

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Technical Committee
Meeting Agenda
April 5, 2022**

Teleconference/Webinar

USDA NRCS State Technical Committee - Texas
Microsoft Teams meeting
[Click here to join the meeting](#)
Or call in (audio only): 1-469-294-4461
Access Code: 223 172 519#

8:30-8:35	Welcome – Announcements – Overview of Meeting	Charles Kneuper
8:35-8:40	Agency Updates	Kristy Oates
8:40-8:45	Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Conservationist	Jeff Dudensing
8:45-8:50	Farm Service Agency, State Executive Director	Wilbert Hundl, Jr.
8:50-8:55	National Agricultural Statistic Service, Southern Plains Director	Francisco Trevino
8:55-9:00	Risk Management Agency, Director	Mike Bodenchuk
9:00-9:05	Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service – Wildlife Services	Daniel Torres
9:05-9:50	Rural Development	
9:05-9:50	Farm Bill Updates	Lori Ziehr
	NRCS	Jeff Dudensing
	FSA	
9:50 – 10:00	Break	
10:00 – 11:00	Subcommittee Reports	Committee Representatives
11:00 – 11:30	Public Comment and Open Discussion	Charles Kneuper
11:30	Closing comments/Adjourn	Kristy Oates

**** Written agenda item comments are encouraged.
Agenda is subject to minor adjustments**

Charles Kneuper, State Resource Conservationist, opened meeting, informed participants the meeting was being recorded.

Agency Updates:

Kristy Oates, NRCS State Conservationist, provided NRCS update:

- Efforts to increase climate smart agriculture and forestry.
- Expand conservation tools and support for urban conservation
- Ensure equity in delivery and implementation of programs and services
- Fostering partnerships for emerging technologies
- Mentioned funding available for watershed and flood prevention operations and rehabilitation
- NRCS and FSA working together to address resource concerns created by wildfires

Jeff Dudensing, provided FSA update:

- Staff able to engage in outreach events
- Processing requests for assistance due to the ongoing natural disasters
- Implementation of programs for emergency conservation program; livestock indemnity program; emergency assistance for livestock, honey bees, and farm raised fish; and physical loss loans are available

Francisco Trevino, provided RMS update:

- Discussed current conditions and dollars paid out by approved insurance providers

Wilbert Hundl, provided NASS update:

- Completed prospective planting report
- Respondent portal has gone live
- Working to close out agricultural resource management survey

Mike Bodenchuk, provided APHIS update:

- Reminded STAC of the cooperative program in place and there are six (6) priority areas
- Mentioned trap loan program starting in Williamson and additional counties
- Discussed avian influenza occurrences

No RD update

Lori Ziehr provided Farm Bill update for NRCS:

- Slides and update information below.
- Question regarding recommendation to Lori if those were shared with whole STAC or only in subcommittee.
 - o Answered that comments and recommendations would be for whole STAC to address and make final recommendations.



United States Department of Agriculture

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



Notice of Funding Opportunity
[grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)

RCPP-Classic and RCPP-Alternative Funding Arrangement
Applications due April 13, 2022



United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)





Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)



Priorities

- Urban & Small Farm Agriculture Conservation
- Innovation in agricultural systems, technology, testing, outreach and partnerships for the Broad-Scale Application of Climate Smart Agriculture
- Innovation in natural resource assessment leading to improved conservation planning and application efficiency

Notice of Funding Opportunity: www.grants.gov.
Due May 20, 2022



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



United States Department of Agriculture

EQIP Conservation Incentives Contracts (CIC)



See Fact Sheets for the 2 EQIP-CIC Initiatives

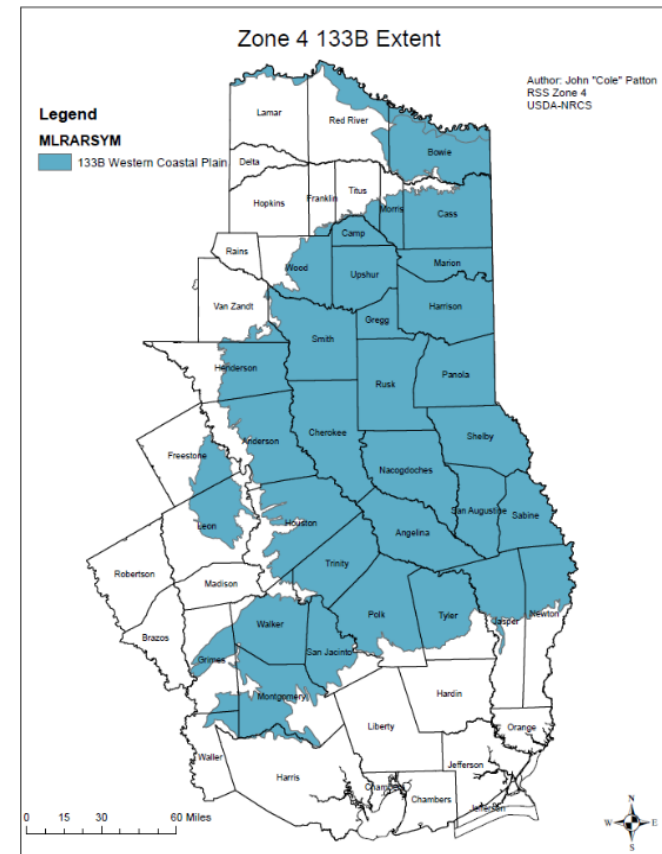
EQIP-CIC High Priority Areas



Climate Smart/Wildlife Initiative



Piney Woods Restoration Initiative



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nrcs.usda.gov/



Priority Resource Concern (PRC)



Climate Smart/Wildlife Initiative

- Terrestrial Habitat for Wildlife and Invertebrates
- Organic Matter Depletion
- Plant Productivity and Health

Piney Woods Restoration Initiative

- Terrestrial Habitat for Wildlife and Invertebrates
- Plant Productivity and Health
- Plant Structure and Composition



EQIP-CIC Practices



- Focus is on Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Practices
- Management practices can be scheduled 5 years if practical for the operation
- All conservation practices are eligible to be planned and contracted as supporting practices to the core management practices.

Climate Smart/Wildlife Initiative	Practice Code
Conservation Crop Rotation	328
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	329
Cover Crop	340
Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	345
Irrigation Water Management	449
Mulching	484
Prescribed Grazing	528
Nutrient Management	590
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645

Piney Woods Restoration Initiative	Practice Code
Prescribed Burning	338
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645



EQIP-CIC Comment Responses

Comments Received for Piney Woods Initiative:

- Suggest narrow down the practices
- Offer intermediate stand treatments (666) and restoration of rare/declining habitats (643).
- Decline of bottomland hardwood forests are also significant factors in the downward trends of many species in TX. Recommend a Focused Forest CIC (and any future CSP efforts); target these 3 imperiled systems as an avenue for NRCS to establish a clear conservation priority for “at-risk”, declining, or T&E species.



EQIP-CIC Comment Responses

Comments Received for Climate Smart/Wildlife Initiative:

- Are the management practices in the recommendation eligible for annual payments or implementation payments or both?
- How will “practices which benefit wildlife” be determined, relevant to the prioritization of applications for that purpose?
- (Suggestion) In order to facilitate conversion of expiring CRP acres to wildlife compatible prescribed grazing systems, fencing, water access, and water distribution systems will be required. Implementation of these systems can be cost prohibitive. Addition of fencing and water infrastructure practices as *Implementation Payment* support practices, with eligibility dependent upon implementation and commitments to a compatible prescribed grazing qualifying/core practice, may greatly serve the interests of the participants and encourage wildlife habitat compatible land use.



EQIP-CIC Comment Responses

Comments Received for Climate Smart/Wildlife Initiative (con't):

- Clarify how upland wildlife habitat management is being planned/applied in EQIP currently and how it will be different in EQIP-CIC?
- Inclusion of Fire Break practices may facilitate practicable application of Prescribed Burning and should be included in all conservation plans that invoke Prescribed Burning.
- We suggest that regionally appropriate scenarios and practice bundles be developed to focus outreach and marketing to the target initiatives.



FY23 Advisory Requests:



1. EQIP Payment Cap Requests
2. High Priority Practices
3. Source Water Protection Priority Areas and Priority Practices
4. NWQI
5. EQIP Funding Distribution/Initiatives
6. Local Working Group Information
7. Wetland Restoration Criteria and Guidelines
8. [Texas Payment Schedules](#) Annual Review

***Subcommittee Input**

***August STAC**



Jeff Dudensing provided Farm Bill update for FSA:

- CRP General sign up 58 concluded in March
- Grassland sign-up is going on
 - o Discussed ranking factors
- Clear 30
- Gave greater detail for emergency conservation program
- Tree assistance program
- Explained livestock indemnity program in relation to the wildfires
- Emergency Livestock Relief Program, a new program, covered in two (2) phases.
- Farm loans
- Urban Ag
 - o Question about Urban Agents around Houston and Austin
 - o Josh Coleman answered regarding the Dallas Urban being pilot and that the program will expand but unsure of what cities.

Subcommittee Reports:

- Water Resources subcommittee, Kimberly Horndeski
 - o Recommendation: consider adding Conservation Practice 430 Irrigation Pipeline to the list of practices for Source Water protection.
 - o Support continued effort in Lake Lavon for NWQI
 - o See subcommittee minutes below.
- Urban subcommittee, Susie Marshall
 - o Recommendation: State staff develop some technical notes on topics pertinent to addressing conservation practices for small farms and urban agriculture.
 - o Recommendation: Look at using the OR work on adopting a practice standard for raised beds.
- AFO/CAFO subcommittee, J.C. Essler
 - o Recommendation: Stated Lori did a great job with discussing NRCS programs and to continue these efforts.
 - o Recommendation: update TSP rates for CPS-313
 - o Recommendation: NRCS assist with development of publication regarding closures of water storage facilities.
 - o See subcommittee minutes below.
- Easement subcommittee, John Tate
 - o Brought up issues regarding chairmanship of subcommittee.
 - o Kim Burr is new NRCS government representative for committee and will facilitate a meeting with subcommittee to address any action items for next STAC meeting.
- Irrigation subcommittee, no report
 - o Charles made request for anyone wishing to serve on the committee to reach out.
- Wildlife subcommittee, Cyndee Watson
 - o Recommendation: Increase collaboration and input on all levels regarding prescribed fire to increase the amount of prescribed fire across Texas.
 - o Recommendation: Provide and assist with more training to increase job approval authority and to develop a strategy to address any inconsistencies or inefficiencies

between NRCS guidance, TDA certified and insured prescribed fire managers, and Texas burn laws.

- See subcommittee minutes below.
- Grazing subcommittee, Brian Hayes
 - Recommendation: Texas NRCS to consider filling the two (2) grazing land positions that are currently open, one in Amarillo and one in Weatherford.
 - Recommendation: Continued support and funding for NRCS employees on prescribed fire training in order to facilitate recommendation from Fish and Wildlife subcommittee on prescribed fire.
 - See subcommittee minutes below.
- Forestry subcommittee, James Houser (Brian Townsend, NRCS gov rep gave report)
 - Recommendation: Increase rates for herbicide application by 50% and all other rates related to forest management by 25%.
 - Rate increase for small landowners (less than 20 ac) 25%.
 - EQIP funding notification occur by May 31st to not delay site prep burn operations.

Open discussion focused on the Urban Ag and prescribed fire.

Kristy Oates closed the meeting at 10:21 am.

Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee

- Role – we serve in an advisory capacity to provide information regarding pressing wildlife concerns in Texas to the State Conservationist for her consideration
- The fish and wildlife subcommittee met via Microsoft teams on February 7, 2022. In total, around 45 people called into the meeting. Notably, we had several NRCS folks on the call including zone biologists and other staff.

Subcommittee Discussion

- Great Plains WG - Jim Giocomo gave an update on the Great Plains WLFW project and provided websites for additional information on Great Plains-wide grassland conservation efforts. Also, he discussed the grassland efficiency monitoring protocol.
- Riparian WG - Melissa Parker asked for new members and NRCS announced they are reassembling their internal Riparian Cadre
- CRP SAFE WG – Will Newman discussed efforts for a broader SAFE project to increase enrollment that is on hold due to developments with CRP and SAFE, to assess current enrollment & Cropland Reserve Enhancement Program expansion that may interact with SAFE. There will likely be a meeting soon to discuss SAFE and CREP proposals. If interested reach out to Will.

Subcommittee Discussion

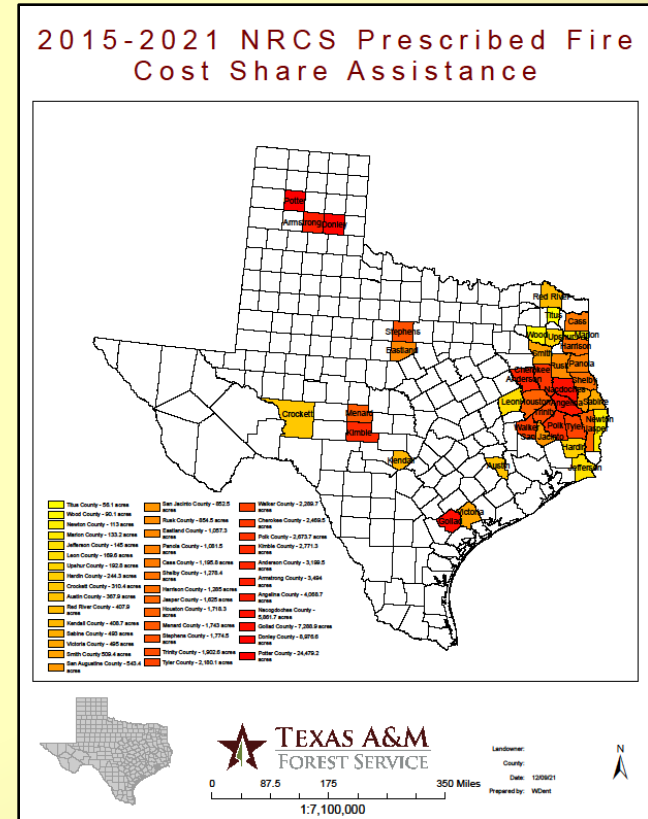
- Black rails & grazing – Woody Woodrow (USFWS)
- Lori Ziehr also attended to discuss Fall requests presented at the STAC this was highly collaborative and informative and allows us to better understand how we can best serve in our advisory role and make meaningful requests.

Prescribed Fire Working Group

Bill Bartush – gave an update on the following prescribed fire needs that cross many disciplines:

- Low prescribed fire output; high resource/landowner needs
- Need for clear guidance & streamlined job approval authority for more financial and technical assistance for prescribed fire
- Need to adjust pay-rates to reflect Eco-Regional challenges

**Texas is 93% private land,
but less than 50% of Rx
fire occurs on those private
lands.**



Prescribed Fire Working Group

Proactive Solutions (Shared Vision)

- Collaboratively suggest changes to NRCS Prescribed Burning (338) practice standard during public comment period and conduct state-level collaboration on TX scenarios
- Target frequent fire through EQIP, adjust rates, increase Conservation Incentive Contract/CSP, & improvements via ecological site descriptions
- Provide or assist with training to increase job approval authority and gain experience with prescribed fire
- Provide a collaborative concerted effort on education for producers that want to implement more prescribed fire in a way that assuages concerns of wildfire and highlights benefits to their operations that prescribed fire can bring forward
- Verbal commitments to assist from several partners



Formal Request

- The subcommittee formally and respectfully requests increased collaboration and input on all levels regarding Prescribed Fire (338) to increase the amount of prescribed fire across Texas. Also, to provide and assist with more training to increase job approval authority, and to develop a strategy to address any inconsistencies or inefficiencies between NRCS technical guidance, TDA Certified & Insured Prescribed Burn Managers and TX burn laws. Further, to increase implementation of 338 via EQIP that allows rate adjustments per ecological need as well as CIC/CSP and ecological site descriptions.

Water Resources STAC Sub-Committee

Meeting Notes

March 24, 2022

1. NRCS Zone 1 (Panhandle) Texas recommendation to add Conservation Practice 430 Irrigation Pipeline to the list of practices for Source Water Protection

Kyle presented a recommendation from Zone 1 to consider adding Conservation Practice 430 Irrigation Pipeline to the list of practices for Source Water protection. The sub-committee review the request and decided to recommend adding Conservation Practice 430 Irrigation Pipeline to the list of practices for Source Water Protection. Member have until April 1 to provide additional comments, questions or concerns with this recommendation.

2. The next State Technical Advisory Committee meeting (scheduled for April 5th)

Kyle discussed the upcoming STAC meeting. It appears that several members did not receive the meeting invitation. Kyle will resend the invite out to committee members.

3. Updates on the NWQI and Source Water programs

Kyle gave a brief update on the NWQI and SWPA programs and ongoing outreach efforts to promote the programs. The Subcommittee is supportive of continuing the NWQI program in the current areas (Lake Lavon/Lampasas) for the time being. The Subcommittee will evaluate NRCS feedback on if practices are being funded in May and determine if a new priority area should be identified.

4. EPA funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

Kimberly Horndeski discussed that EPA received funding for water resources through the Infrastructure bill and that funding will be channeled through state agencies.

5. Upcoming events

The Subcommittee will review resources for the Source Water Protection Area recommendations (e.g., a volunteer for GIS support).

The subcommittee will plan for a followup meeting in May to review status of the NWQI program.

Texas AFO/CAFO STAC Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2022

Meeting Information

Tuesday, January 18th at 2 p.m. CST.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82050549312?pwd=TDNEZmlvZU9SWnRGbWxHNXcwU1JSUT09>

Meeting ID: 820 5054 9312

Passcode: 755587

Meeting Details

1. Meeting called to order at 2:02 p.m. by **J.C. Essler, Chair**
2. Attendees:

Name	Organization
Anissa Purswell	Enviro-Ag Engineering
Zong Liu	Texas AgriLife Extension
Dana Porter	Texas AgriLife Extension
Darren Turley	Texas Association of Dairymen
Ben Weinheimer	Texas Cattle Feeders Association
J.C. Essler, Chair	Texas Poultry Federation
Lee Munz	Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board
Catherine Stanley	USDA - NRCS
Lori Ziehr	USDA - NRCS
Randall Rush	USEPA

3. EQIP Funding and NRCS Programs –
 - a. Lori Ziehr reported that Texas NRCS obligated approximately \$906k from the AFO/CAFO Funding pool. Additional funding for AFO/CAFO projects may have been made from county base funds. For FY2022, \$1.0M has been set aside for AFO/CAFO funding; additional funding may be available if this funding level is completely utilized.
 - b. New program will be rolling out this week for climate smart and wildlife initiatives. These will be five year contracts and offer both management and structural practices.
 - c. Question from Dr. Zong Liu regarding education and outreach. Lori referred Dr. Liu to reach out to Rob Ziehr, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships to inquire on outreach and education agreements.
 - d. Lori indicated that some additional funding may be available for conservation efforts pending the outcome of the Build Back Better.
 - e. Lori reported that the infrastructure bill that passed will assist in funding some rehabilitation and repairs of NRCS Watershed Structures (small dams in the upper portion of the watersheds that reduce flash flood risks and help reduce erosion).
4. Animal Mortality Facility and New Technologies

- a. Catherine Stanley indicated that the enhanced mortality payment schedule is in place and there are numerous requests for the dehydration system.
 - b. J.C. asked if anyone had additional new technologies that need to be considered. No comments
 - c. Zong reminded everyone of the International Mortality Conference that will be held this summer.
 - d. Zong indicated that he received an APHIS grant to develop program and materials for all animal agriculture groups.
5. Waste Facility Closures
 - a. Randall Rush, EPA, indicated that their compliance assistance division would like to help share information on the requirements and resources for closure of waste storage facilities for AFOs.
 - b. Suggestion for the development of a coordinated news release from Texas Agri-Life regarding closure of the operations.
 - c. Suggestion for development of one page fact sheets on the closure of the waste storage facilities that is co-authored by EPA, TCEQ, TSSWCB, NRCS, and Industry Groups that includes requirements, anticipated costs, technical and financial assistance.
 - d. Suggestion that this topic be added to the TAMMI 2022 Conference Agenda.
6. TSP Rates
 - a. Catherine Stanley reported that a draft Statement of Work for CPS 313 – Waste Storage Facility was sent for comments in December 2021. Internal comments were received. Revisions are underway and once approved by SCE, she will be requesting information on estimated costs for the work to update the TSP rates.
7. LPELC Webinar – the next live webinar will focus on Cleanout for Lagoons and Anaerobic Digesters. It will be held on January 21, 2022 at 1:30 pm central. Connect from this page starting 15 minutes prior: [Live Webinar Information – Livestock and Poultry Environmental Learning Community \(lpehc.org\)](#)
8. TCEQ – C.W. Schneider indicated that there has been a significant turnover at TCEQ. Currently, they are working in a completely remote setting (COVID-19), but he expects them to return to a hybrid situation in the near future.
9. Texas Animal Manure Management Issues Conference
 - a. Conference facilities are being toured this week.
 - b. Committee meeting will be held next week. Contact Zong Liu for additional information.
10. J.C. Essler graciously agreed to serve as Chair for another year. Committee members are appreciative of the great job that J.C. has done and fully supports him for another term.
11. Recommendations from the subcommittee for the April 2022 State Technical Committee meeting:
 - a. Continue efforts to update TSP Rates for CPS 313 Waste Storage Facilities
 - b. EQIP Funding pool for the AFO/CAFO is appreciated
 - c. TAMMI 2022 conference support by NRCS is appreciated
 - d. NRCS assistance with the development of co-authored publications regarding closures of waste storage facilities would be appreciated
12. High Pathogenic Avian Influenza – J.C. indicated that HPAI has been detected in waterfowl in Canada and the Carolinas. Testing of wild birds provides the means to identify the disease. Please be sure to follow all biosecurity protocols. If access is being restricted, this is likely why.
13. Meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m. by **J.C. Essler**

State Technical Advisory Committee – Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee

Draft Meeting Minutes

2/7/2022

The fish and wildlife subcommittee to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) met via Microsoft teams on September 10, 2021. In total, about 45 people called into the meeting. The meeting agenda is attached here for reference. Notably, we had several NRCS staff call into the meeting, which was a great value to the discussion.

During our meeting we had several updates including:

Jim Giocomo (spokesperson for the Great plains WLFW Working Group) - discussed the Grassland Efficiency Monitoring protocol that is being developed with several partners including the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. He also gave an update on the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) program and provided websites for additional information on Great Plains-wide grassland conservation efforts.

Bill Bartush (spokesperson for Prescribed Fire Working Group) - gave an update discussing the need for increased collaboration and input on all levels regarding Prescribed Fire (338) to increase the amount of prescribed fire across Texas. Also, the need to provide more training to increase job approval authority, and the need to develop a strategy to address any inconsistencies or inefficiencies between NRCS technical guidance, TDA Certified & Insured Prescribed Burn Managers and TX burn laws. Further, to increase implementation of 338 via EQIP that allows rate adjustments per ecological need as well as CIC/CSP and ecological site descriptions.

Melissa Parker (spokesperson for the Riparian Working Group) - put out a call for new members as most of the original ones have moved on. Russel Castro also announced that NRCS is reassembling their internal NRCS Riparian Cadre.

Will Newman (spokesperson for the CRP SAFE Working Group) - gave an update that this group that is developing broader SAFE project to increase enrollment is on hold due to developments with CRP and SAFE, to assess current enrollment & Cropland Reserve Enhancement Program expansion that may interact with SAFE.

Woody Woodrow with the USFWS Coastal Program - gave an update on Eastern black rails that were recently listed and discussed how grazing operations can be compatible with this species.

Lori Ziehr attended our call to discuss Fall requests presented at the STAC this was highly collaborative and informative and allows us to better understand how we can best serve in our advisory role.

We discussed the Quail WLFW project at length. The subcommittee respectfully requests to have input on high priority practices in regard to ranking, we request to collaborate with NRCS on monitoring projects in quail focal areas and we request to understand the connection between comments submitted at the National level for the Quail WLFW project and the state office. We discussed several potential ways to try to quantify success that need further consideration that perhaps can happen in the quail working group.

We went on to discuss the recent freshwater mussel proposed listing. There will be information meetings for the mussels this week on Tuesday and Thursday – for more information you can reach out to Matt Johnson with the USFWS.

We also discussed the LPC proposed listing. Our members, along with the grazing subcommittee discussed the importance of prescribed grazing for this species. Several members discussed the hope that the USFWS will allow prescribed grazing in the 4d rule for this species. Other partners said that they could also assist with grazing plans if the Service did decide to allow that practice in the 4d rule. I encouraged partners to reach out to the species lead – Clay Nichols to provide this feedback.

Other topics included a respectful request to see the Advisory requests prior to the STAC to allow for subcommittee discussion.

We also had a request to learn when working group meetings will be held so that our members can attend in high priority areas for quail for example.

Will Newman presented draft CRP State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement proposals that are under development. We are forming a working group to assist with that effort and some members discussed the importance of early producer engagement to ensure success. Other discussed that a regional focus should be considered as well as ecosystem services. Last on this topic is that at least one focal species must be identified in these proposals to identify outcomes. Will Newman will be the spokesperson for that working group.

On to other working groups:

- The Quail working group is led by Robert Perez. This group may be considering some of the aforementioned requests soon e.g., monitoring and practice ranking.
- The Riparian Working Group looks to increase activity in the fall. Their spokesperson Melissa Parker wanted me to share that TPWD has some exciting news that their watershed conservation initiatives in West and Central Texas are going very well. They had some “cutting edge” developments occur: 1) the first BDA in Texas was installed in West Texas, and more are planned for installation on Alamito Creek over the next couple of months 2) and they are working with other partners to install the first Zuni bowl to stop a headcut on a tributary of the Pedernales River. I am so proud to say that the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program provided some financial assistance for some of these projects and we are grateful for the collaborative partnership with TPWD and the Landowner Incentive Program. Also, the Riparian and Stream Ecosystem partnership between NRCS, Texas AgriLife, Water Resources Institute, State Soil and Water Conservation Board, TPWD, TFS and local partners is continuing statewide riparian

education and restoration workshops. They had to conduct them virtually last year, but are back to doing them in person starting this month.

- The Great Plains WLFW working group has a goal of learning more about that WLFW project. Jim Giocomo is the spokesperson for that group. We are hoping to learn more from them soon.
- The Prescribed Fire working group is looking to also ramp up soon and they look forward to collaborating with other subcommittees on prescribed fire.
- We plan to bring the Texas kangaroo rat working group together soon to see if there is a need for further activity on that species from the subcommittee.

NRCS State Technical Advisory Committee

Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee Meeting Agenda

Type of Meeting: General meeting of the STAC Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee

Meeting Facilitators: Cyndee Watson (FWS) and Russell Castro (NRCS)

Invitees: Official members of the subcommittee plus other interested partners

- I. Roll call and sign-in (Cyndee Watson, 5 minutes)
- II. Welcome (Russell Castro, 5 minutes)
- III. New business (Cyndee Watson)

- a) Freshwater mussel proposed listing (Matt Johnson)
- b) Lesser prairie chicken discussion (Brian Hays and group discussion)
- c) Texas has asked to double amount we currently have allotted under the Monarch WLFW Project to address Bob White Quail (Russell Castro)
- d) Partners for Fish and Wildlife 5-year Strategic Plan (Cyndee Watson)
- e) CRP SAFE Proposals discussion (Will Newman and group discussion)
- f) Collating focal areas from partners (Jim Willis and group discussion)
- g) Discuss FY22 Advisory Requests from the April 2021 STAC

IV. Adjournment (Russell Castro)

State Technical Advisory Committee: Grazing Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

Liaison: NRCS-TX, SRMS Madeline Milner

4/1/22 9:00 a.m.

Attendees:

Jeff Goodwin

Donnie Dippel

Charles Kneuper

Gary Price

Brian Hays

Steven Diebel

William Newman

Cyndee Watson

Phil Ross

1. STAC meets on Tuesday April 5th

2. Adhoc group of grazing and wildlife subcommittee formed to work on prescribed fire:

Led by Bill Bartush

- a. Member may call in to present findings and see if the two committees can present a untied front to the meeting Tuesday, if not she's going to send her notes for the group to review
 - b. Will summarizes outline of nrcs funded fire over the last years and found fewer than 16% of counties had fire funded by nrcs
 - i. Want to start discussion about the need and inconsistency of application across admin areas
 - ii. Want to better understand JAA
 - iii. Need to update state scenarios- could get inline with TDA specs
 - iv. Adjust pay rates to reflect ecoregion specific challenges
 - c. Jeff emphasized keeping recommendations constructive and bringing the collective groups together to provide more **education** on the benefits of the tool that is prescribed fire, include in the recommendation
 - d. Cyndee Watson- summarized the work being put into the language of the recommendations and that more work will need to be done
 - e. Phil- agrees that we need to start off with the 'why' and agrees the educational component is needed
 - f. Jeff final comment- the grazing land subcommittee needs to recommend that they support the outcomes of the adhoc committees' recommendations as well as that education needs to be a primary goal
- 3. North TX grazing land specialist has not yet been filled or advertised**
- a. Charles confirmed it hasn't been advertised and the Amarillo position was advertised but was not filled, he's not sure why, so in total there is two grazing land specialists positions open
- 4. Brian opens for all other topics at 9:19 am**

- a. Stephen: would like to see the empty specialists' positions prioritized by the powers that be because the producers need the technical support
- b. Jeff asked Charles how the committee can support in wildfire relief
 - i. Madi said they must send the demand up through their FO's and admin areas and they make us aware where the need is, and if they need additional assistance from the SO.
 - ii. There are some issues with NRCS employees not understanding their role in prescribed fire, due to lots of new hires and our inability to train them as we usually would
 - iii. Jeff- should a recommendation be to devote funds to fire education/training for employees?
 - iv. William brought up there are two new programs announced for disaster relief- subcommittee should understand the programs so they can communicate them to producers
- c. Charles asked who will provide the update: Brian will
- 5. Recap recommendations:
 - a. Support adhoc committee for prescribed fire
 - b. Prioritize filling two grazing positions
 - c. Funding for training for nracs employees on prescribed fire and wildfires
- 6. Last question to NRCS reps: any word on nracs or USDA getting involved with carbon markets?
 - a. Not that we know of aside from some educational materials and how it relates to 'carbon smart agriculture'
 - b. Will- USDA is evaluating if there is a necessary role for them to stabilize/standardize carbon markets and conservation credits which encompasses more ecosystem services, so discussions are happening but nothing solid. Will likely be affected by midterms elections, politics, etc.
 - c. Existing carbon capture is not a part of the current carbon market, only new carbon capture (additionality). General discussion if the federal government can fill in that gap for producers already doing the level of management who are being left out of the current carbon market boom.
 - d. Gary- important to find a way to reward/incentivize the past/existing good management
- 7. Close out, Brian will draft notes and recommendations to send to the committee for final review before the STAC meeting. Brian will present at the meeting Tuesday.