Presenter Maggie Orr, Lincoln County Conservation District

- Overview/Background:
 - Resource needs assessments stemmed from partnership with the districts and NRCS looking to expand local input
 - Districts decided they would do “Resource Needs Assessments” based on the NRCS planning process
 - Signed agreement in 2017, Hired 3 people (some retired NRCS) and asked districts if they would participate- 6 Districts agreed to participate (Lincoln, White Pine, NE Elko, Eureka, CD of Southern NV, Mason Valley, Smith Valley)

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

- RNA Process: RNAs focused on Resource Concerns- “SWAPA +H” Soil, Water, Air, Plans, Animals + Humans
 - Each district had a contractor assigned- they all went through process
 - For example: Lincoln County- Divided into watersheds, or groupings
 - Steps taken:
 - Invited focus group of people that live or work in the watershed
 - Went through RC checklist
 - Used flipcharts to record info- at the end they identified top 5 concerns and then secondary concerns
 - Ran these concerns through the Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) matrix and compiled all the info into the RNA
 - Finished in June of 2019= in October they had first LWG consisting of agencies, county commissioners, etc- good meetings!
 - Reorganized during that meeting what the top 3 concerns were that were identified in the RNA
 - Lincoln County said Plant Health was the top but then realized that they couldn’t work on that until they addressed livestock distribution- and moved invasive up on the list
 - Now the CD has started moving forward with at each meeting they work through a “conservation action plan”
 - First thing they identified was water distribution in Coal Valley
- Comments about how the LWG is the perfect mechanism to make things happen at the local level
 - The combination of the federal regs with the state authority- Districts have authority under NRS 548
 - Takes a lot of work

Local Work Groups (LWG):

Presenter: Ray Dotson, State Conservationist

The STAC Reviewed information submitted by all local work groups. A summary document* was provided to compile all priorities and specific items suggested for STAC coverage.

**Note: Lincoln County LWG Minutes were erroneously omitted from the LWG Summary Report, however each districts minutes were provided separately in the materials*

Specific recommendations from Elko/Eureka LWG were covered (7 in total):

Recommendation #1. Discussion of 528 on Public Lands-consideration of payment for prescribed grazing on BLM allotments and FS allotments

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

- Clarification from the group on this stated the comment is geared toward help with paying for a rider to ride the riparian areas and keep the cattle off the sensitive areas
- Comment that NRCS in ID helped with Rider

Discussion:

LeeAnn- would find that to be a very valuable opportunity- trying to find creative ways to help ranchers get riders in the past.

Kim- supports this as well

Susan Abele- someone is working on virtual sensing; they have talked about it a bit- she will follow up on the virtual sensing

Maggie- would help with plant health concerns

Jake Tibbits- Eureka CD, they worked through Birgit's program to do riparian fencing on private land, development of offsite water, had funding through the 319 program to fund riders, the data showed that it did improve water quality, BUT the rancher had no sustained way to continue to have the riders- the program could be paired well with a clean water act project to continue to do a herding type thing to continue investment and it would be a good project

Birgit- the 319 program can fund fencing, riders, off stream watering systems, it is an annual source of funding that is available for landowners

Ray- We understand with FS and BLM the allotment plans have hard in and out dates, and certain requirements for moving animals, heights on grasses: We go out and do line transects and our plan might differ from their plan. At the end of the day we must address resource concern. Definition of a Resource Concern is "The expected degradation of soil, water plants, animals air until it is no longer sustainable." If we can predict that the land use is not going to be sustainable- then we can address. If our practices are less stringent than the other agencies requirements- then we don't have a resource concern to address.

Agee- This is an opportunity to get everyone together- collaborative process to discuss the issues

Leann- Would love to collaborate

Kim Dow- BLM is looking at a variety of opportunities to add flexibility and adaptive management into grazing permits to allow grazing management strategies to be more responsive to ecological conditions, welcome to collaborate.

Connie- Wonder what the communication is from the LWG level up the chain? Sometimes this could be a stumbling block. Encourage more communication between the local level

Ray- moving forward we want to meet in person- can have sub-committees to discuss topics

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Action Item:

NRCS will reach out to Idaho State Conservationist to see what their program is, and if it can apply in Nevada, we will consider.

Recommendation #2. Emergency Fund Pools-In the Past NRCS has had some Emergency Fund Pools to help out with wildfires, that doesn't seem to occur anymore, when there is a fire NRCS doesn't have the ability to respond with funding in a timely manner, the contracting process does not coincide with when practices need to be applied to the land.

Discussion:

This item has been reviewed and NRCS has resolved by: Designating a fund pool called "Environmental Readiness." If something happens, we can request dollars from NHQ- the fund pool is there to have a signup outside of our normal batching periods. We still must follow the normal process, sign-up ranking. What it does do it allow us to fund things in the same year.

Recommendation #3. The LWG would like the STAC to focus on promoting cross jurisdictional management. Working more closely with BLM and FS

Clarification on this statement was requested:

- Jake Tibbits- it is more of a statement; we are trying to do that with STAC: The ability to use EQIP dollars on public land as well- just to keep in the forefront of everyone's mind to blur the lines between private and public
- Connie-would like to learn about how SGI can be used on federal lands. We are still not meeting the mark there- how do we increase the funds on federal lands as well?

Discussion:

Ray- We can use NRCS funds on public lands. We understand NEPA is a challenge, we are having dialogue and will continue. There is the desire to move forward and continue to explore opportunities. We will call on districts to implore the private landowner to use the funds on public lands. They have a tough choice, do they want to use the funds on their own private land to what is important to them, or do they want to use it on public lands? We need to continue to educate the public.

Maggie- It's a great thing what is happening, and they want to keep going with it.

Birgit- As appropriate they want to be involved to be a partner

Agee- Applaud Ray and leadership group to put something like this together. Have been involved in the past and it was very disappointing that it seemed like they wanted to share, and it never went anywhere. There is nothing but positive that can come out of all this.

Recommendation #4. There is a concern that there are no Riparian ESD's in NV, however UT does have some developed.

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Discussion:

Jerry Miller- Has spent time looking at riparian areas it is nice to be able to go in and figure out what species are supposed to be there compared to what it is right now. In UT they have ESDs for wet meadows and aspens, etc. If every MLRA could do a couple ESDs it would be good.

Jake: ESDs- NRCS has the primary authority for keeping these updated. They felt it was appropriate to have the request come through NRCS.

Jerry- Would be good to have the correct ESD because there is a lot of room for interpretation

Ray- Jake was correct. In NV we were taking care of it. The rest of the country MLRA was doing it. We transitioned this over to them.

Action Item:

- 1) **NRCS submitted the request to Dr. Stiles on 4/22/20 to complete 3 wet area ESDs per year in Elko county. Response from Dr. Stiles 4/22/20 At present, Region 2 is understaffed with regard to experienced Ecological Sites Specialists with the recent loss of Erin Hourihan (and others). For now, we do not have the capacity to fulfill a request of three ESDs per year as requested. But we can do some limited work.**
- 2) **We can address two or three of the of the draft wet meadow ESs that have the most acreage in Elko County MLRAs and have been previously developed with data and soil-site correlations (according to what Kendra has seen in EDIT and heard from Erin H.), by refining them and adding State and Transition Models (which are presently lacking). They would meet "Provisional Approval" status, making them publicly available, and should meet many of the basic conservation planning needs for the time being. To do this, we may need help from your new RSS Genevieve Landucci to do some soil confirmation for us and some of the NASIS work that may be necessary, as our soils staff is also presently stretched very thin and assigned to high priority tasks.**
- 3) **These two-three provisionally approved ESDs could be done by the end of FY21, dependent upon minimal interference of other tasking from our NHQ.**

Recommendation #5. There is a great potential for cropland to be converted to permanent cover in the near future in Diamond Valley due to the over allocation of water resources in the valley. Are there any NRCS programs to help with this, or Can something specifically be developed for Diamond Valley?

Discussion:

Ray- This has come up before and he wants to let the record show we remember that.

Jake- The focus on Diamond Valley- the discussion at the LWG if you look at the Humboldt River Basin, the potential removal of water rights from land- there is potential for cropland to be converted to permanent cover- but this cover is tumble mustard and cheatgrass. They have 25,000 under center pivot, and half of that needs to cease. They have the potential to have 10,000 have water pulled off with no follow up treatment of the land. Most of these guys are not

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

cattleman, they are going to walk away and not do much. Pursue an incentive to get producers to drill seed.

Ray- we are seeing people buy water rights and not doing anything with the land. One of the bright spots with the new Farm Bill- we have the capability to treat anticipated resource concerns. If someone went from wheel lines to center pivot and now, we have corners that are not utilized and will have weeds, if the producer is willing, they could sign up for pest management to treat that or possibly wildlife friendly mixes, etc.

Maggie- Sometimes there is only one thing that needs to be done- they rank low and don't get funded. Idea: Funding pool for low ranking projects that will never make it. Just put in a little bit of money to allow to do 2-3 projects per year and would take care of backlog of the small projects that keep getting rolled over. She understands at the end of the year there is money left over and could use this money for these projects

Jerry- Anytime there is farm ground that is left to blow- to get it back to permanent cover is extremely hard.

Joe- hard to get native species back once it is irrigated. Some research probably needs to be done. Ended up with weeds. Success rate wasn't that great.

Action Item:

NRCS will consider the recommendation for rectifying the issue of "low ranking" projects that never get funded by realigning funding pools accordingly.

Recommendation #6: Along the lines of Soil Health, how are rodents being addressed? The common practice is to rip the field to control the rodents, however this contradicts the principles of soil health. Are there any other ways to address the rodent problem on pivots?

Discussion:

Ray- We will work internally to try to see what there can be done to address this

Agee- Soil Health- it is on the forefront of so many things now- just from his standpoint of realizing it is important but not knowing how to keep healthy soil, it is an eye opener. The class we did with the state meeting last year outside Winnemucca, Marlon was great. NRCS did a great job in putting on a good workshop. One thing that they are having a problem with- there needs to be more flexibility in the contracts- They are trying to re-do the old hay meadows- put a pivot on and are going to disturb the root mat but they are running into a snag where the contract doesn't have the stuff they need in it- soil amendments, take soil samples, and put what's needed to create healthy soil. The contract says it'll help with preparing the land and then seed permanent seed. It is a total waste to put the seed down with the soil the way it is. There needs to be a way to have flexibility as we learn more.

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Joe- Anytime you use flood and not sprinkler- it helps control rodents. He pays a guy to spray and it gets about 75% of them. Would love to see emphasis on flood irrigation instead of sprinkler.

Recommendation #7. There is a concern in Eureka County that several NRCS contracts have been awarded to junior water rights holders, how might those contracts be affected if in the next 5 years those lands are taken out of production by order of the NV State Water Engineer?

Discussion:

Jake: It is ironic that NRCS water conservation projects have caused more water use. Back in the day there was much less land being irrigated. There is a huge percentage of cost share on the center pivots from NRCS- Overall when someone comes through our door and has an application but is there a consideration of the status of their water rights. Don't think those considerations have been happening.

Ray: When we enter into an agreement: contract policy, etc. They have control, are eligible, etc. If something happens that limits the producers from creating "food and fiber," we will have to terminate the contract.

Action Item:

NRCS will incorporate a question into the ranking to allocate higher points to senior water rights holders.

Program Updates

Presenter: Karri Honaker, Assistant State Conservationist- Programs

Updates were provided on the following:

Source Water

- The 2018 Farm Bill included language that requires updates to some of our programs related to Source Water Protection
 - o Practices that contribute to the protection of Source Water will be highlighted and tracked across the nation
 - o States will work with partners at a more localized level to engage with stakeholders to identify priority areas
 - o There is an opportunity for increased payment rates
 - o 10% of funds will be available nationwide across all programs except CRP
 - o NRCS NV has been working with our partners on identifying priority areas with plans to implement these areas in FY21
 - o Practices may be designated as source water practices and receive a higher payment rate of up to 90%
 - o National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) is a program that has been used in Nevada and for the upcoming year we will identify 3 priority watersheds to focus efforts for FY21

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Discussion:

Birgit- Has had limited success in working with NWQI across the state

Kim- still getting to know NRCS programs; as she learns more will be able to figure out how we can partner.

Susan Able – interested in partnering and contributing;

CART Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool: highlighted and information provided in PowerPoint slides

NRCS Funding Pools: Information provided on allocating funds at the local level and breakdown of funding pools for FY20

Mandatory Spending:

- Information provided on programmatic responsibilities for “mandatory” spending amounts. Further information provided in PowerPoint slides.

High Priority Practices:

- Information was provided on designation of High Priority Practices
- Slides covered each practice, practice requirements and possible rates
- Practices include:
 - o 315- Herbaceous Weed Treatment
 - o 340- Cover Crop
 - o 394 Firebreak
 - o 561- Heavy Use Area
 - o 590- Nutrient Management
 - o 595- Pest Management
 - o **449- Irrigation Water Management***

**** Note: Conservation Practices 449- Irrigation Water Management was added based on STAC recommendation***

Discussion:

Kim – Source water protections plans they struggle to address is well decommissioning; it’s a difficult one for them because they are typically on private lands.

Several agreed with Soil Erosion

Ray- asked that they take these things back to the LWG and consider making the priorities

Jake – think we should consider 449 as one of the high priority practices based upon the priorities of the LWG.

William Cotaskey Partner Fish and Wildlife in Elko – Weed mapping? Lack of mapping; that’s one of the missing elements

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Action Item:

NRCS made note of STAC suggestions for considering practices 449- Irrigation Water Management, 550 Streambank and Shoreline protection and 351- Well Decommissioning as High Priority Practices

** Note: Conservation Practice 449- Irrigation Water Management was added based on STAC recommendation*

Easements

Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC)

- Information provided on GARC Rates (see PowerPoint for further info)
- Proposed GARC rates for FY20 were reviewed
- No opposition

Discussion

Question about getting interested cooperating entities to participate and if the “partner match” is an issue?

Karri/Ray- We have observed that partner match funds are a challenge

Agee- Is it possible to use a credit system?

Action Item:

NRCS will follow up with the SETT to explore opportunities for utilizing credit system funds for non-federal match funds.

Result:

Ray Dotson, Karri Honaker, Ethan Mower and Kelly McGowan met on 4/20/20 to discuss the STAC’s recommendation to utilizing Nevada’s Conservation Credit System funds as non-federal match for NRCS easement programs. After much dialogue the CCS is not a viable vehicle for non-federal match. Credit producer’s in the CCS can utilize post sale funds for non- federal match.

Ranking:

Both ACEP-ALE and WRE FY20 rankings were provided to the STAC for review and comment

One question was posed about a question on the ALE Ranking- Plant and Animal Biodiversity. Request to better understand what this question means.

Action Item:

NRCS will reach out to form subcommittees for future specific conversation. Susan Abele posed the question about the ALE ranking and will be contacted for further discussion.

Nevada Division of Forestry

Presenter: Ryan Shane, Natural Resource Program Manager

Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

4/10/20

Reviewed the Nevada Forest Range Watershed Action Plan

Discussion:

How can comments be made?

Action Item:

Ryan will share the plan with NRCS and the STAC members. Those interested can submit comment to him via email.

Summary of Action Items:

- NRCS will reach out to Idaho State Conservationist to see what their program is, and if it can apply in Nevada, we will consider it
- NRCS will submit the request to MLRA to look at these ESDs and suggest 2-3 wet area ESDs per year.
- NRCS will consider the recommendation for rectifying the issue of “low ranking” projects that never get funded by realigning funding pools accordingly.
- NRCS will incorporate a question into the ranking to allocate higher points to senior water rights holders.
- NRCS made note of STAC suggestions for considering practices 449- Irrigation Water Management, 550 Streambank and Shoreline protection and 351- Well Decommissioning as High Priority Practices
- NRCS will follow up with the SETT to explore opportunities for utilizing credit system funds for non-federal match funds.
- NRCS will reach out to form subcommittees for future specific conversation. Susan Abele posed the question about the ALE ranking and will be contacted for further discussion.
- Ryan will share the plan with NRCS and the STAC members. Those interested can submit comment to him via email.