



# AGRICULTURE COST SHARE PROGRAM

## Technical Review Committee

December 17, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

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**TRC Members:** John Beck, Erin Rivers, Abubakarr Mansaray, Starla Harwood, Anne Coan, Dewitt Hardee, Rick McSwain, Benjy Strobe, Rodney Wright, Rachel Smith, Alex Jones

**Guests:** Shelby Kaplan, Allie Dinwiddie, Julie Henshaw, Lisa Fine, Lorien Deaton, Levi Preston, Matthew Berens, Robert Moore, Sam Just, Rogelio Toledo, Bryan Evans, Porche Spence, Gail Hughes

### Meeting Proceedings:

#### 1. Welcome

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 1:31 PM. Recording initiated.

- A. Introduced new member Dr. Abubakarr Mansaray (NC A&T), who is replacing Dr. Niroj Aryal.
- B. Announced David Harris will step down at the end of his elected term; replacement expected by February.

#### 2. Review and Approval of June Meeting Minutes

- A. Motion by DeWitt Hardee; second by Rachel Smith.
- B. Motion passed.

#### 3. ACSP Updates

- A. Waste Management Plan Guidance draft to be shared before February meeting.
- B. Maintenance period reduction update forthcoming.
- C. Spot-check contract selection tool under development.

#### 4. Grassed Waterway Policy Update

- A. John Beck reviewed updates to the Grassed Waterway BMP policy related to the inclusion of language on subsurface drains (NRCS Code 606).
  - i. Use only when necessary for vegetation survival.
  - ii. Requires proper Job Approval Authority.
  - iii. Animal guards required on all drain outlets.
  - iv. Wetlands compliance emphasized to avoid Farm Bill issues.

- v. SWCC JAA for subsurface drain would be nested under Grassed Waterway, similar to how Irrigation Pipeline is included with Trough and Tank JAA.

B. Discussion points:

- i. B. Strobe asked if there was any uptake difference between just grass alone or drain tile and if tile removes the water quality benefit. R. Smith replied the BMP is primarily a water conveyance channel for erosion control- we want the water to drain off and not stand in the waterway. Without tile the water may sit, killing the grass and causing an erosion issue. Using subsurface drain allows for management of this.
- ii. A. Mansaray asked if certain species of grasses are being used that may handle high waterflow/runoff conditions. J. Beck and R. Smith replied that species choice is dependent upon the standard and the cooperator choice, but grass species selections are dependent on what would handle the typical runoff events.
- iii. A. Coan asked if the issue is associated with low slope conditions. R. Smith answered that if you are in a particularly low slope adjacent to surface water, then drainage could be an issue, which increases the need for drains. Biggest concern is grass not surviving. The BMP proximity to the groundwater slope is a major factor and the closer you get to a water source, the higher the groundwater slope. This often occurs in relatively flat areas and may create an issue when digging down the grade of a waterway.
- iv. A. Coan stressed the importance that this policy addition defines the intent, so it is clear ACSP is not facilitating drainage work. R. Smith mentioned an additional step of verification may be needed to ensure appropriate need and use.
- v. Follow up clarification is needed on how the program defines wetlands related to this BMP. Staff will add some clarifying language. Participation in the BMP should not impact a cooperator's USDA Farm Bill Compliance (i.e. swamp buster rules). Sufficient preparatory site planning upfront is ideal to document wetland or drainage needs. Farms may be prior converted, but when making changes to a drainage system a determination is needed.

C. Division will revise draft policy and present updates in February.

5. Member Items

- A. Full-year calendar invites requested for FY2027.

- B. Gail Hughes presented an issue Orange SWCD has faced with Contractor/Operator in Charge (OIC) compliance concerns; advised to coordinate with regulators and discuss at the next 1217 meeting.

**Meeting Adjourned: 2:47 PM**