

USDA STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Neal Smith Federal Building - 210 Walnut Street, Room 693, Des Moines, Iowa
NRCS Hugh Hammond Bennett Conference Room/Microsoft Teams

December 18, 2025
1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

Minutes

Opening Comments – Jon Hubbert

- Welcome and call meeting to order.
- Introduction of attendees.
- Approval of minutes from September 18, 2025.
 - No comments or corrections were noted by the committee.
 - Minutes from September 18, 2025, were unanimously approved as written.
- Review of Recommendations from previous meeting
 - EQIP Subcommittee: Paige Frautschy recommended as the new subcommittee chair – approved at September 18 meeting.
 - ACEP-WRE Subcommittee: Utilization of the Prioritization Tool for FY26 – provided the high selected projects collectively represent the four wetland classes in proportion consistent with the Iowa Wetland Restoration Criteria and Guidelines. – approved and adopted.

Agency Updates – General

NRCS – Jon Hubbert

- NRCS has a new leadership structure at the national headquarter level.
 - Politically appointed Assistant Chief (AC) positions were established for the Northern, Southern, Central, and Western Regions.
 - The Central Region AC is Jimmy Emmons.
 - Directly reporting to the ACs are Deputy Assistant Chief (DAC) positions for each region – these positions align with the former Regional Conservationist positions.
 - The Acting Central Region DAC is David Doctorian.
- The 43-day shutdown caused the loss of a construction and planning season.
 - The window between the end of harvest and a hard freeze.
- CSP payments and catching up on application workload have been a priority since returning from the shutdown.
- NRCS has received a full year budget allocation – through September 30, 2026, but all funds have not been appropriated to the states yet.
 - Funding allocations for CSP, EQIP, and ACEP are known.
 - Funding amounts are in line with normal Farm Bill amounts from the past few years.
- Critical staffing gaps persist.
 - Engineering, Archaeology, and field leadership.
 - Will be working to fill these vacancies as soon as we have the authority to do so.
- *Question: Will the Regenerative Ag Pilot Program impact Iowa NRCS's budget and how it relates to row crop production or renewable fuels?*
 - *Answer: 25% of CSP and EQIP funds are to be dedicated to the Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP). There are also specific practices that will be part of the RPP.*
 - *New dollars aren't coming to the state, but 25% of Iowa funds for EQIP and CSP will be re-allocated to RPP.*
- *Question: Is the Workload Prioritization Tool (WPT) for Wetland Restoration only going to be for wetland restoration or will it expand into other restoration practices?*

- *Answer: Only one WPT can be set up for each state, but different programs can be added into the tool. Iowa has not adopted the WPT for CSP, EQIP, or RCPP – only for easement programs currently.*
- RCPP funding is in place for projects that have been approved – big projects, not individual contracts for producers.
- RCPP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for partners is expected to be released soon.
- *Question: Are the critical staffing vacancies dependent on funding or is it a matter of getting them filled?*
 - *Answer: the federal hiring freeze has been extended.*

FSA Update – Curt Goettsch

- County offices are busy with Marketing Assistance Loans.
- Farm Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program was announced December 8.
 - Information is continuing to roll out and offices are working towards moving this program forward.
- Progress is being made on opening high priority positions at the national level.

Local Workgroup Feedback – Jon Hubbert/Dien Judge

- No updates.

Technical Topics

Compliance Minimal Effect and Mitigation Tool Follow Up Meetings Summary – Julie McMichael

- Follow up meetings for interested STAC members for the Compliance Minimal Effect and Mitigation Tools were held December 17.
 - The tools were demonstrated and discussed in greater detail as a follow-up to the September 18 STAC presentation.
 - Minimal Effect Tool – 7 attendees
 - Mitigation Tool – 3 attendees
 - Both tools received positive feedback.
- These tools are part of the post-determination process. They help provide the producer with next steps after a wetland has been identified on their land.
- If you would like a copy of the procedures, please reach out to Julie McMichael or Keiko Sampson.
- *Comment: Appreciation for the tools and knowing there are steps that can be taken if a wetland determination is received, as a farmer.*

Status of Farm Bill Programs

Programs Report – Sam Adams

- See report (*attached with agenda*).
 - *Please note in the report “patching” should be “batching”*
- Regenerative Ag Pilot Program (RPP) requirements
 - A full farm plan must be developed.
 - At least one of the approved practices must be implemented.

Primary Regenerative Management Practices	
328	Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
330	Contour Farming (330)
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop (331)
340	Cover Crop (340)
554	Drainage Water Management (554)
511	Forage Harvest Management (511)
666	Forest Stand Improvement (666)
449	Irrigation Water Management (449)
484	Mulching (484)
590	Nutrient Management (590)
595	Pest Management Conservation System (595)
528	Prescribed Grazing (528)
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced (345)
585	Stripcropping (585)

- Soil health testing at the beginning and end of contract.
- *Question: Will there be a second ranking for RCPP?*
 - *Answer: Do not know right now. Not anticipating a need for a second round due to the high number of applications received the past couple of years.*

- No CSP renewals in FY26 – only one application period anticipated for CSP.
 - All applications eligible for renewal have been moved to first round applications and they will compete with other first round applications.
- *Question: If a farmer wants to adopt one of the listed primary RPP practices but is organic and needs to make sure those management changes align with their Organic System Plan, I assume that they would be allowed/encouraged to attach CPS 823 Organic Management in their application as an additional practice which could also be funded by the Regenerative Pilot Program?*
 - *Answer: Able to use facilitating practices for your primary practice.*
 - *Example: prescribed grazing – to have a prescribed grazing plan, fence pipeline tanks may be needed. Those are activities that facilitate grazing. The prescribed grazing is your primary practice that meets the Regenerative Ag system, but facilitating practices are also needed and would be funded under the same program.*
 - *Comment: Many organic farmers are interested due to the soil health testing portion – looking forward to learning if CPS 823 will qualify as a facilitating practice.*
- *Question: Will RPP payments be per acre?*
 - *Answer: Do not know currently.*
- *Question: Will ActNow be available for RPP?*
 - *Answer: No.*
- *Question: How much will be allocated to ActNow?*
 - *Answer: There are a handful of RCPP projects that are going to be ActNow priorities for edge of field practices.*
- *Question: Are funding levels going to be comparable to past years?*
 - *Answer: Funding levels are comparable from a Farm Bill only perspective – no IRA funds.*
- *Question: The changes to EQIP funding pools, are those a national directive and not just Iowa?*
 - *Answer: Correct, they are nationally directed.*
- *Question: What is the status of RCPP with DNR and INHF (RCPP 3030)? Did it get approved or was it tied to IRA?*
 - *Answer: It was selected for funding, but it was impacted from the withdrawal of IRA dollars.*
- *Question: How long are the RPP contracts and how that is tied to meeting soil health requirements?*
 - *Answer: RPP contract length will be 5 years. Many practices on the RPP list are part of the soil health initiatives. Cover cropping and No Till are the main systems that have been utilized for soil health practices. Other facilitative practices could be found to add on,*
 - *Example: Adding livestock on a cover cropped field could equal prescribed grazing and other facilitating practices to build a soil system which is like regenerative ag.*
- *Comment: Strongly suggest adding a second batch ranking for RCPP. A lot of time was lost due to the shutdown and there likely won't be many projects ready to rank by the January 15th application batching deadline. Would like to see a second ranking date of March 15.*
 - *Follow up: Sam to discuss with Scott Cagle and Christine Evans and follow up with Cameron Aker.*
 - *Follow up: Need to consider that the longer ranking dates are pushed out, the harder it is to finalize a contract after the application and selection.*
- *Question: What will the budget be for new ACEP-WRE enrollments if the focus is on converting some 30-year easements to permanent?*
 - *Answer: Anticipate that the budget will be diminished.*
- *Question: Now that producers earning over \$900,000 annually can qualify for EQIP and CSP, how is Iowa going to make these programs equitable for smaller producers? With the new Regenerative Ag program prioritizing no till and cover crops, there could be a shift to larger, commercial producers into funding pools and there may not be much funding left for smaller-scale, diversified producers across the state.*
 - *Answer: If 75% of an applicant's taxable income is from farming, they are exempt from the AGI requirements of \$900,000. It is unclear how this is going to be verified.*
 - *There is a Specialty Ag funding pool for diversified farms and not traditional ag.*

- *The intention of reducing funding pools is to increase equity across the state. Categories will be created for each Resource Team to compete for the Regenerative Ag funds. The more practices an applicant is adopting, the higher the score at ranking. It won't matter if your putting 1000 acres of cover crops or 100 acres, the practice and what resource concerns are the same – the ranking score will be the same.*
- *Discussion and comments on adding practices and the time spent on applications with farmers in field offices with current staffing challenges.*
- *Question: What will training look like for staff with the new Regenerative Ag program?*
 - *Answer: Training is coming. This program is new to NRCS and just rolling out.*
 - *The new Regenerative Ag program does not differ greatly from previous NRCS soil health initiatives.*

Partnerships update – Heather Friedrichsen

- See report (*attached with agenda*).
- No new RCPPs this year and a few agreements were lost due to the withdrawal of IRA funding.

CRP Report – Curt Goettsch

- See report (*attached with minutes*)
- Biggest change over the last Farm Bill would be the number of acres enrolled in grassland CRP – from about 500,000 acres to over 10 million since 2018 – nationally.
- Nationally since 2018, General CRP has seen a decline from just under 14 million acres to 7.6 million acres.
- Continuous CRP has remained steady since 2018 – nationally.
- Water quality practices listed on the report are not an all-inclusive list, they represent the main water quality practices in Iowa.
- CRP received a one-year extension.
- *Question: What is the status of cost share for organic certification?*
 - *Answer: Congress allocated 8 million acres annually through 2031.*

Subcommittee Reports

CSP – Cynthia Farmer

- Did not meet

EQIP – Paige Frautschy

- Did not meet

ACEP-WRE – Kelsey Fleming

- Did not meet

ACEP-ALE – Ryan Smith

- Did not meet

CRP – Todd Bogenschutz

- Did not meet
- Todd visited with Curt Goettsch about the decrease in filter strips and waterways.

SWP – Christina Murphy

- Did not meet

Urban Ag –Tim Palmer/Sarah Nizzi

- Did not meet
- 2 new members on the committee. Anyone interested in joining can contact Sarah Nizzi.
- *Comment on changing the vernacular to include small-scale with urban ag.*

Reports from Other Committee Members

CDI – Dien Judge

- Partnership Day is February 12 from 11:00am – 1:00pm at the Iowa Capitol.
- CDI Spring Regionals are scheduled for February 24-26 and March 3-4.

Ag Drainage Management Coalition – Charlie Schafer

- Charlie, Keegan Kult, and Chuck Brandel met with Chief Bettencourt in September to discuss the ADMC MOU on drainage water management and edge of field practices.
- A working group has been established to look at ways to streamline delivery systems and regulations.

Guest participation

- None

Closing Comments – Jon

- Overview of an advance copy of the annual At-A-Glance for FY2025.
 - The document will be announced with a news release once it is finalized.
 - IDALS is finalizing an annual report with similar statistics with more comprehensive breakdown on state programs – should be available soon.
- Thank you everyone for attending.

Future Meeting Dates

March 19, 2026

Attendance

In-Person

Jon Hubbert, NRCS
Dien Judge, CDI
Kelsey Fleming, IDNR
Sam Adams, NRCS
Will Myers, IDALS
Rubyana Neely, NRCS
Julie McMichael, NRCS

Heather Friedrichsen, NRCS
Keiko Sampson, NRCS
Cynthia Farmer, Center for Rural Affairs
Joe McGovern, INHF
Charlie Schafer, Agri Drain
Patrick Chase, NRCS

Virtual

Curt Goettsch, FSA
Angela Barker, INSGA
Dave Petty, Iowa River Ranch
Wendy Johnson, Climate Land Leaders
Cameron Aker, Trout Unlimited
Josh Divan, Pheasants Forever
Mark Heckman, Iowa Renewable Fuels Association
Paige Frautschy, TNC
Joan Flecksing, Meskwaki Tribe
Dan Paulsen, NRCS
Catherine DeLong, ISU
Sarah Nizzi, Xerces Society
Matt Dvorak, IDNR
Jeff Lucas, IAWA
Sharyl Bruning, IFBF

Ashley Utt, Pathfinders RC&D
Todd Bogenschutz, IDNR
Jeannette Schafer, EPA
Ben Lehman, Rodale Institute
Keegan Kult, Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition
Gabrella, Elliott, EPA
Vince Sitmann, IDALS
Lisa Stark, Iowa Valley RC&D
Starlyn Perdue, FSA



United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency

STATE PRACTICE SUMMARY BY SIGNUP TYPE

Prepared Date:	12/18/2025		
National CRP Program Totals			
	Program Type	Total Contracts:	Total Acres:
	General CRP	103,710	7,618,629
	Continuous CRP	397,024	8,252,230
	Grassland CRP	29,046	10,068,857
	Totals	529,780	25,939,716
Iowa CRP Program Totals			
	Program Type	Total Contracts:	Total Acres:
	General CRP	12,287	305,475
	Continuous CRP	89,304	1,317,302
	Grassland CRP	102	4,286
	Totals	101,693	1,627,063
Continuous CRP Water Quality Practices in Iowa			
Practice Code:	Practice Name:	Total Contracts:	Total Acres:
CP8A	Grassed Waterway	12,339	28,008.69
CP15A	Contour Grass Buffer Strips	1,380	6,634.96
CP21	Filter Strip	25,901	152,540.91
CP22	Riparian Buffer	3,767	33,859.55
CP23	Floodplain Wetlands	2,952	92,518.53
CP29	Marginal Pastureland Buffer	359	2,801.52
CP33	Habitat Buffers	3,082	20,983.06
CP43	Prairie Strips	1,749	7,232.27
FWP (CP27/CP28)	Farmable Wetlands Program	9,520	89,587.37
	Totals	61,049	434,166.86
Expiring CRP in Iowa			
	Year	Contracts	Acres
	2025 (Expired 09/30/2025)	10,280	153,036
	2026 (Expires 09/30/2026)	14,366	272,813
	2027 (Expires 09/30/2027)	13,783	301,293
These numbers can be found at this public link:			
https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/reports-and-statistics/conservation-reserve-program-statistics/index			