

Minimum Standards for Providers of Conservation Technical Assistance pertaining to Wetland Conservation Provisions of the FSA and NEPA.

General

Maine NRCS requires individuals who provide technical assistance related to wetland conservation provisions of the National Food Security Act (FSA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to have Maine NRCS Job Approval Authority (JAA). This includes Wetland Identification and Delineation, FSA Determinations, and/or Creation/Enhancement/Restoration for participants in USDA programs for which NRCS has been assigned technical responsibility. This will be done by meeting the following qualifications and criteria, or by earning NRCS National Certification utilizing the TechReg web site (<http://techreg.usda.gov>).

NRCS technical assistance for wetlands includes the identification, delineation, and determination of wetlands for conservation compliance purposes and the development of wetland mitigation/restoration projects. These Minimum Standards Provisions are the basis for assigning the status of individuals on the Maine Roster of Agency Experts for FSA Wetland Conservation Activities, which is maintained by the State Soil Scientist.

NRCS Engineering Job Approval or a signature and stamp by a professional Engineer licensed in the State of Maine are required for the engineering components of Wetland Restoration/Mitigation Plan.

(1) Minimum training requirement for all Wetland Identification and Delineations/NFSAM Determinations:

Title of Course	Training
Wetland Plant Identification	USFWS Eagle Hill Seminar or equivalent
Hydric Soils for Wetland Delineation	NRCS NEDC 000022
USACOE Reg 4 Wetland – Determination/Delination Training	USACOE: http://pdsc.usace.army.mil/aboutus.aspx
Introduction to Digital Remote Sensing	NRCS NEDC 000028
Wetland Delineation: National Food Security Act (NFSAM) On-Site Methods	NRCS NEDC 000254

Note: The NRCS State Soil Scientist may waive a training requirement based on equivalent training and/or demonstrated competency.

(2) Minimum training requirement for wetland mitigation/restoration planning activities:

Note: The NRCS State Soil Scientist may waive a training requirement based on equivalent training and/or demonstrated competency.

Title of Course	Training
Wetland Restoration and Enhancement	NRCS NEDC 000081
Hydrology Tools for Wetland Restoration and Determinations	NRCS NEDC 000025
All other requirements in (1) above	

FSA and NEPA Wetland Identification/Delineation/Determinations and Wetland Restoration and Mitigation Planning JAA

For JAA to be granted, the applicable training or equivalent above must be acknowledged in writing, and the applicant must have demonstrated the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct wetland determinations and delineations, scope and effect evaluations, functional

assessments, minimal effects evaluations, mitigation planning, and mitigation easements to gain JAA for each respective element. The demonstration of training and skill will be documented by the State Soil Scientist. The State Soil Scientist will maintain the Agency expert roster and post appropriate sections of it in Section III of the eFOTG accordingly per NFSAM Section 514.1B.

Maine NRCS Formal Wetland Creation, Enhancement, or Restoration Performance Demonstration Requirements

To be placed on the roster as having JAA for these activities (usually for compensatory mitigation purposes), individuals must participate in the development and implementation of one or more wetland development plans. Applicants must possess the ability to properly identify wetlands, perform functional assessments, apply hydrogeomorphic models, and determine scope and effect of wetland impacts and developments. Successful applicants will demonstrate the ability to independently identify sites with restoration potential, develop wetland restoration strategies including development of preliminary engineering alternatives in consultation with an Engineer (if the individual does not possess Engineering Job Approval), and develop an initial Habitat Restoration Plan for the surrounding area. Alternatives developed during the planning process shall demonstrate an awareness of regulations impacting wetland restoration/mitigation and ability to match wetland restoration techniques to the limitations of the site.

The NRCS State Soil Scientist shall review the documentation provided, the sites being planned, and the individual's interaction with the planning decision makers, regulators, and partners. The State Soil Scientist may recommend granting JAA to the applicant. If JAA is not granted, then the State Soil Scientist will document deficiencies. To complete the approval process, the NRCS State Soil Scientist or designee shall define with the applicant a training strategy to address remaining deficiencies in order to earn JAA in wetland mitigation activities. This process may reoccur as necessary. The State Soil Scientist may cancel JAA in the event of a request by the individual or their supervisor, demonstrated deficiencies, or after prolonged period of inactivity by the individual in this work area (e.g. greater than three years).

Quality Assurance

The NRCS State Soil Scientist (Reviewer) will establish and maintain a database (Maine Wetland Compliance and Conservation Tracking Database) to ensure that a minimum of one Wetland Restoration/Mitigation Plan or one Wetland Determination relating to the appropriate JAA is reviewed a minimum of once every three years. The outcome of these reviews will be documented in the database, and individuals will be notified of their status accordingly.

Questions concerning this policy should be forwarded to Tony Jenkins, NRCS State Soil Scientist at 207-990-9557 or email at tony.jenkins@me.usda.gov.