SECTION IV

INTRODUCTION

A. General

Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide contains the Practice Standards and Specifications for the application of Conservation Management Systems. The General Manual (Title 450-Part 401, Subpart A) sets forth the policy for Section IV.

Standard – A practice standard establishes the minimum level of acceptable quality for planning and designing a practice. The standard is mostly an NRCS discipline expert speaking to a planner regarding the quality of work. A planner needs to know what is required for each practice to be accepted by NRCS. Standards can be changed only by a California Technical Guide Notice.

The wording of the standard will tell you of flexibility allowed. All statements in the standard need to be addressed. The items listed in "Criteria" and "Planning Considerations" must be addressed by the planner (either in the Conservation Notes or in the Design Report). Should a planner not follow the minimums as outlined in the standards, he/she is out side of his/her job authority and is subject to "negligence".

Specification – A practice specification describes the minimum requirements necessary to install the practice so that it functions properly. Specifications include elements of work to be done, kind, quality of materials, details of installation, and maintenance of the practice.

Specifications are written in the language of the planner speaking to the landowner or client. The landowner or client needs to know what is required for the installed practice to be "accepted" (or "approved" in the case of cost-sharing).

The planner is to assure that the practice was installed to conform to the minimum quality of work as specified. If the work does not conform, then document the shortcoming in the Conservation Notes. This is a must, because should there be a failure, these notes are very important.

Usually there is no "advisory" information contained in specifications. Most specifications are written as "required" except where some clauses are written, "when specified". The "Practice Requirements" sheet tailors a specification to the specific site.

B. Terms and Definitions

National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP) – This handbook is issued by the National Office and is available at the NRCS State Office. It contains a copy of the conservation practice standards for each of the nationally approved conservation practices.

National Standard – The practice standard, as prepared by the National office, is transmitted to the State offices by a NHCP Transmittal Notice. These are not issued to field offices.

California Issued National Standard – A National standard which has been reviewed and supplemented by NRCS state discipline specialists with field and partnership inputs and issued via a California Technical Guide Notice.

California Interim Standard – A practice standard prepared by NRCS in California to establish the minimum quality of work for a new practice which is different from any existing practice. These interim standards are approved and assigned a code number by the National Technical Guide Committee and have a life of three to five years when they need to be raised to a National Standard or dropped. These are issued via a California Technical Guide Notice.

Practice Requirements – This sheet is part of the specification and identifies the landowner or client, the tract of land, the drawings, and the required practice specification(s) and any special instructions for the practice(s) being applied to make them more site specific.

National Specification – The practice specification, as prepared by the National office, is transmitted to the State Offices by a NHCP Transmittal Notice. These are not issued to field offices. The few that have been issued are incorporated into California practice specifications.

California Practice Specification – An installation specification for engineering practices and the installation or application specification for a non-engineering practices. These practice specifications should not be used when the work is to be built by a formal contract. The words "Contractor" and "Contracting Officer" are not used. These specifications are the minimum requirement to be complied by the landowner, or client, for the practice to be "accepted" by NRCS.

Material Specification – This is a California issue of the Materials Section taken out of the National Specification, and formatted into a separate Material Specification. These are mostly used regarding pipe and deal with the various kinds, wall thickness, gauge, and strength requirements.

Construction Specification – There are several California issued construction specifications for use of various materials; such as concrete, earthfill, concrete block, post & wire; and geotextile fabric which are available to be used in conjunction with a practice specification.

C. Procedures for Using Section IV

1. The planner/designer needs to understand the resource problem of the landowner/client, and to determine the cause of the problem; and then determine what RMS covers the problem area.
2. Then decide what practice or group of practices are necessary to treat the causes, then provide the landowner/client with alternatives. After the landowner/client has decided what treatment is to be planned/designed, the planner can move forward with the planning process.
3. Read the practice standard, and determine if all of the requirements of the standard can be met. If so, record in the design report or the Conservation Notes.
4. Obtain and read the practice specification(s), and determine the required items to be listed on the Practice Requirement sheet.
5. When the application requires the installation of more than one practice, only the Practice Requirements sheet for the major practice is necessary – as long as the requirements for each supporting practice are recorded on the front side of the sheet.
6. Fill-in the backside of the Practice Requirements sheet:

   Design Approval – This complies with the assigned job approval authority. Ref. Section 501, NEM. Insert the limits for the job being designed.

   Landowner Acknowledgement – The acknowledgement of the landowner (or other responsible person) is requested by obtaining his signature. If the application requires more than one practice, and all practices are listed on the Practice Requirements sheet for the major practice, then the landowner's signature is needed only on the one sheet.

   Construction/Installation – This certification is made by the responsible NRCS person upon the successful installation or performance of the practice(s).