



Helping People Help the Land

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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**TECHNICAL GUIDE
NOTICE #256 (electronic)**

Purpose: To transmit information regarding the electronic NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG).

Effective Date: This notice is effective upon receipt.

Notice of Changes

SECTION I. General References

Economic Cost Data

3. Average Component Costs and Cost Tools

A new **Cost Estimate Tool** has been added to the FOTG, Section I, Economic Cost Data. This tool is designed to assist planners to provide individual site specific cost estimates. Training on this tool is provided in the Cost Estimates for Conservation Planners course number MI000263 which will be offered December 4, 2013.

4. Statewide Practice Cost Information

The Economic Cost Data in Section I has been updated to add revised **Statewide Practice Cost Information**. There is a new statewide typical practice cost table that shows the typical practice installation costs, O&M costs, design lifespan, and total average annual costs. A new cost information tool has been added. This excel spreadsheet tool allows planners to provide general cost information about typical practice costs.

Technical questions on these tools and information should be addressed to June Grabemeyer, Agricultural Economist, at (517) 324-5280.

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DIST: All Holders of the Field Office Technical Guide

Michigan Technical Notes

Michigan Agronomy Technical Note #60, “Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment, Version 2.0” has been updated to reflect changes in the Nutrient Management (590) conservation practice standard.

Technical questions should be addressed to Ruth Shaffer, Water Quality Specialist, at (517) 324-5239.

SECTION IV Practice Standards and Specifications

Conservation Practices

The conservation practice standard **Cover Crops (340)** has been updated. New termination guidelines were added to the existing conservation practice standard. The termination guidelines are consistent with a national agreement between FSA, RMA and NRCS for future crop insurance claims when cover crops are involved. Conservation and Contract planners should inform producers of their responsibility to protect crop insurance claims where cover crops are planned and be familiar with the termination guidelines.

Technical question should be addressed to Jerry Grigar, State Agronomist, at (517) 324-5250.

The conservation practice standard, **Nutrient Management (590)** has been updated based on changes in the national conservation practice standard and national nutrient management policy. Changes include the following:

- The currently approved NRCS assessment tools for wind and water erosion (RUSLE2 and WEPS), nitrate leaching (Leaching Index) and phosphorus movement offsite (the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment, P-Index Version 2.0) are required for all fields where nutrients are applied. Where the resource assessment tool results show high risk of erosion or offsite movement of nutrients, conservation and management practices must be put in place to mitigate the risk.
- The previous nutrient management practice required phosphorus risk assessments by means of a State-approved phosphorus risk assessment. The States were allowed to utilize a threshold, soil test phosphorus, or P-Index approach to phosphorus loss risk assessments. The revised policy requires that all phosphorus risk assessment tools be based on the P-Index approach.
- For fields receiving manure, where the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment results equate to LOW risk and the soil test phosphorus is less than 150 ppm Bray P1, manure application rates may be based on the nitrogen fertilizer recommendation. If the field is LOW risk, two, three or four crop years of phosphorus removal may be applied, but no

additional fertilizer or manure P can be applied for the second, third or fourth crop year. The calculated manure application rate shall not apply more plant-available nitrogen than the amount of the nitrogen fertilizer recommendation for the crop to be grown the first year.

- For fields receiving manure, where the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment results equate to MEDIUM risk, manure shall be applied at the phosphorus removal rate. Up to two crop years of phosphorus removal may be applied, but no additional fertilizer or manure phosphorus can be applied for the second crop year. The calculated manure application rate shall not apply more plant-available nitrogen than the amount of the nitrogen fertilizer recommendation for the crop to be grown the first year.
- For fields receiving manure, where the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment results equate to HIGH risk, no additional phosphorus may be applied. Manure application of greater than four crop years' phosphorus removal is not allowed.
- Regardless of the Michigan Phosphorus Risk Assessment score, if field soil test phosphorus is greater than 150 ppm, then no manure application is allowed, with the exception of dilute wastewater. Guidance on when dilute wastewater can be applied is consistent with the Manure Management GAAMPs.
- The previous standard did not include emerging strategies or technologies like adaptive nutrient management, organic crop production, precision agriculture, or enhanced-efficiency fertilizer products. The updated standard includes criteria and considerations for these topics.

Technical questions should be addressed to Ruth Shaffer, Water Quality Specialist, at (517) 324-5239.

SECTION V Conservation Effects

NEPA Environmental Evaluation

A new version of the **CPA-52, "Environmental Evaluation Worksheet"** has been added. Summary of Changes to the FY14 CPA-52 include:

- Section F. Resource Concerns.
 - Energy has been added.
 - Drop down menus have been updated to include the new & consolidated Resource Concern list (recently released with Tech Guide Notice 255).
 - The Field Inventory Guide Sheet (Resource Considerations) has been updated to reflect the new list of resource concerns.

- Individual subsections for resource concerns have been created, such as Soil Erosion and Soil Quality with separate drop down menus for the respective resource concern.
- Section I. Impacts to Special Environmental Concerns
 - A separate link to the Guide Sheets is below the name of each Special Environmental Concern; the previous link was built into the name.
 - Links to Fact Sheets explaining the Special Environmental Concern have been added in the same block as the link to the guide sheets. These are very informative; they include a list of actions that could potentially cause negative impacts (related to resource concern identification) and potential solutions.
 - The options have been simplified; the planner will now make a technical conclusion the alternative will have No Effect or May Effect the natural resources covered by the Special Environmental Concern.
 - Natural Areas and Scenic Beauty are added back in as Special Environmental Concerns.
- Section P. Planner Signature
 - Two separate lines exist for signatures. NRCS must sign this section.
 - If the individual completing section A-O is not the person that provided the technical assistance, (i.e. the form is being completed by the Farm Bill Specialist or a partner employee assisting the planner) the NRCS or Conservation District planner who provided the assistance will review the information for accuracy and sign Section P as the planner.
 - If the planner is not an NRCS employee (i.e. planning assistance is provided by a CD employee), the non-NRCS planner will sign the first line as the planner. An NRCS planner will then review the information in section A-O for accuracy and sign the second line in section P.
 - Only the Responsible Federal Official completes the remaining section Q-S.
 - The NRCS Responsible Federal Official is the District Conservationist (DC) unless otherwise designated in writing by the State Conservationist.
 - Reminder: If the plan is developed for the Conservation Reserve Program, NRCS may stop here and forward the signed CPA-52 to the Farm Service Agency (FSA), as the responsible federal agency, to complete sections Q-S.
 - The FSA Responsible Federal Official is the County Executive Director (CED).
- This September 2013 version of the CPA-52 is effective immediately.
 - Any plans completed in FY13 that do not have a completed CPA-52 will be evaluated using the September 2013 CPA-52.

- Any plans being modified or updated, where the modification or update includes a new practice, practice extent or scope, or a change in land units, will be re-evaluated for environmental compliance using the September 2013 CPA-52.

Technical questions should be addressed to Sally Van Lieu, Resource Conservationist, at (517) 324-5279.

Michigan Conservation Practice Physical Effects

Michigan Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPEs) have been developed for the Michigan interim conservation practice **Milking Center Wastewater Treatment (796)** and the conservation practice standard **Anaerobic Digester Controlled Temperature (366)**. The CPPEs were updated for consistency with the National and State Resource Concerns and Planning Criteria.

Technical questions should be addressed to Suzanne Reamer, Environmental Engineer, at (517) 324-5252 or (231) 941-0951, ext. 113.

Questions regarding eFOTG content management should be directed to Ruth Shaffer, Water Quality Specialist, at (517) 324-5239.

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JAMES G. SCOTT
State Resource Conservationist