

Montana State Technical Committee Minutes

November 6th, 2024, 9:00 am to 11:30 am Helena, MT



Attendance:

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Tom Watson (State Conservationist), Noel Waterman (Executive Assistant), Kyle Tackett (Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships), Ernie Haglund and Emily Metier (Financial Assistance Programs), Andrew Williamson (Cultural Resources Specialist), Nathan Parry (State Soil Scientist), Mindy Gauthier (Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Missoula), Mark Henning (Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations – Miles City) Shawna Taylor (Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Easements), Rob Molacek (State Conservation Engineer), Keela Deaton (State Soil Health Specialist), Marni Thompson (Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations – Great Falls)

NRCS Soils: Eva Muller, Ben Moore

Farm Service Agency (FSA): Maureen Wicks (State Executive Director), Heather Fryer, Les Rispens, Tami Hahn

Prairie Pothole Joint Venture: Josh Vest

Montana Association of Land Trusts: Brian Ohs

Montana Department of Environmental Quality: Mark Ockey

Montana Association of Conservation Districts: Rebecca Boslough King

Montana Salinity Control Association: Tenlee Atchison, Ashley Atchison, Tera Ryan

Montana Stock Growers Association: Ellie Brighton

Montana Grazing Lands Conservation/Producer: Jim Willis

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks: Heather Harris

Ducks Unlimited: Adam McDaniel

IX Ranch: Rich Roth

Montana Organic Association: Michael Deakin

Lewis and Clark Conservation District: Joe Kremer-Herman

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Jake Martin, Ann Schmidt

Northern Plains Resource Council: Augusta Sauer

Opening Remarks

Tom Watson, NRCS State Conservationist

Tom welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation.

Maureen Wicks, FSA State Executive Director

Maureen introduced herself and thanked attendees for showing up and looks forward to interacting with the group.

Emily Metier (Environmental Quality Incentives Program Specialist) and Ernie Haglund (Conservation Stewardship Program Specialist)

Emily and Ernie provided a recap of the FY24 EQIP and CSP programs, including dollars obligated, acres, contracts and top practices and enhancements. Tom Watson discussed payment limitations and contract limitations as it relates to the status of the Farm Bill and impact to programs.

- FY 2024 EQIP Obligations totaled \$57,459,543
- FY 2024 CSP Obligations totaled \$32,468,604
- FY 2024 Montana Focused Conservation: 113 active Targeted Implementation Plans (TIPs)

Les Rispens with FSA gave a short explanation to the group about the status of Farm Bill as it relates to FSA programs.

Andrew Williamson (NRCS Cultural Resources Specialist)

Andrew gave a presentation on Section 106 compliance for NRCS Montana. The presentation discussed the role of NRCS in historic preservation, the NRCS process, and a look ahead to the new Programmatic Agreement planned for FY 2025.

Keela Deaton (NRCS Soil Health Specialist)

Keela is working on updating the cover crop practice, code 340. She explained the changes and asked for input.

Rob Molacek, NRCS State Conservation Engineer

Rob did not give a formal presentation, but rather informed the group that he and his staff will be updating several engineering practices this upcoming year and that he will work with Mark Ockey and the Water Subcommittee for initial review and comments.

Shawna Taylor, Acting NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Easements

Shawna gave a brief overview of the easement accomplishments from FY 2024 and showed the FY 2025 GARC map.

**Next meetings: March 18th, Missoula
July 15th, Great Falls**

Lunch was provided by the Montana Association of Conservation Districts

Meeting handouts and presentations are available by emailing Kyle Tackett (kyle.tackett@usda.gov)