

§ 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