



IWLA Agricultural Program Fact Sheet: **Volunteer participation on ag conservation State Technical Committees**

United States Department of Agriculture

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>



The NRCS mission is to promote the long-term sustainability of all agricultural lands, including cropland, forestland, and grazing lands; and to include improving water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, and unique natural areas.

- ▶ The Secretary must establish a ***technical committee*** in each State to assist in making technical considerations related to the implementation of conservation provisions.
- ▶ ***State Technical Committees*** work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service in an advisory capacity.

▶ USDA will seek State Technical Committee recommendations including, but not limited to, the following:

- Wetland protection, restoration, and mitigation requirements;
- Criteria for evaluating bids for CRP enrollment;
- Guidelines for haying, grazing and weed control to protect nesting wildlife;
- Wetland and highly erodible land conservation compliance exemptions and the appeals process;
- Guidelines for planting perennial cover for water quality and wildlife habitat improvement on set-aside lands;
- Criteria and priorities for state initiatives under EQIP;
- Criteria for defining a large confined livestock operation;
- Determination of cost share and incentive payment limits;
- Implementation of the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program;
- Statewide guidelines applicable to WRP easement compensation, restoration planning, priority ranking, and related policy matters.

▶ State Technical Committee will provide information, analysis, and recommendations for the following programs and initiatives:

- Agricultural Water Enhancement Program
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative
- Conservation Compliance
- Conservation Innovation Grants
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Conservation Security Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Conservation of Private Grazing Land
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
- Grassland Reserve Program
- Grassroots Source Water Protection Program
- Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
- Great Lakes Basin Program
- Technical Service Providers
- Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

► Operations and participation in STCs and Local Working Groups.

State Technical Committee operations:

- The State Technical Committee should meet at least twice a year at a time and place designated by the State Conservationist. Other meetings may be held at the discretion of the State Conservationist. Any USDA agency, however, can make a request of the State Conservationist for a meeting.
- State Technical Committee and subcommittee meetings are open to the public.
- The meetings will be conducted as an open discussion among members. Discussion will focus on USDA programs and activities.
- The State Conservationist will inform the State Technical Committee as to the decisions made in response to all State Technical Committee recommendations within 90 days. This notification will be made in writing to all State Technical Committee members and posted to the NRCS State Web site.
- Local Working Groups may provide input and recommendations to the State Technical Committee.

State Technical Committee membership:

- Individuals or groups wanting to become a member on a State Technical Committee within a specific State may submit to the State Conservationist a request that explains their interest and outlines their credentials for becoming a member of the State Technical Committee.
- Decisions of the State Conservationist concerning membership on the committee are final and not appealable.
- The State Conservationist will respond to requests for State Technical Committee membership in writing within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 60 days.
- State Technical Committee membership will be posted on the NRCS State Web site.

Local Working Group operations:

- Local Working Groups provide recommendations to the District Conservationist (or Designated Conservationist) and the State Conservationist on local natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs.
- The Local Working Group should meet at least once each year.
- Local Working Group meetings are open to the public. Public notice of Local Working Group meetings should be provided at least 14 calendar days prior to the meeting.
- The meetings will be conducted as an open discussion among members. Discussion will focus on identifying local natural resource concerns that can be treated using USDA programs and activities.
- Local Working Group recommendations are to be submitted to State Technical Committee Chairperson and/or the District Conservationist (or Designated Conservationist), as appropriate, within 14 calendar days after a meeting.

Local Working Group membership:

- Individuals or groups wanting to become a member of a Local Working Group may submit to the Local Working Group Chairperson and the NRCS District Conservationist (or Designated Conservationist), a request that explains their interest and outlines their credentials for becoming a member of the Local Working Group.
- The District Conservationist (or Designated Conservationist) will assist the soil and water conservation district in making decisions concerning membership of the group.

► Ikes participation in State Technical Committees.

COMPOSITION.—Each State technical committee shall be composed of agricultural producers and other professionals that represent a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, wetland, and wildlife sciences. The technical committee for a State shall include representatives from among the following:

(1) The Natural Resources Conservation Service.

(2) The Farm Service Agency.

(3) The Forest Service.

(4) The National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

(5) The State fish and wildlife agency.

(6) The State forester or equivalent State official.

(7) The State water resources agency.

(8) The State department of agriculture.

(9) The State association of soil and water conservation districts.

(10) Agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the State.

(11) Owners of nonindustrial private forest land.

(12) Nonprofit organizations within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with demonstrable conservation expertise and experience working with agriculture producers in the State.

(13) Agribusiness.

► Ikes participation in Local Working Groups.

Local Working Group membership should be diverse and focus on agricultural interests and natural resource issues existing in the local community. Membership should include:

- **agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock and/or poultry raised within the local area;**
- **owners of nonindustrial private forest land;**
- **representatives of agricultural and environmental organizations;**
- representatives of governmental agencies carrying out agricultural and natural resource conservation programs and activities.

► Contacts; Learn More:

Go to the NRCS website for details on conservation programs and state technical committees:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

At NRCS website, click on “States and Regions” to find your state’s NRCS website and contact information:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/organization/regions.html>

For questions and assistance, contact me anytime:

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National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s State Technical Committee Network

(an affiliation of conservation advocates from colleague organizations, academia, state agencies, farmers, etc.)

<http://groups.google.com/group/nsac-stc-network>

And visit the IWLA Agricultural Program website for more information and updates:

<http://www.iwla.org/agconservation>