



# State Technical Committee Meeting January 18, 2023

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|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9:00-9:10   | Welcome, <i>Juan Hernandez, State Conservationist</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:10-9:20   | Hurricane Ian Updates                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 9:20-9:30   | Financial Assistance Program Updates, <i>Amber Till, ASTC-Programs</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 9:30-9:45   | Ecological Sciences, <i>Nathan Fikkert, State Resource Conservationist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T&amp;E Species Updates, Wildlife Strategy Plan Execution</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 9:45-10:05  | Partnership Updates, <i>Hilary Barnhart, ASTC-Partnerships &amp; Initiatives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conservation Innovation Grants, Regional Conservation Partnership Program</li> <li>Local Working Group, <i>Kaylee Pate, AFCD</i></li> <li>Association of Florida Conservation District Updates, <i>Charlene Meeks</i></li> <li>Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District, <i>Susie Bishop</i></li> </ul> |
| 10:05-10:15 | Break                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|             | State Technical Committee Input & Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 10:15-10:30 | Conservation Easements, <i>Crenel Francis, Acting ASTC-Easements</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquisitions &amp; Stewardship every other year</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 10:30-11:50 | General Discussion: Reports, Comments, Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watering Facility (614) Updates, <i>Jason Strenth, State Engineer</i></li> <li>Wetland Determinations- Off Site Methods, <i>Nathan Fikkert</i></li> <li>Review of State Technical Committee Memberships</li> <li>Discussion on Aquaculture &amp; Forestry Subcommittees</li> </ul>                                                            |



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# Hurricane Ian Updates

**Hurricane Ian EQIP Assistance Applications: 472**

**Site Visits: 428**

**Hurricane Ian EWP Assistance (23 Total Requests with multiple sites)**

**•Estimated Cost: \$27,044,971**

- NRCS has received requests for EWP assistance from 24 sponsors in 16 counties
- So far damage survey reports (DSR's) have been submitted for 4 sponsors on 41 sites for an estimated \$28.5 million
- We have 22 draft DSR's on 42 sites for 2 sponsors for an estimated \$41.2 million
- We have determined 12 other sites for 6 sponsors as tentatively eligible, but no cost estimates yet
- Last day to submit a request for EWP assistance is January 27, 2023
- General EWP funding was provided in Omnibus Bill, but funding and timing of funding for Hurricane Ian is not yet determined



## Florida NRCS

Spring STAC Meeting - January 18, 2023

Amber Till, Assistant State Conservationist for Financial Assistance Programs

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# Financial Assistance Programs

| Program                                      | Initial Allocations |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| CSP Renewals                                 | \$895,595 (final)   |
| CSP Grasslands Conservation Initiative (GCI) | \$23,265 (final)    |
| CSP Classic                                  | \$8,596,905         |
| CSP Organic                                  | \$200,000           |
| CSP Long Leaf Pine Initiative                | \$350,000           |
| <b>Total CSP Initial Allocation</b>          | <b>\$10,523,265</b> |
| EQIP Disaster                                | \$12,000,000        |
| EQIP Classic                                 | \$15,664,000        |
| EQIP Initiatives                             | \$2,823,800         |
| EQIP CIG                                     | \$900,000           |
| <b>Total EQIP Initial Allocation</b>         | <b>\$31,387,800</b> |
| <b>Total FA Programs Initial Allocation</b>  | <b>\$41,911,065</b> |

# EQIP Disaster

- **Initial Allocation – \$12 million**
- **652 requests for assistance**
- **475 field visits**
- **435 active applications**
- **ACT Now Selection Process**
  - Rank and preapprove applications based on a threshold ranking score rather than a batching date
  - Applications are processed in the order they are received

# EQIP Classic

- **Initial Allocation - \$15.6 Million**
- **80% of EQIP Classic targeted to local-level**
  - Field office funding to address locally-led priorities
  - Area-wide funding for livestock, wildlife, water conservation
- **20% of EQIP Classic targeted to state-level priorities**
  - Historically Underserved, Organic, On-Farm Energy, Urban, Tribal, Conservation Planning Activities

# EQIP Initiatives

- **Initial Allocation - \$2.8 Million**
- **Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Initiative**
  - \$60,000 (final year) – Cogongrass
- **Long Leaf Pine Initiative**
  - \$1,700,800
- **Working Lands for Wildlife – Gopher Tortoise**
  - \$1,063,000

## FY 2023 Application-Obligation Milestones and Timelines (revised 12/2/2022)

| Program        | Pools                         | Application Sign-up     | Eligibility Letter              | Required Records* | Assess Cost Estimate Rank | Preapproval                                                                | Contract Approval | Contract Obligation | Deferrals | ProTracts Sign-Up    | Implementation Timelines                          |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| CSP Renewals   | All CSP Renewals              | 15-Apr-22               | 18-Oct-22                       | 16-Nov-22         |                           | 18-Nov-22                                                                  | 22-Dec-22         |                     | TBD       | CSP Renewal signup 1 | 5 years                                           |
| CSP GCI        | CSP GCI                       | 14-Oct-22               | 18-Oct-22                       | 16-Nov-22         |                           | 18-Nov-22                                                                  | 22-Dec-22         |                     | TBD       | CSP GCI signup 1     |                                                   |
| CSP Classic    | All CSP Classic               | 24-Feb-23               | 10-Apr-23                       | 19-May-23         |                           | 26-May-23                                                                  | 7-Jul-23          | 21-Jul-23           | TBD       | CSP Classic signup 1 |                                                   |
| EQIP Classic   | All Pools (Area 1-2)          | 7-Oct-22                | 15-Dec-22                       | 15-Jan-23         | 13-Jan-23                 | 21-Apr-23                                                                  | 28-Jul-23         | 11-Aug-23           | TBD       | EQIP signup 1        | Typical, 2 to 5 years, up to 10 years             |
|                | All Pools (Area 3-4)          |                         | 24-Feb-23                       | 24-Mar-23         | 14-Apr-23                 |                                                                            |                   |                     |           | EQIP signup TBD      |                                                   |
|                |                               | Climate Smart, EQIP CIC | TBD                             |                   |                           |                                                                            |                   |                     |           |                      |                                                   |
| EQIP Emergency | Hurricane Ian Disaster Relief | 15-Nov-22               | varies based on phone call date | 6-Jan-23          | 3-Feb-23                  | 1. Threshold Score Funding* (Daily/Weekly)<br>2. Rank Order Funding* (TBD) | 10-Mar-23         | 24-Mar-23           | TBD       | EQIP signup 2        | ASAP, no later than 1 year of contract obligation |
| RCPP-LMR       | Tall Timbers                  | 7-Oct-22                | 15-Dec-22                       | 15-Jan-23         | 13-Jan-23                 | 20-Jan-23                                                                  | 12-May-23         | 26-May-23           | TBD       | N/A                  | Typical, 2 to 5 years, up to 10 years             |

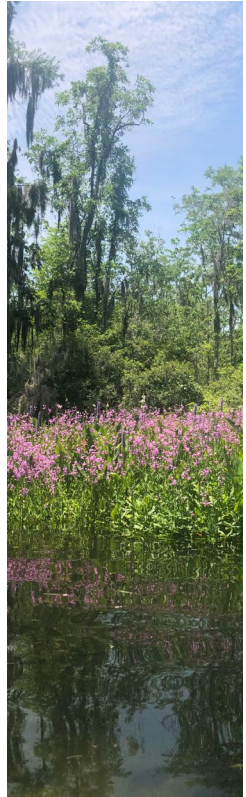
**\*Required Records** - This date establishes the deadline for the applicant to provide required records and forms needed for FSA to establish Farm Records and make HELC/WC, AGI, and 902 determinations.

**\*Threshold Score Funding** - For EQIP Emergency, applications will be batched by their sign-up date and application ranking scores that meet or exceed 90 will automatically preapproved. Applications that meet or exceed the threshold ranking score will be preapproved until EQIP Emergency funds are exhausted.

**\*Rank Order Funding** - For EQIP Emergency, applications that do not meet or exceed the threshold ranking score can be considered for rank order funding if funds remain

# Ecological Sciences, *Nathan Fikkert*, *State Resource Conservationist*

- **Threatened and Endangered Species Updates**
- **Wildlife Strategy Execution Plan**
- **Wetland Determinations**
  - Offsite Methods



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# Partnership Updates

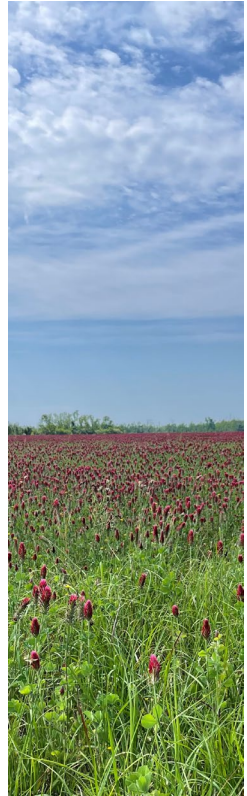
**Hilary Barnhart, ASTC-Partnerships & Initiatives**

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# Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- **Inflation Reduction Act plans to have \$4.95 billion to RCPP between FY23-FY26.**
- **FL is currently working with potential applicants.**
- **Expected Notice of Funding Opportunity to be announced Spring 2023.**



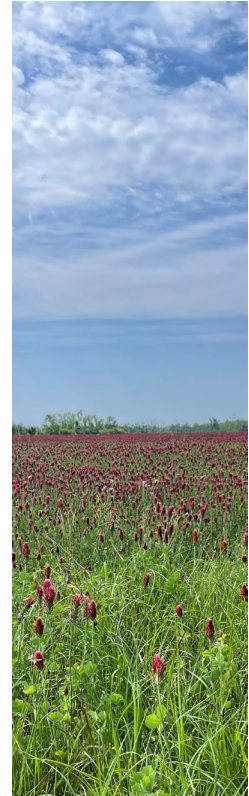
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# Conservation Innovation Grants

- **FY2022 State Awardees**

- ***Blackbeard's Ranch*** → Invisible fencing for rotational grazing on ranch. This will benefit wildlife movement and reduce maintenance of fences.
- ***IMG Citrus, Inc.*** → Planting perennial peanut as a cover crop between citrus rows to combat citrus greening and improve soil microbial content and nutrient uptake.
- ***Archbold Expeditions, Inc.*** → This pilot project seeks to develop innovative UAV technology to better identify and quantify brush and improve data collection and management in Florida's grazing lands. They will evaluate the abilities of various UAV sensor technologies to identify brush, develop a standardized methodology for data collection with UAVs and image processing, and demonstrate feasibility.
- ***Florida State University*** → The *overarching goal* of this project is to understand the export of microplastics to urban farms from the surrounding environments following a range of weather patterns. FSU plans to investigate the relationships between microplastics and the driving pollution factors and explore the effectiveness of rain gardens.



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# Local Work Groups FY2024

- Completed a total of 44 Local Work Group Meetings covering all 67 counties in Florida.
- Received feedback from all counties except Bradford and Union.
- Top 5 Resource Concerns statewide:
  1. Cropland
  2. Grazing
  3. Water Quality
  4. Invasive Plants
  5. Forestry

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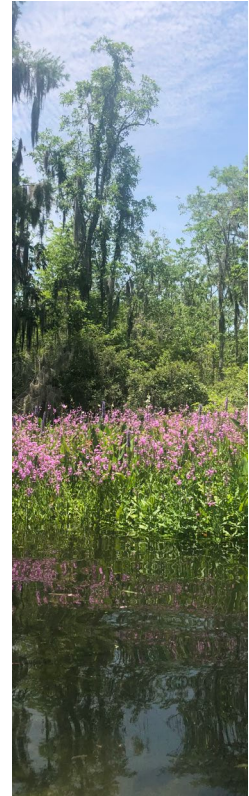
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# Conservation Easement Updates

Crenel Francis, Acting ASTC- Easements

# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **What is the Food Security Act and how it impacts participant eligibility and wetland conservation?**
  - Originally signed Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1985
  - Set parameters for conservation of wetlands and highly erodible land for a USDA participant to maintain eligibility for certain USDA programs.
  - Farm Service Agency (FSA) responsible to administrative functions and NRCS is responsible for the technical determinations

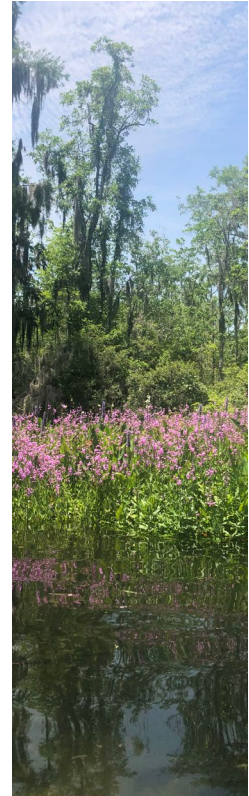


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- Typically, wetland determination request is initiated by a Farm Bill program participant when they are proposing to complete activities that could impact wetlands.
- FSA fills out a 1026 from and submits to NRCS for a technical determination
- NRCS completes determination and returns a form that describes the findings and associated maps.

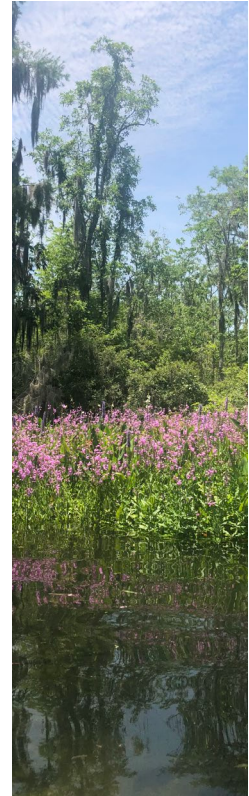


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Food Security Act wetland determinations are based on:**
  - Hydric Soils
  - Wetland hydrology
  - Predominance of Hydrophytic vegetation
- **Once these factors are confirmed NRCS applies Food Security Act labels. And returns completed determination to FSA and the participant**

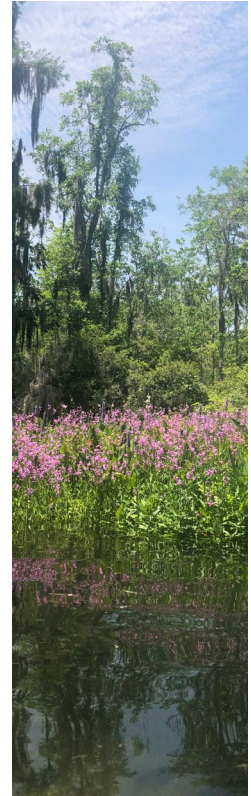


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Wetland determinations can be completed off-site or on-site.**
- **Off-site methods provide NRCS an expedited and streamline method to return wetland determination findings in a timely manner.**
- **In order for off-site methods to be used the policy and procedures for those methods must be reviewed and approved in public/open format.**

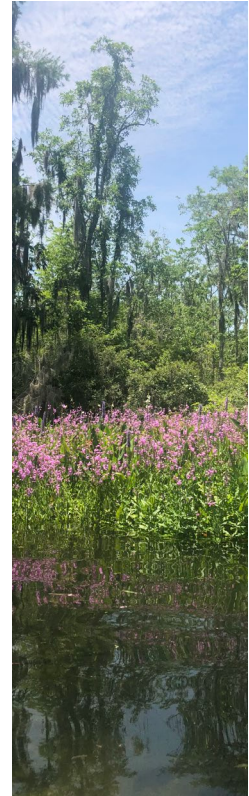


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Off-site methods still require determining the existence of the three wetland factors previously listed.**
- **Off-site methods utilize imagery and other technology to establish the existence of those factors.**
- **If all three can be confirmed or denied, then NRCS can use this information for completing determinations.**

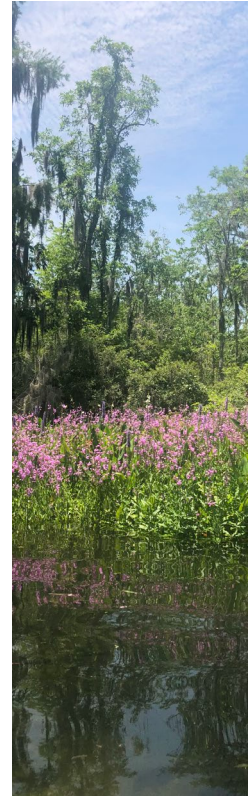


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Resources used to confirm wetland factors**
  - NRCS Soil Survey
  - National Wetland Inventory maps
  - Contour maps (1- or 2-foot contours)
  - USGS Quad maps
  - Aerial photos and aerial photo interpretation techniques
  - LiDAR technology to show potential surface water.
- **By overlapping these resources, we can determine if all 3 of the wetland factors exist or not.**

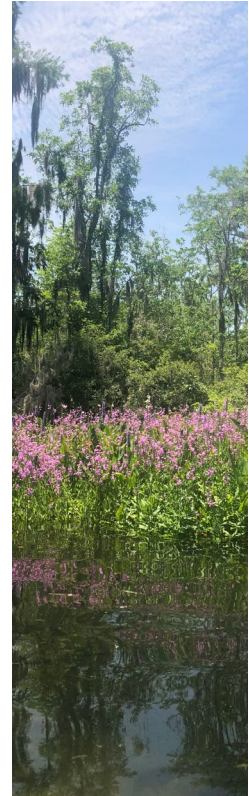


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Off-site methods should:**
  - Expedite the wetland determination process.
  - Allow NRCS to efficiently work through workload.
  - Increase efficiency by reducing travel time and resources required for on-site determinations.
  - Allow NRCS to stop using off-site methods and switch to on-site methods if the determination cannot be made with confidence.

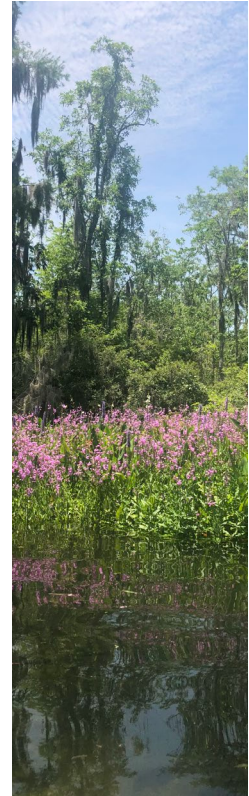


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Off-site methods should not:**
  - Allow NRCS to make determinations of converted wetlands or other potentially adverse decisions.
  - Be used to circumvent the requirement of confirming the absence or existence of all three wetland factors.
  - Be used to complete final determinations in the case of appeals or reconsiderations.

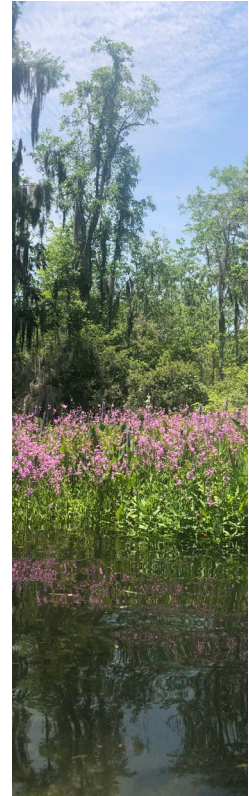


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# Food Security Act Wetland Determinations

- **Role of State Technical Committee:**
  - NRCS FL is asking this committee to review the proposed off-site wetland determination methods and provide comment.

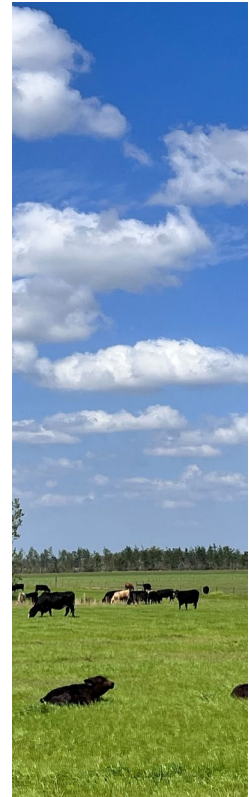


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# Capacity of Watering Facility Conservation Practice Standard, Code 614

**Jason Strenth**  
**State Conservation Engineer**



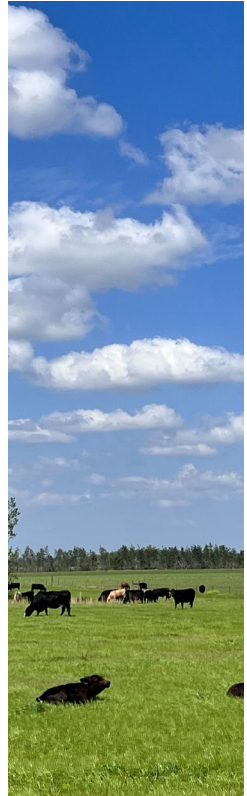
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# Watering Facility Capacity (or Storage)

**Current conservation practice standard 614 (CPS) states:**

- **Size the storage capacity for each pasture or series of adjacent pastures based on herd management and how often the watering system is checked, consistent with the operation and maintenance plan.**



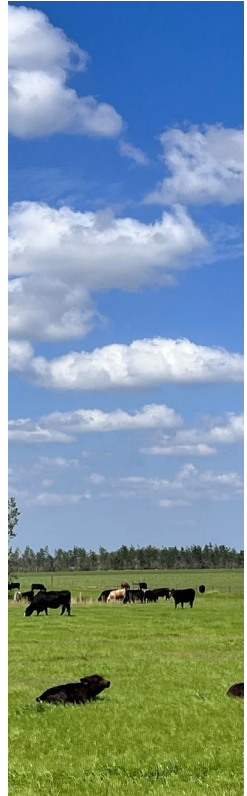
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## CPS 614 (cont'd)

**A minimum one (1) day storage capacity for each pasture is required unless one of the three below is met:**

- **A dependable alternative water source (such as a pond, lake, stream, etc.) is available in each planned pasture.**
- **Water is supplied by an electric powered pump with a dependable backup power source.**
- **Livestock and the watering system are checked daily.**

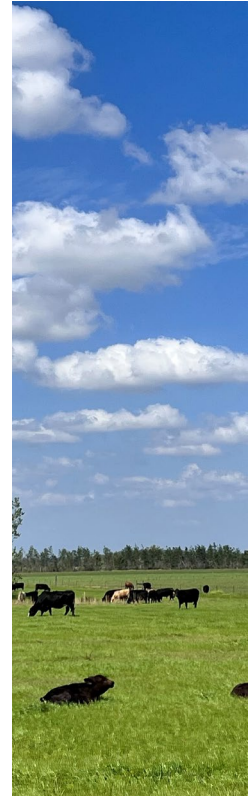


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## CPS 614 (cont'd)

- **However, in all situations, the entire watering system will have at least three (3) days of storage across all pastures serving each herd .**
- **This storage can include existing watering facilities, but would not include the storage in existing surface waters.**



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## CPS 614 (cont'd)

**The idea behind this requirement is animal welfare. With Florida having a history with hurricanes and more importantly lightning, it was decided many years ago to ensure livestock had adequate water in the event of pump or watering system failure.**

**There is no published data supporting a minimum amount of storage (# of days) needed for livestock.**



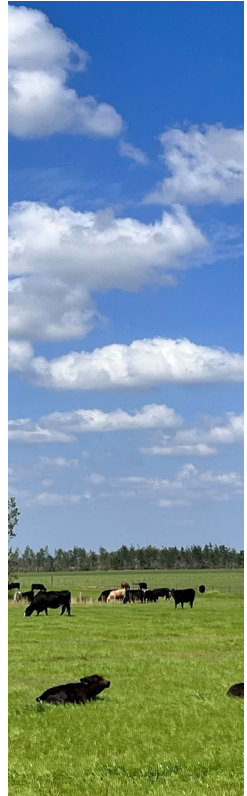
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## CPS 614 (cont'd)

**Another consideration is the watering facility (or trough) perimeter.**

- The watering facility shall accommodate 5% of the herd drinking at one time. For large animals, allow 20 inches of perimeter per animal for circular tanks and 30 inches per animal for straight side tanks. For small animals, allow 12 inches of perimeter per animal for circular tanks and 18 inches per animal for straight side tanks.**



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## CPS 614 (cont'd)

**For cases where the travel distance to the water source is greater than one-half mile, design the watering facility to accommodate 10% of the herd at one time.**



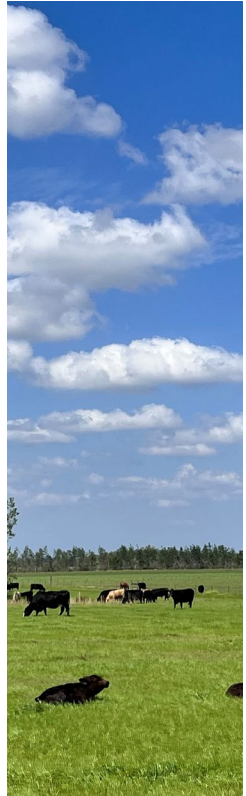
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# CPS 614 (cont'd)

## Questions:

- Are the previously mentioned requirements adequate for Florida livestock?
- Are the 1 day storage requirement for each pasture or 3 days for the entire herd excessive?
- If a change is needed, what are adequate requirements?



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# Partner Updates



# AFCD Updates

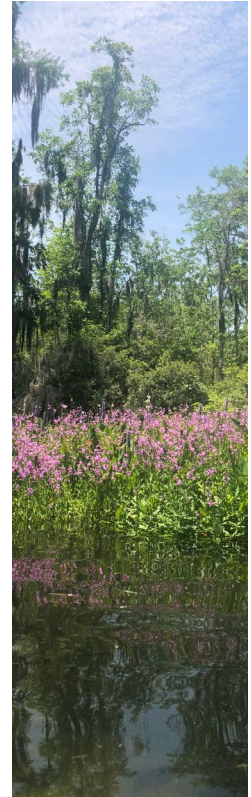


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# Subcommittees

- **Aquaculture**
- **Forestry**
  - Discussion, Necessary?
  - Establish a Chairperson



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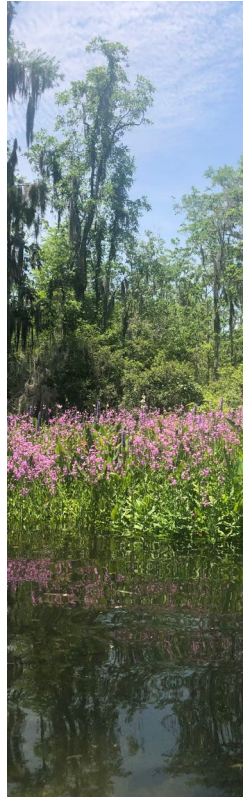
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Thank you!

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