



Steve Troxler
Commissioner

**North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services**
Division of Soil and Water Conservation

David Williams
Director

THE NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL WATER RESOURCES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
AgWRAP Review Committee: Monday, October 13, 2025: 1:00 pm

Meeting began at 1:02pm

Attendees: Julie Henshaw, Jacob Peele, Mitch Peele, Robert Moore, Sarah Cope, Shelby Kaplan, Madison Bridges, Darren Layton, Lorien Deaton.

Agenda

- I. Welcome and introductions
- II. Recap of July SWCC meeting
- III. Commission process changes
 - a. Julie Henshaw explained some changes to action item approve at the Commission level and at the review committee levels for all cost share programs. The Commission's work session used to be held the evening before the business meeting, but with new members on the Commission, the work sessions have been moved back to occur a week ahead of the business session.
 - b. Another change is how the Commission will vote on action items. To allow Commission members adequate time to review action items prior to voting, all action items will be presented as informational items at the prior meeting. For example, AgWRAP's Regional Applications will be presented as an informational item with progress details at the January meeting so the Commission can be well-informed in time to vote at March's meeting.
- IV. 2025 NC Tobacco Trust Fund Grant Application

Mitchell Peele presented a grant via the Tobacco Trust Fund that received funding recently. The focus of this project is to update the AgH2O Plan that created AgWRAP in 2011. Updates to policies and program standards will identify flood retention opportunities. The Eastern Leadership Group will lead the work group through the process as they did in 2011. ~80 individuals helped with the initial AgH2O plan, and all are expected to take part in the update.

V. ARC Updates

- a. The ARC webpage will be updated to mirror Ag Cost Share's technical review committee website. Committee members and their affiliations will be listed, agendas and meeting minutes will be posted along with Teams meeting details.
- b. Another change to the ARC is the approval of alternate committee members. There are three district representatives – one for each region (eastern, central, western) currently serving as voting committee members. Alternate representatives will be selected to attend ARC meetings in their absence as needed. This will assist with having continued representation across the state in every meeting but also ensure that each region receives a vote on action items.

VI. FY2025 Cost Share Program Annual Report Update

Data from our cost share contracting software has been compiled and editing the cost share programs annual report has begun. Outside of StRAP details, the text version of the report's first draft is complete. I will update StRAP's section soon and send the report to Julie and John for review. Following their edits, I will update both the text version and the adobe online version of the report for commission approval in January.

VII. Next Meeting Dates for FY26:

- a. February 9, 2026 at 1pm - information items presented today in preparation for February meeting:
 - To follow the action item changes from the Commission, information items that will be voted on in February's meeting were presented today. The main item to address in February's meeting will be the update on the AgWRAP Regional Applications that ranked the highest and were approved as feasible by technical services. The deadline to apply is November 14th. Thus far, there are 8 applications total, 7 have been initiated and 1 submitted.
 - Following the deadline, I'll have two weeks to rank the applications and will forward the highest-ranking new pond and pond repair applications to technical services so engineers and soil scientists can confirm project feasibility.
 - Projects deemed feasible by technical services will be presented to the review committee at the February meeting for a vote to send the applications forward to the Commission at the March meeting.
 - February's meeting will have the alternate committee members finalized.
- b. June 15th, 2026 at 1pm OR July 13th 2026 at 1pm:
 - The Commission's July meeting has been rescheduled for July 29th and the work session will be July 21st. This gives the ARC the option of holding the next meeting on June 15th to allow for ample time to prepare Commission items for the July meeting – but also means funding totals presented will be estimates.
 - Holding the meeting on July 13th would allow for exact numbers to be presented, but if there aren't enough voting members in attendance, could make Commission meeting preparation difficult. I will leave this item on the agenda for February's meeting for the ARC to choose which date they would prefer to meet.

VIII. Open Discussion & Conclusion

- a. Outreach ideas – the cost share team wants to make sure all forms of outreach are utilized when updating local districts on deadlines and program changes. We currently post updates and deadlines online, send listserve emails, host recorded webinars that are posted online, and present program updates in person across the state every February. Even with these outreach methods, we hear that districts still don't feel well-informed on program changes. I asked the ARC for outreach ideas that have worked for them and their specific audiences. Jacob Peele mentioned having a free text service available for district employees to sign up for and unsubscribe from. Texts regarding program deadlines or meetings can be sent to districts who've signed up.

No other ideas regarding outreach were discussed. This item will remain on the agenda for February to allow the committee time to come up with additional ideas that may be helpful.

- b. Water Supply Well ideas - The cost of installing new wells is increasing. New wells average over \$14,000 across the entire state and one county just had required well permits increase to \$800 a permit. Without additional recurring funding for AgWRAP, it's getting harder to complete one well contract within the fiscal year with the local allocation being around \$9000 or \$10,000. Ideas on how to manage increasing prices with no additional funding were requested.

Madison Bridges with Lincoln SWCD says they've adapted to this funding discrepancy by funding one well per year and requesting a supplemental allocation the following February. If there is less than \$3000 left in the AG fund, they will return it rather than starting a new well contract with such low funding available.

No other discussion or ideas were presented. This discussion item will be revisited at February's meeting to review again. The more ideas we can create or investigate ahead of time, the better off AgWRAP and Districts will be when another major drought hits.

- c. No additional items or questions were raised and the meeting adjourned at 1:37pm.