

# ARIZONA'S LOCAL WORK GROUPS



# LOCAL WORK GROUPS

A Brief Introduction



# WHAT ARE LOCAL WORK GROUPS?

- LWGs are subcommittees of the State Technical Committee
- LWGs act in an advisory capacity
  - *Provide recommendations on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs to NRCS and others*
- LWGs should be made up of local stakeholders who are in some way involved in natural resources in your area
  - *Conservation District Supervisors and staff*
  - *Local producers*
  - *Federal and State natural resource/land management agencies, including your area's NRCS-Designated Conservationist*
  - *Agricultural Organizations (e.g., Farm Bureau)*
  - *Fish & Wildlife Organizations (e.g., Pheasants, duck, quail, etc.)*
  - *Environmental Organizations (e.g., The Nature Conservancy, Audubon, etc.)*
  - *State or Local elected officials*
  - *FSA county executive director/County Committee Members*
  - *Cooperative Extension*
  - *Tribal Representatives*
  - *Resource Conservation and Development Councils*

# WHAT IS A CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S ROLE IN LOCAL WORK GROUPS?

A Conservation District is the driving force behind a Local Work Group. A Conservation District leading LWG efforts:

- Reinforces the principle of locally-led conservation in a formalized manner with a consistent application
- WHY YOU EXIST
- Introduces you as the leaders of locally-led conservation and community input to new stakeholders
  - *New stakeholders may include underserved producers, active local conservation groups that you have not worked with, etc.*
- Allows you to exhibit your local leadership role

# WHAT IS THE NRCS-DESIGNATED CONSERVATIONISTS' ROLE?

- Help conservation districts identify members for the LWG
- Help prepare information/materials to support the LWG (resource priorities/program needs)
- Support/Advise LWGs on technical, programmatic, and procedural matters
- Ensures thoughtful consideration is given to LWG's recommendations (resource needs, suggested practices, ranking, etc.)
- Provides the LWG with the status of recommendations given to the State Technical Committee within 90 days of submission

# STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES OF LWG MEETINGS

- LWG meetings must be held at least once a year—ideally, you should be doing more than one, and be doing more than “ticking the box” (more on that later).
- LWG meetings are open to the public and must be announced via a public forum (e.g., website) in accordance with state laws.
- Agendas must be provided in advance in accordance with state laws.
- Summaries of all meetings will be made available to the public via the local NRCS office.
- LWG recommendations are submitted to the State Technical Committee by the NRCD Designated Conservationist.

# HOW TO HOLD AN IMPACTFUL LWG MEETING



# STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

- Diverse stakeholder involvement is key to having a successful, engaging meeting.
  - *Local input on priority resource needs for local, state, and federal*
- Seek out new stakeholders and ask your existing stakeholders to assist with this-- you never know who they may be working with who would like to be involved.
  - *Emphasize how they would benefit from participating when approaching them.*
- Identify shared resources that connect natural resource concerns and efforts underway
  - *Time, people, funds, etc.*



# MEETING DESIGN

- Identify roles: Who will lead the meeting? The Conservation District chair? A member of the Board? A Cooperator? A third party?
  - *The Designated NRCS Conservationist should remain in the role of participant and support, not as lead.*
- Identify meeting goals
  - *Discuss with your Designated NRCS Conservationist the goals you would like to see achieved at the meeting.*
- Gather information about programs/projects in the area that are underway or have recently been completed that address previous/ongoing resource concerns
- Reach out to stakeholders who have participated in your LWG meetings before and get their input on discussion topics (there is a list of suggested questions in the Handbook)

# MEETING DESIGN

Are you having an in-person meeting, virtual, or hybrid?

## ■ In-Person:

- *Pick a location, date, and time that works for a majority of your participants. You can send out a Doodle poll to your known stakeholders. And set up an RSVP.*
- *Consider what sort of equipment you may need (projector, screen, AV, etc.)*
- *Consider the seating arrangements. How can the space be set up to encourage participation?*
- *Depending on the time and length of the meeting, consider providing refreshments or a meal, if possible*
- *Have all pertinent materials printed (e.g., agenda, data, reports)*
- *Identify someone who can take notes.*
- *Select your facilitator*
- *Provide a quick overview of LWGs if you have new stakeholders present*

# MEETING DESIGN

- Virtual:
  - *Identify a date and time that will work for the maximum amount of your stakeholders.*
  - *Set up a registration link via Zoom, for example.*
  - *Email pertinent materials out to all confirmed participants before the meeting.*
  - *Identify someone who can watch for “raised hands” and respond to chats.*
  - *Record the meeting so you can use it to refer back for notes.*
- Hybrid:
  - *Combine the best practices listed for in-person and virtual! Audio will be key in this scenario, so ensure you have a great set-up!*
- Whichever style of meeting you end up having, try to make the meeting as interactive as possible. Get people talking. Intersperse presentations with discussion.

# OUTPUT

Identify the following and provide recommendations:

- Resource Needs
- Priority Resource Areas
- Resource Concerns of each area (High, Medium, Low)
- Practices to address concerns
- Ranking questions needed to focus funds to address resource concerns
- Provide data for price changes needed for Incentives/Cost Share

# PORTAL

- Before
- During
- After

# FINAL CHAPTER

- Chapter 5 is where the local working group uses the data available to set priorities for conservation treatments based on resource concerns, suitability for treatment, and interested parties.

RESOURCES



# WHAT ARE THE STATUTORY & REGULATORY ORIGINS OF LOCAL WORK GROUPS?

- A.R.S. 37-1054 (A) (1) & (6)

- *(1) Conduct surveys, investigations and research relating to the character of the soil, soil erosion prevention within a farm or ranch, methods of cultivation, farm and range practices, seeding, eradication of noxious growths and any other measures that will aid farm and range operations, disseminate information pertaining thereto, and carry-on research programs with or without the cooperation of this state or its agencies or the United States or its agencies.*
  - Example: Resource Needs Assessments
- *(6) Develop, publish and bring to the attention of landowners within the district comprehensive plans for the conservation of soil and water resources within the district that specify in such detail as may be feasible the acts, procedures, performances and avoidances necessary or desirable for the effectuation of the plans.*
  - Example: Conservation Action Plans



# WHAT ARE THE STATUTORY & REGULATORY ORIGINS OF LOCAL WORK GROUPS?

## ■ [US Title 7, Subtitle B, Chapter 6, Subchapter B, Part 610, Subpart C](#)

- *1985 Farm Bill (Section 1261): The Secretary of Agriculture establishes State Technical Committees through the Soil Conservation Service (NRCS). STCs can make recommendations on the implementation of conservation programs and activities at the state level.*
- *1996 Farm Bill: The role of State Technical Committees is expanded to include an opportunity for interested stakeholders to advise NRCS on how best to implement conservation programs/activities at the local level*
- *2008 Farm Bill: Local Work Groups are made subcommittees of the State Technical Committee, exempting them from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).*

# WHAT ARE THE STATUTORY & REGULATORY ORIGINS OF LOCAL WORK GROUPS?

- USDA 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A 501.13
  - It is the responsibility of the conservation district to:
    - (i) Develop the conservation needs assessment as outlined in 440-CPM, Part 500, Subpart A.
    - (ii) Assemble (Convene) the USDA local working group.
    - (iii) Set the agenda.
    - (iv) Conduct the USDA local working group meetings.
    - (v) Transmit the USDA local working group's priority area(s) and funding requests to the NRCS designated conservationist or the State Technical Committee, as appropriate.

# THE AZ LOCAL WORK GROUP HANDBOOK

The Arizona Local Work Group Handbook will help guide Arizona's Conservation Districts in understanding the purpose of the Local Work Group (LWG), how to run LWG meetings, and how to engage local conservation stakeholders.