



Agricultural Producers Working Group Meeting Wednesday, March 26, 2025 1:30 p.m.-3:30p.m.

Contact: Brenda Hunt, (775) 877-9005, brenda@cwsd.org

Meeting Purpose: The CRC – APWG works with Carson River Watershed agricultural-associated partners to enhance soil health practices, maintain and improve water quality and water resource management, increase agricultural economic resilience (from drought, climate change, invasive species, etc.) and promote agriculture as a beneficial and critical land use for the protection of the CRW floodplain. See [CRC Agricultural Producers Working Group Foundational Document](#).

Attendees:

Attendee Name	Title	Acronym	Organization
Ariel De Lara	Assistant State Conservationist - Programs	NRCS	NRCS
Joe Frey	Owner/Operator	WSH	Western States Hemp
Chris Fritsen	Branch Supervisor, Nonpoint Source Pollution	NDEP	NDEP Bureau of Water Quality Planning
Kaitlyn Garber	Climate Action Corps Fellow	AWG	Alpine Watershed Group
Brenda Hunt	Watershed Program Manager	CWSD	Carson Water Subconservancy Dist.
Marlee Jenkins	Western Region CD Staff Specialist	DCNR	NV Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources
Mo Loden	Environmental Scientist, NPS Unit	LRWQCB	Lahontan Reg. WQ Control Board
Lindsay Marsh	Water Resource Specialist 1	CWSD	Carson Water Subconservancy District
Allen Moody	State Agronomist	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Albert Mulder	District Conservationist	NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Kelly Nicholas	Senior Watershed Clerk	CWSD	Carson Water Subconservancy District
Rachel Schmidt	Conservation Tech	DVCD	Dayton Valley Conservation District
Christy Sullivan	District Clerk	LVCD	Lahontan Valley Conservation District
Jake Tibbitts	Natural Resources Manager, Eureka CD	Eureka	Eureka CD, NACD, State Conservation Comm.
Andrew Waaswa	Extension Agricultural Educator, Fallon Office	UNCE	UNR Cooperative Extension
Courtney Walker	Stormwater Program Manager	DC	Douglas County Public Works
Rich Wilkinson	District Manager	CVCD	Carson Valley Conservation District
Daunelle Wulstein	Extension Education Project Coordinator	UNCE	UNR Cooperative Extension

Welcome, Introductions, Participant Round Robin

Adam Carpenter is the new Cooperative Extension Coordinator for Carson City.

Andrew Waaswa, UNCE – He reached out to the Western SARE coordinator to see when grants are opening. She said 2026 awards are tied to the Farm Bill, which Congress just extended through another year. There has not yet been a call for applications. She will keep in touch with updates to him. He has several hard-copy SARE publications and several flash drives containing all SARE publications available on a first-come, first-served basis if they are needed.

Christy Sullivan, LVCD – She will wait until her agenda item; no other updates.

Ari De Lara, NRCS – There is one National Water Quality Initiative in the implementation phase in Nevada. It's near the Carson, it's in its last year, and NRCS didn't get any applications this year. If anyone in the meeting knows eligible people in the watershed have them sign up. There is a NWQI in the Yerington area in the planning phase. NRCS needs a partner to develop the plan; the plan comes with a template, so what NRCS needs is clear and spelled out; it's more of a lit review. They can't find anyone; Walker Basin Conservancy has passed because the new manager out there has too much on his plate right now. If that changes they would be the perfect entity. Because many things are paused right now NRCS is hoping to get an extension; however, the funding freeze and how that will affect future work remains uncertain. There is \$50K for an agreement once those become active again, and NDEP may have additional funds for it to help with the administrative burden. Ari was checking to see if anyone in the meeting had the capacity or could set up a side meeting; a qualified graduate student who could follow the template will suffice. NRCS's next move is to check with UNR and UC Extensions. Brenda will check with Ed for ideas. Kelly will send the contact info for Lyon Co. UNCE Coordinator [Kenya Vandervort](#).

The next Nevada ranking date for EQIP applications is June 13. For NWQI projects, any standard irrigation project will fit the requirements as long as it falls within the specific HUC 12. Rich Wilkinson with CVCD said there hasn't been too much interest in the program, and he doesn't know why. He hopes to help more with NRCS to help promote/push their EQIP programs. Brenda asked if the NWQI could be expanded to the whole watershed; however, priority HUC 12s are established at the national level because there's an overlap with drinking water sources. If the office isn't funding projects now because of low demand the request to expand may not be well received. That being said, the NWQI covers the Minden service center so even though several irrigation projects did not fall within the NWQI watersheds, several within the Minden service area were covered for a total of \$2M. **As per Allen Moody, to expand the NWQIs to other HUC 12s would be requesting a new planning phase. The current NWQI will cover several HUC 12s downstream, which may be a possibility; deadline for submissions is Apr. 28, or it could be done next year.** Before moving to complete an application, Chris Fritsen suggested checking to see if water quality indicators are already in place; the QAAP work that CWSD will be doing may be able to lay the groundwork for that. Will check with Mo Loden to see if there are source water protection areas in that part of Alpine Co. that are on ag lands.

Marlee Jenkins, DCNR – Works with the conservation districts program; assists nine conservation districts in western Nevada. No other updates.

Rich Wilkinson, CVCD – No updates (later in agenda).

Courtney Walker, DC – Serving on the Carson Valley Conservation District Board. They have a storm water maintenance crew that currently is working on clearing irrigation ditch crossings and box culverts before the water gets turned on. They are also working on some property acquisition on and around the upper Alleman irrigation ditch, which is not used for irrigation anymore but can convey stormwater and flood flows. They've been working with the ag producers in the area to see how best to handle that system. They have also been coordinating with Rich Wilkinson on his river projects and seeing where her crew can help in some of the bank shaping to stretch dollars for those projects.

Mo Loden, LRWQCB – Mary Fiore Wagner, who has been the Nonpoint Source Supervisor for the past three years, got promoted; Laurie Scribe is now the section supervisor. **She and Brenda will chat re: NRCS source water protection areas within the Carson Valley portion of Alpine Co. offline.**

Chris Fritsen, NDEP – NDEP is looking forward to a couple Regen Ag projects, one with The Nature Conservancy and the other with CWSD. The nonpoint source branch is still intact, and funding will still take place in some shape or form TBD due to the continuing resolution. They are putting together budgets for FY25 and anticipate releasing another GFO very soon, even perhaps competing for those FY25 funds to get permitting and construction for projects that are one-year-plus.

Albert Mulder, NRCS – Nothing to report except irrigation under EQIP. Brenda hopes to set up a meeting with him, Chris, and Mo re: NWQI.

Lindsay Marsh, CWSD – Will be speaking later in the agenda.

Allen Moody, NRCS – Besides being state agronomist for NRCS he is also the state water quality and air quality person. He looks forward to talking more about the NWQI.

Daunelle Wulstein, UNCE – She works with Staci Emm and Kaley Chapin with the statewide ag team. Update later in the agenda.

Jake Tibbitts, Eureka – Update later in agenda.

Rachel Schmidt, DVCD – Update later in the agenda.

Kaitlyn Garber, AWG – Arbor Day tree planting is confirmed for Friday Apr. 25 10-noon, with a free lunch for volunteers. CWSD will help promote it.

Legislative Updates

[Soil Health Bill AB80 Update](#), Jake Tibbitts – This bill was heard early in the session. There were some fiscal issues behind the scenes on how to fund and staff it. Because of funding concerns particularly this session, AB80 was amended to exclude or revise funding-related components. Sans appropriations, standing up an advisory board and open-ended language about the program being established upon funding availability, the bill passed the committee unanimously on Monday. It will move forward to the full assembly for a vote, and then the same process will happen on the Senate side. This bill follows heavily on the models of Utah and Colorado, which have met with strong successes: [Western Slope Producers Partner with State to Boost Soil Health](#). This program has brought in millions of dollars in resources, focusing on both educating ag producers and helping them implement voluntary, incentive-based soil health practices.

By establishing a formal program we'll be able to have a more focused effort on soil health. There is a lot of great stuff going on already. Kudos to Joe Frey for helping co-present the bill; he's providing a lot of good examples in the soil health/regenerative ag space. We believe that by standing up this program we'll have some resources to bring to the table. One of the amendments has a 10-year mandatory check-in/sunset provision; after passage of the bill, the State Conservation Commission will be mandated to evaluate whether the Soil Health Initiative is meeting its goals and intentions. At that time a decision will be made to continue or request sunset from the Legislature. You can look up this and particulars – current language, amendments, meeting recordings, etc. – for this or any bills at NELIS: <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/83rd2025>.

There is no mandatory advisory board; it was to get people who would be implementing these practices to be members – various ag producers across various stripes. It costs money for an advisory board to meet. The intent of the bill, even without specifically stating the advisory board is mandated (as per the job of the State Conservation Commission) is to “facilitate stakeholder collaboration to advance the understanding of the science of soil health, the implementation of soil health practices, which may include collaboration between the government, Indian tribes, academic and research institutions, nonprofit organizations, private entities, and ag producers.” So the mandate is in the bill to do that collaboration anyway. So regardless of whether we call it an advisory board, we're mandated to bring all the right people to the table to make sure this is done in a good way. If you look at the existing authorities in chapter 548...for the State Conservation Commission, they're mandated to also work with all affected interests and parties and everybody else. So we have a good construct to bring all the right people to the table to try to make this successful. If it's on the books, it can then apply for grants, accept donations, ask for future appropriations, and work with 319 or USDA funding; it provides a formal, centralized space that can help focus soil health efforts and broaden partnerships across the state. CWSD General Manager Ed James, as a registered lobbyist, supports this bill.

They have worked with Director Settelmeyer to get a fiscal note removed, which should be within one-two weeks; we feel then it will go before the full assembly. When it gets to the Senate side, that will be the time for folks who support it to send a letter or email or show up at the hearing and get on the record with their two minutes of comment. He's happy to help people along the way: Jake Tibbitts, [Jake Tibbitts](#), (775) 237-6010. CWSD will also send out notice of the next hearing and request letters of support. See attachments.

- a. Ag Day at the Legislature – There were a lot of vendors there, and NACD had a booth promoting AB80 as well as providing information on what conservation districts do and some specific examples, with a lot of posters from many of the CDs from that side of the state. Evidently it was the largest attended Ag Day that's ever been held, and it was very organized; there were a lot of great things outside in front and in the new revamped section of the building.

One highlight was that Sen. Cortez-Masto attended and addressed the group; she's working on many agriculturally related items: wildfire and Mormon cricket and grasshopper challenges. She's also working on funding and hiring freezes. It was a good session, with a lot of legislators rolling in and out. One of the board members from CVCD and Christy Sullivan also attended.

CWA 319 Grant Updates

Ag BMP grant – CWSD is working with Cami Hodges of Break-a-Heart Ranch in Lyon Co. and Joe Frey of Rambling River Ranches in Churchill Co. CWSD is in the middle of revising a scope of work as per NDEP suggestions. CWSD will be meeting with Chris about finalization and getting under contract.

Watershed Planning Grants – CWSD has applied for a few planning grants, all to assist with the Carson River Adaptive Stewardship Plan (CRASP) update: one is to develop a regional quality assurance project plan (QAPP), which will include data collection methods and procedures for soil and water, to include the labs used, and a formal photo monitoring process. There will be some additional water monitoring at areas of heavy nonpoint source pollution. We will hopefully be under contract for that one soon. CWSD has also applied for a Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance technical assistance grant through the National Park Service; we have a meeting with them next week to discuss our application and should hear back in May. There are two RTCA projects going on in the watershed currently: one project to protect the East Fork Hot Springs and another on the Carson River Master Plan revision. CWSD is partners for both projects, and after seeing how the process works we felt it would be a big help for the CRASP update. The final grant is through NDEP for an underserved community grant; it was turned in Mar. 12.

Chris Fritsen – Anxious to get the ranch projects going and are excited about the amendments about return flows and riparian area management, in addition to cover cropping; a lot of those activities would fit into NWQI work down there. Will check on the QAPP award status. Because the EPA dictates that for action or decision-making quality assurance needs to be associated, it builds capacity within CWSD to help obtain information on water quality and soils, and augment what the state already does. It also offers the chance to look longitudinally along the river or its tributaries to target areas where nonpoint source pollution collects. NDEP is also excited about the prospect of working with the RTCA/NPS planners on the CRASP renewal. NDEP will be releasing another no-match-required funding opportunity for planning efforts. They may also consider implementation efforts throughout the state that are outside of a watershed-based plan, elements from which could be assembled in a way to garner EPA approval.

Nevada Bee & Garden Conference Takeaways

This was the third of three ag conferences by UNCE. They get their funding through UNR as well as the USDA Risk Management Agency. The first was the urban ag conference in Las Vegas; the second

was the small farms conference. This last, with 119 attendees from as far away as Henderson and Amargosa Valley to Fallon, was to help small producers and beekeepers to mitigate financial and personal risk. Sponsors included NRCS, Full Circle Compost, NDA, Minden Mill, Master Gardeners, and NDA Stress and Wellness. This is the third of this event and the second one in Minden around the same time of year, and it was very successful. Comprehensive information from bee experts like Randy Oliver from Grass Valley; he discussed land carrying capacity and planting for pollinators. Cody Witt from Full Circle Compost talked about soil health and nutrients for Nevada soils. She's taking soil tests herself because she's a small lavender farmer and beekeeper. They got a lot of great feedback. It was expanded beyond beekeepers to the general public: homeowners, gardeners, anyone interested in what they can do to mitigate risk to beekeepers. They learned a lot about native pollinators and the general decline of pollinators across the board. There were presentations on irrigation and integrated pest management for homeowners. UNCE is next looking at providing four-to six-hour workshops throughout Nevada; this could be in collaboration with master gardeners with beekeepers in other regions. She also has the slide decks if you're interested and weren't able to attend any of the conferences.

[Urban Ag Conference 2025](#)

[Small Farms Conference 2025](#)

Bee & Garden Conference 2025

If anyone has ideas, get in touch with her. Daunelle Wulstein, Extension Education Project Coordinator, University of Nevada, Reno Extension, daunellew@unr.edu

Kelly – As someone who wants to combine CWSD watershed/water quality messaging and restoration activities with her obligations as a Carson City master gardener and resident, it was good to learn about producer's concerns, bees, and pollinators in general to see where intersections can be capitalized upon.

Conservation District Updates:

Rich Wilkinson, CVCD: They are always working with the Minden NRCS office to promote their EQIP and farm service programs. If they get calls about regenerative ag, erosion control or crop management, we'll often do in-field work for them. In 2018 they received a grant from NDA to purchase a Great Plains no-till drill. Although their acre meter quit working a few months ago, he thinks they've exceeded 5K acres with it. That piece of equipment is available for rent if someone has experience using it, otherwise it's used by staff, and we've been busy with that. We're currently working on a bank stabilization project but will be transitioning to noxious weed treatment in May. We typically work with Douglas Co. on ag producer properties; most of the time it's spot spray to help them keep weed-free forage certs. They just found out they received an NDA grant for a drone for ag spraying and mapping. It's a two-year program: the first year will be spent on certifications and FAA licensing as well as the State of Nevada for aerial application. They have also been working with the Conserve Nevada program, and DCNR has a nice drone that can do mapping and LIDAR, and they have agreed to help CVCD by flying the river throughout the CD boundary. State Parks will be part of this; they have the only two pilots who can fly that drone. Once he has more information, he will reach out to NDEP and CWSD to see when they can fly the entire reach.

The drone can also be used for seeding; it's rated to seed 60 acres per hour, which given employee hiring and retention difficulties gives them more flexibility. To clarify, the NDA funding will not be used for the drone purchase itself but the purchase will be used as match; it's hard to find a grant that will fund an equipment purchase like that. Funding will go for the training, some actual application and mapping. Chamomile and yellow-star thistle will be targeted first.

CWSD also has a drone and is happy to have someone with the qualifications borrow it. Its capabilities are limited, but for photos or mapping it's fine.

Rachel Schmidt, DVCD: They have been doing invasive weed surveys on rancher properties throughout the Middle Carson, especially Mound House. We're looking for yellow starthistle; we've surveyed in Gold Hill too because we try to work with Storey Co. Trying to get in gear for weed treatments soon. We are also trying to get an equipment rental program started. In the past we've loaned out herbicide to producers too, and we're trying to get that going again. They have a grant-funded stabilization project to help protect land for two producers from further erosion; they hope to finish this fall. They completed monitoring on all 60 of their old river projects to make sure they're in good condition. A lot of those are on ag producer properties; they are working on a woody debris clearing project to help protect them. Permitting has been challenging this year, but they realize Chris and Ed and several others have met to try and expedite the process.

Brenda referred her to Christy Sullivan, who has run a successful chemical program for property owners for weed abatement.

Christy Sullivan, LVCD – [See attached PowerPoint](#). Also, the national conservation district poster contest theme is "Home Is Where the Habitat Is." Applications will be accepted from Mar 30-Oct 27. The fall date gives the district board members approve them; the top ones are sent to NACD, who meets in November; this ensures meeting the actual December deadline. K-12, including homeschooled, is eligible.

The weed spray class first meeting of the season is Apr. 2. You can go to the LVCD office and put your name on a list. Classes are Wednesdays at 9 a.m. at the weed abatement facility, 7400 Reno Highway. Users come in and take a 25-minute class on safety, how and when to use the spray, and safety gear. After the meeting we give them a certain amount of 240 and they go and spray their own weeds. LVCD tries to reuse containers whenever possible, but they must be kept out of the sunlight, otherwise they break down. It helps to bring back the jugs so they can either be reused or recycled properly.

They have also partnered with the Churchill High plant systems class on the LVCD tree sale; the class will provide native plants from their greenhouses. The ordering deadline for the tree sale is Apr. 4; the sale itself is May 3, when folks can pick up their orders. There will also be additional plants and trees available the day of the sale.

They also have equipment rental and sales: We just bought a no-till drill and also have loaders, backhoes, dump trucks and graders. Prices range from \$49-300 per day. The no-till drill is \$20/acre, 10 acres minimum. They have a backhoe, a trailer and a loader for sale. There is a use review for the no-till drill, but renters should already know how to use one.

Upcoming Funding Opportunities

[NRCS grant programs in NV](#)

Last EQIP deadline was in November. Because most of the money is allocated for that batch, few funding pools remain. NWQI will be one that offers a second signup; deadline is June 13, 2025. There is a Conservation Stewardship Program signup deadline in May. They welcome new applications but they will most likely be considered in the next fiscal year.

[Virtual Fencing for Managing Livestock NRCS Fact Sheet](#) (Jan 2025) – Virtual fencing pays out by the head of cattle because you have to pay for a monitor for each head. Required at least one year up to three years of prescribed grazing with that practice. The concern is that if a rancher signs up for it that they can find a contractor that can service in time to keep them on schedule with their EQIP contract – they're in high demand. Parts of the website have been taken down for

administrative review and may or may not return. Different counties will have different payment rates. Nevada is one of the first states to offer the program.

Chris Fritsen, NDEP - I'm reminded because I was at with River Wranglers today, they're embedded within that project. And, you know, the broader ag in the classroom activities that will be going on in the FFA, work on The Ed educating potential stakeholders on use of virtual fencing and other things is quite exciting. So very supportive of that.

[Western SARE](#) – Potential Spring 2025 opportunities (CWSD staff) *We are currently holding new Call for Proposals pending notification from our funding source, USDA-NIFA. All NIFA Requests for Applications are under review. You can check back for updates or subscribe to our mailing list to be notified when our Calls are released.* Also heard from Andrew above.

[NV Energy Foundation Grants](#): Environment- Water Conservation, Disaster Mitigation, Animal and Wildlife Conservation and Education: Youth Literacy, STEM, Trade Ed and Leadership Max \$15,000

[NV Department of Agriculture grants](#) (NDA staff): Farm to School Grant/ Request for Application (RFA) Round 2 Division of Food and Nutrition, Max request \$25,000. Applications will be accepted until all funding is awarded.

Upcoming events/Opportunities for input and/or outreach

Apr. 9, 2025: Nevada Water Resources Association Irrigation and Agriculture Committee Meeting (Lindsay Marsh) – Lindsay is on the NWRA Board of Directors for District Two, and during the last conference they came out with some new committees, including the agricultural and irrigation committee, which she heads. These committees were made to harness collective insights from group meetings and potentially sparking ideas for events, individual presentations, visits, etc. And so we were hoping to get groups of those individuals, whether that be farmers, agriculture producers, irrigators, to come to a meeting and discuss what they want to hear, what they want to see. You don't have to be an NWRA member. Others include environmental conservation, mining and energy, and municipal and industrial water. Last meeting Alexandria Lutz spoke about DRI involvement with rural water planning and how irrigators will be involved with that. Staci Emm, a UNR professor with UNCE, will speak at the upcoming meeting Apr 9 at 6pm on implementing irrigation water projects via USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service Program funding. Leana Carey with [The Progressive Rancher](#) has been drumming up support for speakers, but they hope to get more people on the committee to build community. Meetings can be found here: <https://www.nvwra.org/water-initiative>.

May 3 is Ag in the Classroom in Genoa and also Earth Day for WTNC in Woodfords; Apr 24 River Wranglers will be doing Ag in the Classroom; Apr. 19 is FPST Earth Day in Fallon. Ag in the Classroom could always use additional folks to table. It's good to have local people at the events to help integrate with young people who will be coming up in the workforce who might not be going directly into college but will have a direct line to the conservation districts or public works, or working with their agricultural producers – letting them know that the option is there.

May 19, 2025: NRCS State Technical Committee meeting. The agenda and other information will be posted as it becomes available, [keep checking here](#). Nevada State Technical Committee was established by the 1985 Food Security Act, the Nevada STAC provides recommendations to NRCS to carry out the conservation provisions of the Farm Bill. Although the STAC has no implementation or enforcement authority, the committee's recommendations are given strong consideration by USDA.

Ari De Lara, NRCS: It's where state priority resource concerns are set; projects that address these concerns are given higher rankings. Providing input increases the likelihood of funding. STAC also sets priority practices, which will get funded at a higher rate; last year a lot of livestock watering practices were added.

Marlee Jenkins, DCNR - Last time we did one of these we worked with Jessica Gwerder to set up the local work group meeting. She and Carson Valley CD hosted that. It's been difficult to get turnout for so keeping in touch with this group and trying to spread the word for those local work group meetings

would help. Most of those that I've been to tend to be a couple CD staff and a couple CD board members. We haven't been very successful recently in getting a lot of producers to come out for those. We've been trying to brainstorm ways to get better outreach on that.

Christy Sullivan, LVCD – Maybe for the programs offered attendance could be mandatory.

Albert Mulder, NRCS – We're also seeing in local work groups that the stated priorities don't match the contracts. So NRCS needs to make sure the work groups know what they're asking for.

Ari – The training to the conservation districts is a little outdated; there needs to be communication about new software, which groups resource concerns differently than previous. Trying to coordinate with the trainer, and he will attend trainings to reintroduce the NRCS ranking system and get feedback. CDs: Contact him if you're interested in him coming by. To receive findings and recommendations from the working groups, typically each local group sends in a letter to NRCS; Ari will ask [Chris Rose](#) to make all of last year's results available to the entire STAC. Typically local work group meetings have been in Nov or Dec, which does not align with the NRCS fiscal year to implement, so now NRCS is setting a deadline of Sep 1 for local work groups and STAC to provide their feedback. Ideally the local work group meetings would be shortly before the STAC, in the spring. Anyone can sign up, but the meeting is capped at a certain number of members. It would be good to attend to understand what's going on and what can be done, like adjust local work group ranking pools and providing NRCS good feedback by Sep. 1.

Christy – It's too late for this one to have a local meeting, because you need two weeks' notice for a local working group meeting.

May 12, 2025: Potential dates for Ag in the Classroom (Pioneer High School & Empire Elementary)

Next Meeting June 25, 2025, 1:30-3:30pm (considering a field trip for this date)