

VERMONT NRCS TECHNICAL GUIDE SECTION IV

Conservation Practice Support Data Documentation and Certification Requirements

Background:

A conservation practice is recorded in an NRCS-approved conservation plan that addresses identified natural resource concerns and accomplishes the producer's conservation objective. Supporting data are to include a record of planning, design, installation, certification, and maintenance necessary to ensure that practices achieve their intended purpose. Supporting data to be recorded include those features of a practice that can be measured, surveyed, tested, or observed. The completed work is to be checked against the plans and specifications or other requirements to ensure a satisfactory job has been achieved and to assure size or quantity of practice implemented. Check notes or observations become a part of the supporting data along with previous planning, layout, or documenting records. Planned and installed location information is required for all practices.

Following is a listing of frequently used conservation practices in Vermont and required support documentation. Completed practice documentation will include all items listed for each specific practice type.

The practice certification documentation must indicate that the conservation planning, design and installation meets NRCS standards and specifications. The documentation must also include thorough measurement of the installed practice; where the customer is provided Financial Assistance (USDA Conservation Programs) funding associated with any installed practice, measurement calculations will be conducted and documented to assure that contract payments are appropriate with respect to the payment rate units associated with the installed practice. Note: payment rate units may be different than the practice reporting units found in the Conservation Practice Standard (example: 313 Waste Storage Facility practice reporting unit is 'Number', but the payment rate unit may be 'Cubic Feet').

The following required conservation planning information shall be documented for all practices, whether applied through Conservation Technical Assistance or through Financial Assistance Programs:

- ▶ Conservation Plan objectives and resource oriented justification for the practice, documented in the conservation plan and/or conservation planning alternatives. Planned practice justification must be directly associated with an identified resource concern and an enhancement to benchmark resource conditions (refer to Resource Concerns and Planning Criteria, Vermont eFOTG Section III-B),
- ▶ Conservation Assistance Notes detailing field visits for conservation planning/resource assessment, to check practice layout/installation or establishment, method and results of measuring the completed practice extent, communications with the client, TSP, or contractor, etc.,
- ▶ Environmental Evaluation NRCS-CPA-52, completed and signed by the Responsible Federal Official (NRCS official), as well as additional documentation of resource concerns (photos, worksheets, etc),
- ▶ Cultural Resource Review for all ground-disturbing or potential CR disturbing practices, and all additional NEPA requirements for Special Environmental Concerns are to be completed during the conservation planning process,
- ▶ Practice Operation and Maintenance requirements. O&M requirements shall be provided to the customer at the time of conservation plan signing by the customer. The signed O&M cover sheet(s) shall be filed in the customer's plan folder or uploaded to the Document Management System (DMS) for FA Program contracts.
- ▶ Practice cost estimates shall be developed and provided to the customer at the time of conservation plan alternatives development. Updates to cost estimates may be necessary upon completion of structural practice designs.

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All completed conservation practices certified as meeting NRCS standards and specifications will be documented in the following locations. This includes practices implemented through Financial Assistance Programs as well as practices applied through Conservation Technical Assistance.

WHERE	WHAT / HOW
Practice Reporting	Ensure practice reporting is properly completed within the approved Agency software system (CS Toolkit, CDSI Conservation Desktop, Protracts, etc).
Conservation Plan Map (Conservation Practice Certification map only needs to be uploaded to DMS for contracted CINs where practice location, configuration or quantity is different than the original contracted CIN)	<p>Red pencil or ink notation on the plan map with ‘call out’ pointing to the practice and including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Completed practice quantity (reporting units) 2- Payment rate units installed, if applicable 3- Certifying Official initials 4- Certified date <p>Draw practice location of implemented practices <u>if the location is different</u> than the original planned location.</p> <p>Acceptable alternative methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a ‘Completed Conservation Practice Map’ including digitized location data of the completed practice. This would be most useful where final practice location is different than the original planned location, is determined using GPS, or where practice implementation is only on a portion of a land unit.
Conservation Plan / Record of Decisions (Hard copy document in customer plan folder-Record of Decisions) for all certified practices	<p>Notation (legible) in the ‘Applied Amount’ column specifying:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1-Applied Amount/Quantity, 2-Applied Date, 3-Certifying Official initials.
Document Management System (for all USDA FA Program Contracts)	<p>For all practices implemented through FA Program contracts, upload to DMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of NRCS CPA-1245 in Protracts and uploaded to DMS. The 1245 must indicate the Technical Specialist’s name who certified the practice. ▪ VT NRCS Practice Certification Form (Attachment A), NRCS or Partner generated and completed by the certifying official who has authority to certify the practice. This form shall be completed and labelled/named to provide for CIN identification, i.e.: Program, contract number and CIN number(s). Example: <i>Certify_EQIP_7416441407H_CIN-9,10,11,12.xls</i>. Note: up to 8 CINs can be documented on each form. ▪ * Digital photo(s) showing completed/certified practices: A minimum of one digital photo documenting each certified practice shall be uploaded to DMS with all pertinent certification materials. The photo(s) shall be labelled/named to provide for CIN identification, i.e.: Program, contract number and CIN number. Example: <i>EQIP_7416441407H_CIN-12.jpg</i> ▪ Any additional required practice-specific certification forms/materials. Examples: 590 Nutrient Management - Nutrient Management

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	<p>Certification Form, EQIP Grassland Bird Field Management Documentation, EQIP Documentation of Manure Injection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conservation Practice Certification Map showing certified practice locations, only for CINs where practice location, configuration or quantity is different than the original contracted CIN (see Conservation Plan Map guidance above). ▪ Conservation Plan (Record of Decisions) with customer and planner signatures (original copy). ▪ Completed NRCS-CPA-52 and VT-ECS-1 (Cultural Resources Review). ▪ Practice O&M Signature Page(s) for FA contract practices. <p>* For land management practices such as Cover Crop, digital photos are not required for every field where the practice was applied. Provide at least one representative photo showing typical condition of the completed practice. Photos are not required for some practices where a photo would not be logical (Examples: Nutrient Management, CAP Plans).</p> <p>Also: upload to DMS any documentation or files which are specifically requested by the customer to be uploaded to DMS.</p>
<p>Customer’s Conservation Plan Folder ** = Or Customer Service Toolkit Customer Folder if stored digitally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Required Job Sheets (completed) **, ▪ Customer’s Records for specific practices **. Examples: 528 Prescribed Grazing - Grazing Records, 590 Nutrient Management farmer records. ▪ Signed Practice O&M Signature Page(s) **
<p>Customer’s Blue Engineering Folder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practice engineering designs, calculations and other associated documents will be archived in the customer’s blue engineering design folder.
<p>Local F:\ Customer_Digital_Photos <i>(Some offices have slight variations of this folder name i.e. ‘Customer Digital Info’)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Digital photographs showing resource concerns justifying the conservation practice(s) (as appropriate for the practice type) will be archived here. ▪ Photographs showing completed practices may be stored in this folder (in addition to required photos to be uploaded to DMS).
<p style="text-align: center;">NOTE:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Before processing a CPA-1245 for program payment all practice documentation and certification requirements shall be met.</p>

‘Vermont NRCS Protocol for Filing of Conservation Planning and Conservation Practice Data and Information’ (Attachment C) will be used as a reference for approved filing locations of additional documents resulting from resource assessment, conservation planning, practice design and practice implementation.

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Required Support Data

<p>Engineering practice related documents will be archived in the customer’s Blue Engineering Design Folder:</p>	<p><u>Engineering Practice Required Documentation</u></p> <p>All Items required by ‘<i>Engineering Practice Blue Folder Documentation Checklist</i>’ (Attachment B).</p> <p>This checklist will be completed by the design or approving official for the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access Road – 560 Agrichemical Handling Facility – 309 Animal Mortality Facility - 316 Channel Bed Stabilization – 584 Composting Facility – 317 Constructed Wetland - 656 Diversion – 362 Aquatic Organism Passage – 396 Grade Stabilization Structure – 410 Grassed Waterway - 412 Heavy Use Area Protection – 561 Irrigation Pipeline–430 Irrigation Reservoir – 436 Irrigation System, Microirrigation – 441 Lined Waterway or Outlet – 468 On-Farm Secondary Containment Facility (other than double wall tank) – 319 Phosphorous Removal System - 782 Pond – 378 Pond Sealing or Lining, Flexible Membrane - 521A Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Clay Treatment – 521D Roofs and Covers – 367 Roof Runoff Structure – 558 Sediment Basin – 350 Spring Development – 574 Sprinkler System– 442 Stream Crossing - 578 Streambank and Shoreline Protection – 580 Structure for Water Control – 587 Subsurface Drain – 606 Surface Drainage, Field Ditch – 607 Trails and Walkways – 575 Underground Outlet - 620 Vegetated Treatment Area – 635 Waste Facility Closure – 360 Waste Separation Facility – 632 Waste Storage Facility – 313 Waste Transfer – 634 Waste Treatment – 629 Water and Sediment Control Basin – 638
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<p>For the following practices, minimum support documentation requirements will be met by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of the Vermont Practice Job Sheet, provided to the customer prior to practice installation or implementation and archived. 	<p><u>Ecological Sciences Practices</u></p> <p>Access Control - 472 Contour Buffer Strips – 332 Cover Crop – 340 Conservation Cover – 327 Critical Area Planting – 342 Field Border – 386 Forage and Biomass Planting – 512 Forage Harvest Management – 511 Hedgerow Planting – 422 High Tunnel System – 325 Livestock Pipeline – 516 Mulching – 484 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats – 643 Strip Cropping – 585 Tree / Shrub Establishment – 612 Tree / Shrub Site Preparation – 490 Tree/Shrub Pruning – 660 (Use 645 Apple Tree Job Sheet) Upland Wildlife Habitat Management – 645 Watering Facility – 614 Windbreak / Shelterbelt Establishment – 380 Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation – 650</p>
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The conservation practices listed below have different or additional documentation requirements since one or both of the following situations apply:

- 1- approved job sheets are not available,
- 2- practice certification requires additional documentation.

For practices tagged ‘ENG’, the items listed in ‘Engineering Practice Required Documentation’ also apply.

<p>Anaerobic Digester – 366 <i>ENG</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Design Data Materials used – manufacturer, certifications
<p>Brush Management – 314</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brush Management Job Sheet (for pasture renovation) or Invasive Plant Control plan has been developed and provided to the customer and management has occurred based on specifications provided ▪ Records have been provided to NRCS detailing that plant management which has occurred was in accordance with the plan and includes herbicide application records in accordance with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s Pesticide Recordkeeping Program and state specific requirements. Use ‘Landowner Record Keeping Sheet’ or ‘Contractor Record and Certification Sheet’ ▪ GPS perimeter of treatment area. NOTE: It is not necessary to GPS the perimeter of the treatment area again if the area was already GPS’d and Flagged during practice layout. This assumes that the practice was implemented properly and was implemented at extents previously flagged.

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Building Envelope Improvement – 672 *ENG*

- Energy audit that identifies installed practice as eligible
- Design is required (an AgEMP is not a design) for the selection, specification and installation of equipment.
- Site visit by Energy Coordinator for certification
- Certification form signed by installer/supplier that equipment was sized properly and installed according to manufacturer's recommendations

Clearing and Snagging – 326 *ENG*

- Method of disposal of material removed,
- Resulting fish and wildlife enhancement

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (Written–102, Applied–103)

- For 102: Completed CNMP (including Manure/Wastewater Handling, Nutrient Management, and Land Treatment) has been delivered to the customer and to NRCS by the developer(s),
- For 103: All practices specified by 102 CNMP have been installed/completed

Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (Written–138, Applied–139)

- For 138: Completed Organic Transition Plan has been delivered to the customer and to NRCS by Technical Service Provider,
- For 139: All practices specified by 138 have been installed/completed

Conservation Crop Rotation – 328

- Completed RUSLE2 for benchmark system,
- Completed RUSLE2 planning alternatives,
- Documented customer selected RUSLE2 planning alternative for crop management,
- Conservation plan (and contract support document 1155 if applicable) practice narrative will specify the selected crop rotation by field (Example: 3 years silage corn w/cover crop, 5 years legume hay, no-till planting)

Dry Hydrant – 432 *ENG*

- Contact VACD office for assistance from the Rural Fire Protection Program

Early Successional Habitat Development / Management – 647

- Appropriate Vermont NRCS 647 Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer and management has occurred based on specifications provided
- GPS perimeter of treatment area for treatments part of land unit (e.g. patch cut). NOTE: It is not necessary to GPS the perimeter of the treatment area again if the area was already GPSed and Flagged during practice layout. This assumes that the practice was implemented properly and was implemented at extents previously flagged.

Grassland Bird Management (Delayed 2nd Cut)

- Confirm and document 1st and 2nd mowing date (form at back of EQIP Guidance Document)

Farmstead Energy Improvement – 374 *ENG*

- Energy audit that identifies installed practice as eligible
- Design is required (an AgEMP is not a design) for the selection, specification and installation of equipment.
- Site visit by Energy Coordinator for certification
- Certification form signed by installer/supplier that equipment was sized properly and installed according to manufacturer's recommendations

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Feed Management – 592

- Completed Feed Management Plan has been delivered to the customer,
- Records documenting implementation are delivered to NRCS. As applicable, records include:
 - Records of application (evidence of ongoing forage sampling and reformulating of diets)
 - Extent of practice units applied
 - Actual materials used
 - Certification that the application meets NRCS standards and specifications and is in compliance with permits,
- Progress reporting (Protracts or CS Toolkit),
 - Exit conference with client and contractor.

Fence – 382

- Planned area to be protected or enhanced,
- Type of fence to be installed, based on livestock class type,
- Materials to be used as specified in VT Standard Drawing 'Fence_Details'

Filter Strip – 393

- Complete VT Filter Strip job sheet,
- Complete Filter Strip Lifespan Design Tool, if the planned purpose is to reduce suspended solids and associated contaminants in runoff.

Forest Management Plan (Written–106, Applied–107)

- For 106: Completed Forest Management Plan has been delivered to Customer and NRCS,
- For 107: All practices / managements specified by 106 have been installed / completed

Forest Stand Improvement – 666

- Appropriate Vermont NRCS 666 Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer and management has occurred based on specifications provided, including:
 - Number of mast/crop trees released, basal area plots (to determine Basal Area target met for timber), etc,
- GPS perimeter of treatment area. NOTE: It is not necessary to GPS the perimeter of the treatment area again if the area was already GPSed and Flagged during practice layout. This assumes that the practice was implemented properly and was implemented at extents previously flagged.

Forest Trails and Landings – 655

- Appropriate 655 Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer and management has occurred based on specifications provided.
- GPS section of trails,
- Pace, tape or otherwise measure sections of trails

Grazing Management Plan (Written–110, Applied–111)

- For 110: Completed grazing management plan has been delivered to Customer and NRCS,
- For 111: All practices / management as specified by 110 have been installed / completed

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Herbaceous Weed Control – 315

- Herbaceous Weed Control Invasive Control plan has been developed and provided to the customer and management has occurred based on specifications provided,
- Records have been provided to NRCS detailing that plant management which has occurred was in accordance with the plan and includes herbicide application records in accordance with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s Pesticide Recordkeeping, Program and state specific requirements. Use Landowner Record Keeping Sheet,
- GPS perimeter of treatment area for treatments part of land unit. NOTE: It is not necessary to GPS the perimeter of the treatment area again if the area was already GPSed and Flagged during practice layout. This assumes that the practice was implemented properly and was implemented at extents previously flagged.

Integrated Pest Management – 595

- Integrated Pest Management Plan – Written (114) has been developed and a copy provided to NRCS,
- Records have been provided to NRCS detailing that Integrated Pest Management implemented was in accordance with the IPM plan and includes herbicide application records in accordance with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service’s Pesticide Recordkeeping Program and state specific requirements. Records are archived in the customer conservation plan folder.

Irrigation Water Management – 449

- Irrigation Water Management Plan – Written (118) has been developed and a copy provided to NRCS,
- Irrigation water management records provided indicate the 118 plan is being followed.

Lighting System Improvement – 670 *ENG*

- Energy audit that identifies installed practice as eligible
- Design is required (an AgEMP is not a design) for the selection, specification and installation of equipment.
- Site visit by Energy Coordinator for certification
- Certification form signed by installer/supplier that equipment was sized properly and installed according to manufacturer’s recommendations

Nutrient Management – 590

- Nutrient Management Plan – Written (104) has been developed and a copy provided to NRCS,
- Nutrient management annual records with producer certification have been provided to NRCS and indicate the 590 plan is being substantially followed, and archived in the customer plan folder.
- Required land treatment practices are in place,
- Complete checklist ‘*Certification Requirements for Conservation Practice 590 Nutrient Management*’ and upload to DMS.

Obstruction Removal – 500 *ENG*

- Justification for removal,
- Manner and location of disposal

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On-Farm Secondary Containment Facility (Double wall tank) – 319 *ENG*

- Photos showing location of double wall tank
- Photos or other document showing tank specifications

Prescribed Burning – 338

- Prescribed burning plan was completed by a certified individual and a copy provided to NRCS, along with burn permits prior to burn,
- Burn was completed in accordance with the burn plan,
- GPS perimeter of treatment area

Prescribed Grazing – 528

- Grazing Management Plan Written (110) has been completed and a copy provided to NRCS,
- Producer records have been submitted which indicate the producer is substantially following the grazing plan, archived in the customer plan folder.

Pumping Plant – 533 *ENG*

- Documentation of the following:
 - Manufacturer, certification, dimensions,
 - Foundation details,
 - Safety features and devices,
 - Appurtenances used

Residue & Tillage Management, Reduced Tillage – 345

- Timing of soil disturbance, Type of equipment Used, Soil quality Considerations (SCI, STIR),
- Erosion benchmark and planned documentation using RUSLE2,
- Verification that the STIR rating is less than 80, and no primary inversion tillage implements (e.g. moldboard plow) was used.

Residue & Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed - (329)

- Documentation of type of equipment used, Timing and amount of soil disturbance,
- Soil quality considerations (SCI, STIR),
- Pest management planning considerations,
- Erosion benchmark and planned documentation using RUSLE2

Riparian Forest Buffer – 391

- Vermont NRCS 391 Job Sheet (planting plan) has been completed and provided to the customer and or contractor,
- Management has occurred based on specifications provided in the planting plan (e.g. trees properly planted, tree tubes/mats installed correctly, number/density of stems is correct, etc.),
- GPS perimeter of final treatment area for treatments part of land unit. NOTE: It is not necessary to GPS the perimeter of the planting area again if the area was already GPSed and Flagged during practice layout. This assumes that the practice was implemented properly and was implemented at extents previously flagged.

Row Arrangement – 557

- Completed RUSLE2 for benchmark system and completed RUSLE2 plan alternatives,
- Document customer selected RUSLE2 alternative for crop management,
- Conservation plan (and contract support document 1155 if applicable) practice narrative will specify the target row slope and target maximum flow length.
- Complete VT Row Arrangement job sheet.

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Stream Habitat Improvement & Management – 395

- Stream Habitat Improvement and Management plans and specifications are complete and were followed,
- Required permits have been acquired

Tree and Shrub Pruning – 660

- Vermont NRCS 645 Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer,
- Management has occurred based on specifications provided,
- Number of trees properly pruned has been documented

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation – 490

- Appropriate 490 Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer,
- Management has occurred based on specifications provided,
- GPS perimeter of treatment area for treatments part of land unit

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management – 645

Apple Tree Release

- Vermont NRCS 645 Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer,
- Management has occurred based on specifications provided,
- GPS perimeter of treatment area and/or count trees

Waste Recycling – 633

- Documentation of wastes type and quantity to be recycled and appropriate recycling process.

Water Well – 642 *ENG*

- Conservation practice map provided to the customer, pre-installation, showing planned well location and mandatory distances from existing potential pollution sources including waste storage facilities, livestock use areas, feed silos, mortality compost facilities, etc.

Wetland Restoration – 657 (*ENG if structures are included*)

- Wetland functions planned,
- Hydrologic restoration required,
- Hydric soils restoration required,
- Vegetation restoration required,
- Weed control provisions as applicable,
- Measurements of completed structure,
- Type and quality of materials,
- Adequacy of vegetation
- Average area and depth of pool,
- Dimensions of water control structures,
- Appropriate elevations to check design, including cross-sections and profiles.

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management – 644 (*ENG if structures are included*)

- Appropriate written documentation or Job Sheet has been completed and provided to the customer,
- Management has occurred based on specifications provided,
- GPS Perimeter of Treatment area.