

Local Work Group Summary Report for Kansas 2026

Prepared by the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD)

The following report summarizes the 41 Local Work Group (LWG) meetings that were held in Kansas in 2026. LWG meetings were conducted on a multi-county Management Unit (MU) basis (23), and on an individual county basis (18), with local Conservation Districts hosting each meeting. The LWG meetings were coordinated and implemented by local conservation districts to engaged local producers and stakeholders in the assessment of needs and identification of priority natural resource concerns at the local level.

The LWG meetings were conducted in January, February, March, and April 2026. As previously noted, 41 LWG meetings were held. Each LWG meeting was conducted in-person, with several LWG meetings offering remote participants the option to attend virtually. There was a total of 583 participants in the 41 LWG meetings. As LWG meetings were completed, local Conservation District Managers developed individualized “LWG Meeting Reports” which are the basis for this summary report.

To accurately capture the occurrence of comments that were presented during the LWG meetings, a separate spreadsheet report entitled “2026 LWG State Resource Concern Spreadsheet” was developed and is considered a companion document to this summary report. The “2026 LWG State Resource Concern Spreadsheet” lists the specific “state resource concern statements” which are captured by number and % of occurrence across the MU’s and counties which held LWG meetings, and also by number and % of occurrence within each NRCS administrative area (see exhibit 1 map). For the purpose of this report, those state resource concern statements most prevalently noted during the LWG meetings serve as the basis for the summary narratives that follow. Please see the “2026 LWG State Resource Concern Spreadsheet” for a full listing of all resource concerns identified.

Soil Health:

- Concern for a need to expand soil health practices (no-till/cover crops). Keep the soil biologically active and healthy. Cover crop adoption/expansion was a major discussion item in 2026. This concern was noted at 70% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with nutrient management and the implementation of nutrient management practices. This included concerns with proper soil testing, soil test interpretation, and the associated proper/efficient application of fertilizers. It was felt that additional education and training was needed to address this concern. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.

- Concern with active gully erosion (specifically ephemeral erosion) in cropland. Ephemeral erosion concerns were associated with cropland fields that do not have structural practices applied (i.e., using only management practices to control erosion) and cropland fields that have failing (outlived practice lifespan) structural conservation practices. This erosion is worked shut every year, but reforms annually. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the lack of diversified crop rotations was noted across the state. This concern was primarily associated with the increase of row crop production (primarily corn). The perception was this is driven by economics, crop insurance safety nets, and localized market demands. This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern there is a perceived need for additional education/training on cover crops/soil health and the long-term benefits of soil health practices (for both staff & producers). This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern adapting agricultural operations to challenging environmental conditions...drought, heat, increased rainfall intensities, etc. This concern was noted at 30% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern water availability (drought) across all land uses...drought mitigation. This concern was noted at 30% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with grasslands being converted to marginal cropland (sodbusting) and not being adequately treated. Concern grassland conversions to cropland are primarily treated with management/vegetative practices (i.e., no-till, cover crops) and concentrated flow areas are not adequately addressed leading to the occurrence of ephemeral erosion. This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with structural conservation practices that have outlived their span and are failing...active erosion is occurring in these unmaintained structural practice systems. (terraces, waterways, ponds, etc.) This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern that benefits from soil health practices take years to realize...perception there is a general apprehension to commit to the multi-year time frame needed to realize benefits...associated with farm economics...economics of surviving on a year-to-year basis. This concern was noted at 23% of the LWG meetings.

Grazing Lands:

- Tree/brush (primarily cedar trees) invasion associated with grazing lands across the state was a major concern. Contributing factors include: unmanaged land utilized primarily for wildlife; fear or hesitation to use prescribed burns (see related concern below); and lack of early identification of resource concern and lack of action to control. Tree/brush invasion was noted at 74% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with performing prescribed burns and the overall risks associated with prescribed burning. Concern that prescribed burning is not implemented as it has been in the past due to changing environmental conditions, increased fuel loads (brush/trees/invasive species), and fear of potential non-desirable outcomes (i.e., out of control fires, litigation, etc.). This concern was noted at 67% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern for the lack of available resources to assist/support producers in applying prescribed burning (burn associations & districts/groups, rural/municipal fire departments). This concern was noted at 58% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern for the growing number of absentee landowners and their perceived lack of concern for, or understanding of, grassland management needs. It is becoming increasingly difficult for local producers to address grassland related concerns without the understanding, concurrence, and support of absentee landowners. It was also noted that education and outreach efforts need to be made targeting absentee landowners. This concern was noted at 49% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with overgrazing of grasslands and perceived lack of adoption of prescribed grazing practices/systems. This concern was noted at 44% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the invasive species of old-world bluestem. This concern was noted at 42% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with lack of water availability on grasslands...lack of reliable watering points for proper grazing distribution...on both large and small grazing operations. This concern was noted at 35% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern associated with the challenges managing grazing lands that are adjacent to tracts of land that are primarily managed for deer hunting...leading to a fear of prescribed burning, hesitation of spraying, and dealing with perennial seed sources of undesirable invasive species (cedars, hedge, locust, etc.). This concern was noted at 35% of the LWG meetings.

- Concern with the acreage of grasslands that are being purchased for hunting with grazing management becoming an afterthought. This concern was noted at 28% of the LWG meetings. It was also noted that education and outreach efforts need to be made targeting landowners whose focus is managing lands primarily for deer hunting.
- Concern with grazing lands being converted to cropland...primarily economically driven. This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.

Water Conservation/Water Quality:

- Concern with the overall nutrient management and implementation of nutrient management practices and its effects on water quality. This included concerns with proper soil testing, soil test interpretation, and the associated proper/efficient application of fertilizers. It was felt that additional education and training was needed to address this concern. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with declining groundwater levels. Recommendations shared at LWG meetings to address this resource concern included: adoption of drought tolerant crops and/or less water intensive need crops; additional incentives to reduce irrigation rates; improved infiltration rates on cropland; improved irrigation system efficiencies; broader use of moisture probes for irrigation water management; increased application of small watershed structures, impoundments, level terraces, and playas to facilitate aquifer recharge. This concern was noted at 37% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with the amount of nutrient delivery to surface waters and the subsequent negative effect on the receiving surface waters. This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the amount of sediment delivery to surface waters and the subsequent negative effect on the receiving surface waters. This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern there is a need to provide funding for irrigated cropland to dryland cropland conversions...need to look at other financial alternatives to encourage landowners to retire water rights and permanently transition to dryland (easements, tax codes, etc.) . This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.

- Concern with need to increase irrigation efficiencies and the economic challenges associated with transitioning from irrigated to dryland cropland. This concern was noted at 16% of LWG meetings.
- Perception that more expansive use of soil health practices would improve water infiltration and subsequently assist in reducing excessive surface water runoff. This perception was noted at 16% of the LWG meetings.

Wildlife/Forestry/Riparian Area/Streambank:

- Concern with habitat degradation and lack of diversity across the landscape. This includes degradation and/or loss in native grasslands (including CRP acres) and riparian areas, loss of brood rearing habitat, lack of habitat connectivity, loss of edge effect in habitat areas, over grazing of grasslands, lack of diversified crop rotations, and clean/weed free cropland acres. This concern was noted at 67% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with invasive species encroachment...cedar, hedge, locust, honeysuckle, phragmites, teasel, winter creeper, sericea lespedeza, old-world bluestem, salt cedar, etc...and the detrimental effect on wildlife habitat. This concern was noted at 60% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with lack of proper habitat management on lands owned/controlled by “out of area” individuals whose primary interest is “deer hunting”. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the declining populations of ground nesting game birds (quail, pheasant, turkey) and non-game birds. This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with lack of proper management and maintenance of forestland. Concerns include plant vigor, density thinning, removal of undesirable trees, and control of invasive species (honeysuckle, Callery pear). This concern was noted at 23% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with lack of riparian area management...degraded riparian area conditions, livestock winter feeding areas, woody/herbaceous invasive species encroachment. This concern was noted at 19% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with streambank erosion and increased occurrence of active streambank erosion...stream channel width and incision concerns that are advancing up smaller tribs and into adjacent land uses...forming advancing gully

erosion...loss or riparian areas and cropland, and infrastructure stability. This concern was noted at 19% of LWG meetings.

- Concern with loss of native hardwoods in forested areas. Desirable native species being replaced with less desirable species. This concern was noted at 16% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with loss of windbreaks/shelterbelts, and windbreaks/shelterbelts not being properly managed/maintained. This concern was noted at 14% of LWG meetings.

Urban/Non-Traditional:

- Perception the conservation partnership is not properly prepared/educated/trained to assist urban/small farm landowners and producers. A need for additional training for the conservation partnership staff, with a focused outreach effort towards these potential customers is perceived. The perception exists that these potential customers are not aware of the conservation partnership and services available. These concerns were noted at 28% of the LWG meetings.
- The following concerns were noted within the purview of associated urban/non-traditional LWG discussions.
 - Concern educational needs exist for urban/small farms and conservation partners...need to have a better understanding of urban/small farm perspectives and needs
 - Concern with conservation partnership lack of familiarity with challenges faced by small farm/specialty crop producers...resource, economic, logistic, marketing concerns
 - Concern with lack of technical practices available to assist small farm/specialty crop producers
 - Concern with lack of financially assisted practices/activities to assist small farm/specialty crop producers
 - Concern technical and financial assistance favors “traditional” farming operations
 - Suggestion conservation partnership becomes more involved with farmers markets, community gardens, and demonstration farms
 - Concern with the perceived urban population lack of understanding of “traditional agriculture”
 - Concern with increased fracturing of rural lands
 - Concern with the frequency and magnitude of ownership changes in a fragmented urban landscape

- Concern with people moving into rural areas and having unrealistic expectations dealing with traditional agriculture interactions...dust, odors, smoke, noise, etc.

Outreach:

- Concern there could be an improved collaborative effort between local/private/state/federal entities to promote, advertise, and implement resource protection programs. Landowners, producers, and conservation partners have found it challenging to understand and locate all sources of information, technical assistance, and financial assistance. This concern was noted at 65% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern reaching and providing outreach/education to absentee landowners. Additionally, a concern with absentee landowners' lack of understanding of conservation practices and willingness to support/apply conservation practices. This concern was noted at 58% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with lack of outreach promoting available conservation programs. This concern was noted at 44% of the LWG meetings.
- Perceived need for "conservation partnership" to become more familiar with "all" available programs...or to at least have a familiarity with where to find and share this information. This concern was noted at 37% of LWG meetings.
- Concern utilizing available mentoring programs to transfer knowledge...farmer to farmer...need to encourage more peer-to-peer training/learning. This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern reaching an audience with a diverse "age demographics". There is a perceived need for resource/technical support to share information targeting groups via social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, twitter, podcasts, etc. This concern was noted at 23% of LWG meetings.
- Concern NRCS is not utilizing all forms of social media outreach...i.e. mass emails and text messaging. This concern was noted at 23% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with the lack of landowner/producer participation in meetings, workshops, trainings, and field days. Significant efforts are put into developing meaningful educational/outreach events only to realize relatively low landowner/producer attendance and participation. This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.

- Concern there is a lack of outreach to local schools/school organizations, and local civic groups. This concern was noted at 21% of LWG meetings.

Training:

- Concern with training of new employees (NRCS and Partners). Providing timely training, appropriate training, field training/experiences. Perception exists many new employees are focused on program deliverables rather than resource/planning training. This concern was noted at 70% of LWG meetings.
- Perceived need for additional prescribed burning training for staff and producers. Associated with this concern is the perceived lack of available resources available to producers to support prescribed burning (burn associations & districts/groups, rural/municipal fire departments). This concern was noted at 58% of the LWG meetings.
- Perceived need to provide additional training and educational materials on the control of old-world bluestem. This concern was noted at 35% of the LWG meetings.
- Perceived need for additional soil health training for both staff and producers. Training needs included identifying the long-term benefits of applying soil health practices such as cover crops, no-till, crop rotation; appropriate use of cover crop mixtures; management of cover crops; and the economics associated with cover crop application. This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Perceived need for additional training/education/resources to promote grazing lands health (proper grazing mgmt., pest ID, brush control, etc.). This resource concern was noted at 30% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with challenges associated with partnership staff being the “experts” on all available programs...the programs are constantly changing...tough to keep up on all of them. This resource concern was noted at 30% of LWG meetings.
- Concern with nutrient management and implementation of nutrient management practices. This includes concerns with proper soil testing, soil test interpretation, and the associated proper/efficient application of fertilizers. It was felt that additional education and training was needed to address this concern. This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.
- Perceived need for additional staff and producer training on brush management and follow-up needs after completion of brush management. This resource concern was noted at 26% of LWG meetings.

Programs (NRCS):

- Concern with lack of outreach promoting available conservation programs. This concern was noted at 44% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the amount of “paperwork and administration” that exists with implementing federal FA...the current program application/approval process is perceived to be complicated, cumbersome, and lengthy. This concern was noted at 42% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with time from EQIP application to potential funding...too much time in between...producers waiting to hear and not addressing resource concern in a timely manner...hinders decision-making process...especially with deferred applications. This concern was noted at 35% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern payments rates are too low for many practices...magnified by current inflation rates and supply issues. This concern was noted at 35% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern inadequate livestock water..."water availability"...should be considered a stand-alone resource concern for EQIP. It was shared that water availability is not always tied to a plant resource concern. This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern available financial assistance funds are insufficient to address existing resource concerns. This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern grazing plans for EQIP applications/contracts are too restrictive and are not economically feasible for producers to implement. This concern was noted at 26% of the LWG meetings.
- Recommendation to include "virtual" fencing for livestock as an eligible FA practice. This concern was noted at 23% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern additional FA is needed for new structural practices (i.e. terraces, waterways, etc.). This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern additional FA is needed for rebuilding/replacing structural conservation practices that have outlived their lifespan and are considered failing (i.e., terraces, waterways, etc.). This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.

- Concern program (EQIP/CSP) interpretations vary from office to office. This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern EQIP payment rates should be developed on a more "localized" state basis, rather than on a multi-state basis. This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern more funding is needed for irrigation to dryland conversions...need to look at other financial alternatives to encourage landowners to retire water rights and permanently transition to dryland (easements, tax codes, etc.). This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.
- Need to provide program FA to address ponds that have outlived their lifespan and need to be rehabilitated...similar to past DOC sediment removal programs. Currently rehabilitation or rebuilding of water sources is considered maintenance and not eligible for federal FA. This concern was noted at 19% of LWG meetings.
- Concern that "funding pools" should be refocused back to the MU level. This concern was noted at 19% of the LWG meetings.

Programs (FSA):

- Concern with the lack of appropriate vegetative management, maintenance, and oversight of CRP acres. Suggested considerations include providing more agency oversight of CRP field conditions, and holding CRP participants more accountable. This concern was noted at 44% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern CRP payments rates are too low hindering interest in new contracts and renewal of expiring contracts. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the conversion of expired CRP to cropland. Perception exists that better incentives are needed to improve CRP re-enrolled. This concern was noted at 23% of LWG meetings.
- Concern the burning window associated with the primary nesting season is too restrictive and needs to be extended. This concern was noted at 21% of LWG meetings.
- Concern the increase in emergency haying/grazing is having an adverse effect on wildlife. This concern was noted at 16% of LWG meetings.

Technical Assistance/Staffing/General:

- Concern with lack of adequate staff, number of vacant positions, training/knowledge of existing staff (particularly new staff), and retention of staff. This concern was noted at 88% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with the lack of time NRCS is spending on the land with landowners...not enough staff to spend adequate time in the field with producers. This affects the ability to build trust and to fully understand the producers concerns and needs. This was a concern noted in 67% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with cultural resource review process. Perception this has resulted in significant delays in practice start/implementation and become a road block for producers and contractors to start/complete a project within a reasonable time frame. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern NRCS needs to place more emphasis on CTA planning vs programs. Spending more time with landowners providing a comprehensive evaluation of the landowner's resource concerns with treatment alternatives, along with follow-up after practice implementation. This concern was noted at 40% of the LWG meetings.
- Concern with contractor availability (contractors servicing soil conservation, spraying and brush/tree removal, well drilling, prescribed burning, tree planting, grass drilling, etc.). This concern was noted at 33% of the LWG meetings.
- LWG participants would like to know how agency leaders/decision makers are considering/implementing LWG recommendations. What are the results of LWG input. This concern was noted at 21% of the LWG meetings.

Exhibit 1

