

Tennessee State Technical Committee Meeting

Tennessee State University (TSU) Farm Pavilion

1513 Ed Temple Blvd Nashville, TN 37208

Tuesday, February 10, 2026, 9:00 AM–12:30 PM (CT)

NRCS and Guest/Partners:

USDA–NRCS Tennessee

- Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist (Chair)
- Trevor Hunt, Assistant State Conservationist, Partnerships (Facilitator)
- Jordan Edwards, Public Affairs Specialist
- Conor Fay, Public Affairs Specialist
- Harold Pettigrew, State Outreach Coordinator
- Fred Walker, State Outreach Coordinator
- Jamie Quarfeld, State Urban Conservationist
- Linda Ortiz, State Resource Conservationist
- Leslie Honicker, State Agronomist
- Robin Mayberry, State Biologist
- Garrett McFall, State Forester
- Shelby Pearson, Civil/Agricultural Engineer
- Garrett Morris, Assistant State Conservationist, Programs
- Vanessa Merriweather, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Manager
- Devin Ross, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Manager
- Chris Wolkonowski, Assistant State Conservationist, Field Operations, Area 2
- Arthur Hawkins, Assistant State Conservationist, Field Operations, Area 3
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Partner Agencies/Organizations

- Blaine Hyle, State Director, United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- Brittney Viers-Scott, Tennessee State Coordinator, Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever
- Jillian Tramel, Quail Forever Grazing Coordinator, Quail Forever
- Levi Morgan, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Sam Marshall, Program Administrator, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Land & Water Stewardship
- Fulya Baysal-Gurel, Associate Dean for Research, Tennessee State University
- Bharat Pokharel, Chair of Environmental Science, Tennessee State University
- Dharma Pitchay, Professor, Tennessee State University

- Arvazena (Zena) Clardy, Associate Professor, Tennessee State University
- Bill Sutton, Assistant Professor, Wildlife Biology, Tennessee State University
- Felix Ogunmokun, Assistant Professor, Tennessee State University
- Huseyin Tecimen, Assistant Professor, Tennessee State University
- Sarah Neumann, Assistant Professor, Forest Ecology, Tennessee State University
- Steven Kennedy, Professor of Fruit Crops, Tennessee State University
- Yujuan Chen, Associate Professor, Urban & Community Forestry, Tennessee State University
- Katrina Seaman, Research Associate, Tennessee State University
- Forbes Walker Ph.D., Extension Soil Specialist & Professor, University of Tennessee
- Britton Dotson, Geologist, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation
- Karina Bynum, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Water Resources, Nutrient Reduction Task Force
- Mekayle Houghton, Executive Director, Cumberland River Compact
- Emily Bidgood, Partnerships Director, Appalachian Resource Conservation & Development Council
- Chris Roberts, Director of Conservation, Tennessee Wildlife Federation
- Chase Hulan, Forest Conservation Specialist, Tennessee Wildlife Federation
- Michael McCord, Feral Swine Coordinator, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Brad Miller, Private Land Program Manager, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
- Jay Hayek, Assistant State Forester, Tennessee Department of Forestry
- Greg Pate, Conservation Impact Consultant, Tennessee Forestry Association
- Mary Pate, Conservation Impact Consultant, Tennessee Forestry Association
- Emily Stefanick, Conservation Projects Manager, Panther Creek Forestry / Tennessee Forestry Association
- Tina Hudges, Georgia Korean-American Farmers Association, Inc.
- Seung "James" Lee, Executive Director, Georgia Korean-American Farmers Association, Inc.
- Reggie Marshall, Producer
- Mary Schmidt, Urban Orchard Manager, The Works Inc.

Agenda Overview (as delivered)

1. Opening remarks (Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist, Trevor Hunt, Assistant State Conservationist, Partnerships)
2. Regenerative Agriculture Pilot Program overview (Ecological Sciences: Linda Ortiz, Leslie Honicker)
3. Program delivery and funding updates: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)/Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)/ Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) (Garrett Morris, Vanessa Merriweather, Devin Ross)
4. Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Land & Water Stewardship Updates (Sam Marshall)
5. Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) storm recovery status (Shelby Pearson)
6. Feral Swine Eradication & Control (APHIS Wildlife Services) pilot coordination (Blaine Hyle)
7. Partner acknowledgments and agency/partner updates (Trevor Hunt)
8. Scheduling and logistics (remaining FY26 State Technical Committee dates; calendar invites)

Key Discussions & Summaries

1) Welcome – Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist (Chair)

- Good morning. Thank you all for being here today. It is good to see each of you, and I know it has been a while since our last in-person meeting.
- Many thanks to NRCS staff for preparing in getting items ready for today's meeting.
- Welcome to our new State Technical Committee Members.

Tennessee State Technical Committee

- State Technical Committees (STC) have been and continue to be a vital part of Farm Bill implementation. NRCS depends on their knowledge and expertise to implement Farm Bill programs that are locally led.

Operations-Staffing

- As of January 31, NRCS has **220 active employees** (excluding interns). We are converting some summer interns to permanent positions.

NRCS Priorities

- NRCS is partnering with local governments and land trusts to ensure farmland is preserved for future generations. With the nation losing 5,000 acres of farmland per day, it is essential that we work directly with landowners to provide the programs and tools they consider necessary to keep their land in productive use.
- As an agency, NRCS will continue advocating for policies that maintain agricultural land in production while upholding strong resource management and conservation practices.
- We are continually working to incorporate and promote regenerative practices that strengthen soil health and yield, while also integrating precision agriculture and digital farming tools that enhance productivity and profitability.
- Whole-farm planning remains the centerpiece of our approach, ensuring that all resource concerns—soil, water, and overall natural vitality—are addressed together rather than in isolation.
- We are integrating core software systems into a unified, cloud-based platform to improve in-field technical service and streamline digital processes.
- Implementing a “One Farmer, One File” system will reduce unnecessary physical paperwork, allowing NRCS employees to meet producers in the field and create a smoother, more efficient path for enrolling in conservation practices.
- New technology practices will improve data access and provide a more streamlined process for producers to receive the information and technical assistance they need. In many cases, this is as simple as transitioning from paper-heavy workflows to a more digitized process. Simultaneously, NRCS is supporting precision agriculture and digital farming tools to enhance productivity and profit.

- Improved initiatives will position NRCS employees closer to the people they serve, enabling more on-site consultations. To effectively support producers, we must meet farmers where they are—not solely in the office.
- Moving forward, we are seeking to accept third-party certified conservation plans that meet or exceed NRCS standards and help farmers achieve their goals while receiving regulatory and marketplace credit.
- We want to place recognition back on farmers as the true champions of conservation and highlight their achievements through scientific data and measurable results.

Farm Bill Programs

- **Regenerative Agriculture Pilot Program**
 - Regenerative Agriculture is a conservation management approach that emphasizes natural resources through improved soil health, water management, and natural vitality for the productivity and prosperity of American agriculture and communities.
 - USDA is committing \$700 million in EQIP and CSP, plus technical assistance, to launch a national, farmer-first regenerative agriculture pilot.
 - The pilot will leverage existing NRCS programs in EQIP and CSP, delivering regenerative agriculture through programs our farmers know and trust. **States will set aside 25% of their EQIP and CSP financial assistance funding.**
 - This pilot replaces fragmented, practice-by-practice conservation with one unified process that evaluates the whole farm and every resource concern.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- Construction has been completed on 164 Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) sites, with 7 sites still under construction out of the 171 impacted by Hurricane Helene.

2) Regenerative Agriculture Pilot Overview - Linda Ortiz, State Resource Conservationist, Leslie Honicker, State Agronomist (Ecological Sciences)

- Short video message referenced from NRCS Chief; program framed around soil health, water management, and whole-farm planning; outcome-based, producer-led.
www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/regenerative-pilot-program
- Requirements highlighted: evaluate all resource concerns; focus on soil health & water quality; five-year conservation plan; at least **one of 15 priority practices**; soil health testing via Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA) 216 at start/end of contract.
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/FY26-CEMA-216-Soil-Health-Test-01-26.pdf>
- Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 331 (Contour Orchard/Perennial Crops) and CPS 330 (Contour Farming) discussed; rationale for Tennessee adoption given sloping/erodible lands across much of the state. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/contour-orchard-and-other-perennial-crops-ac-331-conservation>

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/contour-farming-ac-330-conservation-practice-standard>

- Site-specific planning and planning criteria explained; contouring benefits (erosion reduction, infiltration, water quality, equipment operability), especially within five-year cycle.
- Integration with supporting practices (e.g., cover crops, buffer strips, irrigation water management) encouraged to achieve higher conservation outcomes.
- Request for practitioner feedback on CPS 331 via email from Trevor Hunt, Assistant State Conservationist Partnerships trevor.hunt@usda.gov -or- linda.ortiz@usda.gov
 - Common-sense language and clarity sought in conservation practice standards.

3) Programs Update — EQIP, RCPP, CSP

EQIP (Vanessa Merriweather, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Manager):

- FY25 began at **\$26.9 million**; additional **\$13.8 million** (including early \$6 million + mid-year \$7.8 million for soil health) brought total EQIP allocation to **~\$35.9 million**.
- FY26 opening allocation noted at **~\$46 million**; plan to prioritize ~40% of EQIP allocation toward county-specific Local Workgroup resource concerns.

RCPP (Devin Ross, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Manager):

- NFO (notice of funding opportunity) delayed; prior ceiling **\$25 million** subject to change due to Inflation Reduction Act rescission; encouragement for partner proposals remains.
- Active projects: Tennessee Aquarium “Largest Rivers” (**\$10 million**; ~year 3 sign-ups) and Mid-South (AR/MS/TN lead in TN; Project awarded **\$21 million**; FY26; **\$2.6 million** budgeted).

CSP (Garrett Morris, Assistant State Conservationist, Programs):

- Program delivery changes: CSP renewals discontinued; participants reapply through regular CSP classes; existing activity payments (EAP) consolidated; minimum payments now calculated at \$4,000 (raising earlier \$1,500 obligations via modifications).
- CSP funding levels have increased sharply; FY2025 obligations cited at **~\$26.7 million** (significant jump from prior year).

4) Tennessee Department of Agriculture Updates (Sam Marshall, Program Administrator, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Land & Water Stewardship):

- Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund (ARCF):
 - The fall funding cycle concluded with **\$11.7 million** received for FY25.
 - Amendments and funding memos are going out now – about halfway done.
 - **\$5,394,000** allocated (both District and non-District grants)
 - Agricultural best management practices (AgBMPs) comprised the largest allocation category at just over **\$4.5 million**.
 - The next application period is scheduled for **April 1–15**.

- Gulf Hypoxia Cover Crop Project (GHP):
 - From 2023-2025, **\$687,148** in incentives have been paid to **153 landowners**. TDA will be receiving an additional **\$943,000** over the next three years for additional cover crop practices.
 - To date, approximately **18,200 acres** have been planted. Estimated load reductions; **69,544 lbs** of nitrogen, **31,585 lbs** of phosphorus, and **15,779 tons** of sediment.
- Tennessee Riparian Incentive Program (TRIP):
 - Originally funded by Tennessee Valley Authority and now expanded statewide with support from Tennessee Department of Environmental and Conservation.
 - The program pays a one-time **\$3,000/acre** incentive payment to the landowner with a 5-acre cap per participant.
- Tennessee Nutrient Reduction Task Force:
 - Hosted the first inaugural **Tennessee Nutrient Summit** and released its annual report.
 - **16 new organizations** added to strengthen collaborative nutrient reduction strategies and watershed planning across the state.
 - **97 participants** from a wide variety of organizations.
- Tennessee Department of Agriculture Activities and Accomplishments:
 - Emphasis placed on partnerships with local soil and water conservation districts and NRCS.
 - Highlighted recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) success stories involving delisted streams.
 - Commitment to publishing four success stories annually to showcase program impact.

5) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Storm Portfolio (Shelby Pearson, Civil/Agricultural Engineer):

- Program purpose: assist local governments after storm-caused watershed impairments (e.g., bank failures, debris-caused flooding) threatening infrastructure; sponsors must request within 60 days of event.
- Multiple storms active (May–Apr FY24/25 portfolios). For Hurricane Helene (Sept 2024), due to magnitude, federal coverage at 100% of eligible costs; **~169 sites, 8 remaining; ~\$14 million** spent to date with total projected near **\$20 million**.
- Visual examples described (e.g., roadway washouts; bank stabilization; historic EWP structures from 1998 still performing). Federal Emergency Management Agency coordination for infrastructure replacement; EWP stabilizes streambanks—does **not** rebuild infrastructure.
- Carcass disposal policy and cross-agency logistics noted; inspections supported statewide; appreciation expressed for partner mobilization across areas during recovery.

6) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services — Feral Swine Eradication & Control (Blaine Hyle, State Director, United States Department of Agriculture, APHIS):

- Background: Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA) eliminated statewide hunting to curb illegal relocations; federal program (since ~2014) aims to **eliminate** swine in low-population

states and **manage** damage where eradication isn't currently feasible. Tennessee is a "Level 3" state (management while working toward eradication).

- Distribution reduced to historic pockets (Plateau, Mississippi River corridor, Land Between the Lakes); current pilot with NRCS focuses on four counties, with goal to shift boundary and eliminate pigs there over five years.
- Tactics: corral traps (including Pig Brig), winter aerial removal (FLIR-equipped helicopter); landowner participation via permission forms; disease risks preclude meat donation from aerial operations.
- Funding: Wildlife Services to receive ~\$2.4 million over ~5 years for field operations; NRCS to route roughly \$3 million in grants for damage repair/outreach/education; aviation funded separately and **not** charged to pilot cap.

7) Partner Updates (Trevor Hunt, Assistant State Conservationist, Partnerships (Facilitator):

1. Emily Bidgood, Partnerships Director, Appalachian Resource Conservation & Development Council:

- Works closely with NRCS district conservationists, soil conservation districts, and Tennessee State University (TSU) to run a beginning farmer training program in a nine-county area in Northeast Tennessee. This program aims to support new farmers by providing them with the necessary training and resources to succeed.
- Involved in recovery efforts following Hurricane Helene, focusing on soil reclamation and stream bank stabilization across eight counties that were affected by the flooding.
- Funding **\$700,000**. Over **18,000 acres** planted, significant reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment.

2. Greg Pate, Conservation Impact Consultant, Tennessee Forestry Association (TFA):

- TFA is in the second year of a **three year** project funded by NRCS to eliminate barriers to forest landowners participating in improving their forest resources. During the first year of the project TFA developed a Tennessee Accredited Forester Council (TNAFC) which provides forest landowners with a reliable location to find a forester who meets high educational, experience, and ethical standards.
- TNAFC has been taking applications from foresters since January 5, 2026, and to date we have **26** foresters who have been approved for membership.
- Currently, TFA is completing design of a searchable online database for forest landowners to use in locating a forester to meet their needs.
- The database contains a Direct Connect tool through which TFA will connect a forest landowner directly with a TNAFC forester.
- The second partnership project involves a grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) which is funded, in part, through NRCS.

- Through the grant TFA will collaborate with partners in the states of Alabama and Kentucky to raise awareness and improve management of White oak and other upland oaks on private lands in Tennessee, Alabama, and Kentucky.
- Technical assistance through the grant will focus on directing forest landowners to NRCS programs for financial assistance.
- TFA will begin this **2-year** project in March 2026.

3. **Reggie Marshall, Producer:**

- Outreach to small and medium farmers in West Tennessee.
- Formerly operated an urban farm business in Nashville and conducts outreach in West Tennessee. Engages in similar activities as in Nashville, focusing on supporting small and medium farmers.
- Expanded outreach efforts to support small and medium farmers in West Tennessee.

4. **Seung "James" Lee, Executive Director, Georgia Korean-American Farmers Association Inc.:**

- Expanding efforts to work with all farmers, including Asian American farmers.
- Active in **17 states**, including Tennessee. Recently signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state of New Jersey.
- Highlights the underreporting of Asian American farmers and the lack of crop insurance for their specialty crops.
- Increased awareness of the underreporting issue and efforts to address crop insurance gaps.

5. **Karina Bynum, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Water Resources, Nutrient Reduction Task Force:**

- The Tennessee Nutrient Reduction Task Force and watershed planning. Emphasizes partnerships to achieve nutrient reduction goals and supports watershed planning initiatives.
- The task force aims to take action and spotlight partners already working on nutrient reduction.
- Nutrient Task Force released the 2025 Annual Report (<https://www.tn.gov/environment/program-areas/wr-water-resources/nutrient-management-in-tennessee/partnerships/tennessee-nutrient-reduction-task-force.html>)
- If anyone wants to be added to the quarterly virtual calls, please email Kairna.Bynum@tn.gov.
- Ongoing efforts to develop and implement nutrient reduction strategies and watershed plans.

6. **Mekayle Houghton, Executive Director, Cumberland River Compact (CRC):**

- West TN Spring Grazing School: April (TBD), hosted in Obion County at Preuett Grass Cattle farm in Troy, TN.

- Middle TN Spring Grazing School: May 18th, hosted in Lawrence County in collaboration with Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District and UT Extension as part of the Master Forage program. The class will be at Holler Hills Farm in Five Points, TN.
- Registration for both classes will open on CRC website in March. Please contact jack.barganier@cumberlandrivercompact.org for details.
- The cost-share program can cover up to **80%** on supplies for farmers who install exclusionary fence along a stream. ***Farmers must attend a Grazing School to be eligible.***

7. Levi Morgan, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, US Fish & Wildlife Service:

- US Fish Wildlife Service, mission specifically under the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, is to restore habitats for at-risk and federally listed species. This involves collaborative efforts with various partners to ensure the protection and recovery of these species through habitat restoration and conservation practices.
- Collaborates closely with NRCS and other USDA partners to provide technical assistance and resources for habitat restoration projects. This partnership ensures that conservation efforts are well-supported and effectively implemented.
- Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency is a key partner, providing additional expertise and resources for wildlife management and habitat restoration. This collaboration helps address multiple aspects of ecosystem health.
- Tennessee Division of Forestry supports the US. Fish & Wildlife Service efforts by contributing to forest management and restoration projects, particularly in areas with high biodiversity and at-risk species.
- The priority areas are Duck River, Elk River, and Shoal Creek Watershed.
- Conducted over **25 site visits** since the beginning of the fiscal year, providing technical assistance to landowners and helping them implement conservation practices.
- Restoration projects have been successfully completed in the Duck River and Elk River watersheds, leading to significant improvements in habitat quality and benefiting numerous at-risk species.

8. Brittney Viers-Scott, Tennessee State Coordinator, Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever:

- The team now includes grazing coordinators, foresters, habitat specialists, and coordinating biologists, allowing TWRA to address a wide range of conservation needs and provide comprehensive support to landowners
- Team of **14** across the state.

9. Forbes Walker Ph.D., Extension Soil Specialist & Professor, University of Tennessee:

- Involved in Hurricane Helene recovery efforts and works on soil reclamation projects. Focuses on generating research-based recommendations for soil health and reclamation.
- The project aims to develop strategies for rebuilding topsoil, adding organic matter, and improving nutrient retention in these affected areas.

- Actively involved in providing technical assistance to landowners, helping them implement best practices for soil health and crop production.

10. Brad Miller, Private Land Program Manager, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency:

- **Over 90%** of Tennessee is privately owned, making private landowners crucial stakeholders in conservation efforts.
- TWRA has four Private Lands Biologists dedicated to working with private landowners to implement conservation practices. These biologists provide technical assistance and support to enhance habitat quality and promote wildlife conservation on private lands.
- Given the extensive private landownership in Tennessee, partnerships are essential for increasing conservation efforts. TWRA collaborates with various organizations, including NRCS, to leverage resources and expertise for habitat restoration projects.
- TWRA is always looking for additional partners to support its conservation efforts. By collaborating with more organizations, TWRA aims to enhance its capacity to provide technical assistance and implement conservation projects on private lands.

11. Mary Schmidt, Urban Orchard Manager, The Works Inc.:

- The Works is involved in the Mid-South project under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This project focuses on enhancing ecosystem health by establishing diverse ecosystem sites, reducing synthetic inputs, increasing biodiversity, and improving nutrient cycling.
- The Works operate with urban farms in Memphis, contributing to local food production and community engagement in sustainable agriculture practices.

12. Jay Hayek, Assistant State Forester, Tennessee Department of Forestry:

- Jay Hayek is the new Assistant State Forester for the Tennessee Division of Forestry, overseeing multiple units including State Forests, Nursery Reforestation, Forest Health and Stewardship, and Forest Data and Analysis.
- The Tennessee Forestry Council has recently released its annual report, which will be available on their website. This report provides insights into the council's activities and achievements over the past year.
- The Tennessee Division of Forestry successfully deployed over **200 staff** members to assist with ice storm recovery efforts. This included organizing **79 saw crews** to help clear debris and restore affected areas.
- The Hurricane Helene agricultural and timber relief efforts of **\$30 million** are aimed at supporting agricultural producers and forest landowners affected by the hurricane. The formal announcement of this **relief fund is expected soon**.

13. Bharat Pokharel, Chair of Environmental Science, Tennessee State University:

- As part of our workforce development initiative, Tennessee State University offer a B.S. in Agricultural Sciences with a concentration in Environmental Sciences, an M.S. in Environmental Sciences, and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Sciences with a research focus on natural resources, soil, water, forestry, geospatial sciences, and wildlife biology.
- Tennessee State University research spans from soil health, water conservation and management, climate change and flood mitigation, urban forestry, wildlife biology, forestry, plant sciences, cover crops, and agronomy. Tennessee State University recently added new faculty members specializing in Soil Physics and Soil Health.
- Tennessee State University is currently reviewing curriculum to better align with the needs of NRCS, government agencies, and industry partners.

14. Emily Stefanick, Conservation Projects Manager, Panther Creek Forestry / Tennessee Forestry Association:

- Technical Service Providers Network (TSPN) hosted their annual training in November of last year.
- Mr. Hightower and TN staff were wonderful hosts to the group that met for three days in Murfreesboro, TN.
- Special thanks to Garrett McFall, Linda Ortiz, and Leslie Honicker for their support and assistance throughout the training.

8) Logistics & Scheduling

- Upcoming FY26 STAC dates announced at the bottom of the agenda: **May 12, August 11, November 17**; updated calendar invites to be sent; attendees asked to leave name badges for next meeting.

Decisions & Action Items

Decisions recorded in session

- Proceed with Ecological Sciences kickoff flow; CPS 331 adoption/feedback process continues under state direction; integrate suite-based planning for soil/water outcomes.
- EQIP allocations will continue weighting county Local Workgroup priorities (~40% guidance).
- EWP portfolio marches forward with site completion and payment closeout; FEMA coordination for infrastructure items reaffirmed.
- APHIS–NRCS feral swine pilot: target the defined four-county footprint, staff trappers, and deploy traps/aerial operations; outreach via NRCS and partners to enroll landowners.

Action Items

- **All STAC members:** Provide feedback on CPS 331 language and regenerative program materials to Hunt, Trevor - FPAC-NRCS, TN.
- **Outreach (Harold Pettigrew- FPAC-NRCS, TN; Fred Walker - FPAC-NRCS, TN):** Capture attendee names/emails for distribution lists and follow-ups; manage sign-in records.
- **EQIP & CSP (Garrett Morris and Vanessa Merriweather):** Continue EQIP allocation monitoring and publish resource-concern emphasis by county.
- **RCPP (Devin Ross):** Share NFO updates and timelines with partners as available; encourage proposal readiness.
- **EWP (Shelby Pearson):** Advance remaining designs/construction; coordinate with sponsors on contractor engagement; preserve photo documentation.
- **APHIS (Blaine Hyle) & NRCS field leads:** Stand up county trapper coverage; implement landowner permission workflow; align burial/composting SOPs with UT Extension guidance.

Closing Remarks (Sheldon Hightower, State Conservationist (Chair):

- A big thank you to Tennessee State University for allowing us to hold this state technical committee meeting here. Your partnership is invaluable.
- Greatly appreciate all our partners and presenters today. Special thanks to Emily, Brittany, Blaine, Sam, and the Farm Service Agency for your updates and contributions.
- Thank you to the NRCS team for providing such valuable information and handling the logistics for today's meeting. Your efforts are truly appreciated.
- The Tennessee Natural Resources Conservation Service is always looking for feedback on how we can better serve our landowners and address resource concerns in Tennessee. Your input is crucial.
- Please note that meeting minutes and recordings will be distributed within 30 days from today (February 10, 2026).
- Thank you all for being here, for your dedication, and for the work you do. Have a safe and wonderful day.