

## Tennessee State Technical Committee Meeting 2/14/2023

Starting time: 9 a.m.

- **Robert Boettcher- Acting ASTC-Programs, EQIP Program Manager-** Intro: I am filling in due to Sheldon attending the NACD meeting.
  - Review of the agenda (*See TNSTC Agenda\_Feb12\_2023*)
- **Pamela Haskins- Easement Program Manager**
  - (*See STC\_Programs\_February2023*)
  - 2023 ACEP Funding- We are in the middle of the fiscal year for FY23.
  - WRE-There are general funds available statewide- \$4,065,451.
  - ACEP-ALE- There is \$600k available for that program.
  - Application process- last meeting in November, initial first sign-up cutoff date of Nov 3, 2022
  - Due to the low response of applicants during that sign up period. Second announcement was 1/10 with cutoff date of 2/10
  - Program applications for ACEP- 10 New applicants, 5 applications from previous years deferred. With a total of 15 applications. Field offices have until 2/24 to get the ACEP applications submitted to the state office to give them a little more time.
  - AWMA/GARC- GARC was approved 1/3/2023, it was also posted to the TN NARC website. It is posted for public viewing for FY23.
  - Map- Geographical Area Rate Cap (GARC)- open land (crop land and pastureland), Woodland (forest and wooded areas), Other (odd and brushy areas that might not fit in to forest or open land)
  - The GARC Map and values are developed to create a basis for the conservation easements, it places a value per acre. – See the paragraph that is listed to describe the GARC evaluation process.
  - Easement Compensation Considerations- We would like to have feedback from TSTC on opinions of Easement compensation values. Should TN consider continuing to use the GARC methods, (4 states use GARC, 4 states use individual appraisals, some use a combination of both)
- **Bill Norfleet- CSP Program Manager**
  - (*See STC\_Programs\_February2023*)
  - CSP-FY23 Allocations- these are the initial allocations; we are anticipating getting a little more if we need to request it. (See slide for numbers)
  - Upcoming CSP Trainings- See the dates listed in March some in person and some are available on teams.
- **Robert Boettcher-Acting ASTC-Programs, EQIP Program Manager**
  - (*See STC\_Programs\_February2023*)
  - EQIP FY23 Information- what the field offices are currently working on. (See slide show for the details) 6/2- all the contracts must be obligated.
  - Administration priorities- national headquarters decision- as a state this is how those will be delivered- targeting some ranking questions and filtered in more ranking points. Renamed them to focus more on the administration priorities.
  - Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry-
  - Racial Justice and social equity- ability to focus on areas where there is low income, and a significant share of those residents are more than ½ mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.
  - Urban Agriculture- able to implement them to be geospatially answered.
  - Urban Ranking Pool New for FY23- areas in pink are what (2017 census) are urban areas, application that falls into the pink areas it automatically admitted to that program.

- FY 2023 Budget- this is only the starting budget. As funds become available these funds are re-allocated (if there is a note that is a requirement)
- EQIP CIC- what sets EQIP CIC apart, 5-year contract, steppingstone, focusing conservation on priority areas. Annual payments and
- FY23 Fund Pools-Still very broad where we are offering EQIP CIC program, where it is focalized it is where we are putting those funds.
- Terrestrial Habitat Fund Pool-the key here is that they implement one of those core practices. You won't see fence or pipeline or watering supplies, the focus is on the core and the planters implement and provide those supporting practices.
- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
- LILA half & 10: Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is more than 1/2 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket.
- Just starting to get the implementation tools for that- sneak peek based on what we know as of yesterday.
- IRA Sneak Peak- We know that we will receive IRA financial assistance. There will also be some national money available for easements. There is not a TN fund avail, but we may slip into FA-money that we get to fund programs TA- training, salary's, equipment, everything behind the scenes. FY23 is just a small step in the IRA 24-25-26 could have very substantial dollars behind them. A new sign up is going to be requires. It is going to be handled as its own program. Will still be EQIP IRA and CSP IRA. There will be a news release coming out soon and there will be a cut off March 23,2023. As this is an inflation reduction act, it's not just getting those contracts written but getting the money out there to the public and utilized quickly is also key.
- Climate Smart Ag and Forestry- The PDF that has been released and has all the practices and managements on there: see pdf, practices and CSP enhancements. Ensuring that these are climate smart and appropriate enhancements. IRA is focused on climate smart agriculture and forestry- organic and recently added in FY23-provisional-in testing and continuing to do research and evaluate if the quantification will result in reduced greenhouse gases etc. every IRA contract must include at least 1 practice or enhancement from that list.
- Planned IRA Ranking Pools, EQIP IRA- group of state leads meet to rank the priorities, what the categories allow that to do is delegate specific funds to each category. It is very detailed in how the funds can be directed. They can be delegated to each area but then devised down to each specific need.
- **Bill Norfleet-CSP Program Manager**
  - *(See STC Programs February2023)*
  - Planned IRA ranking pools- CSP IRA- areas will be divided similarly to each CSP classic pool.
  - What can you do as a state technical committee- feedback on ranking pool structure, and feedback, comments is greatly appreciated. Any input as how you this this money should go. Spread the word- get the word out there sign up for EQIP sign up for CSP and CSP classic, we want to make sure that those applications best suited for IRA go into IRA.
- **John McClurkan- TN Department of Agriculture**
  - *(See Presentation for NRCS STAC 02.14.2023)*
  - Soil and Water Conservation Action Plan 2022-2026. A few months back commissioner Charlie Hatcher challenged us to develop a 4-year action plan to “move the needle”. Soil, water, and nutrients are the main focuses of the action plan.
  - Moving the needle on water quality- *See slide 2 with goals listed-*
    - Task 1- Establish a baseline (how much nutrient does your crop need based on the soils) Little data is on which producers conduct these tests. UT extension to develop a survey- opened on 2/3/2023-UT.
    - Request 1 of District Technicians-Ground truthing the list

- Request 2 of district technicians- Moving programs into a more proactive mode- where is the farmland that is in the worst conditions does the landowner know about the possibility of partnering on programs. Is there documentation of contact with the landowner?
  - Governor's Stewardship Awards-This group probably knows some good strong nominees from agriculture and forestry. Please send that information along.
- **Brittney Viers- Quail Forever TN State Coordinator**
  - *(See NRCS\_STC\_Meeting\_2-14-23\_QF\_TN\_Staff\_Update)*
  - Qual Forever in Tennessee 10 years of partnership and how far we've come.
  - Pheasants Forever / Quail Forever Farm Bill Partner Field Staff (are basically sister organizations)
  - 2013- Farm Bill Biologist- red are the counties serviced at the time, there were only 2 for west Tennessee starting out
  - Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever- stars represent actual positions.
  - Quail Forever in the Southeast- back in 2013 only 150 farm bill biologists nationwide, now close to 285, largest national private lands staff. Habitats specialist- boots on the ground (do what is recommended by the biologists), biologists do contract disbursements etc.
  - Pheasants forever and quail forever footprint southeast regions
  - Tennessee pheasants forever and quail forever- team of 8 currently
  - QF Partner Staff Program- what we provide- 4 Farm Bill Wildlife Biologists-jack of all trades when it comes to implementation, mission is to address resource concerns. 1 Coordinating Forester- plan writing & reviews, woodland, and savanna ecosystem restoration. 1 Grassland Coordinating Biologist- grasslands guru-recreation, restoration, and re-stabilization. 1 Precision Ag Conservation Specialist- data analysis of nonproductive crop and pastureland. 1 state coordinator- Brittney Viers, Statewide QF team lead, statewide CRP technical assistance
  - Focus- Managements plans & documentations- CTA plan (just want to know what to do with their property to improve it on their own, not necessarily interested in enrolling in a farm bill), trip reports, farm bill contract documents, farm bill ranking assistance, drill & sprayer calibrations > there are more listed.
  - Farm Bill Biologist Duties- Planning, taking notes meeting with the landowner, seeing if they're interested in a program.
  - Outreach-Landowner workshops- try to encourage field team to do as much outreach as possible.
  - What's next for the Team TN- currently 8 positions statewide- soon adding 4 habitat specialists, first ever grasslands outreach coordinator (bobwhite habitat and rare grasslands), Area 4 Farm Bill Biologists II
  - 10 years or hard work and dedication- impacted 124,043 acres! Over 1,00 conservation practice certifications, 581 CRP program eligibility requests completed, 331 vegetation plan reviews (NRCS staff assistance requests completed) Over 42 outreach and education events (landowner workshops, joint participation in conservation outreach events, educational brochures & bulletins) None of these accomplishments would be possible without our partners. Robin Mayberry and Mike Hansbrough provided countless hours of mentoring and support. Thank you to those guys. Josh turner and Counts, put a lot of hours into our program countless hours of landowner and NRCS assistance)
  - Our Volunteer QF Chapter Model- work independently of quail forever chapters, they often raise money. Field Staff support QF chapters but work independently. Mutually beneficial relationship.
- **Josh Breitung-WLFW Farm Bill Biologist**
  - *(See NRCS\_STC\_Meeting\_2-14-23\_QF\_TN\_Staff\_Update)*

- Acoustic Recording Unit (ARU)- with working lands come bobwhite quail habitat improvements- monitoring bobwhite quail, go out after EQIP contract is signed- what did we do to benefit the quail.
- Goals of ARU- Better understand what quail need, monitoring multiple fields at once, what EQIP practices work for bobwhite quail, allows landowner to witness wildlife management to see the fruits of their labor.
- Personal goals- educational use, more quail on the landscape, more EQIP contacts. Looking to start this in May-hoping to have a better update with data once this is implemented.
- **Harold Pettigrew- State Outreach Coordinator**
  - *(See TNSTC Presentation)*
  - Background-This is the introduction and the goals of the State Outreach Coordinator Role
  - TN marketing and Outreach plan- *See Graphs*
  - FY23 Outreach Updates- The Outreach Tracker is live. We are focusing on Area Diversity Day, and Field Office Open Office Day. Activities (career fair, MANRRS Program, be at as many events as possible)
- **Keith Harrison- NASDA (National Association State Department of Agriculture)**
  - *(See EPA NASDA Farmer to Farmer Presentation)*
  - NASDA is very involved in the MANORS program, giving away lots of scholarships.
  - NASDA-EPA Historically Underserved Farmer Grant Program
  - Executive Summary- funded \$3million dollars, fund up to 16 sub awards to underserved farmers, expecting projects to average \$125million dollars.
  - Other Grant Awardees- 1 of 3 awardees in the United States to be awarded this funding, NACD (national association of conservation districts)
  - EPA Water Quality
  - Sub Awards- subawards to organizations who work directly with underserved farmers.
  - Potential Sub Awardees Include
  - Environmental Results- the number of square miles of watersheds with surface water
  - Eligible Activities- outreach and technical assistance, financial assistance,
  - Process details- 2 phase application process, risk assessment of those applicants.
  - Phase 1 Pre applications
  - Phase 2 Full Applications & Evaluation Criteria
  - 2022-23 Timeline- Reviews all dates.
  - Advisory Committee- 4-member advisory, will be compensated for their time, subject matter experts, want to have a representation of people from across the region.
  - Next Steps-Further developing the landing page for NASDA-won't take place until the first of March for the actual applications, for now there is a newsletter for signup for notifications.
  - Contact Information- My contact information is 615-714-3210 and keith.harrison@nasda.org
- **Robert Boettcher- Acting ASTC-Programs, EQIP Program Manager-**
  - Final Comments- Welcome to New Members- Edward Wansing and Sheila Williams.
  - If you presented during this meeting, please share that information with Hiliary and Katherine so that we can get those presentations and notes out to those individuals that need them.
  - Another notice that the USDA has is the partnership for climate smart commodities. Notice and reminder of what else is available- creating marketing opportunities and delivering solutions. 2.8 billion dollars towards 70 projects, 325 million to another 75 projects. About 25 of those projects landed in Tennessee. Outreach is Key. A lot of these projects are in the beginning stages. Opportunities for implementing innovative practices. Opportunity to stop and reflect where we are in American history with all the great things that are going on.