

LOUISIANA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
USGS WETLANDS RESEARCH CENTER CONFERENCE ROOM
LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

APRIL 24, 2014

RECORD OF AGENDA ITEMS AND COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

John Pitre, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m., and welcomed the meeting participants. (See attendance list attached.)

Tom Doyle, USGS, welcomed the group to the USGS Wetlands Research Center.

Pitre reviewed the agenda and commented on the highlights of items to be discussed.

♦ **LOCALLY LED-PRIORITY RESOURCE CONCERNS**

John Pitre, NRCS State Resource Conservationist, commented on the locally led process.

Louisiana's EQIP allocation formula is based on an equity division and weighted share of local and state resource concerns identified and prioritized through the locally led process. Resource concerns that are identified through this process are documented and entered into a state database. The complete list of all resource concerns and the report of statewide soil and water conservation district prioritization was presented to the committee for state prioritization. Each represented group of the State Technical Committee was given the opportunity to vote on the priority resources concerns for Louisiana.

Below are the voting results:

2015 Locally Led Conservation Initiative List of Resource Concerns	LASTC Vote
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Animal – Fish and Wildlife - Inadequate Habitat –
Habitat degradation (#2)

20

Water – Insufficient Water – Inefficient use of irrigation water (#1)	16
Water – Water Quality Degradation – Excess nutrients in surface and ground water (#8)	7
Plant – Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable plant productivity and health (#4)	2
Water – Water Quality Degradation – Excessive sediment in surface water (#6)	2
Water – Water Quality Degradation – Excess pathogens and chemicals from manure, bio solids or compost applications	2
Air – Air Quality Impacts – Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors	2
Soil – Soil Erosion – Sheet, rill and wind erosion (#5)	1
Soil – Soil Erosion – Concentrated flow erosion (#7)	1
Plant – Degraded Plant Condition – Excessive plant pest pressure (#9)	1

These results will be posted on the NRCS state web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/technical/stc/>

◆ **NRCS CONSERVATION PROGRAMS UPDATE AND THE WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM RANKING FORM**

Sarah Haymaker, NRCS Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, reported the Farm Bill passed on February 7, 2014. NRCS is authorized to use existing rules to implement EQIP until new rules are sent out. Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is now part of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is now Wetlands Reserve Enhancement (WRE). Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is now a two priority resource concerns program.

Dustin Farmer, NRCS Program Specialist, reviewed the WRE Ranking Form and discussed changes in the new ranking form and the ranking of points.

◆ **CALL FOR CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS**

Scott Edwards, NRCS Assistance State Conservationist for Partner and Initiative Coordination, briefed the members on CSP, the need for development of enhancements, and outlining a potential process for collaboration. Sixty million acres has been enrolled in this program, the new Farm Bill pre-authorizes ten million acres a year for a total of one hundred million acres in this program.

◆ **REVIEW OF WILDLIFE BENEFITING PRACTICES**

Tim Landreneau, NRCS Program Specialist, reviewed the list of conservation practices that will facilitate the transition from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Due to limited WHIP funding in FY 2014, Louisiana will offer a funding opportunity through EQIP to meet wildlife conservation needs. All eligible conservation practices are approved.

◆ **LOUISIANA USDA STRIKEFORCE UPDATE**

Dexter Sapp, NRCS StrikeForce Coordinator, discussed USDA's StrikeForce basics and the geographic focus area. USDA's StrikeForce for rural growth and opportunity initiative is part of USDA's commitment to growing economies, increasing investments, and creating opportunities in poverty-stricken rural communities. USDA is leveraging resources and collaborating with partners and stakeholders to improve economic opportunity and quality of life in these areas.

◆ **ESA PROGRAMMATIC CONSULTATION UPDATE AND CHANGES TO USFWS MAPS**

Rob Smith, USFWS Biologist, stated NRCS recently requested the USFWS update the Endangered Species Act Programmatic Consultation for 2014 to streamline the statutorily required process to get written concurrence when Federally listed species are impacted (positively or negatively). The USFWS has also updated shapefiles on aerial imagery for the federally listed species commonly found in the NRCS planning areas. These maps are important for planning and implementing a science-based protocol to aid in recovery efforts using Farm Bill Conservation Programs.

Andy Dolan, USFWS State Private lands Coordinator, discussed WRE Ranking Maps for Threatened and Endangered Species for aquatic species. Ranking has changed from high priority or no points changed to high, medium and low priority.

◆ **PARTNER UPDATES OF NEW ACTIVITIES**

STC member representatives were given the opportunity to provide updates on recent activities or upcoming events. ,

Alicia Wiseman, Ducks Unlimited, reported on the Rice Stewardship Program to encourage efficiency. DU entered into a Field to Market Group which is an alliance to sustainable in agriculture. National Ducks Unlimited has formed a partnership with USA Rice Federation. Resource inventories have been provided to Southeast Louisiana farmers' analysis of 41 pump tests. For additional information contact Wiseman at awiseman@ducks.org.

Matt Springer, FSA, reported new CRP guidance is expected soon due to the new Farm Bill implementation. For additional information contact Springer at matt.springer@la.usda.gov.

Bill Bartush, USFWS/GPLCC, stated he just attended a very productive meeting in east Texas. All partners expressed an interest to make priority areas where grasslands in coastal prairies to make better logical decisions on future management practices especially protection and restoration actions. A series of workshops starting May 15 on grassland areas for potential pilot projects and information gathering for restoring and management grasslands will be held. For additional information contact Bartush at bill_bartush@fws.gov.

(A copy of Bartush's updates can be viewed at LASTC Web Site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/technical/stc/>.)

Amity Bass, LDWF, reported WWF is working on restoration of coastal prairies. LDWF is looking to acquire at least 10,000 acres of land in southwest Louisiana close to prairie remnants for restoration. LDWF is updating the State-Wide Infracation Plan which includes all plant and animal species of concern. For additional information contact Bass at abass@wlf.la.gov.

Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter, stated the Red River Station is almost fully staffed. The LSU AgCenter has found toxic bait for feral hogs and is currently testing it. A delivery system is still yet to be found. Master Gardener Program is re-engaging with the urban as focus. A newly created Herbicide Task Force has been formed and tasked with new technology causing more problems with drift potential. Dr. Bill Richardson has been promoted to Vice-President of Agriculture and is also Dean of Agriculture. For additional information contact Leonard at rleonard@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Ernest Girouard, LA Master Farmer Program LSU AgCenter, the Master Farmer Program certification program is a three phase program. The first phase is environmental stewardship; second phase is field day of BMPs; and third phase is presentation and development of conservation plan for whole

farm. For additional information contact Girouard at egirouard@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Jerry Boos, EPA, reported 135 million dollars of proposal requests were received. Two proposals were funded in Louisiana, LA Pontchartrain Foundation on water quality monitoring and partial funding for Nancy Rabalais with LUMCOM for a Hypoxia Tour. For additional information contact Boos at boos.gerald@epa.gov.

John Tirpak, USFWS/GCPLCC, reported on a recently funded project from GCPLCC to look at how and why small private landowners value alternative land uses. Another recently funded effort across multi LCC project is the Mississippi River Basin Gulf Hypoxia Project. For additional information contact Tirpak at john_tirpak@fws.gov.

(A copy of Tirpak's updates can be viewed at LASTC Web Site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/technical/stc/>.)

Steve Brock, USFWS/LMVJV, reported on a Joint Venture strategy on conservation delivery network coordinating wildlife delivery activities, the working group will be working on agricultural lands. For additional information contact Brock at steve_c_brock@fws.gov.

Ron Seiss, TNC, discussed an agreement between Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi NRCS, Joint Venture and TNC to provide implementation and support on key Farm Bill Programs in the Lower Mississippi River Valley. A working committee was formed and charged with ranking criteria for WRP. For additional information contact Seiss at rseiss@tnc.org.

Luke Lewis, Regional Biologist NWTF, reported on NWTF activities in Louisiana. An upcoming Longleaf Field Day in Dry Creek in southwest Louisiana is scheduled for Saturday, May 10. A flyer that contains a map, physical address and registration sheet can be viewed at LASTC Web Site. For additional information contact Lewis at llewis@ntwf.net.

(Copy of Lewis' updates can be viewed at LASTC Web Site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/technical/stc/>.)

◆ **CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM READINESS INITIATIVE IN LOUISIANA**

David Ferrell, Ferrell Consulting LLC, reported the Conservation Reserve Program Readiness Initiative (CRPRI) was a grant funded program created to build a quality pool of conservation professionals to help NRCS, Farm Services agency (FSA), and their partners and technical service providers

accomplish the work involved with CRP enrollments, CRP plan development and implementation, and the follow-up management of developed plans. The CRPRI is designed to provide a working understanding of CRP from basic policies and procedures to the development of comprehensive NRCS compliant conservation plans. Meetings are scheduled for May 20 and 21 in West Monroe. To register for the courses, go to conservation-training.wisc.edu and click the Conservation Planning category. For additional information contact Ferrell at ferrell2302@gmail.com.

(A copy of news release on the CRP Workshops can be viewed at LASTC Web Site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/la/technical/stc/>.)

◆ **GENERAL TOPICS AND CLOSING COMMENTS**

John Pitre, NRCS Resource State Conservationist, appreciated all the partner updates and encouraged attendance at the CRPRI meetings.

◆ **NEXT MEETING DATE**

No specific meeting date was set. Members will be notified when the date of the teleconference is scheduled.

12:05 p.m. – Meeting Adjourned

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LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA

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LIST OF ATTENDEES

John Pitre, USDA-NRCS
Scott Edwards, USDA-NRCS
Mike Lindsey, USDA-NRCS
Sarah Haymaker, USDA-NRCS
Mari Gilford, USDA-NRCS
Randy Cheveallier, USDA-NRCS
Chris Coreil, USDA-NRCS
Rick Williams, USDA-NRCS
Tim Landreneau, USDA-NRCS
Dustin Farmer, USDA-NRCS
Morgan Bennett, USDA-NRCS
Dexter Sapp, USDA-NRCS
Troy Mallach, USDA-NRCS
Johnny Cross, USDA-NRCS
Bill Waits, USDA-NRCS
Matt Springer, USDA-FSA
Tim Doyle, USGS
John McCoy, USGS
Carrie Castille, LDAF/OSWC
Andy Dolan, USFWS
Rob Smith, USFWS
Barry Wilson, GCJV/USFWS
Steve Brock, USFWS/LMVJV
John Tirpak, USFWS/GCPLCC
Bill Bartush, USFWS/GCPLCC
Jeff Durand, LRGA
Amity Bass, LDWF
Cody Cedotal, LDWF
Marty Floyd, LWF
Amber Robinson, HDR
Angela Bulger, HDR
Alicia Wiseman, DU
Rogers Leonard, LSU AgCenter
Ernest Girouard, LSU Ag Center/LAMFP
Ronnie Ulmer, TNC
Ron Seiss, TNC
Jerry Boos, EPA