**NRCS SC State Technical Committee Virtual Meeting Minutes**

Dec 9, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.

**Present:** Ann English (SC NRCS), Reginald Hall (SC NRCS), Sylvia Harris (SC NRCS), Stephen Henry (SC NRCS), Terry Kelly (SC NRCS), Jessica Humes (SC NRCS), Eddie Reese (SC NRCS), George Sullivan (SC NRCS), Gordon Mikell (SC NRCS), Staci Henry (SC NRCS), Khalia Giles (SC NRCS), Tria Yang (SC NRCS), Brittany Felder (SC NRCS), John Oxner (SC NRCS), Lynette Savereno (SC NRCS), Michelle Alexander (SC NRCS), Lavetta Blair (SC NRCS)

**Partner Attendees:** Michael Hook (SC DNR), Breck Carmichael (SC DNR), Bret Beasley (FWS), Chris Workman (SC DNR), Tyler Brown (SC DNR), Chisolm Beckham (SCFC), Guy Sabin (SCFC), Jacqueline Moore (REE-NASS), Mike Stewart (SCACD), Noel Myers (APHIS), Karen McSwain, Melanie Shull, Lisa Rigden, Kenny Mullis, Marc Cribb, Sonya Terry, Shea McCarthy, Dan Peeples, Karin Skipper, Russell Hubright, Julie Ureta, Michael Neault, Yvonne Kling, Tim Watkins, Dr. Saundra Glover, Rick Caldwell, Cassidy Murphy, Michael Small

**Guest Speaker**

Christel Youmans (SC FSA)

**Welcome** - **Ann English, State Conservationist NRCS, SC Chair, State Technical Committee**

**Opening remarks - Terry Kelly, State Resource Conservationist, SC NRCS** **terry.kelly@usda.gov**

* Reviewed the agenda.

**SC NRCS State Biologist Update - Sylvia Harris,****sylvia.harris2@usda.gov**

* T&E Species Consultation with USFWS and SCDNR
* 420 Wildlife Habitat Planting Conservation Practice Standard
* STAC Joint Subcommittee on Forestry & Wildlife
* Grant with Catawba Nation for River Cane
* Feral Swine Control Pilot Program (Newberry/Hampton/Jasper)
* HELC/WC Joint Training for NRCS/FSA
* CPA 52 Environmental Evaluation Training for NRCS
* SC Quail Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG)
* SC NRCS Wetlands Cadre

**ECS Updates - Terry Kelly, State Resource Conservationist, SC NRCS** **terry.kelly@usda.gov**

**Conservation Planning Certification**

* December 31st, 2021 Deadline

**Resource Concerns**

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=47345.wba>

**State Technical Committee – Sub-Committees**

* Grazing Land
* Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)
* Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production

**Engineering Updates - Stephen Henry, Assistant State Conservation Engineer*,*** **stephen.henry@usda.gov**

Updated STC of engineering staff activities this fiscal year (FY) 21 and FY 22 workload expectations.

* Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)
* Field Office Technical Guide
* EQIP
* Tools

**EWP**

* Hurricane / Tropical Depression Sally
* City of North Augusta
* Total Cost $ 3,934,750
* Financial Assistance: $2,252,250
* Watershed Planning (interest)
* Horry
* City of North Augusta
* Town of Bowman / Cow Castle Creek

**Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)**

* Revised Standards
* FOTG Notice 352
* New / Revised Tools
* Standard drawings
* Design packets
* Design tools (spreadsheets)
* Statements of Work (details the required items for practice completion)
* Suitability/Feasibility worksheets

**New CPS Names**

* 670 Energy Efficient Lighting System
* 672 Energy Efficient Building Envelope

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

* + 442 Sprinkler Systems
	+ Center Pivot System (R)
	+ VRI\_New\_System (R)
		- Renozzle Center Pivot Irrigation Systems
		- Pod Irrigation Systems
* Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) have been replaced with Activities – Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMA), Design and Implementation Activities (DIA), and Conservation Planning Activities (CPA)

**Programs Updates – Reginald Hall, Acting Assistant State Conservationist*,*** **reginald. hall@usda.gov**

**EQIP Coronavirus Agricultural Relief Payment (CARP): Practices eligible for CARP**

* 367 - Roofs and covers
* 430 - Irrigation Pipeline
* 443 - Irrigation System, surface and subsurface
* 468 - Lined waterway or outlet
* 516 - Livestock Pipeline
* 575 - Trails and walkways
* 584 - Channel bed stabilization

**FY2021 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Accomplishments - $33,029,143M**

* Area Funding Pools (Crop, Pasture, Forestry, Animal Waste) - $17,642,735.32
* Bobwhite Quail Initiative - $227,272.30
* New/Beginning Farmer/Rancher - $3,369734.43
* Limited Resource Producer - $74,914.02
* Longleaf Pine Initiative (LLPI) - $ 2,601,119.98
* National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) - $ 335,760.00
* On-Farm Energy - $3,523,636.51
* Organic - $107,898.00
* Planning - $295,212.00
* Gopher Tortoise (GT) - $0
* Seasonal High Tunnels - $482,033.00
* Socially Disadvantaged Producers - $1,872,036.37
* Soil Health Initiative - $1,220,900.00
* Specialty Crops - $258,068.00
* Sustainable Forestry Initiative - $310,985.28
* Area 1 Contracts - 498
* Area 2 Contracts – 537
* Mandatory Livestock 50% - 53.5%

**FY21 Conservation Stewardship Program CSP-Classic**

* Allocation - $8.2M

**FY22 EQIP Funds**

* General - $25,104,000.00
	+ Livestock - $12,252,000.00

**EQIP Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC)**

* South Carolina’s high priority area will encompass the entire state and address soil health
* Pasture and Cropland will be the primary land uses available for selection

**Area 1 Local Work Group**

Pastureland:

* Animal - Livestock Production Limitation
* Plants - Degraded Plant Condition
* Soils - Concentrated Erosion

Forest Land:

* Plants - Degraded Plant Condition
* Soils - Concentrated Erosion
* Animals - Terrestrial Habitat

Cropland:

* Soils – Soil quality Limitation
* Water – Source Water depletion
* Plants – Degraded Plant Condition

Ag Waste:

* Water – Water quality degradation
* Energy – Inefficient Energy Use
* Soils – Concentrated erosion

**Area 2 Local Work Group**

Cropland:

* Soil Quality
* Soil Erosion
* Water Quality

Pastureland:

* Soil Erosion
* Water Quality
* Water Quantity

Forest Land:

* Plant Health/Condition
* Soil Erosion
* Water Quality

**Cover Crop Initiative Pilot Program CPS-340**

* South Carolina has been selected as 1 of 11 states to pilot this program with a total of $38.3 Million
* South Carolina will reserve $1.6 Million and National will match the $1.6 Million for a total of $3.2 Million
* This will be a targeted and rapid streamlined application to contract approval process
* We are authorized to process a 30-Day Public Notice Waiver
* All applications must be pre-approved for funding by January 14, 2022
* States are encouraged to obligate contracts quickly
* All contracts must be obligated by January 28, 2022

**Guest Presentation – Farm Services Agency (FSA) Updates - Christel Youmans, Farm Program Specialist****christel.youmans@usda.gov**

Provided a brief update on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Pandemic Assistance for Timber Harvesters and Haulers (PATHH) Program, and Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program (OTECP).  Continuous CRP Signup 57 Signup dates are October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022.  OTECP signup dates for years 2020 and 2021 are November 8, 2021 – January 7, 2022.

**Live Presentation – Jessica Humes, Business Tool Coordinator*,*** **jessica.humes@usda.gov**

Jessica presented a demonstration of the FY22 Workload Prioritization Tool and a CART assessment for a cropland EQIP application addressing Organic Matter Depletion and Gully Erosion.

**Open discussion**

* Ken Mullis requested that Kirsten Robertson be added to the grazing land committee
* Yvonne Kling joined the SARE committee
* Mike Stewart joined Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production committee

**Closing remarks**

* Terry Kelly thanked the group and requested volunteers for the three-state technical sub-committees: Grazing, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), and Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production
* The meeting adjourned at 11:57 a.m. The next SC State Technical Committee meeting date, time, and location to be determined.