

Tennessee State Technical Committee Meeting

(Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams)

August 10, 2021

Present.

Sheldon L. Hightower, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)-Tennessee,
Meeting Facilitator

Aaron Friend, USDA-NRCS-TN

Alex Richman, Tennessee Forestry Association

Alton Miller, USDA-NRCS-TN

Angela Warden, Technical Service Provider (TSP)

Ben Myers, Panther Creek Forestry

Bill Norfleet, USDA-NRCS-TN

Brandi Broughton, USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA)

Brian Chandler, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)

Brian Flock, TWRA

Britton Dotson, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC), Division of
Water Resources

Chad Foutch, 412 Corridor Forestry Association

Chris Nelson, USDA-NRCS-TN

Chris Wolkonowski, USDA-NRCS-TN

Christel Hiltibran, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Tennessee Chapter

Corey Giles, TNC, Tennessee Chapter

Danny Jones, USDA-NRCS-TN

David Lincicome, TDEC, Natural Heritage Program

Debra Kenerson, USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service Information (NASS)

Dustin Boles, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Emily Leonard, USDA-NRCS-TN

Emily Stefanick, Panther Creek Forestry

Heather Slayton, Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA), Tennessee Division of Forestry
(TDF)

Jamie Carpenter, USDA-NRCS-TN

Jay Yeargin, Tennessee Cattlemen's Association

John McClurkan, TDA

John Womack, USDA-NRCS-TN

Justin Griffin, Tennessee Association of Utility Districts (TAUD)

Katherine Burse, USDA-NRCS-TN

Kevin Davis, USDA-NRCS-TN

Kyle Brazil, Central Hardwoods Joint Venture

Leslie Honicker, USDA-NRCS-TN

Linda Ortiz, USDA-NRCS-TN

Mark Gudlin, TWRA

Melanie Mitchell, USDA-NRCS-TN

Mike Black, Shortleaf Pine Initiative

Mike Oliver, USDA-NRCS-TN

Nathan Hicklin, USDA-NRCS-TN

Nathan Hoover, TDA-TDF

Pam Hoskins, USDA-NRCS-TN

Pat Gibson, USDA-NRCS-TN

Robert D. Baker, TDEC, Division of Water Resources

Robert Boettcher, USDA-NRCS-TN
Robin Mayberry, USDA-NRCS-TN
Sindhu Jagadamma, University of Tennessee
Tammy Swihart, USDA-NRCS-TN
Trisha Johnson, TNC, Tennessee Chapter
Vivian Doyle, Environmental Protection Agency
Zach Luttrell, TNC, Tennessee Chapter
Suzanne Senecal, USDA-NRCS-TN

Welcome/Opening Remarks: Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS-TN

- Good morning. Thank you, All, for being on the call this morning. I apologize for the mix-up on the start time of today's meeting. I truly appreciate you joining us today. I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy throughout this pandemic.
- **USDA-NRCS-Tennessee Personnel Update**
 - **Mark Dose, State Conservation Engineer:** Mark Dose has been selected for the State Conservation Engineer in Tennessee. Mark will start on August 29th. He currently serves as an Area Engineer in Spokane Valley, Washington. He has completed a Leadership Development Program in March 2021 and spent nine years as the Agricultural Engineer in two locations in Minnesota and served as an Instructor for Conservation Bootcamp. Mark is a Professional Engineer in Washington and Minnesota and a Contacting Officers Representative (COR)-Level 1. He has a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering from North Dakota State University in Fargo, North Dakota.
 - **Arthur Hawkins III, Assistant State Conservationist (ASTC) for Field Operations:** Arthur Hawkins III has been selected for the Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations in Cookeville and will start on September 12, 2021. Arthur currently serves as a Resource Conservationist in Cleveland, Ohio. He completed a Multi-State Leadership Development Program in 2020. He served as acting ASTC-Partnership in Indiana and acting Business Specialist in Texas. Arthur recently served as the National Black Emphasis Program Manager and spent six years as the Supervisory District Conservationist in Pennsylvania. He has a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural and Extension Education, Service, and Leadership from Pennsylvania State University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.
- **Farm Bill Payments:** As of August 2, 2021, we have made 3,825 Farm Bill conservation payments in the amount of \$28 million.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** Tennessee has received an additional \$11.5 million for EQIP. Our total allocations for EQIP this year are \$38 million. Tennessee is one of the top five states for EQIP allocations.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP):** Tennessee has received an additional \$2.9 million for CSP. Our total allocations for CSP this year are \$10 million.
- **Competitive Funded Agreements:** In FY 21, Tennessee NRCS received a total of 21 proposals for competitive funded agreements in the categories of Conservation, Urban Conservation, and Collaborative Outreach. Of the 21 proposals received, 13 proposals were selected for a total funding amount of more than \$600,000.
- **COVID-19 Update**
 - We are still operating up to 50 percent office staffing at the Service Centers and 25 percent at the State Office. Visitors are permitted in the Service Centers by appointment only.

- On Wednesday, July 28th, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) changed mask recommendations and, as a result, the Secretary of Agriculture issued the following guidance:

Updated CDC guidance means Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) employees, on-site contractors, partners, volunteers, customers, and visitors in areas of “substantial” or “high” community COVID-19 transmission are required to wear a mask in Federal buildings and government-owned or leased vehicles regardless of vaccination status.

- **USDA-NRCS-TN – Programs Staff’s Reports** (Highlights only; please see attachment, August TNSTC Meeting NRCS Programs – Combined 08-10-2021, for complete presentation.)
 - **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) Overview: Pat Gibson, ACES Employee**
 - ECP is a cost-share program to farmers and producers for damage caused from natural disasters, such as tornadoes, floods, etc. In 2010, there were over 50 Tennessee counties approved for ECP.
 - NRCS provides the technical assistance, and FSA provides the financial assistance for this program.
 - FSA requested over \$1.7 million for 2021. This amount could change throughout the year depending on the number of disasters that Tennessee may have this year.
- **Introductions: Jamie Carpenter, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, and Robert Boettcher, EQIP Program Manager**
 - **Jamie Carpenter:** Robert, please introduce yourself to the committee. Robert replaces Kelly German, who went to the national team.
 - **Robert Boettcher:** I started with the agency in 2010 in Wyoming. For the last few years, I have been in my home state of Nebraska. I am now a resident of Tennessee. I am looking forward to doing EQIP in Tennessee.
- **EQIP FY21 Updates: Robert Boettcher**
 - **Applications:** Tennessee received 3,157 applications for funding of which approximately half of the applications have been funded. On July 30th, Tennessee received an additional \$4.2 million in funding.
 - **Practices with Higher Payments:** Due to the spike in material prices from COVID, national headquarters (NHQ) approved the following seven practices, installed in calendar year 2021, to receive higher payment:
 - 367 – Roofs and Covers
 - 430 – Irrigation Pipeline
 - 443 – Irrigation System Surface and Sub-Surface
 - 468 – Lined Waterway or Outlets
 - 516 – Livestock Pipeline
 - 575 – Trials and Walkways
 - 584 – Channel Bed Stabilization.
 - **Ten High Priority Practices:** Last fall, the Tennessee State Technical Committee (TNSTC) and others agreed on the 10 high priority practices listed below to be utilized in FY-2021:
 - 327 – Conservation Cover (native and pollinator scenarios only)
 - 338 – Prescribed Burning
 - 386 – Field Border
 - 394 – Firebreak

- 420 – Wildlife Planting
- 512 – Native Grass Planting
- 527 – Karst Sinkhole Treatment
- 612 – Tree and Shrub Establishment
- 643 – Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities
- 666 – Forest Stand Improvement.

We recommend using the same list in FY2022. This list can be revised if necessary.

○ **FY-2022 Source Water Protection (SWP) Practices**

- Source Water Protection practices had its own fund pool in FY-2021 and will again in FY-2022.
- The following 10 SWP Practices that are utilized in FY-2021 will be utilized again in FY-2022:
 - 340 – Cover Crop
 - 390 – Riparian Herbaceous Cover
 - 391 – Riparian Forest Buffer
 - 393 – Filter Strip
 - 412 – Grassed Waterway
 - 472 – Access Control
 - 512 – Forage and Biomass for Cropland Conversion
 - 527 – Karst Sinkhole Treatment
 - 528 – Prescribed Grazing
 - 638 – Water and Sediment Control Basin.

This list can be revised if necessary.

○ **New Watersheds:** Tennessee submitted proposals for funding to develop plans for the following watersheds:

- Mississippi River Basin Initiative – Lower Hatchie;
- National Water Quality Initiative – Lower Elk River;
- National Water Quality Initiative – Upper Duck; and,
- National Water Quality Initiative – Watts Bar sub watersheds.

○ **FY-2022 EQIP Classic**

Although applications may be submitted throughout the year, the cutoff date for applications is November 19, 2021. Local Work Group (LWG) meetings will be conducted virtually by November 19, 2021.

○ **Questions/Comments**

- **Ben Myers, Panther Creek Forestry:** I would have expected 314 (Brush Management) to be on the Priority list due to the needed amount of exotic and invasive treatments.

Jamie Carpenter, USDA-NRCS-TN: Ben, please send me an email about that. If anyone else has a suggestion(s), please email me, and I will discuss them with Sheldon.

- **Mark Gudlin, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)**

- I agree to using the same lists (high priority and SWP practices) for FY-2022.
- Has TN-NRCS been involved in determining how payment types will be shaped?

Sheldon Hightower, USDA-NRCS-TN: We have one employee on the national team.

- When can we expect the summaries of the FY practices breakdown? Having that information will help us for considering funding.

Jamie Carpenter, USDA-NRCS-TN: That will be presented at the November meeting.

- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): Bill Norfleet, Resource Conservationist**
 - RCPP's ranking and obligation deadlines are aligned with Classic signups in RCPP-EQIP, RCPP-CSP, and RCPP-ACEP-WRE (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easement).
 - Tennessee received two new RCPP proposals for FY-2021, which were not funded.
 - August 20, 2021 is Tennessee's deadline for CSP Classic and RCPP-CSP obligations.
 - September 3, 2021 is the national obligation deadline for CSP Classic FY-2021.
- **ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program): Pam Hoskins, Easement Program Manager**
 - We have 14 applications to fund for a total of \$8,512,510 that include 3 for WRE-General, 3 for WREP (Wetland Reserve Easement Partnership)-Mississippi River Trust, 4 for WREP-The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and 4 for RCPP WRE-Grassland.
 - **ACEP WRE/WREP:** The Easement Team has compiled the comments received from the Tennessee State Technical Committee and has provided responses for those comments. Robin will be giving a presentation on those responses for your review today.
 - **ACEP-ALE:** On August 4th, we sent the proposed ranking questions to the Tennessee State Technical Committee for review/comment. The deadline for comments is August 12th. Please send them to me at pamela.hoskins@usda.gov.
 - **FY-2022 Area Wide Market Analysis (AWMA) and Geographical Area Rate Cap (GARC):** We are in the process of updating the area wide market analysis and geographical area rate cap. When completed, we will submit it to the Tennessee State Technical Committee for approval.
 - **FY-2022 ACEP Bulletin:** We would like to send the bulletin out on September 17th with the application deadline of October 22nd.
- **Status of Payments: Emily Leonard, Management Analyst**

In July, we implemented a new payment review process via a state bulletin. It seems to have reduced the time in processing the reviews.
- **ACEP-WRE General/WREP Cart Ranking Tool State Specific Questions: Robin Mayberry, State Biologist and Acting State Forester, for Derrick Brasher, Easement Team Coordinator** (Highlights only; please see attachment, TNSTC Meeting – NRCS – 2022 CART Ranking Tool – Questions_08-10-2021, for complete presentation.)
 - Two sets of questions were sent to the field that created confusion but generated comments from membership. We apologize for the confusion. We wanted to inform you today of the comments that we received.
 - Questions 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10 were addressed.

Jamie Carpenter: We will address ranking at the November meeting. WREP is similar to the WRE program other than we announce those to submit and match to specific watersheds in the state. In FY-2022, we will have a Phase 6 of the Mississippi River Trust WREP and a new WREP through the Tennessee Nature Conservancy (TNC). Shelly Morris of the TNC will give a presentation on the project at the November meeting.

CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) and ECP (Emergency Conservation Program): Brandi Broughton, Agricultural Program Specialist, USDA-FSA-TN (Highlights only; please see attachment, Farm Service Agency PP – TNSTC Meeting – August 10, 2021, for complete presentation.)

- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

- CRP is a voluntary land conservation program that focuses on reestablishing valuable land cover to help improve air and water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.
- The national CRP signup is ranked nationally and based on different factors. July 23, 2021 is the deadline for CRP.
- **CLEAR30:** CLEAR30 is a new program. The Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers initiative offers 30-year contracts. The pilot was introduced in 2020 and originally focused on 12 states in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watershed. For 2021, CLEAR30 is now available nationwide.
- **CRP Transition Incentive Program (TIP):** The CRP-TIP program provides land owners and operators with an incentive to return land to production on an expiring CRP Contract in a way that preserves established conservation practices.
- **Forest Management Incentive (FMI):** The FMI program is authorized until September 30, 2023 and has \$6 million remaining in the nationwide funding pool. The FMI payments are not authorized in addition to cost-share payments for practices eligible for both payments.

Question/Comment

Mark Gudlin, TWRA: What level of participation has Tennessee had on the FMI option?

Brandi Broughton, USDA-FSA: We are trying to increase participation in this area and have agreements across the state.

- **General Signup 56 & Continuous 55 (Re-enrollments) Deadlines:** Please see attachment for a complete list of the deadlines.
- **CRP Grasslands:** The deadline for CRP Grassland is August 20, 2021.
- **Tennessee State Technical Committee's Review/Comment:** I wanted you to know of the upcoming opportunity for you to review and comment on either renewing or revising the existing State Conservation Priority Area (CPA) – CRP-936, Renewing, Revising and Establishing New State Conservation Priority Area's (CPA's) and Wildlife, Water Quality, and Air Quality Zones. Your recommendations will be submitted to the FSA State Committee for review and approval. Once the zones are submitted to the National Office and approved, the zones will be effective on October 1, 2021.

- **Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)**

- ECP provides emergency funding to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters.
- **New Updated Handbook and New Policy :** FSA is in the process of updating its handbook and policy on ECP. We hope to have it ready for distribution in the near future.
- **Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP):** EFRP is a cost share program that provides emergency funding and technical assistance to owners of non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) to carry out emergency measures to restore forest health and forest resources on NIPF damaged by natural disasters. Land must be physically located in the county affected by the natural disaster.

Sheldon Hightower, USDA-NRCS-TN: Thank you, Brandi, for your presentation and for your partnership.

Tennessee Forest Action Plan (FAP): Heather Slayton, Assistant State Forester, Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA), Division of Forestry (TDF), and Trisha Johnson, Director of Forest Carbon Programs, and Christel Hiltibran, Policy Analyst, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Tennessee Chapter (Highlights only; please see attachment, TNSTC Meeting TN Forest Action Plan 2020-2030 – 08-10-2021, for complete presentation.)

- **Heather Slayton, Assistant State Forester, TDA-TDF**
 - The big change this year was for the Tennessee Division of Forestry to co-author the Tennessee Forest Action Plan (FAP) with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Tennessee Chapter. Partnering with the TNC has raised the bar for Tennessee’s FAP.
 - **Resource Assessment:** Over half of the state is forested with over 8 billion live trees. The predominant forestry type is Old Hickory. Hardwoods have an 80-year rotation and softwoods have a 40-year rotation. Only 6 percent of forest is generated.
 - **Two Top Concerns:** TDF has two top concerns related to family forest owners: one is that they must have 10 acres of woodlands to be eligible for certain TDF programs, and the other is that the majority of owners do not have a forest management action plan.
 - **Education and Outreach:** It is important to educate landowners on available initiatives.
 - **FAP Objectives:** The word, “threats” was changed to “objectives.” Objectives will incorporate a wide variety of partners. The list is not all inclusive.
- **Christel Hiltibran, Policy Analyst, TNC**
 - Our strategies also impact riparian flood zones and flood plains, not just forested landscapes.
 - We encourage you to review the number of success stories to gain a better understanding of the importance of forests in Tennessee.
 - One of our top priorities is to collaborate with other governmental and non-governmental organizations within Tennessee to develop regulations or a statewide counsel to reduce the threat of wildfires in order to protect public and private forest in Tennessee. We have a cost share program to reduce the risk of wildfire and improve management.
- **Trisha Johnson, Director of Forest Carbon Programs, TNC**

The Priority Areas map retained diversity on a continental scale, was ranked on 30 meter patch, and utilized geographic information systems (GIS). It is the result of 12 years of work with 150 scientists and partners, has had 11 peer-reviewed articles, and included in a section of Conservation Biology (scientific journal). You may search “resilient landscapes” on the TNC website.
- **Questions/Comments**
 - **Mark Gudlin, TWRA:** What would you say are the top three actions or findings that impact TDF?
 - **Heather Slayton, TDF:** (1) We did not take the overall decision by the community approach. We talked with other organizations with which we were aligned with their mission. (2) For part of our FAP, we had to declare the forest legacy priorities and retool that priority area to land directly located in proximity to a mill. We required a forest management plan. (3) We looked at how to use our existing programs to increase the objectives for the forestry industry.

- **Mark Gudlin, TWRA:** What capacity do you estimate your foresters have to write more FMPs if we can increase the demand?
Heather Slayton, TDF: Tennessee has 535,000 private landowners. The Tennessee Division of Forestry consists of 27 area foresters of which 4 positions are vacant. We have our own suite at the conversation districts and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency have their own as well. We need to leverage our efforts. The forest resource management plan is for the entire state of Tennessee for forest managers to use for stewardship-type plans and to focus more on prescriptions. Many do not want large management plans, like 90 pages, but rather just want to know how to do it.
- **Mark Gudlin, TWRA:** Is TDF meeting the demand for TDF services, such as implementing prescribed burns?
Heather Slayton, TDF: We are giving it our best. We have burned more this year than we have in the past. There is no system in place to determine the length they have been on hold. As for prescribed burns, we are increasing our capacity and are not sure that we have serviced all the burns in Tennessee. We all collaborate to do it appropriately. Lighting a fire in the forest needs to have a prescription. Consultants are available and could help you with that.
- **Mark Gudlin, TWRA:** Are hard copies of the action plan available?
Heather Slayton, TDF: You can download a copy of the FAP from our website.

- **Closing Comments: Heather Slayton, TDF:** Thank you for allowing us time to present on the FAP. Please check it and provide your feedback to me, Heather, and Christel. We are mandated to give a five-year update on the FAP. If you have objectives that are applicable from your own agency, please contact us.

Sheldon Hightower, USDA-NRCS-TN: Thank you for this great information. Perhaps we can partner and help you with landowners getting forest management action plans. I am looking forward to reviewing the Tennessee Forest Action Plan.

Land and Water Stewardship Section (LWSS) Update, Tennessee Department of Agriculture: John McClurkan, Administrator, LWSS Programs (Highlights only; please see attachment, TNSTC Meeting – TDA – LWSS Update_08-10-2021, for complete presentation.)

- **Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund (ARCF):** Thank you to TN-NRCS and teams for help with this grant. Revenues remain strong and are tied to the real estate market in Tennessee.
- **Name Change:** We changed the name of our Districts to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). We will address the changes in depth at tomorrow's (August 11th) District Employee Training.
- **New Act:** At tomorrow's training, we will also address the new act to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 29; Section 5-9-106; Section 6-58-104; Title 43, Chapter 14; Title 43, Chapter 34; Title 64 and Title 69, Chapter 6, which is relative to soil and water conservation. We will give a side-by-side comparison on the language. You can find the new act at <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/112/pub/pc0203.pdf>.
- **319 Nonpoint Source Grant:** We also manage the federal program, 319 Nonpoint Source Grant. Please contact me at john.mcclurkan@tn.gov or Sam Marshall at sam.marshall@tn.gov to address any nonpoint issues that do not fit in other programs.

Sheldon Hightower: Thank you for assisting us with the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. We appreciate your partnership.

Conservation Planning for Resource Concerns: Linda Ortiz, State Resource Conservationist, USDA-NRCS-TN (Highlights only; please see attachment, Resource Concern Presentation TNSTC August 2021, for complete presentation.)

- I am the new State Resource Conservationist for TN-NRCS and have been serving in this position for three months. I am excited to be with all of you today.
- **Fact Sheet: 5 Steps to Assistance – How to Get Assistance from NRCS for Farms, Ranches and Forests: Step 1 – Planning**
 - Many of you saw this fact sheet at the May meeting. We would like to continue focusing on Planning, which is the first step to get assistance from NRCS.
 - To recap, the conservation planning process consists of three phases and nine steps. We have discussed the first phase of Planning, Collection and Analysis, in our previous meeting, which starts with the landowner meeting with the local NRCS field office to discuss goals and have a staff member to visit the farm to collect data/information. Today, we will be covering Phase 2 (Decision Support), following the farm visit, the NRCS employee will draft a conservation plan using conservation practices as alternatives to address resource concerns for the landowner. From that, the landowner will select the desire alternative(s).
- **Resource Concerns**
 - A resource concern is defined as the condition of natural resources that may be sensitive to change by natural forces or human activity. Our resource concerns are called SWAPA+E, which is the acronym for soil, water, animals, plants, air, plus energy. An example of a soil resource concern would be “soil quality limitations” with the six components of (1) aggregate instability, (2) compaction, (3) concentration of salts or other chemicals, (4) organic matter depletion, (5) soil organism habitat loss or degradation, and (6) subsidence.
 - We use different tools to determine resource concerns. For example, for soil organism habitat loss or degradation, our tools would include the National or State In-Field Soil Health Assessment Worksheet, the client’s input, and/or the planner’s observation.

Solving Resource Concerns with Soil Health Practices in Middle Tennessee: Chris Wolkonowski, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, and Nathan Hicklin, District Conservationist, USDA-NRCS-TN (Highlights only; please click [here](#) for the PowerPoint presentation, Soil Health to Address Resource Concerns.)

- **Chris Wolkonowski**
 - Thank you, Linda, for your presentation, and thank you, Sheldon, for giving us an opportunity to present on addressing resource concerns in Area 2.
 - At our last State Technical Committee meeting, Curt McDaniel did a good job on addressing the resource concerns in west Tennessee and on the installed practices they use to address them. Today, we are going to switch gears and talk about the resource concerns in Area 2, specifically the northwestern section of Area 2 that is located in Robertson County. I also want to talk about the great work our field office staff and conservation partners are doing through our Soil Health efforts. We have a lot of different agricultural operations in Robertson County, that consist of row crop, livestock, and also specialty producers, such as organics.
 - Nathan Hicklin will give a presentation on the great work that has been done in middle Tennessee and also on soil health. This group understands the importance of soil health and its benefits to our producers. The implementation of soil health practices improves soil structure and infiltration and reduces soil erosion. We want to keep our soils healthy and productive, but we also want to keep them resilient.

- Nathan is the District Conservationist (DC) in Robertson County and is a great DC along with the staff there. Nathan has been with the agency for about 13 years and has been the DC in our Springfield office for over 3 years. He has put himself out front of our Soil Health efforts in Tennessee by working with our network of partners, including the University of Tennessee. He does a great job and is passionate about conservation.
- **Nathan Hicklin**
 - Good morning! I want to thank the Tennessee State Technical Committee for having me today. I would like to share some information about the work we do in middle Tennessee and in Robertson County. I am the DC in Robertson County and have been in Tennessee for 12 years.
 - Today, we will focus on cropland, which is king in Robertson County. Row crops is a major focus of agriculture in the county.
 - Sheet/rill erosion and sediment transported to surface water are two of numerous resource concerns in middle Tennessee, especially in the Red River watershed, as it causes nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, in surface and groundwater. We are implementing soil health management systems to identify these resource concerns.
 - Our partnerships play an important role to help us to address the number of resource concerns and to promote soil health in middle Tennessee.

Sheldon Hightower: Thank you, Chris and Nathan, for your efforts in soil health and for the valuable information. I appreciate the cooperation between Linda and Chris.

Final Comments: Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS-TN

- I want to thank all the presenters today for all the information, and want to thank you again for joining the call.
- **Meeting Minutes/Recording:** We will have the meeting minutes and presentations posted to our website within 30 days of this meeting, and the recording will be available next Tuesday, August 17th.
- **Next Meeting:** Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 9th. Please reach out to me for agenda items.
- **Retirement Announcement:** I want to recognize a valuable partner. Mark Gudlin of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) is retiring in October, and this may be his last meeting. I want to thank Mark for being a long-term member of this committee and working on our subcommittees with Robin Mayberry. We will miss you, and with that, thank you, Mark, so much! Others here also would like to provide their input to you as well. We will open the floor for comments.
- **Closing Remarks:** Again, congratulations, Mark, and thank you for everything. Thank you for joining our meeting today. I look forward to our next meeting. Continue to be safe until next time.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:47 a.m. (CT).

Minutes prepared by Sue Senecal, Secretary to the State Resource Conservationist and Ecological Sciences Technology Staff, USDA-NRCS-TN

Attachments: Click [here](#) for presentations.

- Farm Service Agency PP – TNSTC Meeting – August 10, 2021
- TNSTC Meeting - TDA – LWSS Update_08-10-2021
- Resource Concern Presentation TNSTC August 2021
- TNSTC Meeting – NRCS – 2022 CART Ranking Tool – Questions_08-10-2021

- August TNSTC Meeting - NRCS Programs Combined – 08-10-2021
- TDF/TNC – TN Forest Action Plan 2020-2030 – 08-10-2021
- Soil Health to Address Resource Concerns

Addendum (August 31, 2021): COVID-19 Update

Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS-Tennessee

On August 31, 2021, the Pandemic Incident Commander – Farm Production and Conservation Mission Area, provided Tennessee updated COVID-19 guidance for business operations. Effectively immediately and until further notice, all USDA-NRCS facilities in Tennessee must not exceed 25 percent staffing and visitors are not permitted.