



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

October 29, 2014

**NATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES
450 – NHCP
NOTICE 160**

Purpose. This notice transmits new or revised national Conservation Practice Standards (CPSs), along with an updated index, for insertion into the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). In addition, notes are included to highlight key changes made to each document.

Effective Date. This notice is effective upon receipt.

Explanation of Changes. New or revised national CPSs are as follows:

Access Road (Code 560)—The agency revised the definition. The chart for the location of cross-slope drainage features was modified to include a variety of soils rather than a single soil. The agency clarified references to supporting practices.

Agrichemical Handling Facility (Code 309)—The agency added new criteria under which lowering the water table would be allowable, expanded sizing criteria of the agrichemical handling pad, clarified language under the storage capacity criteria, added new criteria for an equipment wash bay, and updated and added clarification to the criteria for concrete exposed to agrichemicals.

Conservation Cover (Code 327)—Managing pests was not appropriate as the purpose of this standard and was deleted. Added “beneficial organism habitat” to the pollinator purpose of the practice. Added one new reference: National Agronomy Technical Note 9, Preventing or Mitigating Potential Negative Impacts of Pesticides on Pollinators Using IPM and Other Conservation Practices.

Conservation Crop Rotation (Code 328)—Changed definition slightly from “Growing crops in a planned sequence on the same field” to “A planned sequence of crops grown on the same ground over a period of time (i.e., the rotation).”

Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332)—Added an additional practice purpose to reduce transport of nutrients downslope and combined the additional criteria for this purpose with the additional criteria to reduce transport of sediment and other waterborne contaminants downslope. Made minor wording modifications to improve understanding and reduce redundancy in the standard.

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Cover Crop (Code 340)—Deleted two purposes, (1) promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use, and (2) increase biodiversity, as the two purposes are captured in the criteria in the general criteria and the criteria for the other purposes. Edited the criteria to improve clarity and understanding of the standard. Added additional criteria to address the need to terminate cover crops within the NRCS cover Crop Termination Guidelines. Provided additional criteria for haying and grazing cover crops.

Cross Wind Trap Strips (Code 589c)—Removed the purpose to induce windborne sediment deposition as this is covered under the purpose to reduce soil erosion and induce windblown sediment deposition. Deleted the purpose to provide food and cover for pollinators and wildlife. In the general criteria for the practice, changed the language from using university extension guides to NRCS approved technical references for seeding and establishment.

Grade Stabilization Structure (Code 410)—The agency refined the definition, modified criteria, and updated terminology related to hazard classification.

Grassed Waterway (Code 412)—The agency refined the definition and purposes slightly and modified the criteria to allow the use of state planting guides. The agency clarified references to supporting practices.

Groundwater Testing (Code 355)—The agency changed the title from “Well Water Testing” to “Groundwater Testing,” to reflect that this practice can be used to test groundwater from both wells and springs. The agency also modified conditions where practice applies and removed items from criteria operation and maintenance.

Heavy Use Area Protection (Code 561)—The agency changed the units of this practice from acres to square feet to better reflect usage. The definition of this practice changed slightly. Criteria for the use of concrete and mulches were modified. Criteria for the use of vegetation and other material as a surface treatment were added. Considerations for animal health and air quality were added. The agency clarified references to supporting practices.

Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery (Code 447)—Rewritten to use clearer, plain language. Definition and purpose were clarified but not materially changed. Under criteria for storage, two new criteria setting the minimum size of the storage component were added. The plans and specifications section was completely rewritten, and four new references were added.

Irrigation Water Management (Code 449)—The purpose of improving air quality was removed. IWM would not be applied to treat air quality in and of itself. The purpose of decreasing nonpoint source pollution of surface and groundwater resources was rewritten as “Decrease degradation of surface and groundwater resources.” The criteria section has been edited for clarity, and the criteria for plant stress monitoring were updated to include current technology. Several new references were added.

Monitoring Well (Code 353)—The agency changed the definition, deleted a purpose, modified conditions where practice applies, changed some criteria, and added considerations.

On-Farm Secondary Containment Facility (Code 319)—The agency created this new conservation practice standard to address the need for on-farm secondary containment of oil and petroleum products. The lifespan of this practice is 15 years.

Precision Land Forming (Code 462)—The agency updated the operation and maintenance section and references.

Roof Runoff Structure (Code 558)—The agency added inventory and assessment information, clarified the language and organization of the standard, added conditions and criteria for capturing roof runoff for other uses, and added considerations.

Short Term Storage of Animal Waste and Byproducts (Code 318)—The agency created this new conservation practice standard to address the need for short-term storage of animal waste and byproducts on farms where there is no existing permanent storage facility. The lifespan of this practice is 1 year.

Structures for Wildlife (Code 649)—This is a new national conservation practice standard with a 5-year lifespan. Prior to this new national conservation practice standard, there existed no minimum requirements for applying fish and wildlife structures or retrofitting existing structures as needed to improve management and conservation of fish and wildlife habitats and to achieve their intended purpose. To address this technical gap, an interim national conservation practice standard, Fish and Wildlife Structures (Code 734), was developed and tested in several States. Ultimately, States recommended conversion of this interim standard to a new national conservation practice standard. Structures for Wildlife (Code 734) does not apply to structures benefitting aquatic species. During field testing, NRCS found that most habitat structures for aquatic species (e.g., fish ladders) are adequately addressed in other national conservation practice standards. It was also discovered during the testing process that the interim standard (Code 734) did not provide for retrofitting existing structures that pose a threat to wildlife. This standard corrects that oversight by providing for retrofitting existing structures, such as the installation of wildlife escape ramps to existing water troughs and retrofitting existing fencing to allow for safe passage by wildlife.

Surface Roughening (Code 609)—Revised the condition where the practice applies to stress the practice is “emergency tillage” and not the primary method of erosion control. The general criterion for the random roughness based in the “soil erodibility factor” from the former wind erosion equation was removed. The current technology is now based on the Wind Erosion Prediction System technology.

Terrace (Code 600)—The agency clearly defined pressure flow and gravity flow, added tractive stress references, updated the operation and maintenance section, and added references.

Trails and Walkways (Code 575)—The agency incorporated Trails and Walkways (Code 568) into Animal Trails and Walkways (Code 575) under the name Trails and Walkways (Code 575). These standards were combined into one because many of the criteria are very similar. The practice name, definition, purpose, and conditions where practice applies were modified accordingly. The agency clarified references to supporting practices.

Tree/Shrub Pruning (Code 660)—The agency added two new purposes and updated the criteria, considerations, plans and specifications, operation and maintenance, and references sections.

Waste Transfer (Code 634)—The agency removed “hauling waste material with equipment or vehicles” from the conditions where this practice is applied and expanded the design criteria information specific for waste transfer pipelines.

Watering Facility (Code 614)—The agency revised the definition of this practice and a purpose was added. The criteria for watering ramps were added. There is more emphasis on water storage tanks. The lifespan of this practice changed from 20 years to 10 years. The agency clarified references to supporting practices.

Water Well (Code 642)—The agency changed the criteria to clarify that domestic use and irrigation wells must follow consensus standards, grouting, and sealing with a water-tight seal required in annulus of the casing, clarified suitable filter pack materials, removed numerical limit on intake velocity through screens, and added a statement to emphasize all wells must be developed. The paragraph on well performance testing after completion was moved from criteria to considerations.

Well Decommissioning (Code 351)—The agency changed the name of this practice from Water Well Decommissioning to Well Decommissioning to reflect that this standard is used to decommission both water wells and monitoring wells. The agency revised the purposes and criteria sections. Disinfection was moved from criteria to considerations.

Filing Instructions. If a hardcopy of the NHCP is maintained, replace the “Contents” (pages i through vi, dated December 2013) with the revised pages found at <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=22299>

Remove and archive, as appropriate, the following existing practice standards:

Access Road (Code 560), dated July 2010
 Agrichemical Handling Facility (Code 309), dated February 2008
 Animal Trails and Walkways (Code 575), dated April 2010
 Conservation Cover (Code 327), dated September 2010
 Conservation Crop Rotation (Code 328), dated May 2011
 Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332), dated April 2010
 Cover Crop (Code 340), dated May 2011
 Cross Wind Trap Strips (Code 589c), dated April 2011
 Grade Stabilization Structure (Code 410), dated October 1985
 Grassed Waterway (Code 412), dated April 2010
 Heavy Use Area Protection (Code 561), dated January 2010
 Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery (Code 447), dated May 2011
 Irrigation Water Management (Code 449), dated May 2011
 Monitoring Well (Code 353), dated September 2010
 Precision Land Forming (Code 462), dated July 2002
 Roof Runoff Structure (Code 558), dated September 2009
 Surface Roughening (Code 609), dated September 2009
 Terrace (Code 600), dated April 2010

Trails and Walkways (Code 568), dated January 2010
Tree/Shrub Pruning (Code 660), dated January 2006
Waste Transfer (Code 634), November 2008
Watering Facility (Code 614), dated September 2010
Water Well (Code 642), dated September 2010
Water Well Decommissioning (Code 351), dated September 2010
Well Water Testing (Code 355), dated September 2010

This notice, and each of the conservation practice standards included with this notice, can be accessed electronically through the NRCS Web site at

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849

Federal Register Notice.

NRCS published two notices to solicit public comments about how to improve specific agency conservation practice standards in the *Federal Register* on April 21, 2014, and August 18, 2014, for a 30-day comment periods. Comments from the public were accepted during the comment period.

Guidance to the States and the Pacific Islands and Caribbean Areas for complying with the provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill that require advertising for public comment prior to revising NRCS State-level technical guides can be found in Title 450, General Manual, Part 401, Subpart B, Section 401.19.

/s/

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