



**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Technical Committee
Meeting Agenda
June 24, 2026
9:00 – 12:00**

**USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Grassland Soil and Water Research Laboratory
808 E. Blackland Road, Temple, Texas**

9:00-9:15	Registration	
9:15-9:30	Welcome – Announcements – Overview of Meeting-Introductions	Charles Kneuper
9:30-9:45	Agency Updates	Kristy Oates
9:45-10:00	Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Conservationist	Dan Hunter
10:00-10:05	Farm Service Agency	Michael Canales
10:05-10:20	Rural Development, Community Programs Director	Charles Kneuper
10:20-10:30	Local Work Group summary	
10:30-10:50	Break	
10:30-10:50	Subcommittee Reports	Committee Representatives
	AFO/CAFO	JC Essler
	Agronomy	Johanna Nuding
	Easement	Lori Olson
	Forestry	Jason Raines
	Grazing	Joseph Johnson
	Water Resources	Tina Hendon
	Wildlife	Thomas Janke
10:50-11:50	Open Discussion	
	Comments and open discussion	All
11:50-12:00	Closing comments/Adjourn	Kristy Oates

**** Written agenda item comments are encouraged.**

Agenda is subject to minor adjustments.

Charles Kneuper, State Resource Conservationist, called the State Technical Committee (STC) to order at 9:15 a.m. on June 24, 2026, in Temple, Texas.

Present for the meeting were 41 STC members and 11 NRCS Texas staff.

Agency Updates:

Kristy Oates, State Conservationist- Texas, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

- Provided update of current NRCS activities and successes:
 - New NRCS Chief Colton Buckley and updated motto, mission statement, vision statement, and national priorities.
 - EQIP and CSP funding opportunities:
 - RPP funding requirements, including the need for qualified individuals (QIs) for soil testing in five-year agreements.
 - NRCS in a support role for the New World Screwworm (NWS) response, with APHIS as the lead agency.
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) 2026: Classic and Alternative opportunities
 - NRCS must receive proposals by 4:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 24, 2026.
 - Application guidance is available through Grants.gov and the RCPP Portal (<https://nrcs.my.salesforce-sites.com/>)

Dan Hunter, State Director- Texas, Farm Service Agency (FSA):

- Programs: Create your login.gov account now-
 - FSA is switching from paper records to electronic, which will greatly improve customer service.
- Texas has unique challenges and opportunities in agriculture:
 - The Pasture Mealybug- invasive pest spreading throughout Texas.
 - The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is working closely with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to coordinate a rapid response and protect Texas producers.
 - Webpage: <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/pasture-mealybug/>
 - New World Screwworm- a serious pest that affects livestock, pets, wildlife, and, less commonly, people and birds.
 - This is not a food safety issue; it's an animal health issue.
 - Early detection is key, monitoring is important. If suspected, call state veterinarian immediately.
 - Webpage: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animals/animal-health/livestock-and-poultry-disease/stop-screwworm>

Michael Canales, Community Programs Director- Texas, Rural Development (RD):

- Realignment update- staffing numbers continue to decline, 59 employees currently in Texas.
- Community program: 4 million in loans and grants are ready to fund.

- Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program – Phase 4
 - Provides grants to help eligible meat and poultry processors expand their capacity.
 - Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on August 7, 2026, through Grants.gov.
 - Webpage: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program-phase-4>

Charles Kneuper, State Resource Conservationist-Texas, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

- 2027 Local Work Group Priority Resource Concerns:

Dryland Cropland:

- Organic Matter Depletion
- Sheet and Rill Erosion
- Plant Productivity and Health
- Wind Erosion
- Classic Gully Erosion

Irrigated Cropland:

- Inefficient Irrigation Water Use
- Organic Matter Depletion
- Plant Productivity and Health
- Wind Erosion
- Water-Groundwater Depletion

Rangeland/Pasture:

- Inadequate Livestock Water Quantity, Quality, and Distribution
- Plant Productivity and Health
- Feed and Forage Balance
- Plant Structure and Composition
- Plant Pest Pressure

Forestland:

- Plant Productivity and Health
- Plant Structure and Composition
- Terrestrial Habitat for Wildlife and Invertebrates
- Plant Pest Pressure
- Wildfire Hazard from Biomass Accumulation

- 2027 Local Work Group General Comments:
 - Concerns regarding damage by feral hogs, mealy bug and other invasive pests.
 - Water availability remains a concern relative to urbanization and costs/challenges to drill wells.
 - Emphasis on follow-up for operation and maintenance following project implementation.
 - Emphasis in promoting proper grazing management and regenerative agriculture.
 - Concerns about fund pool structure, fearing fewer applications.

Subcommittee Reports:

Animal Feeding Operations/Confined Animal Feeding Operations (AFO/CAFO) – J.C. Essler

- Recommendations:
 - Review new 590 Conservation Practice Standard when released nationally, prior to making state recommendations.
 - Review and update TSP payment rates.
 - Keep EQIP funding for AFO/CAFO.

Agronomy – Johanna Nuding

- Recommendations:
 - Update Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) applicable conservation practice standards to include more regenerative methods.
 - Adoption of the Regenerative Pilot Program fully.
 - Include Soil Carbon Amendment (CPS 336).

☆ **Question:** *CPS 810- Annual Forages for Grazing Systems is an important transition tool for regenerative actions. Will this interim practice be adopted fully by Texas?*

Answer: *A new CPS “Annual Forages for Grazing Systems (Code 513) was developed at the National office from interim CPS of the same name (Code 810) and will be available for states to adopt for FY 2027.*

Easements – Stacy Riley

- Recommendations:
 - \$5000 geographic rate cap is too low.
 - Review A&M land price data to adjust.
 - Ranking Criteria issues:
 - Letting the public know what the max points are per category.
 - Provide additional details for each criteria and what the purpose is.
 - Utilize the Texas Ecosystem Analytical Mapper (TEAM) tool; developed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), this desktop tool provides exact data on landscape features, vegetation, geology, and hydrology.
 - WRE—making Compatible Use Agreements (CUA’s) more predictable and reliable for landowners
 - Regarding Grasslands of Special Significance, planting of trees and shrubs should be allowed.

Forestry – Jason Raines

- Recommendations:
 - Priority to fill the NRCS State Forester position.
 - Improve Local Work Group participation:
 - Improve the process for notifying stakeholders of meetings and create a simple, consistent method for documenting input and sending follow up to the LWG based on past recommendations (how the input is being used).
 - Silviculture for the health of the forest stand:
 - Landowners, including commercial timber companies, must pay to have pulpwood removed from their land.
 - Utilize Forest Stand Improvement (CPS 666) in conjunction with Woody Residue Treatment (CPS 384) and Prescribed Burning (338), as 3 high priority practices.

Grazing Lands – Joseph Johnson

- Recommendations:
 - Adopt the new national standard for CPS 528 Grazing Management in FY 2027:

- The committee recommends that NRCS adopt the new national standard for CPS 528 Grazing Management in FY 2027, as written. This includes traditional livestock, wildlife, omnivores, and large exotic animals.
- Ensure state involvement in developing practice scenarios:
 - The committee recommends that Texas NRCS communicate to national leadership that state involvement is critical as national efforts continue to streamline the payment schedule.
- Provide in-field training on the regenerative agriculture pilot program (RPP)
 - The committee recommends that NRCS dedicate resources to in-field training for employees on the technical aspects of the regenerative agriculture pilot program, including practice design and implementation.
- Use caution when applying CPS 314 Brush Management as part of NWS prevention:
 - The committee recommends that when CPS 314 Brush Management is used as part of a strategy to prevent NWS outbreaks, planners and producers should be cautioned against unnecessary degradation of important wildlife habitat.
- Develop a small-acreage practice scenario for CPS 338 Prescribed Burning:
 - The committee recommends NRCS TX develop a practice scenario for CPS 338 Prescribed Burning for small acreage properties.

Water Resources – Tina Hendon

- Recommendations:
 - Identify new priority areas for source water protection areas, increasing the current 12% of coverage closer to the cap of 20%.

Wildlife – Thomas Janke

- Recommendations:
 - Training NRCS Field Staff on producer eligibility to ensure wildlife needs are adequately considered.
 - Training NRCS field staff to increase consistency across zones regarding wildlife resource concerns and how to address them.
 - Guidance regarding Herbaceous Weed Control (315) to ensure that land use types are not changed in a way that resource concerns are not met long term.

Open Discussion

Question: *(In regard to the committee) Are new subcommittees ever created for specific/new topics?*

Answer: *Yes- you can participate in any existing subcommittee meetings, but there are opportunities to create specific subcommittees if needed.*

Question: *For counties that have New World Screwworm positive cases, are they getting any specialized funding or resources?*

Answer: *Currently there is no specialized funding, but NRCS is supporting APHIS in getting the information out to the public and how to report suspected cases. NRCS is currently in a technical supporting role only.*

Question: *Feral Swine Program- where does that allotment from the Big Beautiful Bill fall and where is the program moving?*

Answer: *Everything is still being worked on nationally for that program, no updates from NRCS currently.*

Question: *Is there a CEMA monitoring practice to help mitigate NWS?*

Answer: *There is a CEMA identified as a NWS support practice to monitor feral swine, not reduce the population.*

Question: *Pasture Mealybug is another urgent concern for livestock operations, as the mealybug is decimating critical forage. Is there a sub-committee to discuss and address these concerns?*

Answer: *Grazing committee, Agronomy committee. Federal and state agencies, universities, etc. are working on solutions/treatment program options for mealybug but no updates at this time.*

Question: *Can the process for receiving input from Local Work Groups and subcommittee input be more efficient and encourage engagement? This could include a standardized flow for meetings, and timing/frequency of meetings to ensure local input can be considered.*

Answer: *Subcommittees are led by the members; they can meet at any time of the year and should be coordinated through the assigned NRCS subcommittee POC. The local led conservation process must be driven at the local level and NRCS welcomes input on processes and workflow.*

Question: *The seeding tables NRCS uses are out of date, many of the species listed are now hard to source or access. Can the regional species lists be reviewed and updated? The Texas Seed Trade Association (TSTA) would be happy to help.*

Answer: *There is a plan to update the seeding tables and NRCS would be grateful for input and suggestions for improvement.*

Question: *In regard to TSSWCB's 2028 & 2029 appropriations for flood protection sites- the funds allocated for hiring partner planners is insufficient, are there different funding sources available for this? Or are there similar studies or programs that have experience with Dam analysis?*

Answer: *Contact the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board concerning their program funding.*

Question: *EQIP offers an advanced payment option for Historically Underserved applicants, can NRCS consider this for CSP as well?*

Answer: *Based on the current Farm Bill language, advanced payments are only allowed for EQIP.*

Kristy Oates provided closing comments.

Meeting adjourned – 11:30 a.m.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FY 2027

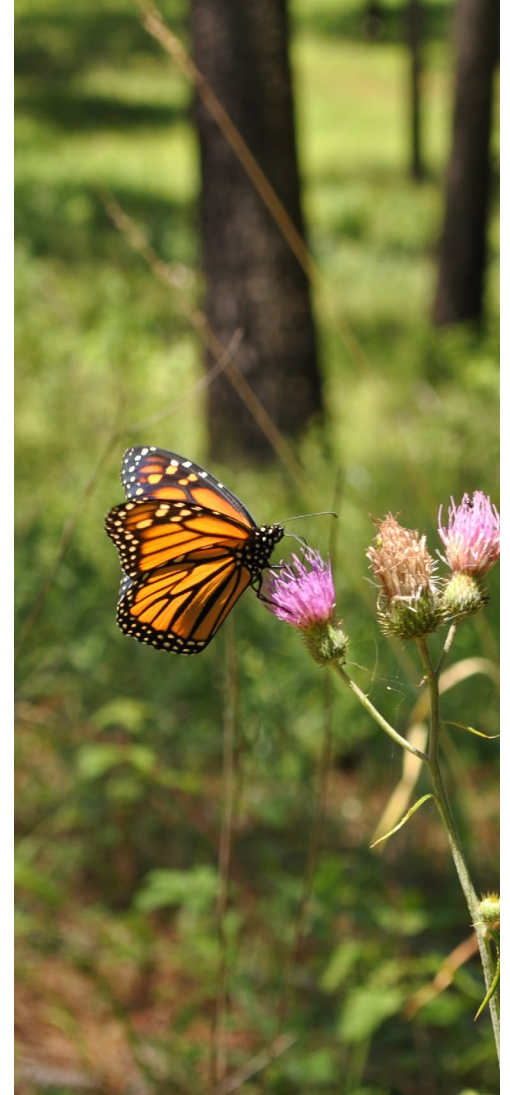
USDA-NRCS Texas Priority Resource Concerns



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Responsibilities of Local Working Groups

- Identify priority resource concerns and identify, as appropriate, high-priority areas needing assistance.
- Assist NRCS and the conservation district with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs.
- Participate in multicounty coordination were program funding and priority area proposals cross county boundaries.
- Utilize the conservation needs assessment to identify priority resource concerns that can be addressed by USDA programs.



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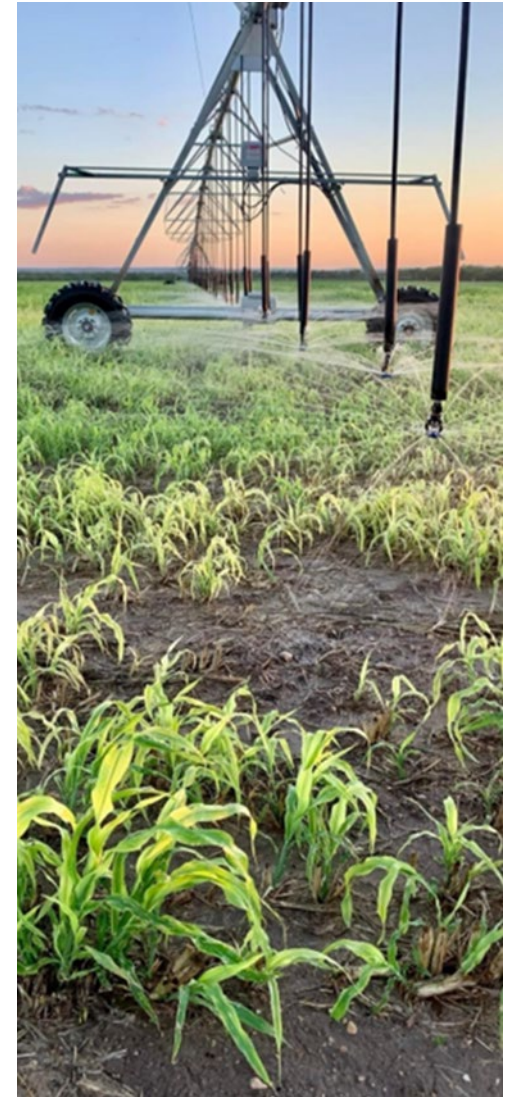
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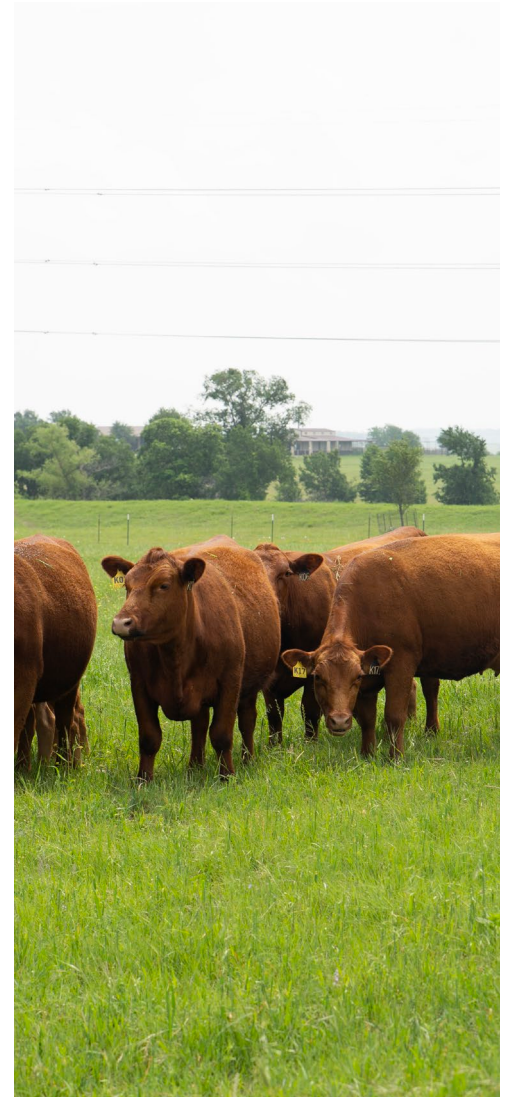
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Fish and Wildlife Subcommittee Update

**Thomas Janke on behalf of Cyndee Watson
NRCS STC Fish and Wildlife
Subcommittee Chair**

**State Coordinator for Texas
Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program
cyndee_watson@fws.gov**

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 subcommittee met in-person on April 22, 2026, at NRCS, TX HQ. In total, 16 people were in attendance and several noted that they appreciated the quality of in-person conversation and interaction.

Subcommittee Discussion

During our meeting, we had several discussions on the following that will be worked on by subcommittee members:

- Former CSP Enhancement 646 C&D technical guidance
- Former CSP Enhancement 644A – priority locations
- Discussion of CP 644 being combined with CP 645 that now includes both Wetland and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- Technical guidance on a suite of practices for Golden-cheeked warbler and Houston toad
- Information will be gathered on grazing as a management tool for WRE with lessons learned from CRP
- The need for one Priority Bird List

Formal Requests

Based on our discussions, we respectfully request consideration of the following:

- Training to NRCS Field Staff on Producer Eligibility to ensure Wildlife needs are adequately considered.
- Training to field staff to increase consistency across zones regarding wildlife resource concerns and how to address them.
- Guidance regarding CP 315 Herbaceous Weed Control to ensure that land use types are not changed in a way that resource concerns are not met long term.