

Meeting of the
Tennessee
State Technical Committee
May 12, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Webinar
801 Broadway, 675 U.S. Courthouse, Nashville, Tennessee

The meeting was called to order by **Sheldon Hightower**, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS. Sheldon started the meeting with a brief roll call of those present on the webinar and teleconference line. He offered opening remarks.

Misty Leitsch, Technical Service Provider Network, presented the Zero Suicide Initiative. Suicide among male farmers is 6% higher than the national average. Suicide among female farmers is equivalent to the national average.

1. Statewide Crisis Hotline: (855) 274-7471
2. National Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-TALK [Press 1 for veterans.]
3. Crisis Text Line: Text "TN" to 741 741

To contact Misty, you can reach out to mleitsch@tspn.org. The TSPN website is www.tspn.org.

Robert Anderson, State Conservation Engineer, and **Kelly Gupton**, Agriculture Engineer, presented information and guidance on planning and implementation for Beef Stack Barns.

Focus Points:

- Technical and financial assistance from NRCS is available
- Encourage dispersion as opposed to confinement
- Producers understanding of requirements and Operation & Maintenance (O&M)
- Use of the Livestock Feeding Assessment Tool (LFAT)
- Keep clean water clean
- Use of paddocks and loafing lots
- Fencing out sensitive areas, installing buffers, use of setbacks, location changes, etc.
- Development of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP)

Brandi Broughton, Farm Service Agency, and **Pat Gibson**, USDA-NRCS Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) provided an update on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Emergency Conservation Program (ECP).

- General CRP Signup

- Signup ended February 28, 2020.
- Continuous CRP
 - Signup is ongoing.
- Transition Incentive Program
 - Signup is ongoing.
- CRP Grasslands
 - Signup ends May 15, 2020

For more information about CRP and/or ECP, please contact your local FSA county office or visit fsa.usda.gov for more information. To locate your local FSA office, visit farmers.gov/service-locator. FSA State Office Contact: Brandi Broughton, Agricultural Program Specialist brandi.broughton@usda.gov

Jamie Carpenter, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, and his staff provided the following updates:

Melanie Mitchell, Management Analyst, presented on programs payments.

- Payments processed through May 8
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 2020 Payments for \$19,488,007.37
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) 844 Payments for \$6,965,473.50
- CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI) 414 Payments for \$257,885.80

Payments processed since March 23, 2020 (COVID-19)

- EQIP 259 Payments for \$1,778,149.32
- CSP 1 payment for \$40,000

Kelly German, Resource Conservationist, presented on EQIP and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

EQIP

- Upcoming EQIP Deadlines:
 - June 3- Ranking and cost estimate deadline for State Level Ranking Pools
 - June 24- Ranking and cost estimate deadline for Local Level Ranking Pools
 - July 1- Obligation deadline for State Level Ranking Pools
 - July 29- Obligation deadline for Local Level Ranking Pools
- EQIP applications in ProTracts: 3,059
- All rankings have been released in Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) and the field is working on ranking
- News release came out Friday, March 27th
- Application cut-off for batching will be May 1, 2020
- Ranking deadline- July 10, 2020
- Applications preapproved- July 13, 2020
- Obligation deadline- August 14, 2020

- These dates apply to all RCPP projects

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- Upcoming Partner Program Opportunities
 - May 29- Deadline for RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA) Proposals
 - May 29- Deadline for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) On Farm Demonstration Proposals
 - June 29- Deadline for National CIG Classic Proposals

Bill Norfleet, Resource Conservationist, presented on Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

CSP Renewal

- 2020-1-Renewal signup obligation deadline – June 1, 2020 (projected date)
 - Unfunded CSP Renewals can compete for CSP Classic 2020-1.
- 2021-1 Renewal obligation deadline – December 18, 2020
- TN State Priority Resource Concerns for CSP Renewals 2020-1
 - Concentrated Erosion
 - Degraded Plant Condition
 - Soil Quality Limitation
 - Terrestrial Habitat
 - Wind and Water Erosion
- CSP Classic Renewal FY2020 Allocation **\$1,237,000**.

CSP Classic 2020-1

- June 1, 2020 CSP Classic Application Deadline
- 484 Applications currently in ProTracts in pending/eligible status.
- Obligation deadline – July 31, 2020
- CSP Classic FY 2020 Initial Allocation: **\$5,515,000**

CSP-GCI Grassland Conservation Initiative

- Final obligation:
 - 154 Contracts
 - \$449,495.00 Dollars obligated
 - 4990.9 Acres under contract
 - TN State Priority Resource Concerns for CSP GCI 2020.
 - Concentrated Erosion
 - Degraded Plant Condition
 - Soil Quality Limitation
 - Terrestrial Habitat
 - Wind and Water Erosion

Derrick Brasher, Easement Team Coordinator, presented on Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).

FY20 Application Updates

- TN State Bulletin 300-20-06 LTP for ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)/ Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP)/ Agricultural land Easement (ALE) application Announcement.
- ACEP WRE General Funds Allocation FY20: \$6.2 million
- ACEP WRE Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership FY20 (WREP/Batture Lands): \$1.9 million
- ACEP RCPP WRE General Funds Allocation FY20: \$1.0 million

Dee Pederson, State Soil Scientist (acting), provided an update on Tennessee's Soil Health Strategy Plan. She asked for input from the Committee on the draft plan by May 22nd. Comments should be submitted to dee.pederson@usda.gov. Soil health was spelled out as one of the chief's goals for 2020. Dee also discussed available resources for pathogen-based mortality or catastrophic event such as statewide spatial layers with each interpretation for use in ArcGIS platforms as well as statewide maps for distribution and general use. She also offered an overview of the State National Cooperative Soil Survey Planning Meeting.

Jenny Adkins, Environmental Liaison, USDA-NRCS, presented information on the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) and Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI) programs in Tennessee. Hickory Creek is the oldest NWQI area in Tennessee. A watershed assessment for Hickory Creek is being written. NRCS is currently working with Tennessee Technical University on a new watershed vulnerability index and working with Middle Tennessee State University on modeling. NRCS is working to identify source water protection areas in Tennessee.

John McClurkan, Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA), provided an update on TDA Program Guidance. He provided the following link for additional information:
<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/agriculture/documents/landwaterstewardship/Final%20ARCF%20Guidance.pdf>

Zachary Luttrell, The Nature Conservancy(TNC), introduced himself to the committee as a new representative for TNC.

Dustin Boles, U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS), introduced himself to the group and his new role with USFWS.

Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, offered closing comments. There will be a Grazing Land Subcommittee meeting on August 11th following the full committee meeting. For more information contact Tammy Swihart at (615) 277-2575 or tammy.swihart@usda.gov.

The meeting was closed out by Sheldon Hightower.

Attendees:

1. Brandi Broughton, FSA
2. Kat Dierson, DoW
3. Kelly Gupton, USDA-NRCS
4. Misty Leitsch, TSPN
5. Robin Mayberry, USDA-NRCS
6. J.W. Griffin, TAUD
7. Chris Nelson, USDA-NRCS
8. John Womack, USDA-NRCS
9. Forbes Walker, UTIA
10. Dustin Boles, USFW
11. Sindhu Jagadamma, UTIA
12. Dale Barnett, TN Poultry
13. Matt Walker, USDA-NRCS
14. Carrie Castille, USDA-FPAC
15. Jason McAfee, USDA-NRCS
16. Diana Gennett, TSP
17. Alan Fisher, USDA-NRCS
18. Bill Norfleet, USDA-NRCS
19. Emily Granstaff, USFWS
20. Kevin Hensley, TN Farm Bureau
21. John McClurkan, TDA
22. Steve Beam, NWTF
23. Andy Neal, USDA-NRCS
24. Mark Gudlin, TWRA
25. Jamie Carpenter, USDA-NRCS
26. Pat Gibson, USDA-NRCS
27. Dee Pederson, USDA-NRCS
28. Kelly German, USDA-NRCS
29. Sheldon Hightower, USDA-NRCS
30. Katherine Burse, USDA-NRCS
31. Kathy Hawes, TN Clean Water Network
32. Chris Wolkonowski, USDA-NRCS
33. Robert Anderson, USDA-NRCS
34. Derrick Brasher, USDA-NRCS
35. Stan Butt, TN Dairy Producers
36. Alex Richman, TDF
37. Amanda Robertson, USDA-FSA
38. Matthew Denton, USDA-NRCS
39. Jenny Adkins, USDA-NRCS
40. Ben Koostra, TSP
41. Leslie Honicker, USDA-FSA
42. Tammy Swihart, USDA-NRCS
43. Zachary Luttrell, TNC
44. Melanie Mitchell, USDA-NRCS
45. Angela Warden, TSP
46. Duane Robertson, EPA
47. Leon Tillman, USDA-NRCS
48. Natalie Burger, TDA