

§ 610.23 State Technical Committee meetings.

(a) The State Conservationist, as Chairperson, schedules and conducts the meetings, although a meeting may be requested by any USDA agency or State Technical Committee member.

(b) NRCS will establish and maintain national standard operating procedures governing the operation of State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups in its directive system. The standard operating procedures will outline items such as: The best practice approach to establishing, organizing, and effectively utilizing State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups; direction on publication of State Technical Committee and Local Working Group meeting notices and agendas; State Technical Committee meeting summaries; how to provide feedback on State Conservationist decisions regarding State Technical Committee recommendations; and other items as determined by the Chief.

(c) In addition to the standard operating procedures established under paragraph (b) of this section, the State Conservationist will provide public notice and allow public attendance at State Technical Committee and Local Working Group meetings. The State Conservationist will publish a meeting notice no later than 14 calendar days prior to a State Technical Committee meeting. Notification may exceed this 14-day minimum where State open meeting laws exist and provide for a longer notification period. This minimum 14-day notice requirement may be waived in the case of exceptional conditions, as determined by the State Conservationist. The State Conservationist will publish this notice in at least one or more newspaper(s), including recommended Tribal publications, to attain statewide circulation.

§ 610.24 Responsibilities of State Technical Committees.

(a) Each State Technical Committee established under this subpart will meet on a regular basis, as determined by the State Conservationist, to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to appropriate officials of USDA who are charged with implementing and establishing priorities and

criteria for natural resources conservation activities and programs under Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 including, but not limited to, the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Grassland Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Innovation Grants, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, Conservation of Private Grazing Land, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Grassroots Source Water Protection Program, Great Lakes Basin Program, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, and the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program. The members of the State Technical Committee may also provide input on other natural resource conservation programs and issues as may be requested by the State Conservationist or other USDA agency heads at the State level as long as they are within the programs authorized by Title XII. Such recommendations may include, but are not limited to, recommendations on:

- (1) The criteria to be used in prioritizing program applications;
- (2) The State-specific application criteria;
- (3) Priority natural resource concerns in the State;
- (4) Emerging natural resource concerns and program needs; and
- (5) Conservation practice standards and specifications.

(b) The role of the State Technical Committee is advisory in nature, and the committee will have no implementation or enforcement authority. The implementing agency reserves the authority to accept or reject the committee's recommendations. However, the implementing USDA agency will give strong consideration to the State Technical Committee's recommendations.

(c) State Technical Committees will review whether Local Working Groups are addressing State priorities.

§ 610.25 Subcommittees and Local Working Groups.

(a) *Subcommittees.* In some situations, specialized subcommittees, made up of

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State Technical Committee members, may be needed to analyze and examine specific issues. The State Conservationist may assemble certain members, including members of Local Working Groups and other knowledgeable individuals, to discuss, examine, and focus on a particular technical or programmatic topic. The subcommittee may seek public participation, but it is not required to do so. Nevertheless, recommendations resulting from these subcommittee sessions, other than sessions of Local Working Groups, will be made only in a general session of the State Technical Committee where the public is notified and invited to attend. Decisions resulting from recommendations of Local Working Groups will be communicated to NRCS in accordance with the standard operating procedures described in §610.23(b).

(b) *Local Working Groups.* (1) Local Working Groups will be composed of conservation district officials, agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the local area, nonindustrial private forest land owners, and other professionals representing relevant agricultural and conservation interests and a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, plant, wetland, and wildlife sciences who are familiar with private land agricultural and natural resource issues in the local community;

(2) Local Working Groups will provide recommendations on local natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs; and

(3) Local Working Groups will follow the standard operating procedures described in §610.23(b).

Subpart D—Conservation of Private Grazing Land

SOURCE: 67 FR 68497, Nov. 12, 2002, unless otherwise noted.

§610.31 Purpose and scope.

(a) This subpart sets forth the policies for the Conservation of Private Grazing Land (CPGL) Program, as authorized by Section 386 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, (Pub. L. 104-127, April 4, 1996) 16 U.S.C. 2005b. Under the CPGL

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Program, NRCS will provide technical assistance to landowners and managers who request assistance based on locally-established priorities and resource concerns. The purpose of the CPGL Program is to provide technical assistance to private grazing land owners and managers to voluntarily conserve or enhance grazing land resources to meet ecological, economic, and social demands.

(b) The term “private grazing land” means private, State-owned, tribally owned, and any other non-federally owned rangeland, pastureland, grazed forestland, hayland, and other lands used for grazing.

(c) The NRCS Chief may implement the CPGL Program in any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa. NRCS will provide assistance in cooperation with conservation districts, or directly to a landowner or operator.

§610.32 Technical assistance furnished.

(a) Provide technical assistance to grazing-land owners and managers to plan and implement resource conservation on grazing land. The objective of planning on grazing land is to assist landowners and managers in understanding the basic ecological principles associated with managing their land. This objective can be met by implementing a plan that meets the needs of the resources (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) and management objectives of the owner or manager. NRCS may provide assistance, at the request of the private grazing-land owner or manager to:

(1) Maintain and improve private grazing land resources that provide multiple benefits;

(2) Ensure the long-term sustainability of private grazing land resources;

(3) Implement new grazing land management technologies;

(4) Manage resources on private grazing land through conservation planning, including, but not limited to; grazing management, nutrient management, and weed and invasive species control;