



United States Department of Agriculture

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**2019 Minnesota State Technical Advisory Committee  
Standard Operating Procedures**

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# Minnesota State Technical Advisory Committee

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## Overview

The Minnesota State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the implementation of conservation technical assistance and programs. The Committee is intended to include members from a wide variety of conservation and agricultural interests. Chaired by the State Conservationist, the Minnesota STAC is composed of representatives from Federal and State agencies, American Indian Tribes, agricultural and conservation groups, and agricultural and forestry producers.

## Responsibilities of the State Technical Committee

The Minnesota STAC convenes at least twice per year to discuss and make recommendations to NRCS for delivering conservation technical and program assistance. The role of the Committee is advisory in nature and has no implementation or enforcement authority. However, NRCS gives strong consideration to the recommendations of the STAC.

It is the responsibility of the STAC to:

1. Provide information, analysis, and recommendations to NRCS on conservation priorities for natural resources conservation activities and programs.
2. Identify emerging conservation concerns and program needs.
3. Provide feedback and recommendations for conservation practice standards and specifications.
4. Consider recommendations from local working groups to make recommendations to the State Conservationist.
5. Assist NRCS with public outreach and information efforts.

## State Technical Advisory Committee Membership

The Minnesota STAC will include agricultural producers, nonindustrial private forest land owners, and other professionals who represent a variety of conservation and agricultural interests. The Minnesota STAC will include representatives from among the following, if willing to serve:

1. NRCS
2. Farm Service Agency (FSA)
3. FSA State Committee
4. U.S. Forest Service
5. National Institute of Food and Agriculture
6. Each of the Federally recognized American Indian Tribal Governments

7. Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
8. State departments and agencies within Minnesota, including the following:
  - Agricultural agency
  - Fish and wildlife agency
  - Forestry agency
  - Soil and water conservation agency
  - Water resources agency
9. Agricultural producer representing the crops and livestock raised within Minnesota
10. Owners of nonindustrial private forest land
11. Nonprofit organizations (as defined under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) that demonstrate conservation expertise and experience working with agricultural producers in the State
12. Agribusiness

The State Conservationist will invite other relevant government agencies, organizations, and persons, knowledgeable about economic and environmental impacts of conservation programs, to participate as needed.

### **New Membership**

It is the responsibility of the State Conservationist to seek a balanced representation of interests among the membership on the STAC. The STAC should consider the needs of the diverse groups served by USDA. Membership will include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent the conservation and related technical concerns of historically underserved groups and individuals; as defined by the Farm Bill. Individuals or groups wanting to participate on the Committee within Minnesota may submit a request to the State Conservationist that explains their interest and outlines their credentials. Decisions regarding membership are at the discretion of the State Conservationist. State Conservationist decisions on membership are final and not appealable to any other individual or group within USDA.

### **Specialized Subcommittees**

Specialized subcommittees composed of STAC members may be needed to analyze and refine specific issues or research topics. The State Conservationist may assemble certain committee members, including members of local working groups and other experts to discuss, examine, and focus on a technical or programmatic topic, or combination of such. The State Conservationist shall appoint one of the Minnesota STAC members as a chair, assign an NRCS consultant, and define the purpose, parameters, reporting frequency and lifespan of the committee. Recommendations of specialized subcommittees will be presented in general sessions of the STAC.

## **Minnesota STAC Subcommittees**

The following subcommittees have been identified. Minnesota STAC members are encouraged to participate on one or multiple subcommittees. The subcommittees can be comprised of non-members. Each subcommittee will have an assigned non-NRCS lead and an NRCS advisor.

### **➤ Conservation Easements**

The roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Easements subcommittee is to provide input and direction for Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- application ranking criteria
- geographic area rate caps
- local and state priorities
- compatible use agreements
- restoration plans
- management plans
- management of easement acres

### **➤ Financial Assistance Programs (EQIP and CSP)**

The roles and responsibilities of the FAP subcommittee is to provide input and direction for Financial Assistance Programs to include EQIP and CSP. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- local work group recommendations
- state priorities application ranking criteria
- EQIP initiatives and efforts
- funding pools
- program evaluation

### **➤ Forestry**

The roles and responsibilities of the Forestry subcommittee is to provide input and direction for conservation delivery for private forest land. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- identifying and prioritizing forestland resource concerns
- providing feedback on forestry standards and technical materials
- developing priorities for forest land programs

### **➤ Grazing and Hayland**

The roles and responsibilities of the Grazing and Hayland Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for conservation delivery for Grazing and Hayland. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- identifying and prioritizing pasture and hayland resource concerns
- providing feedback on related standards and technical materials
- developing priorities for programs

➤ **Practice Standards and Technical Materials (As needed)**

The roles and responsibilities of the Practice Standards and Technical Materials Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for technical delivery of conservation. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- providing feedback and direction for standards and technical material updates
- developing state conservation planning priorities
- identifying technical development needs

➤ **Watershed**

The roles and responsibilities of the Priority Watershed Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for technical delivery of watershed conservation planning. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- providing feedback and direction for watershed selection and prioritization
- updates to watershed studies
- watershed monitoring activities

➤ **Wildlife and CRP**

The roles and responsibilities of the Wildlife and CRP Subcommittee is to provide input and direction for conservation delivery for Wildlife and CRP. Input and direction provided may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- identifying and prioritizing CRP priority areas
- providing feedback on related standards and technical materials
- developing priorities for wildlife programs

**Others as Needed Meetings and Frequency**

The Minnesota STAC will meet quarterly each fiscal year. Other meetings may be held at the discretion of the State Conservationist in a format of his or her choosing. The State Conservationist will call a meeting whenever he or she believes that there is business that should be brought before the committee for action. However, any USDA agency may make a request of the State Conservationist for a meeting.

USDA Fiscal Year	Quarter	Date	Location
2019	1	October 25, 2018	Waite Park, MN
2019	2	January 24, 2019	Waite Park, MN
2019	3	April 18, 2019	Waite Park, MN
2019	4	August 15, 2019	Waite Park, MN

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# Minnesota STAC Meeting Process and Procedures

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**The Minnesota STAC process and procedures are as follows:**

## **Scheduling Meetings and Public Notice**

- Minnesota STAC meetings will be scheduled on a quarterly basis.
- A public meeting notice will be posted in the Pioneer Press at least 14 calendar days prior to the meetings.
- The meeting notice will be posted to the Minnesota NRCS website and will include meeting time, location, agenda items, and point of contact.

## **Meeting Agenda and Content**

- The meeting agenda will be developed to reflect the purpose and responsibilities of the Minnesota STAC.
- Requests for agenda items will be emailed to Minnesota STAC members 30 days in advance of the meeting.
- A meeting agenda will be prepared and provided to the committee members at least 7 calendar days prior to a scheduled meeting.
- The State Conservationist may amend the agenda at any time without notice.

## **Meeting Materials and Handouts**

- Handouts will be provided to the Minnesota STAC at least 5 days before the meeting, when time and resources allow.
- Presenters are responsible for providing materials for their area of responsibility.
- Handouts and presentation materials will be sent to the Minnesota State Office for distribution at least 5 days prior to the meeting.

## **Meeting Set Up and Communications**

- VTC and teleconference information will be provided with the agenda.
- Presenters are responsible for contacting the Minnesota STAC coordinator 5 days in advance for equipment and presentation needs.
- Committee members and public participants shall notify the Minnesota STAC coordinator for coordination and location of VTC attendance.
- VTC and the teleconference host will set up 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.
- VTCs are available at the following locations and are subject to change.
  - NRCS Office – Thief River Falls, MN
  - NRCS Office – Fergus Falls, MN
  - NRCS Office – Duluth, MN
  - NRCS Office – Brooklyn Center, MN
  - NRCS Office – Marshall, MN
  - NRCS Office – Rochester, MN
  - NRCS State Office – St. Paul, MN

## **Conducting Business**

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. The following guidelines will govern meeting discussions.

- The State Conservationist or designee will lead the discussion.
- Only one person may speak at a time in an open forum.
- The State Conservationist or designee is responsible for recognizing speakers.
- State Technical Committees are advisory in nature and all reasonable recommendations are considered.
- Members may be polled, but voting on issues is not appropriate.
- The State Conservationist, in consultation with those members present, may establish time limits for discussion on individual agenda items.
- The State Conservationist will defer those agenda items not covered because of time limits to another time.

## **Record of Meetings and Meeting Minutes**

- Summaries for all STAC meetings will be available within 30 calendar days of the committee meeting and distributed to committee members.
- The summaries will be filed at the NRCS State Office and posted to the Minnesota NRCS website.

## **Response to Committee Recommendations**

- The State Conservationist will inform the STAC as to the decisions made in response to all Committee recommendations within 90 days.
- Notification will be made in writing to all STAC members.

## **Annual Review of MNSTAC**

- Members will be reviewed annually for changes to the roster.
- The Minnesota STAC SOP will be updated as needed to reflect any changes.