# 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 ana1yze 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 Specia1ists.

**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/operationa1/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 Pan and submit it to 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 eco1ogical sites in the region
- Multi-State CSG coordination in CRAs that cross state lines
- Regional procedures for developing average annual practice cost 1ists
- 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 March 2012**

| Name | State | Mentor to Consortium | Phone |
|---|---|---|---|
| Helen Denniston | SRC-Alaska | | 907-761-7756 |
| Steve Barker | SRC-Arizona | Plant Materials | 602-280-8823 |
| Kurt Simon | Acting SRC-California | | 530-792-5667 |
| Gene Backhaus, Chair | SRC-Colorado | | 720-544-2826 |
| Anthony Ingersoll | SRC-Pacific Islands Area | Water Quality | 808-541-2600 x111 |
| Gene Schock | SRC-Idaho | Biology | 208-378-5720 |
| Rob Sampson | SCE-Idaho | State Engineers | 208-378-5727 |
| Jerry Schaefer | SRC-Montana | | 406-587-6829 |
| Chuck Gordon | SSS-Montana | Soil Science | 406-587-6818 |
| George Chavez | SRC-New Mexico | Grazing Lands | 505-761-4421 |
| Roger Ford | SCE - New Mexico | | 505-761-4430 |
| Mike Odegard | SRC-Nevada | Cultural Resources | 775-857-8500 x140 |
| Tom Makowski | SRC-Oregon (acting) | | 503-414-3106 |
| Elise Boeke | SRC-Utah | Agronomy | 801-524-4551 |
| Bronson Smart | SCE - Utah | Environmental Eng. | 801-524-4559 |
| Bonda Habets | SRC-Washington | Forestry | 509-323-2961 |
| Larry Johnson | SCE - Washington | Design Eng. | 509-323-2955 |
| Casey Sheley | SRC-Wyoming | GIS | 307-233-6788 |
| Chuck Schmitt | SCE - Wyoming | Irrigation Eng. | 307-233-6748 |
| Jeff Burwell, Advisor | STC-Idaho | | 208-378-5701 |
| Russ Hatz, Coordinator | NTS-WNTSC | | 503-273-2428 |

**West Region Consortia List, Chairpersons, Mentors and Technical Advisors as of March 2012**

| Consortium | Chairperson(s) | Mentor | Technical Advisor(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Agronomy | Adam Reed | Elise Boeke | Rick Fasching and Giulio Ferruzzi |
| Biology | Karen Fullen | George Chavez | Kathryn Boyer, Meg Bishop, Marcus Miller |
| Design Engineers | Mark Yerger | Larry Johnson | Steve Durgin |
| Economics | Julie Pierce | Vacant | Hal Gordon |
| Environmental Engineers | Karen Hoffman | Bronson Smart | Sally Bredeweg |
| Forestry | Misty Seaboldt | Bonda Habets | Craig Ziegler |
| GIS | Randy Wiggins and Scott Splean | Casey Sheley | Steve Campbell |
| Grazing Lands | John Tunberg | Eugene Schock | Pat Shaver and Gene Fults |
| Irrigation Engineers | Fernando Morales | Chuck Schmitt | Peter Robinson |
| Plant Materials | Joe Scianna | Steve Barker | Jim Briggs |
| Soils | Levi Steptoe | Chuck Gordon | Steve Campbell |
| State Conservation Engineers | Steve Becker | Rob Sampson | Kip Yasumiishi |
| Water Quality | Norm Evenstad | Anthony Ingersoll | Shaun McKinney |
| Design Engineers | Mark Yerger | Larry Johnson | Steve Durgin |

# Addendums to the Framework Plan

Addendum 1:

## Guidelines for Holding Consortia Meetings and Workshops West Region (Revised 2/1/2010)

**Process for Requesting Consortia meetings/workshops**

1. Consortium members recommend holding a meeting/workshop and establish meeting objectives, written justification, proposed dates and location, and proposed budget.
   Considerations during the planning phase include:
   a. Holding a teleconference or net meeting in lieu of a face-to-face meeting
   b. Holding the consortia 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
2. Consortium Mentor concurs with recommendation.
3. Consortium Chair and Mentor prepare and submit meeting request package to West Region Technology Work Group for concurrence. Meeting Request Package includes:
   A. Routing Slip
   B. Form NRCS-FNM–72 with the following information:
      i. The number of expected attendees whose expenses will be paid by NRCS;
      ii. The meeting site selected along with the cost comparison, including travel expenses, that justifies the site selected over at least three other comparable sites; and
      iii. Additional expenses expected to be incurred, such as meeting rooms, guest speakers, special equipment rental, etc., to arrive at the total estimated cost of the meeting.
   C. The Detailed Cost Analysis, used to support the information on the NRCS-FNM-72.
   D. Conference or Training Event Request Worksheet.
   E. Cost Comparison used in determining the meeting site selected.
   F. Written justification statement that incorporates the selections made on the Conference or Training Event Request Worksheet.
4. If approved by WRTWG the WRLT representative transmits meeting request package to WRLT for approval.
5. If approved by WRLT but the estimated cost is greater than $10,000 the WRLT submits to the National Office for approval by Associate Chief. Where meeting costs are $40,000 to $100,000 approval by the Chief, the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE), and the Department Chief Financial Officer is required. **NOTE**: Meeting packages must be submitted to NHQ at least 90 days in advance of the start date of the meeting.
6. Once approved, host state works with Consortium members to plan, organize and hold the meeting.

7. Within 30 days after the meeting, Consortium Chair prepares a written report detailing progress on each agenda item. Report is submitted to WRTWG for review. For meetings that require NHQ approval the final report is forwarded to the Chief through WRLT representative.

**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 <u>specific</u> 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/Energy 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

<u>Justification should also include</u>:
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. Meeting cost/person (not including airfare)
8. Estimate of airfare/person
9. Proposed source of funds – e.g. state budgets, or national or regional sources

Addendum 2:

# WRTWG Consortia Mentor Selection and Rotation Protocol (Revised 2/1/2008)

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. One of the SSS WRTWG members shall mentor the soils consortium, and one of the SSE WRTWG members shall mentor the engineering consortium.

5. Mentors will retain their assignments until a vacancy occurs. Vacancies may arise from attrition, change in Chair, or request for change from mentor / consortium.

6. When a consortium needs a replacement mentor, the WRTWG Chair will solicit volunteers from the WRTWG giving first preference to members who have 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. If a majority of the WRTWG concurs with the Chair's recommendation the nomination is approved

7. A mentor may request to switch consortiums when a vacancy arises.