



MAY 26 2016

North Carolina Bulletin: 180-16-03

Subject: State Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

Purpose: Establishing interim guidance for providing conservation planning assistance to clients and provide guidance on the Certified Conservation Planner (CCP) policy in North Carolina.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2016

Background. 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36 was amended in February 2016. As per policy, States may supplement this policy, as needed, to provide specific guidance and to comply with State, territorial, Tribal, and local laws and regulations. State guidance must fit within the scope of this policy.

Explanation. This interim guidance ensures that North Carolina is consistent with 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016. As a result of this new policy, North Carolina's guidance was updated to reflect changes in policy.

North Carolina interim guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016 and exhibits (attached) shall be used in the near future to establish NRCS policy for providing conservation planning assistance to clients and provide guidance on the Certified Conservation Planner (CCP) policy in North Carolina.

Contacts. Conservation planning questions should be directed to the State Resource Conservationist, North Carolina at 919-873-2124.

Timothy A. Beard
State Conservationist

Attachments

1. North Carolina guidance (**bolded**) to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed. Amend. 36, Feb 2016
2. Exhibit 1, CCP Training Requirements
3. Exhibit 2, CCP Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs)

Natural Resources Conservation Service
4407 Bland Road, Suite 117 Raleigh, North Carolina 27609
Voice 919-873-2100 Fax 919-873-2156

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Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy

409.0 General

- A. This document establishes NRCS policy for providing conservation planning assistance to clients. The director of the Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance Division (CPTAD) has national responsibility for conservation planning policy.
- B. States may supplement this policy, as needed, to provide specific guidance and to comply with State, territorial, Tribal, and local laws and regulations. State supplements must fit within the scope of this policy. A copy of the State supplement must be sent to the Director, CPTAD, for review and approval.
- C. Title 180, National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH), Part 600, provides procedures and guidance on implementing this planning policy, including relationships to the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), electronic storage of data, technical handbooks, and program guidance in the planning process. The NRCS planning process and standards as outlined in the NPPH will be used for all conservation planning.
- D. In cases where NRCS is assisting, or is assisted by, other agencies or groups, NRCS planning procedures and plan format may be modified to meet those specific client needs, provided that all applicable Federal environmental and compliance requirements are met.
- E. All references within this policy to State Conservationists include the directors of the Pacific Island and Caribbean Areas.

409.1 Conservation Planning Overview

- A. Conservation plans are the basis for all assistance NRCS provides to clients and the basic tool for clients to manage their natural resources. The greatest value comes by having the client engaged in every step of the planning process. Through participation, the client develops an understanding of the natural resource issues, interactions, and treatments necessary for resource sustainability.
- B. The objective in conservation planning is to help each client attain sustainable use and sound management of soil, water, air, plant, animal, energy, and human resources. The purpose is to prevent the degradation of resources and to ensure their sustained use and productivity, while considering the client's economic and social needs.
 - (1) Conservation planning is conducted with the client, working progressively towards a resource management system (RMS) level of management. An RMS is a combination of conservation practices and resource management activities for the treatment of all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants, animals, energy, and humans that meets or exceeds the planning criteria in the FOTG.
 - (2) The conservation planning process is progressive when a client addresses only a limited number of resource concerns—or even a single resource concern alone—but does not achieve an RMS level of treatment. The rate of progress in moving to an RMS level will depend on the client's desires and constraints.

(NC 2) For progressive conservation plans the client must be offered an understanding of the alternative(s) needed to meet RMS criteria—regardless of whether the client decides to implement an RMS. The CPA-52 should be used to document this process.
 - (3) A conservation plan is developed for one or more planning land units and documents the

land manager's selected alternative.

- C. When programs or initiatives exist (for example, highly erodible land provisions) that define other levels of planning for specific resource issues, clients will be offered alternatives that, as a minimum, meet the criteria of those programs or provisions. The conservation planner will encourage these clients to develop a conservation plan that follows the nine steps of conservation planning and address planning criteria for identified resource concerns. This will help the client identify and address resource concerns and provide a plan to use with other conservation related programs.
- D. Short- and long-term resource management objectives of NRCS's clients are addressed through the development of individual conservation plans and areawide plans where clients develop plans with conservation planning assistance from NRCS, conservation districts, technical service providers (TSPs), and other appropriate sources. NRCS conservation planning assistance is based on ecological, economic, and social considerations relative to the resources. When NRCS provides conservation planning assistance, onsite visits with clients are an integral part of that assistance.

(NC-D) The plan, assistance notes and other records of the planning process should reflect the planner's understanding of natural resource concerns and client's objectives. Client engagement with the planner in the planning process is reflected by their (client) understanding of the problems, issues, interactions and treatments needed for resource sustainability.

- E. A conservation plan is the record of decisions and supporting information for treatment of a unit of land or water meeting planning criteria for one or more identified natural resource concerns as a result of the planning process. The plan describes the schedule of implementation for practices and activities needed to solve identified natural resource concerns and takes advantage of opportunities. The needs of the client, the resources, and Federal, State, territorial, Tribal, and local requirements must be met. The conservation plan may include multiple components that provide practices and management activities for particular resources. It is the responsibility of the client to acquire any additional plan approvals needed to meet specific Federal, State, Tribal, or local program requirements. The following is a list of possible components of conservation plans and is not considered all-inclusive:

- (1) Comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP)
- (2) Irrigation water management (IWM) plan
- (3) Integrated pest management (IPM) plan
- (4) Forest management plan
- (5) Nutrient management plan
- (6) Grazing plan
- (7) Wildlife management plan
- (8) Conservation activity plans (CAPs)
- (9) Others as they are developed nationally or by States

- F. Areawide conservation plans are voluntary, comprehensive plans for a watershed or other large geographic area. Areawide conservation planning will consider all natural resources within the planning area, as well as social and economic considerations. Plan development follows the established planning process to assist local people, through a voluntary locally led effort that assesses their natural resource conditions and needs, sets goals, and identifies programs, alternative actions, and other resources to solve those needs. As a result, proposals are developed and recommendations are made to address those needs, implement solutions, and measure their success. A locally led effort considers all pertinent Federal, State, Tribal, territorial, and local conservation programs and private sector programs, singly and in

combination, as tools to solve natural resource concerns on a broad scale.

409.2 Conservation Planning Assistance Delivery

- A. Conservation planning assistance provided by NRCS will be in compliance with all civil right acts, nondiscrimination statutes, and regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture.
- B. NRCS traditionally provides conservation planning assistance on a request basis through mutual agreements and cooperative agreements with conservation districts and Tribal districts.
 - (1) The mutual agreement establishes a partnership and a foundation for USDA agencies to cooperate with States, units of Government, territorial governments, Tribal governments, conservation districts, and Tribal districts.
 - (2) The cooperative working agreement supplements the mutual agreement and establishes the relationship between the partners and agencies of USDA, and between State conservation agencies, territorial or Tribal governments, and conservation districts or Tribal districts.
 - (3) NRCS may enter into agreements with other organizations and units of Government to provide conservation planning assistance as mutually agreed upon.
 - (4) The State Conservationist will assess and determine the level of NRCS assistance to be provided in areas without conservation districts. NRCS will provide assistance for programs mandated by Congress independent of a cooperative working agreement with the conservation district.
- C. As a Federal agency, NRCS recognizes and acknowledges its trust responsibilities to Indian Tribes, and is committed to government-to-government relationships with each Tribe. It is NRCS's policy to ensure that Tribal rights and concerns are taken into account, to take appropriate steps to remove impediments to working directly and effectively with Tribes, and to work with Tribes to achieve self-sufficiency. Based on its commitment to the government-to-government relationship and its trust responsibilities, NRCS will—
 - (1) Operate within a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Indian Tribes.
 - (2) Consult, to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, with Indian Tribal governments before taking action that affect federally recognized Indian Tribes.
 - (3) Assess the impact of agency activities on Tribal trust resources and ensure that Tribal interests are considered before the activities are undertaken.
 - (4) Remove procedural impediments to working directly with Tribal governments on activities that affect trust property or governmental rights of the Tribes.
 - (5) Work cooperatively with other agencies to accomplish these goals established by Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.
- D. NRCS assistance to clients must meet all applicable Federal, State, territorial, Tribal, and local laws, program rules, policy statements, Executive orders, and international agreements.
- E. Areawide conservation planning, especially for those situations with complex objectives, requires the use of interdisciplinary teams of specialists in the planning effort.

(NC-E) The Assistant State Conservationists for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) will identify those complex situations requiring area-wide planning, appropriate specialists to serve on interdisciplinary area-wide planning teams, and early-scoping processes required to assess the need for NRCS services and resources before committing area-wide planning assistance. Membership of area-wide planning teams will be identified based on the needs

of specific projects. The State Resource Conservationist and the North Carolina NRCS Leadership Team will make similar determinations when needed for area-wide planning that spans multiple NRCS administrative areas.

- F. In complex situations, NRCS will employ an early scoping process to determine expected needs for NRCS services and other resources before committing to planning assistance.
- G. If assistance on Federal, State, territorial, or Tribal land requires a significant amount of NRCS resources beyond the scoping process completed early in the planning process, an agreement that provides for reimbursement of NRCS services must be executed. The State Conservationist will determine when an agreement is required. See Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 525, for additional policy.
- H. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements will be incorporated into all applicable steps and activities of NRCS-assisted planning activities and will not be considered as a separate process or requirement. See Title 190, General Manual (GM), Part 410, for NRCS policy and procedures on compliance with NEPA. The level of NEPA documentation will depend on findings during the scoping process or the environmental evaluation (EE). The EE, which may lead to an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), will be conducted for all NRCS planning activities and will be used to help determine the level of NEPA documentation required. Planners must identify the level of NEPA documentation required for each planning activity as early in the planning process as possible and incorporate activities into each planning step to ensure that information required for NEPA documentation is developed simultaneously with the plan document. Specific guidance related to general NRCS environmental compliance for NEPA, as well as all special environmental concerns (SECs) listed on the Form NRCS-CPA-52, "Environmental Evaluation Worksheet," can be found in 180-NPPH, Part 600, Subpart H, Section 600.71, and in Title 190, National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH), Part 610.

409.3 Requirements for Providing Conservation Planning Assistance

- A. All NRCS conservation planners must be certified. The CPTAD will establish minimum criteria to be met to be a "certified conservation planner" (see 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.9). State Conservationists may also certify conservation planners from partner agencies or organizations, as needed, following the same requirements as NRCS employees. Two subsets of conservation planning assistance will also be certified: "CNMP planners" (see 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.10) and "IPM specialists" (see 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.11). Additional subsets of conservation planning assistance categories may be developed by States. For certain service categories and CAPs listed on the TSP Web site, TSPs are required to be certified as conservation planners. For TSP planner certification requirements, refer to 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.9D(10).

(NC-A) NRCS Soil Conservationist positions are required to complete the training, experience, and plan development requirements for obtaining CCP designation within 3-years of their entry on duty date. Employee training plans and performance standards shall be developed to reflect this requirement utilizing Knowledge, Skills and Ability (KSA) requirements and training requirements outlined for CCP in North Carolina.

- (1) A certified conservation planner is a person who possesses the necessary skills, training, and experience to implement the NRCS nine-step planning process to meet client objectives in solving natural resource concerns.
- (2) The certified conservation planner has demonstrated skill in assisting clients to identify resource problems, to express the client's short- and long-term objectives, to propose

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

feasible solutions to resource problems, and encourages the client to choose and implement an effective alternative that treats resource concerns, meets client's objectives, and meets all Federal policies.

- (3) The State Conservationist may establish additional certification levels and criteria as needed to cover degrees of scope and complexity in planning environments.
- B. All conservation plans developed by NRCS or partner employees for NRCS purposes must be approved by an NRCS-certified conservation planner. When a conservation plan is being used to meet specific USDA program requirements under the authority of NRCS, such as highly erodible land compliance, it must also be approved by the appropriate NRCS official, as required by that program. The signature of the NRCS-certified conservation planner indicates that the conservation plan meets the needs of the client; NRCS conservation planning policy, procedures, and standards; and any applicable program or provision requirements.
- C. The State Conservationist will establish and implement a process to ensure training is provided to NRCS and partner employees delivering conservation planning services for the agency. This is to include the following actions:
- (1) Developing State training needs and budgets for conservation planning training.
(NC-1) CCP Training Requirements in North Carolina (see Exhibit 1)
 - (2) Developing a list of qualifications (knowledge, skills, and abilities) required for certified conservation planner designations in addition to the requirements listed in 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.9.
(NC-2) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for North Carolina (see Exhibit 2)
 - (3) Providing access to training through NRCS training courses, on-the-job training, or equivalent courses and methods developed outside of NRCS and approved by the State Conservationist as meeting the identified training need. Approval of equivalent courses will be done in consultation with the Director, CPTAD.
 - (4) Ensuring that all individuals who approve conservation plans meet minimum NRCS-certified conservation planner requirements.
 - (5) Ensure State training opportunities are also available to TSPs, particularly modules 6-8 of the NRCS Conservation Planning Course and the use of resource assessment tools.
 - (6) Develop and keep current the State-specific training module for conservation planning certification and recertification of TSPs.
- D. The State Conservationist will establish and maintain a list of all NRCS-certified conservation planners in the State, including NRCS employees, volunteers, conservation district employees, TSPs, and participating State agency employees.
- E. The CPTAD will maintain a list in TechReg of all TSPs who meet national conservation planning criteria, as described in 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.9D(10).
- F. The State Conservationist may enter into agreements with non-NRCS sources to become recommending organizations to certify conservation planners in accordance with procedures in 440- CPM, Part 504. The State Conservationist may also directly certify qualified individuals, such as third-party vendors, as conservation planners contingent upon these individuals satisfying NRCS requirements. Whether providing assistance to a recommending organization or directly certifying a qualified individual, the State Conservationist must ensure that this assistance is consistent with existing NRCS policies and technical guidance.
- G. All certified conservation planners will develop conservation plans that contain conservation

practices that meet NRCS standards and specifications as documented in the FOTG.

- H. Job approval authority for both engineering and ecological practices is a process separate from conservation planning certifications.

409.4 Planning on Units That Cross a State, County, or Field Office Boundary

- A. NRCS assistance on an individual planning area that crosses a State, county, or field office boundary is the responsibility of the field office where the majority of the land is located, unless otherwise agreed to by the client and respective State Conservationists (see section 409.6 for work along international borders). Conservation planning will be consistent with the FOTG covering the area where the land is located.
- B. For assistance to groups or units of Government on a planning area that crosses a State boundary, the State Conservationists, in consultation with the client, will determine by mutual consent which State will have the lead responsibility for providing planning and other technical assistance.

409.5 Documentation of Conservation Planning Data and Signature Requirements

- A. NRCS employees, and partners on the NRCS network, will document and maintain conservation plan data using agency approved tools and the official planning database, National Planning and Agreements Database (NPAD). See 130-GM, Part 408, for mandatory electronic field office business tools.
- B. The following terms are important to maintaining electronic conservation plan data:
- (1) Planning Land Unit (PLU).—A PLU is a unique geographic area, defined by a polygon, that has a common land use and land use modifier and is owned, operated, or managed by the same clients.
 - (2) Spatial Data.—Information about the location and shapes of geographic features and the relationship between them; it is usually stored as coordinates and topology.
 - (3) Topology.—The spatial relationship between connecting or adjacent features in a geographic data layer.
 - (4) Geographic Database.—A collection of spatial data and their attributes, organized for efficient storage and retrieval.
- C. To ensure data integrity and to implement a national planning database that is current, accurate and useful for modeling and reporting purposes—
- (1) The PLUs for all active conservation planning will be spatially located (digitized and attributed) in the proper geographic data layer (active PLU layer) in the agency's official conservation planning database.
 - (2) Each PLU in the active PLU layer will be associated with a unique geospatial boundary (polygon).
 - (3) The following horizontal topology is required for PLUs in the active PLU layer:
 - (i) No overlapping of adjacent PLU boundaries (polygons)
 - (ii) No stacking of PLUs (polygons)
 - (4) All planned conservation practices must be spatially located with its standard geometry (point, line, or polygon) in the proper geographic data layer (practice layer) in the agency's official conservation planning database.
- D. The NRCS copy of the conservation plan and associated documents and worksheets will be

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

maintained in combination of hardcopy and electronically, as appropriate.

- E. Conservation plan documents may be made available to the customer in electronic format, hardcopy, or both.
- F. Plan Signatures
 - (1) The plan is signed by an NRCS-certified conservation planner indicating the plan meets client objectives and all NRCS policy, procedures, and standards. Some Federal, State, Tribal, or local program requirements may call for additional signatures. These additional approvals are not required by NRCS, but may be necessary to meet the client's objectives. Therefore it is the client's responsibility to obtain these additional signatures.
 - (2) The plan is signed by the customer indicating acceptance of the conservation system alternative.
 - (3) The plan may be signed by the conservation district, per NRCS and conservation district policy as specified under mutual, cooperative working, operational, and contribution agreements and in accordance with the confidentiality provisions of section 1619 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

409.6 Conservation Planning Assistance That May Have International Impacts

Assistance provided must comply with 280-GM, Part 400, "International Conservation Programs." State Conservationists must contact the CPTAD for further guidance when conservation planning assistance is outside of the 50 States and U.S. territories, such as planning on a tract of land or property that is located on both sides of the U.S. border.

409.7 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 and Privacy Act (PA) of 1974

NRCS policy and procedures on FOIA and PA are contained in National Instruction (NI) 120-300 and 120-GM, Part 408, Subpart C.

409.8 Public Participation in the Planning Process

- A. Public participation is an integral part of the NRCS planning process, and is described in 400-GM, Part 400. Opportunities for public participation and involvement will be provided throughout the planning process to provide for a full partnership when working with groups (not acting as individuals), communities, and units of Government. The locally led process and areawide planning utilize public participation. Individual conservation plans do not normally require public participation except when required by State, Tribal, or local laws or when they include public lands. For conservation plans involving public lands, the client must work with the public land management agency.
- B. Every areawide conservation planning effort will include a public participation component to the extent determined by the State Conservationist. Requirements for public participation are specified in NEPA, OMB Circular A-95, Executive orders, departmental memoranda, and NRCS policy.
- C. In its public participation activities, NRCS will—
 - (1) Provide opportunities for the public to contribute information and express opinions at various stages of the planning process, decision making process, or both.
 - (2) Inform the public early and throughout the process regarding NRCS policy, program development, and NRCS-assisted resource planning.

(180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016)

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

- (3) Evaluate, then carefully consider all information presented and views expressed.
- (4) When applicable, acknowledge written comments and report decisions to the public.

409.9 Criteria to Achieve an NRCS Certified Conservation Planner Designation

A. Prerequisites

Individual must be one of the following:

- (i) An existing NRCS or partner employee
- (ii) A third-party vendor, including a TSP or an individual seeking TSP certification
- (iii) A volunteer

B. Policy References

- (1) 180-GM, Part 409
- (2) 180-NPPH, Part 600

C. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- (1) At a minimum, NRCS-certified conservation planners must have an understanding of the following fundamentals:
 - (i) Crop production
 - (ii) Grazing systems
 - (iii) Plant growth
 - (iv) Soil-water-plant relationships
 - (v) Plant identification
 - (vi) Nutrient management
 - (vii) Erosion processes
 - (viii) Water quality
 - (ix) Scientific tools and models
 - (x) Animal production
 - (xi) Conservation practices and systems common to the work geographic area
 - (xii) Wildlife management
 - (xiii) State and local laws and regulations that may influence conservation planning
- (2) Candidates must possess and demonstrate the following knowledge, skills, and abilities:
 - (i) Knowledge of national conservation programs
 - (ii) Skill in applying the NRCS nine-step conservation planning process
 - (iii) Skill in assessing natural resource concerns
 - (iv) Ability to plan and implement conservation practices common to the geographic area
 - (v) Knowledge of NRCS FOTG standards and specifications for applicable conservation practices in the State and locality
 - (vi) Skill in applying approved erosion prediction technology
 - (vii) Skill in using applicable site vulnerability assessment tools
 - (viii) Knowledge of Federal, State, territorial, Tribal, and local laws and regulations
 - (ix) Ability to accurately complete Form NRCS-CPA-52, "Environmental Evaluation Worksheet"
 - (x) Knowledge of policy and procedures to protect cultural resources and historic properties
 - (xi) Skill in communicating with landowners and operators
- (3) The State Conservationist may develop a list of additional qualifications (knowledge, skills, and abilities) required for the certified conservation planner designation. TSPs are required to meet only the knowledge, skills, and abilities identified in paragraphs 409.9C (1) and (2).

(NC-3) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities for North Carolina (see Exhibit 2)

D. Certification Requirements

- (1) States will follow all national requirements and any additional State requirements. For TSP certification requirements, paragraphs 409.9D (1) - (9) do not apply – skip to 409.9D(10).
- (2) The State Conservationist will establish a process and criteria to certify conservation planners.

(NC-2) The process for becoming a certified conservation planner (CCP) starts on the date of entry to NRCS and can be up to a three year process (see Exhibit 3). During this process the employee will be required to:

- 1) Complete knowledge, skills and abilities to the desired level (see Exhibit 2).
 - a. This will be accomplished through:
 - i. On-the-Job-Training
 - ii. Formal trainings through AgLearn, NEDC or other supported training venues.
 - iii. Informal trainings such as webinars
 - b. Supervisors should utilize Individual Development Plans (IDP) to outline the KSA development for the employee on a yearly basis.
 - c. Supervisors should review KSAs as part of the employee's performance reviews and note changes in their current level and discuss performance that would be required to meet the next level until the desired level is either met or surpassed.
- 2) Complete the required trainings identified on the "CCP Training Requirements in North Carolina" (see Exhibit 1).
- 3) Complete three (3) approved RMS level plans based on landuse as outlined in the "CCP Training Requirements in North Carolina."
- 4) Plans are reviewed and approved by the ASTC-FO or designee with final approval by the State Resource Conservationist or designee. Employees can start the plan submission process by filling out the top portion of form NC-CCP-05 – CCP RMS-Level Plan Submission and submit to their supervisor for routing it to the Area office. Deficiencies to the plans are required to be addressed prior to plan approval and documented.

Recertification process occurs every three (3) years;

- 1) Employee must complete one (1) RMS level plan based on landuse and submit for review and approval by the ASTC-FO or designee.
 - 2) The NRCS Administrative Supervisor (for NRCS employees) and NRCS Technical Supervisor (for SWCD/TSP/Other employees) completes form NC – CCP – 06 - Review and Concurrence of Conservation Planner Certification.
 - a. Verifies that the Continuing Education Requirements have been met. Thirty (30) hours of training (CEUs) within the 3 year period.
 - b. Significant planning issues have NOT been noted in program appraisals or other field office QAR's.
 - c. Approves plan and submits. Deficiencies to the plans are required to be addressed prior to plan approval and documented.
- NC – CCP – 06 form is routed to the State Office for concurrence from

the State Resource Conservationist (or designee).

- (3) NRCS certified conservation planner candidates must complete at least one field-reviewed RMS plan for a conservation management unit (CMU).
 - (i) The planner will be accompanied to the field by the State Conservationist designee to meet with the decisionmaker.
 - (ii) The candidate will be expected to demonstrate competency in the planning process and plan development.
 - (iii) The observer will evaluate the planner's involvement with the decision maker (landowner or land operator) in the planning process and whether all resource concerns associated with the planning unit are adequately addressed.
 - (iv) Field-reviewed plans must be approved by the State Conservationist or designee prior to final delivery to the decision maker.
- (4) Candidates must meet any additional minimum qualifications and criteria for conservation planning assistance established by the State Conservationist.
- (5) The State Conservationist will establish a procedure for reviewing and approving conservation planner certifications for individuals relocating to their State.

(NC-5) NRCS employees who transfer from other states and are already NRCS Certified Planners can transfer their certification to North Carolina for the comparable certification level through the remainder of the designated certification period. Before their next recertification in North Carolina, they must satisfactorily complete all required North Carolina training as identified by the CCP Training Requirements (see Exhibit 1).

- (6) Individuals working in multiple States as conservation planners must be certified in each State.
- (7) The State Conservationist may establish programs to certify third-party vendors and other individuals as conservation planners.
- (8) The State Conservationist will maintain a list of certified planners.
- (9) Training
 - (i) The State Conservationist will determine the type and minimum hours of training necessary to become a certified conservation planner.

(NC-i) CCP Training Requirements in North Carolina (see Exhibit 1)

- (ii) Training may be provided through NRCS training courses, on-the-job training, or equivalent courses and methods approved by the State Conservationist as meeting the identified training requirement. The State Conservationist, in consultation with the Director, CPTAD, may grant approval for course equivalency in lieu of a NRCS formal training course.
 - (iii) State Conservationist may provide a letter waiving training requirements if an individual has previously demonstrated competence in RMS plan development.
 - (iv) NRCS certified conservation planners are responsible for keeping their own individual development plan updated to reflect conservation planning training needed and completed to maintain or increase their skill level.
 - (v) Individuals must complete all modules (1-9) of the "National NRCS Conservation Planning Course" or equivalent as approved by the State Conservationist. Attending Conservation Boot Camp may be substituted for the instructor-led modules 6-8.
- (10) TSP National Certified Conservation Planner Requirements
 - (i) TSPs will obtain the certified conservation planner designation through the

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

following national certification process.

- (ii) TSP certified conservation planner candidates must complete the TSP Orientation and Conservation Planning Course, or an alternative approved by the Director, CPTAD.
- (iii) TSP certified conservation planner candidates must complete modules 6-8 of the NRCS Conservation Planning Course, offered nationally or by any State, or an equivalent course as approved by the Director, CPTAD.
- (iv) TSP certified conservation planner candidates must complete one field-reviewed RMS plan for a conservation management unit with a minimum of two land uses. TSPs seeking planning certification in multiple States are not required to submit additional plans for review.
 - The candidate will be accompanied to the field by a NRCS-certified conservation planner to meet with the plan decisionmaker.
 - The candidate will be expected to demonstrate competency in the planning process, to include the appropriate resource assessment tools and plan development.
 - The field reviewed conservation plan will be submitted to the State Conservationist for the State where the plan was developed with a letter from the reviewer acknowledging the field review and recommendation for certification. The plan review process will follow the policy outlined in 440-CPM, Part 504, Subpart C, Section 504.26B(2), for plan review submission, review, and recommendation.
 - If the State Conservationist concurs with the recommendation, the letter will be forwarded to the national TSP Program manager with the State Conservationists concurrence.
- (v) TSP certified conservation planner candidates must complete the following additional training. TSPs who have previously completed any of the following courses are not required to take the course again if proof of course completion is provided to the national TSP Program manager, unless required for recertification due to poor performance.
 - “Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide” (AgLearn)
 - “Environmental Evaluation Series No. 1: Primer on NRCS Environmental Compliance” (S&T Library)
 - “Environmental Evaluation Series No. 2: Documenting the Environmental Evaluation on the NRCS CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation Worksheet” (S&T Library)
 - “Cultural Resources Training, Part 1” (AgLearn)
 - “Introduction to Water Quality” (AgLearn)
 - Current wind and water erosion technologies training coordinated through a State NRCS office or an equivalent course approved by the Director, CPTAD
 - State-specific training module for each State where planning will be conducted
- (vi) If all requirements are met, the national TSP Program manager will certify the TSP as a national certified conservation planner in TechReg.
- (vii) TSPs obtaining the national certified conservation planner designation will be certified to conduct conservation planning in all States where they have completed the State- specific training module.

E. Maintaining Certification

- (1) Training to maintain and update conservation planning skills must, at a minimum, occur once every 3 years. 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.9E(1), does not apply to TSPs. For national requirements for TSPs to maintain conservation planning certification, see 180- (180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016)

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

GM, Part 409, Section 409.9E(2).

- (i) The State Conservationist will determine the type and minimum hours of training necessary to maintain the certified conservation planner designation.

(NC-i) All certified planners are required to obtain at least ten (10) Continuing Education Units (CEUs) of technical training each calendar year for a total of at least 30 CEUs over a three (3) year period. Training must be related to conservation planning or natural resource management. Technical training provided by the following agencies on topics related to natural resources management or conservation planning is considered eligible for meeting this requirement:

- NRCS (including state-offered events, webinars and NEDC training)
- NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- NC Cooperative Extension Service
- NC Wildlife Resources Commission

One (1) CEU will be the equivalent of one (1) hour of training up to but not exceeding 5 CEUs for a single training. Training must be tracked by;

- 1) Training certificate with the planners name and date on the certificate
- 2) (or) A training log-in sheet accompanied by a training summary which identifies:
 - a. The name of the training
 - b. A summary of the training
 - c. Hours of the training
 - d. Date of the training
- 3) (or) Tracked in AgLearn

It is the planner's responsibility to maintain records and provide proof of attendance for certified conservation planner recertification. Training approval for CEUs shall be made by ASTC-FO or designee.

- (ii) NRCS certified conservation planners are responsible for maintaining their conservation planner certification. Maintaining certification includes completing necessary training to maintain and update skills.

(NC-ii) Certified Conservation Planners are responsible for keeping track of completed trainings in their own Individual Development Plan (IDP) or other tracking mechanism. Certified Conservation Planners should review and update their IDP and/or training annually. Training and KSAs shall be reviewed with Supervisors during annual performance reviews.

(2) TSP National Requirements for Maintaining Certification

- (i) Each TSP certified conservation planner designation will be reviewed at least once every 3 years by the State Conservationist or designee in the TSP's resident State.

- The review will be based on conservation plans completed by the TSP in that State during the time period being reviewed.
- Conservation plans reviewed may be progressive, so an RMS planned level of treatment is not required.

- (ii) If a TSP did not develop any conservation plans in the resident State during the review period, the State Conservationist of the TSP's resident State, after consultation with the national TSP Program manager, will have the review completed by a State where the TSP did work during the review period. Refer to policy in 440-CPM, Part

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

- 504, Subpart C, Section 504.26B(2) for plan reviews outside of resident States.
- (iii) If a TSP has not developed any conservation plans in the past 3 years, a new plan must be prepared for review as outlined in section 409.9D(10)(iv).
 - (iv) The TSP must review the State-specific training module for each State they will recertify in so they can be aware of any updated information.

F. Quality Assurance

The State Conservationist is responsible for maintaining the certified conservation planner process and designation in the State quality assurance plan.

- (i) Each certified conservation planner's designation will be reviewed at least once every 3 years by the State Conservationist or designee.

(NC - i) The Area ASTC-FO is responsible for quality assurance reviews of NRCS and Partnership certified planners to assure completed plans meet NRCS policy, and that certified planners are meeting the continuing training requirement. Quality assurance for certified planners shall be completed with Certified Conservation Planner as its own category of the North Carolina Quality Assurance Plan.

- (ii) A sufficient number of conservation plans will be reviewed to determine that the conservation plans meet the NRCS planning policy and follow the procedures and guidelines listed in 180-NPPH.

(NC – ii) In addition to the formal Field Office Appraisals, the ASTC-FO (or designee) may review conservation plans selected for (1) annual practice spot-checks and/or (2) any occasion that requires review of a conservation plan outside the routine quality assurance process.

- (iii) If an individual fails to meet the criteria for the certified conservation planner designation, the status will be revoked and the individual must be recertified before providing conservation planning assistance.

(NC - iii) The Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) will notify the State Resource Conservationist (SRC) of the recommendation for revoking the employee's certification within five (5) working days. The following actions will be taken;

- **In consultation with the SRC, the ASTC-FO shall direct the employee to complete training in areas requiring improvement.**
- **The employee shall complete and submit one RMS Conservation Plan on two different land uses for an on-site field review. The SRC and ASTC-FO may also specify land uses and conservation practices to be included in the plan in order to address specific deficiencies. The plan must meet the certification requirements in General Manual Title 180, Part 409 in order for the employee to be recertified.**
- **The plan must be reviewed by the Area Office and approved by the SRC or designee no later than 90 days from the date of the letter of direction.**
- **If the employee does not complete the required plan within the 90 day period or submits a plan which does not meet the requirements of General Manual Title 180, Part 409, the ASTC-FO, will take appropriate disciplinary action.**

If a non – NRCS Planner’s certification is revoked, the ASTC-FO will notify the employee’s supervisor. Reinstatement process shall be the same as NRCS employees.

- (iv) Applicants must present proof of training when seeking recertification.
- (v) If multiple certified planner levels exist, an individual could become decertified at a higher designated level while retaining a lower certification level.
- (vi) NRCS is responsible for TSP quality assurance.
- (vii) NRCS quality assurance policy and guidance can be found in 450-GM, Part 407, “Documentation, Certification, and Spot Checking.”

409.10 Criteria to Achieve an NRCS Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planner Designation

A. Prerequisites

- (1) Individual must be one of the following:
 - (i) An existing NRCS or partner employee
 - (ii) A third-party vendor, including a TSP or an individual seeking TSP certification
 - (iii) A volunteer
- (2) See 190-GM, Part 405, Section 405.11, for CNMP approval and signature requirements.

B. Policy References

190-GM, Part 405.

C. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- (1) At a minimum, CNMP planners certified by NRCS in each State to develop and implement CNMPs must have understanding and knowledge of the following:
 - (i) How the FOTG relates to specific elements of the CNMP for which expertise is being provided.
 - (ii) How to apply the technical criteria associated with the various elements of a CNMP as contained in the NRCS FOTG.
 - (iii) How local, State, territorial, Tribal, and Federal laws and regulations affect the elements of a CNMP.
- (2) The State Conservationist may develop a list of additional qualifications (knowledge, skills, and abilities) required for the certified CNMP planner designation. TSPs are required to meet only the knowledge, skills, and abilities identified in paragraphs 409.10C(1).

D. Certification Requirements

- (1) States will follow all national requirements and any additional State requirements. For TSP CNMP certification requirements, paragraphs 409.10D (1) - (8) do not apply – skip to 409.10D(8).
- (2) The State Conservationist will establish a State certification process and criteria to certify CNMP planners.
- (3) The State Conservationist will ensure that all pertinent State certification and licensing requirements (e.g., engineering license, engineering approval authority, and certified nutrient management consultant or specialist) are met as part of any program established.
- (4) The State Conservationist will establish a procedure for reviewing and approving CNMP planner designations for individuals relocating to their State.
- (5) The State Conservationist may establish programs to certify third-party vendors and other

NC Interim Guidance to 180-409-GM, 1st Ed., Amend. 36, Feb 2016

- individuals.
- (6) The State Conservationist will maintain a list of NRCS-approved CNMP planners as well as any other specialists certified by NRCS in the State to develop and implement CNMPs. Each third-party certification program approved by NRCS will maintain a current list of specialists certified by that program and make it available to the State Conservationist. CPTAD will maintain a list of all TSPs who meet national and State certified CNMP criteria in TechReg.
- (7) Training
- (i) The State Conservationist will determine the type and minimum hours of training necessary to become a certified CNMP planner.
- (ii) Training may be provided through NRCS training courses, on-the-job training, or equivalent courses and methods approved by the State Conservationist as meeting the identified training requirement. The State Conservationist, in consultation with the Director, CPTAD, may grant approval for course equivalency in lieu of an NRCS formal training course.
- (iii) Training provided by an NRCS-approved certifying organization may be substituted for NRCS training.
- (iv) Certified planner candidates must complete the following:
- The “National Conservation Planning Course, Part 1” (modules 1-5) or equivalent, as approved by the State Conservationist.
 - “NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Systems - A Primer,” and “NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Systems - Level 2,” in AgLearn, or equivalent as approved by the State Conservationist.

(8) TSP National CNMP Planner Designation Requirements

- (i) TSPs will obtain the CNMP planner designation through the following national certification process.
- (ii) TSP CNMP planner candidates must complete the TSP Orientation and Conservation Planning, or an alternative approved by the Director, CPTAD.
- (iii) TSP CNMP planner candidates must complete modules 6-8 of the “NRCS Conservation Planning Course,” offered nationally or by any State, or an equivalent course as approved by the Director, CPTAD.
- (iv) TSP CNMP planner candidates must complete the following additional training. TSPs who have previously completed any of the following courses are not required to take the course again if proof of course completion is provided to the national TSP Program manager, unless required for recertification due to poor performance.
 - “Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide” (AgLearn)
 - Current wind and water erosion technologies training coordinated through a State NRCS office or an equivalent course approved by the Director, CPTAD
 - “NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Systems, A Primer” (AgLearn)
 - “NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Systems, Level 2” (AgLearn)
 - “Air Quality, Climate Change, and Energy” (AgLearn)
 - “Air Quality Resource Concerns” (AgLearn)
 - “Air Quality Assessment Tool Webinar – Dairy, Swine or Poultry” (S&T Library)
 - “Introduction to Water Quality” (AgLearn)
 - “Nutrient Management, Modules 1-6” (AgLearn)
 - State-specific training module for each State where TSP will be developing CNMPs

E. Maintaining Certification

- (1) State Conservationist will determine the type and minimum hours of training necessary to maintain certification. 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.10E(1) does not apply to TSPs. For national requirements for TSPs to maintain conservation planning certification, see 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.10E(3).
- (2) NRCS and TSP certified CNMP planners are responsible for maintaining their certification. Maintaining certification includes completing necessary training to maintain and update skills.
- (3) TSP National Requirements for Maintaining CNMP Planner Certification
 - (i) Each TSP CNMP planner designation will be reviewed at least once every 3 years by the State Conservationist or designee in the TSP’s resident State. The review will be based on CNMPs completed by the TSP in that State during the time period being reviewed.
 - (ii) If a TSP did not develop any CNMPs in the resident State during the review period, the State Conservationist of the TSP’s resident State, after consultation with the national TSP Program manager, will have the review completed by a State where the TSP did work during the review period. Refer to policy in 440-CPM, Part 504, Subpart C, Section 504.26B(2) for plan reviews outside of resident States.
 - (iii) If a TSP has not developed any CNMPs in the past 3 years, a new sample CNMP must be prepared for review.
 - (iv) The TSP must review the State-specific training module for each State they will be recertified in, so they can be aware of any updated information.

F. Quality Assurance

- (1) The State Conservationist will include actions in the State quality assurance plan to ensure that the State reviews the CNMP certification program.

- (2) The State Conservationist or designee will review and verify the technical adequacy of each certified CNMP planner, including TSPs, at least once every 3 years. If an individual fails to meet the qualifications or criteria established for certified CNMP planner status, the certifying organization, whether it is NRCS or an NRCS-approved certifying organization, must revoke the status. When the status is revoked, the individual may seek recertification based on State-specific guidelines. Applicants must present proof of training when seeking recertification.
- (3) For each NRCS-certified CNMP planner, the State Conservationist or designee will review a sufficient number of that planner's CNMPs to find out whether the plans or designs are developed and carried out according to NRCS conservation practice standards, policy, and CNMP technical criteria.
- (4) NRCS quality assurance policy and guidance can be found in 450-GM, Part 407, "Documentation, Certification, and Spot Checking."

409.11 Criteria to Achieve an NRCS Certified Specialist in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Designation

A. Prerequisites

- (1) Individual must be one of the following:
 - (i) An existing NRCS or partner employee
 - (ii) A third-party vendor, including TSPs or individuals seeking TSP certification
 - (iii) A volunteer
- (2) Although certification is not required to develop or revise IPM components (IPM plan) of conservation plans nor to schedule practice 595 (IPM) in conservation plans, all persons who approve IPM components of conservation plans must be certified specialists in IPM. A certified conservation planner, as required by 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.3B, will approve the overall conservation plan.

B. Policy References

- (1) IPM (595) standard and specification
- (2) 190-GM, Part 404, Subpart A, Section 404.1B

C. Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- (1) The State Conservationist will address the following in establishing a program for certifying specialists who approve IPM components of conservation plans:
 - (i) An understanding of the conservation planning process.
 - (ii) An understanding of the production systems where pest management will be applied.
 - (iii) Skill in using the Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (WIN-PST) or other appropriate pest management environmental risk screening tools.
 - (iv) An understanding of local, State, territorial, Tribal, and Federal laws and regulations related to pest management.
 - (v) An understanding of natural resource concerns related to pest management activities.
 - (vi) An awareness of the content of NRCS pest management policy.
 - (vii) An understanding of the content and use of the NRCS FOTG.
 - (viii) Proficiency in applying the NRCS IPM 595 standard and specification.
- (2) The State Conservationist may develop a list of additional qualifications (knowledge, skills, and abilities) required for the certified specialist in IPM designation. TSPs are required to meet only the knowledge, skills, and abilities identified in paragraphs 409.11C(1).

D. Certification Requirements

- (1) States will follow all national requirements and any additional State requirements. For TSP integrated pest management specialist certification requirements, paragraphs 409.11D (1) - (8) do not apply – skip to 409.11D(9).
- (2) The State Conservationist will establish a process and criteria to certify specialists who approve IPM components of conservation plans.
- (3) The State Conservationist will ensure that all NRCS personnel who provide technical assistance for IPM are properly trained and meet applicable requirements for their positions as well as State or local licensing and certification requirements. In addition, the State Conservationist will establish a process to provide continuing education to maintain employee competency.
- (4) The State Conservationist will determine how competency will be demonstrated. The State Conservationist, in consultation with the Director, CPTAD, may grant approval for course equivalency in lieu of an NRCS formal training course. The following are minimum requirements:
 - (i) Successful completion of the “National Conservation Planning Course, Part 1” (modules 1-5) or equivalent.
 - (ii) Successful completion of the NRCS “Introduction to Water Quality Course” or equivalent.
 - (iii) Successful completion of the pest management track of the NRCS “Nutrient and Pest Management Considerations in Conservation Planning Course” or equivalent.
 - (iv) Demonstrated skill in using the WIN-PST or other appropriate pest management environmental risk screening tools.
 - (v) Demonstrated skill in developing the pest management component of a conservation plan based on the State IPM (FOTG Practice Code 595) conservation practice standard.
- (5) The State Conservationist will establish a procedure for reviewing and approving IPM specialist designations for individuals relocating to their State.
- (6) The State Conservationist may establish a program to certify third-party vendors and other private sector individuals, such as certified crop advisors and crop consultants. Existing programs from national certifying organizations; land grant universities; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; State government agencies; and other appropriately qualified entities may be utilized as components of the NRCS certification program in a State.
- (7) The State Conservationist will maintain a list of NRCS-approved IPM specialists as well as any other specialists certified by NRCS in the State as IPM specialists. Each third-party certification program approved by NRCS must maintain a current list of specialists certified by that program and must make it available to the State Conservationist. CPTAD will maintain a list of all TSPs who meet national and State pest management criteria in TechReg.
- (8) Training
 - (i) The State Conservationist will determine the type and minimum hours of training necessary to become a certified specialist in IPM.
 - (ii) Training may be provided through NRCS training courses, on-the-job training, or equivalent courses and methods approved by the State Conservationist as meeting the identified training requirement.
 - (iii) Training provided by an NRCS-approved certifying organization may be substituted for NRCS training.
- (9) TSP Certified Specialist in Integrated Pest Management Requirements
 - (i) TSPs will obtain the CNMP planner designation through the following national certification process.
 - (ii) TSP certified IPM specialist candidates must complete the “TSP Orientation and

Title 180 – General Manual

Conservation Planning Course” or an alternative approved by the Director, CPTAD.

- (iii) TSP certified integrated pest management specialist candidates must complete the following additional training. TSPs who have previously completed any of the following courses are not required to take the course again if proof of course completion is provided to the national TSP Program manager, unless required for recertification due to poor performance.
 - “Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide” (AgLearn)
 - “Introduction to Water Quality” (AgLearn)
 - Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (WIN-PST) training coordinated through a State NRCS office or an equivalent course for WIN-PST or other appropriate pest management screening tool approved by the Director, CPTAD
 - Pest management track of the “Nutrient and Pest Management Course” (AgLearn)
- State-specific training module for each State where TSP will be developing pest management plans.
- (iv) TSP must complete any additional training or licensing required by State laws or regulations in the State where work is being performed.

E. Maintaining Certification

- (1) The State Conservationist will determine the type and minimum hours of training necessary to maintain certification. 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.11E(1) does not apply to TSPs. For national requirements for TSPs to maintain “certified specialist in integrated pest management” designation, see 180-GM, Part 409, Section 409.11E(3).
- (2) NRCS and TSP certified IPM specialists are responsible for maintaining their certification. Maintaining certification includes completing necessary training to maintain and update skills.
- (3) TSP National Requirements for Maintaining Certified Specialist in Integrated Pest Management Designation
 - (i) Each TSP “certified specialist in integrated pest management” designation will be reviewed at least once every 3 years by the State Conservationist or designee in the TSP’s resident State. The review will be based on IPM plans completed by the TSP in that State during the time period being reviewed.
 - (ii) If a TSP did not develop any IPM plans in the resident State during the review period, the State Conservationist of the TSP’s resident State, after consultation with the national TSP Program manager, will have the review completed by a State where the TSP did work during the review period. Refer to policy in 440-CPM, Part 504, Subpart C, Section 504.26B(2) for plan reviews outside of resident States.
 - (iii) If a TSP has not developed any IPM plans in the past 3 years, a new sample IPM plan must be prepared for review.
 - (iv) The TSP must review the State-specific training module for each State they will be recertified in, so they can be aware of any updated information.

F. Quality Assurance

- (1) The State Conservationist will include actions in the State quality assurance plan to ensure that the State reviews the IPM certification program.
- (2) The State Conservationist or designee will review and verify the technical adequacy of each IPM specialist, including TSPs, at least once every 3 years. If an individual fails to meet the qualifications or criteria established for IPM certification, the IPM certification must be revoked. When the status is revoked, the individual may seek recertification as an IPM specialist based on State guidelines. Applicants must present proof of training when seeking recertification.
- (3) For each NRCS-certified IPM specialist, the State Conservationist or designee will review a sufficient number of that specialist’s IPM approvals to find out whether the plans or designs

Title 180 – General Manual

are developed and carried out according to NRCS conservation practice standards, policy, and technical criteria. NRCS staff may submit plans they developed or plans they approved by a third party.

CCP Training Requirements in North Carolina				
Course	Description	Source	Format	Completion Date
CONSERVATION PLANNING				
Conservation Planning, Part I (Modules 1-5)	Provides an overview of the background and framework for conservation planning, based on NRCS policy, procedures and guidelines.	NEDC-000019	AgLearn - web based	
Conservation Planning, Part II (Modules 6-8) Either: • NRCS Bootcamp or • North Carolina Basics of Conservation Planning plus: o Basic Cropland Planning, and o Basic Headquarters Planning	Provides hands-on field application of the planning process. Includes both classroom and field exercises.	NEDC-000164 OR NC-00005	Classroom & Field	
Conservation Planning, Part III (Module 9) - See Plan development below	Individual application of the conservation planning process. Participant must develop, evaluate and revise conservation plans for review/approval.	State	Self - paced	
Nutrient Management Track 1, Part I	This training course introduces NRCS' mission in nutrient management and how it relates to the RMS planning process. It provides the participant with a basic understanding of the science of nutrient management, as well as environmental concerns associated with the use of nutrients management measures, including environmental risk, and the processes that affect the fate and transport of nutrients in the environment.	NEDC-000083	AgLearn - web based	
Nutrient Management Training, Complete all 3 modules (Nutrient Mgt., Nutrient Mgt. Software, and RULSE2)	This training introduces local tools and criteria required for developing a nutrient management plan.	NC State University	Classroom	
Environmental Evaluations for North Carolina Conservation Planners	Provides an overview of the CPA-52 environmental evaluation used in conservation planning.	State	Classroom	
Soil Survey Data and Application in North Carolina	Provides an overview of utilizing soil survey data in conservation planning.	State	Classroom	
Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide	The Field Office Technical Guide is the primary technical reference for the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). It contains technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.	NEDC-000149	AgLearn - web based	
Introduction to Water Quality	Creates awareness of NRCS Water Quality policy; teaches principles and how to apply them at field, farm, and watershed scales.	NEDC-000033	AgLearn - web based	

Course	Description	Source	Format	Completion Date
CONSERVATION PLANNING				
Agricultural Waste Management Systems - Primer	This training provides an overview of agricultural waste management systems. It covers background, safety and hazards, planning, and functions of agricultural waste management systems. It is intended for field personnel, NRCS supervisors and managers with responsibilities relating to agricultural waste management systems. This course is a prerequisite to the Agricultural Waste Management Systems - Level 2 course.	NEDC-000115	AgLearn - web based	
Agricultural Waste Management Systems - Level 2	This course provides training on planning and designing agricultural waste management systems with an emphasis on systems for livestock and poultry operations. It provides guidance in developing an agricultural waste management system that manages the waste from its production through its utilization.	NEDC-000116	AgLearn - web based	
Pest Management Track 2, Part I	This training course introduces NRCS' mission in pest management and how it relates to the RMS planning process. It provides the participant with a basic understanding of the science of pest management, as well as environmental concerns associated with the use of pest management measures, including environmental risk, and the processes that affect the fate and transport of pesticides in the environment.	NEDC-000085	AgLearn - web based	
Organic 101: Introduction to Organic	The goal of these trainings is to help USDA employees better understand the needs of alternative agricultural producers. This understanding will allow employees to make USDA programs and services more accessible and to connect them with appropriate resources.	USDA-ORGANIC101	AgLearn - web based	
Air Quality, Climate Change and Energy	This course will provide a broad overview of air quality, climate change and energy , and how they are related to each other and SWAPA+H components. Students will learn how agricultural activities can contribute to air emissions, sequester carbon, manage greenhouse gas emissions, and better conserve energy. The course also will provide examples of addressing these issues via NRCS planning and programs.	NEDC-000253	AgLearn - web based	
Energy Basics	Understanding energy basics is fundamental to effective energy conservation planning. This course establishes a technical foundation to prepare NRCS planners to incorporate energy considerations into conservation plans. It provides general background on the fundamental principles behind energy issues in agricultural setting.	NEDC-000255	AgLearn - web based	

Course	Description	Source	Format	Completion Date
CONSERVATION PLANNING				
Environmental Compliance for Conservation Assistance (EC Level 1)	Environmental Compliance Level 1 is the first course in the Environmental Compliance for Conservation Assistance Training series offered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. As a Federal agency, NRCS is responsible to complying with numerous environmental laws, regulations, policies, and Executive Orders. Level 1 provides employees, conservation partners and Technical Service Providers (TSPs) with an awareness of the environmental requirements related to all conservation planning.	NEDC-000190	AgLearn - web based	
Cultural Resources Module 1-6	Establish and increase participant awareness and knowledge of NRCS' cultural resources stewardship responsibilities. It is designed for field office personnel, partners and others who work with the NRCS State Office Cultural Resources Specialist and	NEDC-000141	AgLearn - web based	
Cultural Resources Module 7-8	Course is part of the National Cultural Resources Training Modules. Modules 7-8 covers a review of Modules 1-6, regional cultural overview, cultural resources of field office, identification of artifacts in the field, prehistoric stone tools, historic artifacts, and a site visit to a historic or prehistoric archaeological site.	State	Classroom and field	
Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA)	Additional individual training to meet the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA) desired proficiency level for all criteria.	State	OJT	
Plan Development - Individuals will develop (3) Landuse - RMS level plans, One (1) of the three (3) must be cropland or pasture and contain a NM component. Choose from the following landuses - Cropland, Pasture, Hayland, Forest or Forest-wildlife.				
Landuse - (RMS) Level Plan (1)	Individual application of the planning process. Participant must develop a Resource Management System (RMS) Plan for review/approval.	State	Self - paced	
Landuse - (RMS) Level Plan (1)	Individual application of the planning process. Participant must develop a Resource Management System (RMS) Plan for review/approval.	State	Self - paced	
Landuse - (RMS) Level Plan (1) Cropland or Pasture containing NM component	Individual application of the planning process. Participant must develop a Resource Management System (RMS) Plan for review/approval.	State	Self - paced	

Knowledge, Skills & Abilities for Conservation Planning in North Carolina
Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Leading to Certification

Planner _____

Date: _____

I. NRCS Conservation Planning Policy & Technical Guidance

KSA	<i>One shall be able to:</i>	Current Level	Desired Level	Training Needs
1. Understand NRCS conservation planning policy, procedures and guidance.	Explain, in general, NRCS conservation planning related policy and procedures (see Title 180, Part 600.1 References), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Planning Policy (180-GM, Part 409) • Ecological Sciences (190-GM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with NEPA (Part 410) • Cultural Resources (420-GM, Part 401) • National Planning Procedure Handbook (Title 180, Part 600) • National Environmental Compliance Handbook (Title 190, Part 610) • Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook (Title 210, Part 651) 		4	
2. Working knowledge of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and related handbooks.	a. Describe, in general, the contents of each major section of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) I – General Resource References II – Natural Resources Information III – Resource Management Systems and Planning Criteria IV – Practice Standards and Specifications V – Conservation Effects b. Describe, in general, federal and state handbooks referenced in the FOTG		4	
			3	

II. Communication

KSA	<i>One shall be able to:</i>	Current Level	Desired Level	Training Needs
1. Ability to communicate with customers and others to engender cooperation, and voluntary adoption of conservation practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engage customers in an ongoing dialogue to elicit information, gain understanding, and coordinate action towards improving the conditions of natural resources. b. Work with customers to determine objectives, informed by the conservation planning process. c. Work with resource specialists, program managers and others to facilitate technical transfer and support in conservation delivery. 		<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	
2. Knowledge and understanding of Privacy and Freedom of Information responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explain, in general, the purpose of the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act. b. Describe the procedure for responding to a request for information from conservation plans and case files. c. Explain the components of the conservation plan and case file that are unavailable to the public based on federal privacy laws. d. Describe the types of information that are available for public review in field offices (for example, aerial photos, HEL and wetland determinations, published maps and soil surveys). 		<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	

III. NRCS Conservation Planning Process: Phase I. Resource Inventory/Analysis, And Problem Identification

KSA	<i>One shall be able to:</i>	Current Level	Desired Level	Training Needs
1. Ability to assimilate all pertinent sources of information to identify problems and opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Accurately interpret and document customers' identified problems and expressed concerns. b. Fully assess potential resource problems and opportunities, following accepted methods and procedures, guided by an ability to "read the land" and apply sound judgments. c. Identify problems based on a resource inventory and analysis. 		<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	

<p>2. Ability to develop and document basic resource inventories, using remote sensing, field observation, and other recognized methods.</p>	<p><u>Soil Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use the soil survey and understand basic soils information to determine the important properties of soils found on a land unit (e.g., texture, slope, permeability, pH, depth to groundwater, frequency of flooding, etc.) b. Determine the location of a land unit on maps, including aerial photographs, topography maps, soil survey maps, etc. c. Explain how soil properties may affect crop production, land use decisions, and alternative treatments. d. Define and explain the different types of erosion e. Develop and document soil loss predictions, using RUSLE-2 or most recent approved soil loss technology. f. Measure and estimate crop residue and ground cover. <p><u>Water Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and document the presence of wetlands, relative to the Swampbuster provisions of the Food Security Act. b. Locate and describe watershed boundaries, drainage basins, surface waters, groundwater sources, and hydrologically sensitive areas. c. Identify and document potential concerns regarding water quantity (e.g., seeps, runoff and overland flow, inadequate outlets, flooding, poor drainage, deficient amounts, water management, restricted capacity). <p><u>Animal Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Inventory and document the extent and condition of domestic animal life needs and management components, (e.g., animal numbers and classes, feed, drinking water, waste). b. Inventory and document presence or absence of wildlife needs and management elements (e.g., food, cover, drinking water, population/resource balance, animal health). 		<p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>3</p>	
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<p>3. Ability to assess field conditions relative to the Sodbuster and Swampbuster provisions of the Food Security Act.</p>	<p>a. Identify and document the presence of Highly Erodible Land (HEL). b. Demonstrate the correct procedure for determining whether or not a field is highly erodible, or a wetland. c. Document the HEL determination in the conservation plan folder using an approved soil loss worksheet.</p>		<p>4 2 4</p>	
<p>4. Ability to identify and document environmentally sensitive areas.</p>	<p>a. Locate, and document environmentally sensitive resources associated with a conservation management unit, such as: Tidal and Non-Tidal Wetlands, Waters of The State and United States, 100-Year Floodplains, Riparian Areas, Scenic and Wild Rivers, Outstanding Resource Water, Wellhead Protection Areas, Medium or High Yield Aquifers, Designated Shellfish Growing Areas, Cold Water Fisheries, Anadromous Fish Runs, Threatened, Rare And Endangered Animal & Plant Species, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.</p>		<p>4</p>	
<p>5. Ability to collect and analyze nutrient and pest management related data.</p>	<p>a. Conduct and explain soil sampling procedures, and interpret results of laboratory analysis. b. Conduct and explain manure and other organic by-product sampling procedures, and interpret results of laboratory analysis. c. Collect and analyze nutrient and pest management related data needed for operating NRCS approved planning tools, (e.g., MMP and WIN-PST). d. Use Nutrient and Pest Management Risk Assessment tools, including Nitrogen Leaching Index, Phosphorous Index, WIN-PST, or most recent approved technology..</p>		<p>4 4 4 4</p>	
<p>6. Ability to recognize, document and discuss sources of agricultural pollution.</p>	<p>a. Identify and document existing and potential sources of sediment, other particulates, nutrients and pathogens that may be delivered to surface water. b. Identify and document existing and potential sources of groundwater contamination, including improper storage or disposal of animal wastes, pesticide handling facilities, nutrient</p>		<p>4 4</p>	

	and pesticide application methods. c. Discuss the relationships between sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus and pathogens and water quality.		4	
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IV. Conservation Planning Process: Phase II. Formulate And Evaluate Alternatives.

KSA	One shall be able to:	Current Level	Desired Level	Training Needs
1. Working knowledge of federal, state and local regulations that affect conservation planning and land use decisions	a. Identify the federal, state, and local agencies that have regulatory or resource responsibilities for environmental concerns, such as HEL, tidal and non-tidal wetlands, waters of the United States, 100-year floodplains, designated shellfish areas, riparian areas, scenic and wild rivers, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, and other significant concerns in the work area.		4	
	b. Provide a general explanation of the pertinent federal, state, and local regulations that affect the above-listed environmental concerns.		4	
	c. Describe sources of information for the various federal, state, and local regulations that are available within and outside of the field office.		4	
2. Awareness of federal and state conservation assistance programs	a. Provide a general explanation of the purpose of various federal programs (e.g., EQIP, WHIP, CRP/CREP, WRP), and the types of conservation practices and assistance included in those programs.		4	
	b. Provide a general explanation of the purpose of various state programs and the types of practices and assistance included in those programs.		4	
	c. Identify the potential for using federal and/or state programs to achieve the client's objectives and address resource concerns.		4	
	d. Describe sources of information available within and outside of the field office for clients who wish to pursue enrollment in federal and/or state programs.		4	

<p>3. Knowledge of conservation practices and systems common to the work area</p>	<p>a. Describe the conservation practices commonly used in the geographic region; note their purpose(s), and where and how they are applied.</p> <p>b. Develop appropriate conservation system alternatives for each land use (e.g., cropland, pasture, hayland, etc.), taking into consideration the client's objectives, identified resource concerns, and constraints such as cost, availability of equipment, access, and regulatory or cost-share requirements.</p>		<p>4</p> <p>4</p>	
<p>4. Ability to formulate and evaluate an alternatives analysis.</p>	<p>a. Draw from client's objectives, resource data analysis, problem identification, and knowledge of conservation practices to formulate alternatives.</p> <p>b. Describe the positive and negative effects of conservation practices and systems common to the work area, including consideration of the social, economic, and ecological factors that influence planning.</p> <p>c. Develop and present a basic economic analysis of each alternative.</p> <p>d. Use the environmental evaluation process to determine and document the effects of alternative practices or systems on environmentally sensitive resources (NEPA Evaluation).</p> <p>e. Present alternatives to clients in ways that facilitate decision-making and adoption of conservation systems.</p>		<p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>	
<p>5. Ability to develop a basic conservation plan</p>	<p>a. Obtain clients' decisions from identified alternatives and record the plan.</p> <p>b. Schedule application of conservation practices.</p> <p>c. Prepare plan documents according to the NPPH (e.g. maps, schedule, O&M, job sheets, etc.).</p> <p>d. Deliver the plan to the client, reviewing the objectives, planned practices and implementation schedule.</p> <p>e. Maintain Field Office case files according to policy, including technical assistance notes, correspondence, status reviews, etc.</p> <p>f. Direct customers to other sources of assistance, as appropriate.</p>		<p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>	

V. Conservation Planning Process: Phase III. Implement & Evaluate the Plan

KSA	<i>One shall be able to:</i>	Current Level	Desired Level	Training Needs
1. Ability to provide overall guidance towards conservation system installation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide the client with adequate information to understand, implement, operate and maintain the planned conservation system. b. Work with field engineers and technicians to coordinate practice design, layout, construction and inspection. c. Certify that conservation practices are installed according to NRCS standards and specifications. d. Maintain on-going relationships with clients to monitor completion, operation and maintenance, and evaluation of conservation systems. 		<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	
2. Ability to review and revise a conservation plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine whether an existing conservation plan reflects the resource concerns and client's objectives for the current operation. b. Recommend the addition and/or deletion of conservation practices and systems as appropriate for the current operation. c. Revise the appropriate plan documents. d. Direct customers to other sources of assistance, as appropriate. 		<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	
3. Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Determine whether installed practices are functioning properly and solve the identified problem, as planned. b. Provide feedback to the planning process and technical guidance system to foster continued learning and adaptive management. 		<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	

NOTE: Rate the individual's *current level* of knowledge, skill and ability using the following rating definitions, and identify the specific areas of training needed to meet the minimum desired level for conservation planners (parts i-v).

RATINGS:

- 1 = Limited knowledge or understanding.
- 2 = Has a basic knowledge and can perform in minimally complex circumstances with supervision or oversight.
- 3 = Has working knowledge and competent to perform under moderately complex circumstances with limited supervision.
- 4 = Has an advanced level of working knowledge and competent to perform independently under very complex circumstances.
- 5 = Expert knowledge and competent to perform under the most complex circumstances and able to train or demonstrate to others.

SIGNATURES

Planner

Date:

Supervisor

Date:

**State Resource
Conservationist**

Date: