AGRICULTURE COST SHARE PROGRAM

Technical Review Committee

May 26, 2026 - 1:30 PM

Microsoft Teams Meeting Link

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Review and Approval of April Meeting Minutes
3. ACSP Maintenance Period Follow-up and Discussion
4. Member Items

FY2026 TRC Remaining Meeting Schedule

Wednesdays, 1:30 – 3:30 PM

June 24, 2026

AGRICULTURE COST SHARE PROGRAM

Technical Review Committee

April 22, 2026 – Meeting Minutes

April 22, 2026 – Meeting Minutes

Attendees

TRC Members: John Beck, Benjy Strope, Anne Coan, Rick McSwain, Starla Harwood, Rachel Smith, Dewitt Hardee, Rodney Wright, Abubakarr Mansaray, Erin Rivers, Jim Kjelgaard, Alex Jones, Pete Anderson.

Guests: David Williams, Bryan Evans, Teresa Furr, Julie Henshaw, Lorien Deaton, Samantha Allbee, Alexandra Dinwiddie, Shelby Kaplan, Michael Shepherd, Bill Moss, Reger Toledo, Porche Spence, Josh Vetter, Taryn Thompson, Lisa, Fine, Levi Preston, Robert Moore.

Agenda Summary

- Welcome and Introductions
- Approval of February Meeting Minutes
- Grassed Waterway Policy Update – Subsurface Drains and Wetland Guidance
- ACSP Maintenance Period Survey Results and Discussion
- Member Items

Decisions

- Approved the February 18, 2026, meeting minutes (with a minor grammatical correction to Item #4).
- Approved updates to the ACSP Grassed Waterway BMP policy to explicitly allow incorporation of subsurface drains (NRCS Practice Code 606) under specified conditions and adopt revised wetland compliance language.

Actions & Follow-ups

- Staff will compile committee comments and prepare maintenance period scenario options (e.g., mixed approach, reimplementation cap, practice specific changes) for a follow-up discussion. An interim May meeting may be scheduled prior to the June TRC meeting.
- The approved revision to the Grassed Waterway BMP policy will be presented at the May Soil & Water Conservation Commission meeting.

Meeting Proceedings

1) Welcome and Introductions

- Meeting called to order at **1:31 PM**; recording initiated. Chair **John Beck** previewed the agenda and noted time allocation for the survey results discussion.

2) Approval of February Meeting Minutes

- One grammatical correction (removal of a redundant word in Item #4) was accepted. Motion to approve by Benjy Strope; seconded by Anne Coan; approved unanimously via voice vote.

3) Grassed Waterway Policy Update – Subsurface Drains & Wetland Guidance

- Background: The ACSP Grassed Waterway definition and policy have been under review to clarify when subsurface drains (NRCS 606) may be incorporated to improve vegetation establishment and waterway function.
- **Key policy elements presented (slides):**
    - Subsurface drains may be included where needed to address prolonged low flows, high water tables, or seepage conditions that hinder vegetation establishment/maintenance.
    - Design and installation must meet applicable Job Approval Authority (JAA) and NRCS standards, including references in the National Engineering Handbook (NEH 210-650-H); identify existing drain tile; animal guards required on all outlets.
    - Wetland compliance wording (April update): “Subsurface drainage systems may not be used to drain or convert wetlands and must comply with all applicable provisions of the Food Security Act (FSA). USDA participants are responsible for coordinating certification of compliance with the local Farm

Service Agency (FSA) to ensure all wetland related requirements are met before beginning any subsurface drainage work."

- **Discussion highlights (transcript):**
    - Clarified that AD-1026 certification is expected whenever drainage is installed, modified, or maintained, even when prior determinations exist; prior converted wetlands typically proceed via desk review unless scope & effect indicates expansion beyond prior systems.
    - FSA process: AD-1026 filed at FSA; NRCS/Soil Scientist is alerted via the compliance system to review and determine whether field visit is needed; desk approvals occur when determinations are in place and no changes trigger additional review.
    - Committee acknowledged potential timeline impacts where new determinations/field reviews are required, but framed AD-1026 as a participant protection (safety-net) to avoid Farm Bill compliance issues.
- **Motion & Vote:** Motion by Benjy Strope to adopt the updated wording and policy additions; second by Dewitt/Delmon Hardee; approved by voice vote.

4) ACSP Maintenance Period Survey Results and Discussion

- **Survey overview:** Presented by Samantha Allbee. 96 responses across 57 counties (65 district staff; 31 directors). Group and individual surveys captured perceived benefits, concerns, and options regarding maintenance periods for six BMPs: Critical Area Planting, Cropland Conversion to Grass, Diversion, Field Border, Filter Strip, Grassed Waterway.
- **Group themes:**
    - **Benefits:** Increased participation; reduced burden; shorter commitments fit reality (land ownership changes).
    - **Concerns:** Reduced long term environmental benefits; funding/efficiency; lower commitment/behavioral risk.
    - **Alternatives:** Tiered cost share/incentives; re-enrollment restrictions; more monitoring/spot checks.

- **Individual survey (selected findings):**
    - Overall sentiment: **~63.5%** favor moving **some BMPs** to **5-year** (either select BMPs (37.5%) or 5-year with **10-year reimplementation cap** (26%)), vs. ~22.9% favoring to **keep 10-year.**
    - Regional differences observed (Coastal Plain favoring 10 years; Mountains favoring 5-year with cap; Piedmont favoring 5 years on select BMPs).
    - By development context: Urban districts strongly favor 5-year; rural/transitioning more selective or capped approaches.
    - By BMP: **CAP, Filter Strip, Field Border**—majority support for 5-year; **Cropland Conversion, Grassed Waterway, Diversion**—majority support to retain 10-year given hydrologic/structural risk and longevity needs.
- **Committee discussion:**
    - **Local flexibility** is favored, but desire for statewide guardrails to protect conservation investments.
    - **Risk lens:** Concentrated flow practices (Grassed Waterway, Diversion) carry higher failure risk if maintenance lapses—could become sediment sources—suggesting caution about shortening periods for those BMPs. Vegetative BMPs take time to establish for water quality benefits to build.
    - **NSW Reporting:** Several water bodies in NC have nutrient-related impairments and reducing the maintenance period of vegetative practices (Cropland Conversion to Grass/Trees) may lessen the overall achievement of nutrient loss reductions at a watershed scale. Some vegetative practices are included in annual NSW reporting, and nitrogen and phosphorus loss-risk tracking methodologies for agriculture in these watersheds may need to take reduced maintenance periods into account. Agriculture in these watersheds must continue meeting required reductions of nitrogen loss or phosphorus loss risk or the sector could face additional regulations.
    - **Cost share considerations:** Suggestions for differential rates (e.g., incentivize 10-year or reduce rate for 5-year) noted, with reminder of statutory caps (75%, or 90% for qualifying applicants) that could limit certain incentive structures without rule changes.
    - **Contracting realities:** In rapidly developing areas with year-to-year leases, 10-year commitments can prevent good projects; discussion about

successor responsibility and whether contract language or compliance policy could better address ownership changes (e.g., repayment responsibility when land is sold). This topic will be sent to the Cost Share Committee for consideration.

    - **Possible approaches:** Maintain status quo; adopt mixed approach (shorten for vegetative/diffuse flow BMPs, retain 10-year for engineered/hydrologic BMPs); adopt 5-year with 10-year reimplementation cap; or gather more data/analysis before final decision.

- **Next steps:** Staff will synthesize comments and develop 3–4 scenario options for an interim May discussion, so the TRC can provide direction prior to June DIP approvals.

5) Member Items

- No separate items outside the broader discussion.

Meeting Adjourned

- **3:33 PM**.

Technical Review Committee Meeting

May 26, 2026

Agenda

- Review and approve April meeting minutes
- Review benefits/risks for all BMPS in general
- Review outcomes/risks for specific BMPS
- Scenarios for consideration

Benefits and Risks for All BMPS

Benefits:

- Increased participation
- Lowers cumulative maintenance costs for landowners
- Accommodates changes in land use

Risks:

- Reduced water quality and soil erosion benefits
- Land could be converted back to row crops before long-term soil health gains peak
- ACSP's requirement becomes less consistent across practices

Critical Area Planting

Outcomes in 5 years

- Research shows that permanent vegetation often stabilizes erodible land within the first 3–5 years
- Matches some similar programs across other states

Risks after 5 years

- Long-term WQ benefits are lost when the BMP is removed
- If vegetation thins or fails after year 5 (no obligation to maintain), the site can re-erode

(NRCS 342-CPS)

Filter Strip

Outcomes in 5 years

- Measured sediment/nutrient reductions are documented during the establishment phase (first 1–3 years)

Risks after 5 years

- Filter strips are designed to have a 10-year functional life span
- Halving the maintenance commitment elevates the chance of flow channelization and vegetation decline, which quickly erodes sediment/nutrient removal performance

(NRCS 393-CPS)

Field Border

Outcomes in 5 years

- Benefits begin as soon as the perennial cover is established usually within the first growing season

Risks after 5 years

- If borders are not kept dense beyond 5 years, erosion at the field edge can re-emerge

(NRCS 386-CPS)

Cropland Conversion to Grass

Outcomes in 5 years

- Most functional stabilization occurs in the first 3–5 years
- By year five, grass cover is usually fully established, erosion has dropped significantly, and soil structure has improved

Risks

- Some landowners may plow it up or let weeds take over soon after year 5—reducing long-term conservation impact
- If land is converted back to annual cropping too early, erosion rates can spike again

(NRCS 512-CPS)

Grassed Waterway

Outcomes in 5 years

- After grading and successful vegetation establishment (typically a season or more), waterways immediately prevent gully formation and convey concentrated runoff at non erosive velocities, reducing sediment export

Risks

- Stopping O&M after 5 years leads to sediment infill, vegetation thinning, and gully re-initiation.
- Cost escalation: deferred maintenance often turns into major reconstruction instead of routine scraping/reseeding

(NRCS 412-CPS)

Diversion

Outcomes in 5 years

- Immediately upon construction and stabilization, diversions redirect and manage upland runoff away from sensitive areas, structures, and erosion hotspots

Risks

- Without ongoing maintenance after year 5, ridge settlement and sedimentation reduce capacity; design freeboard is lost and flows overtop cutting new gullies and delivering high sediment/nutrient pulses to receiving waters

(NRCS 362-CPS)

Options to consider

1. Tiers – different rates per BMP
2. BMP-specific change (reduce select BMPs)
3. Reduce with reimplementation cap
4. No change to maintenance periods

Option 1: A tiered cost-share approach:

- Retain a 10-year maintenance period with a 75% cost-share rate, but offer a 5-year maintenance period at a lower cost-share rate

Critical Area Planting

Component	75 % Cost	60% Cost	50% Cost
GRADING – Minimum, <=1/4 acre	$1973	$1578	$1315
VEGETATION – Bulk lime, seed, fertilizer	$144	$115	$96
VEGETATION – Mulch, small grain straw	$365	$292	$243
TOTAL	**= $2482**	**= $1985**	**= $1654**

Option 1: A tiered cost-share approach:

- Consider both 90/75% cost-share rates with tiers
- Cropland Conversion to Grass is currently $476/acre

BMP	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%
Cropland Conversion to Grass	$428	$405	$381	$357	$333	$309	$286	$262	$238

Option 1: A tiered cost-share approach:

- Align the standard cost-share rate with the New, Limited Resource Farmer, or EVAD special cost-share rates
- In the example below, the special rate is reduced the same percentage as the standard rate

BMP	90%	85%	80%	75%	70%	65%	60%	55%	50%
Cropland Conversion to Grass	$428	$405	$381	$357	$333	$309	$286	$262	$238

❖ **A reimplementation restriction is necessary for Option 1 to avoid the loopholes on double funding, otherwise cooperators could get two contracts in ten years.**

Option 2: Change some BMPS but not all:

- Move certain BMPs to 5-year maintenance periods
- Retain 10-year maintenance periods for other practices

State	Field Borders (386)	Critical Area Planting (342)	Filter Strips (393)	Cropland Conversion to Grass (512)	Grassed Waterways (412)	Diversions (362)
Iowa	5-year	5-year	5-year	5-year	10-year	20-year
Virginia	10-year	5-year	10-year	5-year	10-year	10-year
Kansas	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year
Wisconsin	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year
Missouri	10-year	5-year 10-year in feed lots	5-year 10-year for native warm season grass	5-years for pasture seeding 10-years for native warm season grass	10-year	10-year

Option 2: Change some BMPS but not all:

Example:

Move vegetative BMPs to 5-year maintenance periods

State	Field Borders (386)	Critical Area Planting (342)	Filter Strips (393)	Cropland Conversion to Grass (512)	Grassed Waterways (412)	Diversions (362)
Iowa	5-year	5-year	5-year	5-year	10-year	20-year
Virginia	10-year	5-year	10-year	5-year	10-year	10-year
Kansas	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year
Wisconsin	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year
Missouri	10-year	5-year 10-year in feed lots	5-year 10-year for native warm season grass	5-years for pasture seeding 10-years for native warm season grass	10-year	10-year

Option 2: Change some BMPS but not all:

Example:

Retain 10-year maintenance periods for design practices

State	Field Borders (386)	Critical Area Planting (342)	Filter Strips (393)	Cropland Conversion to Grass (512)	Grassed Waterways (412)	Diversions (362)
Iowa	5-year	5-year	5-year	5-year	10-year	20-year
Virginia	10-year	5-year	10-year	5-year	10-year	10-year
Kansas	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year
Wisconsin	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year	10-year
Missouri	10-year	5-year 10-year in feed lots	5-year 10-year for native warm season grass	5-years for pasture seeding 10-years for native warm season grass	10-year	10-year

Option 3: Reduce all with reimplementation cap

- Reduce the BMP maintenance periods from 10 to 5 years with a policy restriction that the BMP may not receive cost share funds for 10 years following implementation.
  - Ex. *Maintenance of the following BMPs is required for 5 years to remain in compliance. The district may not reimplement the BMP for a period of 10 years following implementation.*
    - Critical area planting
    - Cropland conversion
    - Diversion
    - Field border
    - Filter strip
    - Grassed waterway

Option 4: No change to maintenance periods

- The maintenance periods of all BMPs remain at 10-years

General caveats to consider if maintenance periods change

1) BMP policies/average cost list would be updated to reflect changes
2) Clear communication of risks to landowners
   - If any BMPs move to a 5-year maintenance period, there must be clear guidance to landowners about the risks of stopping maintenance early such as erosion returning or vegetative decline.
3) Post-maintenance recommendations would need to be clarified
   - Although maintenance would end at year 5, we should ensure there is guidance beyond the contract period to preserve conservation benefits where possible.

Open discussion