

The Dispatch

The latest from Minnesota's Technical Training and Certification Program



Work on developing and implementing Minnesota's Technical Training and Certification Program has been quietly progressing over the past few months. Take a look below to see what's been happening, and what's on the horizon.

Area Technical Training Teams

We reached an important milestone in February and March with the kick off of Area Technical Training Teams around the state. The Area teams were designed to ensure local training and credentialing needs are met. The teams will focus on identifying local training priorities, organizing and delivering informal and formal training events at a local level, and advocate for priority needs to the Minnesota Technical Training Committee. The Areas are based on NRCS Area boundaries, so there are 6 teams throughout the State. Membership on the teams is composed of 2-3 representatives from each BWSR, NRCS, and SWCDs/TSA. The teams identified current training needs, potential trainers, training gaps, began planning local trainings for 2017 and made recommendations to the Minnesota Technical Training Committee on ways to make it easier for Area teams to provide and coordinate training. Training team members also serve as liaisons for SWCD staff in their area. If you have questions or suggestions related to technical training in your area, feel free to reach out to one of the Area Technical Training Team members (The team leads are in **bold**, TSA representation noted with an *).

Area Technical Training Team Membership - 2017

	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4	Area 5	Area 6
NRCS BWSR SWCD/TSA	Peter Mead* Justin Muller Peter Nelson	Matt Solemsaas Ross Reiffenberger* Deja Anton	Mitch Lundeen Crystal Payment* Lynn Gallice	Troy Kuphal* Kevin Ostermann	Luke Olson Brian Pfarr John Shea Russ Hoogendoorn*	Cody Fox Chris Nelson* Dean Thomas
	Chad Severts Matt Fischer	Tara Ostendorf Pete Waller	Erin Loeffler Dan Steward	Brad Wozney Dan Fabian	Mark Hiles Jason Beckler	Adam Beilke Dave Copeland
	Eric Anderson Ed Musielewicz	Penny Doty Vacant	Jon Sellnow Roger Marks	Craig Peterson Jacob Stich	Nathan Stewart Paul Spartz	Jim Fritz Brian Devetter

Upcoming Trainings

Statewide RUSLE2 trainings

The need to evaluate alternative practices for comparable water quality benefits under the Buffer Law has created an immediate need for RUSLE2 trainings with a focus on using Agronomy Tech Note #2 in RUSLE2. Trainings are being planned for July at 6 locations throughout the State – be on the lookout for dates and registration information in the next few weeks.

Conservation Planning

NRCS is offering one 4-day Conservation Planning training this summer. The Technical Training and Certification program worked closely with SWCDs and NRCS to assess the training need of conservation partners and to ensure that there is room for SWCD staff at those trainings. BWSR is handling online registration again this year for the sessions, and we will send out a notice when the registration opens. If you have questions about the sessions, please contact Ryan Galbreath Ryan.Galbreath@mn.usda.gov.

Soil Health

The Technical Training and Certification Program coordinated with NRCS on the upcoming Soil Health field trainings. There are five 1-day trainings planned for the week of June 19th and features national soil health expert Mike Kucera. The field sessions teach participants how to integrate simple soil health assessments into the planning process while involving local farmers to gain their insight and experiences in the practical application of soil health practices. Many SWCD staff are already registered, however there is space available at the Pine County training on June 20th. If you are interested in attending, contact Megan Lennon, Megan.Lennon@state.mn.us.

Additional Trainings in Development

In addition to the trainings listed above, we are working hard to develop curriculum, secure trainers, and offer the following trainings this summer.

WASCOB

Forestry Planning/Management

Programmatic Milestones

Minnesota Technical Training Committee

The Technical Training and Certification Program has transitioned from the interim committee, to the Minnesota Technical Training Committee (MTTC). The committee directs the administrative functions of the program including: making program development decisions,

providing direction for program implementation, reviewing comprehensive statewide training needs, and makes recommendations on programmatic spending. MTTC membership:

BWSR: Jenny Gieseke, Al Kean, Megan Lennon, Ed Lenz

NRCS: John Beck, Anna Bramblett, Ryan Galbreath, Gary Watson

MASWCD: Sheila Vanney

MACDE: Cody Fox, Chessa Frahm

Expanding the Cadre of Trainers

Finding trainers with not only the technical expertise, but also the time to develop and deliver trainings has been one of the biggest road blocks in delivering technical training around the state. To resolve this issue, we have been working in coordination with the NRCS State Conservationist and the Area Technical Training Teams to identify non-NRCS employees that can provide the training needed to create a highly skilled technical workforce. One component of this work is to create procedures and processes to ensure the quality of training provided, and to make it as easy as possible for knowledgeable and experienced partner staff to deliver training. We are working with the MTTC to identify and/or create a library of statewide training curriculums that a trainer can pick up, modify for their area, and then use to deliver the training. This method minimizes the amount of time needed to plan a training, and ensures consistency in material delivered. In many cases (such as the RUSLE2 trainings) the NRCS already has the curriculum developed, so we are working to locate and utilize these curriculums as the need arises.

Core Competency Trainings

A key recommendation described in Minnesota's Technical Training Strategy is that all conservation partner staff, regardless of position, should have a basic understanding of soil and water conservation activities. To achieve this, Core Competency training modules are being developed for all district and field office staff. The Core Competency trainings include Basic Conservation Planning, Soils, and Water Quality Basics. To ensure that these trainings are easy to access, they will be offered as online training modules, and are being developed by a contractor who was selected using a Two Phase RFP process. The contractor, EcoSource LLC will be working closely with MTTC members to develop the curriculum and training modules. The contract with EcoSource, LLC was finalized in April and work on the modules has already begun.

Learner Survey To make sure these Core Competency trainings are accessible and relevant, we need to hear a bit more about the needs and preferences of the individuals who will be accessing the online modules. We are asking conservation partners to spend approximately 10 minutes to complete the following survey. The information provided will be used to inform design aspects of the training, as well as determine specifically what concepts will be covered. The survey is anonymous and answers will be handled in the strictest confidence.

Remember to complete the survey before May 31st. <https://goo.gl/forms/cRVrY0x6nkN0ktd13>

You can access training on your own!

Technical training doesn't just happen in the classroom. There are many opportunities for conservation staff to access training that can improve their technical skills online. Here are just some of the examples we've found:

- 1) AgLearn has many courses available on a wide variety of technical topics. The courses available consist of self-paced modules as well as recorded webinars. A good starting point is the Hydrology Training Series Module. Don't have access to AgLearn yet? If you are not collocated with your NRCS field office, you can still gain access to AgLearn. Contact your NRCS District Conservationist and request an e-authorization for AgLearn.
- 2) Some courses are available outside of AgLearn. The Hydrology Training Series (30 modules in total!) are available as PDFs. Topics include Intro to Hydrology, Runoff Concepts, Runoff Curve, Peak Discharge, Hydrographs, Design Hydrology, etc. Access the [Hydrology Training Series](#) here.
- 3) Conservation Webinars: The Science and Technology Training Library hosts live webinars and archives recorded training webinars on the website [ConservationWebinars.net](#). Some of the webinars posted on this website are identical to content available in AgLearn. This is a great resource, especially if you are waiting for your AgLearn e-Authorization.

Here are a few webinars that may be of interest:

[Basics of Construction Inspection – Concrete](#)

[Drainage Water Management Awareness – Basic Principles and Practices](#)

[Engineering Field Tools: Overview and Basic Tasks](#)

NRCS Updates and Notices

The National Engineering Manual Part 501 is revised and a new [MN Supplement is released](#) (April 13, 2017)

Minnesota Agronomy Technical Note #31 [Herbaceous Vegetation Establishment Guide](#) (May 2017)