

West Region Technology and Other Group Organizational Structure

This document establishes an organizational structure to facilitate the coordination of State efforts to develop and implement technology. It also establishes an organizational structure by which State Administrative Officers, Assistant State Conservationists, and Public Affairs Officers can share information.

Background -- Need for Coordination and Implementation Workgroups

As NRCS goes about the business of providing leadership to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment, employees are faced with constantly changing technology and technology needs. The needs range from tools used to inventory and analyze resources during the planning process to the tools we use to document conservation plans and contracts. The needs also vary from state to state according to resource issues and various laws and regulations. In addition, state operations, programs, communications and administration provide support and direction for field personnel.

The need for employees with similar work responsibilities to work together in the development, training, and coordination of various tools and methods used in carrying out our responsibilities is critical. States are supported by the West National Technology Support Center (WNTSC) and other National Centers but there are still great efficiencies to be realized by coordinating efforts between States. The objective of this document is to establish a system of working groups to improve efficiency as States implement tools and methods; to share those tools, methods and experiences with others; and to reduce duplication of efforts within the states in the region.

Structure:

West Regional Technology Work Group

The Western Region Technology Work Group (WRTWG) will be sponsored and supported by the West Region Leadership Team (WRLT) to provide regional leadership and coordination for technology transfer within the region. The work group works on issues sponsored and approved by the WRLT. The WRTWG will be composed of the State Resource Conservationist from each state plus two State Conservation Engineers and two State Soil Scientists as members at large selected by the WRLT. A Chairperson will be selected by the membership to function for an annual term.

The Regional Assistant Chief will name a West Region State Conservationist to function as advisor to the WRTWG. The advisor represents the WRLT and serves as a member of the WRTWG to provide management support and input to the decisions of the Work Group.

The National Technology Specialist from the WNTSC will function as Work Group Coordinator and represent the WNTSC to the Work Group.

Discipline Consortia

Discipline Consortia will be approved by the WRLT and sponsored by the WRTWG. Discipline Consortia representing agronomists, biologists, cultural resource specialists, economists, engineers, foresters, grazing land specialists, plant material specialists, soil scientists, and water quality specialists from each state will be organized or maintained. Each state will designate a single state representative for each consortium although a consortium may decide to invite broader participation. Each consortium will select a Chairperson from the membership for an annual term. The WRTWG will assign a mentor to each consortium to facilitate coordination and support. Discipline specialists from the WNTSC will provide technical advice and support to the consortia.

Other Work Groups

Other work groups will be approved and sponsored by the WRLT. These groups will be as follows:

- Public Affairs Officers
- State Administrative Officers
- Assistant State Conservationists (Operations)
- Assistant State Conservationists (Programs)

Each work group will select a Chairperson from the membership for an annual term. The WRLT will provide a mentor to each consortium to facilitate coordination and support. National specialists will be asked to provide program or operational advice and support to each group as needed.

Functions:

West Region Technology Work Group

The following represents a summary of the primary technical functions of the West Region Technology Work Group:

- Coordinate technology transfer at the state level to assure that technology delivered meets customer expectations, management priorities, and agency requirements.
- Coordinate technology needs across state lines to assure regional consistency and work together on issues that commonly affect the states. Projects approved by the WRLT may be assigned to Discipline Consortia for completion. Completed products will be shared with all other states and the Pacific Basin to eliminate duplication of effort. Examples: Development of ESD/FSG, CSG, practice standards and specifications.
- Coordinate technical support activities to assure they are consistent, legal, and technically correct.
- Assist in determining technology transfer and training needs to assure that the NRCS and partnership workforce continues to be recognized as experts in natural resources planning and application.
- Assure that available and needed technology is delivered to specialists and field staffs in

the region.

- Coordinate technology needs at the field level by working through the West Region State Conservationists, state technical specialists, national technology specialist, and WNTSC specialists.
- Facilitate the development of high priority and mission critical technology.

Discipline Consortia

- Communicate with other State Technical Specialists on current issues and identify opportunities for collaboration that results in more efficient and effective technology delivery in the region.
- Work together on projects assigned by the WRTWG to find favorable solutions to problems or develop requested products and eliminate duplication of efforts within the states in the West.
- Strive for consistent and compatible technical information being utilized in the field.
- Identify research and technology development needs among the states.
- Work to eliminate inconsistencies in the implementation of technology and technical processes across state lines.
- Forward information and technology needs to the West Region Technology Work Group.
- Forward information and regional technology needs to leadership within the consortium.
- Function as a two-way communications mechanism between the WRTWG and the Field, including Technical Discipline Specialists.

Other Work Groups

- Communicate with others in the same position on current issues and identify opportunities for collaboration that results in more efficient and effective program/operational/communications/administrations support in the region.
- Work together on projects assigned by the WRLT to find favorable solutions to problems or develop requested products and eliminate duplication of efforts within the states in the West.
- Strive for consistent and compatible information being utilized in the field.
- Identify common needs among the states.
- Work to eliminate inconsistencies in the implementation of programs/operations/communications/administration across state lines.
- Forward program/operational/communications/administration needs to the WRLT.
- Forward information and needs to leadership within the Consortium.
- Function as a two-way communications mechanism between the WRLT and the States.

Operation:

West Region Technology Work Group

The WRTWG will develop an annual West Region Technology Business Plan and submit it to

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the WRLT for approval. The business plan will include those items that require coordination between and among states, needed meetings, and a budget. The work group will teleconference monthly. The work group will carry out the approved business plan by assigning actions, activities, and projects to Discipline Consortia as appropriate to accomplish mission critical objectives. The consortium mentor will report back to the WRTWG on the activities and progress of the consortium.

For those activities that do not include all the states in the region, a special task team will be assembled from the appropriate states. Technical specialists from the WNTSC will serve as resource specialists as appropriate.

Discipline Consortia

The Discipline Consortia will concentrate efforts toward development of products needed at the state and field level. Examples of products include:

- Regional Ecological Site Description Plan for development of all ecological sites in the region
- Multi-State CSG coordination in CRAs that cross state lines
- Regional procedures for developing average annual practice cost lists
- Tillage tool descriptions for RUSLE2 training

The Discipline Consortia will provide input into the West Region Technology Business Plan for those actions, activities, and projects that are needed to ensure appropriate technology is being used in agency activities. Once the business plan is approved, the consortium will carry out those actions, activities, and projects and report progress through their mentor to the WRTWG. Each Discipline Consortia will teleconference at least quarterly.

National technical specialists at the WNTSC will serve as technical advisors and supporters to the consortia. They may be able to provide some administrative support either personally or through the resources of the support center. They will not function as chairperson or mentor to the consortia.

West Region Work Groups

Each West Region Work Group will develop an annual business plan that includes those items that require coordination between and among states, budgets, and any meetings needed to accomplish the plan. The business plan will be approved by the WRLT. The work group will teleconference monthly. The work group will assign actions, activities, and projects from the business plan to work group members as appropriate to accomplish mission critical objectives. The work group mentor will report back to the WRLT on the activities and progress of the group.

Other

All business plans will be submitted to the WRLT in draft by October 1 each year and in final within 30 days of states receiving their allocations.

West Region Technology Work Group Membership as of October 2006

Full Name	State	Business Phone	Business Fax	E-mail
Gene Schock	AK	(907) 761-7715	(907) 761-7790	Gene.Schock@ak.usda.gov
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**West Region Consortia List, Chairpersons, Mentors and Technical Advisors
as of February 2007**

Consortium	Chairperson	State	Mentor	State	Technical Advisor
Agronomy	Bonda Habets	WY	Frank Easter	WA	Tom Gohlke
Biology	Tim Dring	WA	Jerry Jasmer	WY	Wendell Gilgert, Kathryn Boyer, Meg Bishop
Cultural Resources	Scott Williams	WA	Mark Weatherstone	ID	Meg Bishop
Economics	Hal Gordon	OR	Gene Schock	AK	Vacant
Engineering	David J. Pacheco	NM	Charles Davis	CA	Kip Yasumiishi, Peter Robinson, Charles Zuller
Forestry	Frank Gariglio	ID	Russ Hatz	OR	Lyn Townsend
Grazing Lands	Herman Garcia	CO	George Chavez	NM	Pat Shaver, Jeff Repp

Plant Materials	Joe Williams	OR	Jeff Burwell	CO	Jim Briggs
Soils	Steve Park	CO	Chuck Gordon	MT	Terry Aho
Water Quality	Hudson Minshew	HI	Paul Scales	HI	Charles Zuller, Tom Gohlke, Shaun McKinney

Other Work Group List, Chairpersons, and Mentors as of Fall 2005

Work Group	Chairperson	State	Mentor	State
Asst. STC (Operations)	Paul Taylor	WA	Gus Hughbanks	WA
Asst. STC (Programs)	TBA		TBA	
State Administrative Officer	Lesley Kelly	OR	Bob Graham	OR
Public Affairs Officers	TBA		TBA	

Addendums to the Framework Plan

1. Guidelines for Holding Consortia Meetings and Workshops West Region
2. WRTWG Consortia Mentor Selection and Rotation Protocol

Guidelines for Holding Consortia Meetings and Workshops West Region

Process for Requesting Consortia meetings/workshops

1. Consortium members recommend holding a meeting/workshop and establish meeting objectives.
2. Consortium prepares written justification, proposed dates and location, and proposed budget following guidelines below. Considerations during the planning phase include:
 - a. Holding a teleconference or net meeting in lieu of a face-to-face meeting
 - b. Holding the NRCS meeting in conjunction with a national conference where most consortium members are likely to be attending
 - c. Selecting a least cost site/location/agenda for the proposed meeting
3. Consortium Mentor concurs with recommendation.
4. Consortium Chair (or Mentor) submits written recommendation, including meeting objectives, proposed justification, proposed budget, and proposed agenda to West Region Technology Work Group for concurrence.
5. West Region Technology Work Group concurs with recommendation and adds meeting/workshop to WRTWG Business Plan.
6. WRLT approves Business Plan.
7. If approved by WRLT and the estimated cost is greater than \$7,500, consortium completes meeting approval form (SCS-FNM-72 as described in GM Title 250, Part 406) and submits to the National Office (Deputy Chief for Management) for approval. If estimated cost is greater than \$25,000, other special provisions apply. If a meeting of seven or more employees requires the payment of transportation expenses, a cost-benefit analysis must be conducted and kept on file.
8. Once approved, host state works with Consortium members to plan, organize and hold the meeting.

Guidelines for Justifying a Consortium Meeting or Workshop

A consortium meeting or workshop should include provisions for:

1. Training for consortium members. Training needs should be identified in each employee's Employee/Individual Development Plan
2. Developing specific work products needed by state/field offices that support the Chief's strategic planning priorities (e.g. Farm Bill, Human Capital, Partners, Market-based Approach, Watershed Approach, Energy, and Air Quality).

- a. Example products:
 - i. Reviewing and preparing a unified response to new practice standards
 - ii. Developing technical assessment tools
 - iii. Air Quality Planning Guides
 - iv. Job Sheets
 - v. Market based strategies
3. Developing and implementing a consortium business plan
4. Coordinating technical input to delivery of Farm Bill programs (e.g. coordinating technical standards, protocols, and products across state lines/MLRA boundaries)
5. Coordinating implementation of agency policies across state/MLRA boundaries
6. Developing strategies to address new technologies or resource issue areas

Justification should also include:

1. Written rationale for why a face-to-face meeting is needed in lieu of a teleconference or net meeting
2. Written rationale for selection of proposed dates and location

Items to include in Proposed Budget

1. Estimated number of attendees
2. Number of days of meeting/travel
3. Estimated travel/per diem costs
4. Meeting room costs
5. Supplies
6. Other miscellaneous costs – printing, etc.
7. Proposed source of funds – e.g. state budgets, or national or regional sources

Addendum 2 to the Framework Plan

WRTWG Consortia Mentor Selection and Rotation Protocol

1. A WRTWG member shall mentor no more than one consortium at a time.
2. A mentorship should be a minimum of 2 years whenever possible.
3. The WRTWG Chair shall relinquish mentor duties to someone else during their tenure and one year following that period.
4. The soils consortium shall be mentored by one of the SSS WRTWG members, and the engineering consortium shall be mentored by one of the SCE WRTWG members.
5. Current mentor assignments shall be retained until a vacancy occurs. Vacancies may arise from attrition, change in Chair, or request for change from mentor / consortium.
6. Replacements should be based on soliciting a volunteer from the WRTWG who has an interest or expertise in the consortium discipline. If there are no volunteers, the Chair makes a recommendation from members who are not currently serving as a mentor. The nomination is approved if a majority of the WRTWG concurs with the Chair's recommendation.
7. A mentor may request to switch consortiums when a vacancy arises.