

PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATION EMPLOYEES PROGRAM TRAINING PLAN

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| Name: | Location: |
| Position: | Work Unit: |
| Period: | |
| Supervisor: | |
| List here the employee's technical/admin resource advisors & mentors: | |

Background

North Carolina's conservation partnership has a strong heritage of providing quality assistance to the state's landowners and citizens. Because of this, conservation districts have earned a high level of trust with landowners and this trust is the backbone of an effective delivery system that is envied by other agencies and organizations. To a large degree, the future of conservation districts is directly tied to continued quality assistance provided through employees.

In order to enhance the professionalism and accountability of the conservation partnership's employees, a committee was formed to develop a training guide to be used across the state. The committee consists of district supervisors, as well as employees from Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Division of Soil and Water Conservation and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The vision of this committee is to have a statewide training template to guide the training and development of employees within the conservation partnership. The committee identified four employee job areas for focus; managerial, administrative, technical and educational. Training plans within each of these focal areas will consist of two tiers to guide the training process. Tier 1 is geared toward partnership employees with 0 to 2 years experience and tier 2 for those with 2 to 5 years experience. The committee realizes that each employee's training plan should be tailored to meet the specific employee's and/or county's needs but many of the items listed are applicable to all employees.

The concept of a state-wide training tool has evolved into the Professional Conservation Employee Program (PCEP). The PCEP has been introduced at various meetings across the state during the past twelve months and the committee has now completed the first of four training plan templates (technical). The conservation partnership will insure its future success by being proactive and supporting employee development. Below is the PCEP training plan for employees with technical responsibilities.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Review the following NRCS publications:

- “Challenging Careers in the Natural Resources Conservation Service”
- “In Partnership with People and a Healthy Land” (to learn about NRCS and its mission)
- “Helping You Help Your Land” (to understand conservation from the landowner’s perspective)

Review the questions and answers in “The Guidebook on the Law and Practice of Soil and Water Conservation in North Carolina” (edited by Milton S. Heath, Jr. - 2004) to learn about Conservation Districts and the Conservation Partnership in North Carolina.

Read the article “Son of the Soil” in the magazine “Wildlife in North Carolina” (January 2002) to learn about Hugh Hammond Bennett and his legacy of soil conservation.

Meet with one or more District supervisors to find out what their interest is in conservation and what they feel are the most critical conservation issues that need to be addressed in the county.

Attend a District Board meeting, Local Work Group Meeting, or other meeting where strategic planning is discussed to gain a better understanding of the District’s conservation objectives and workload priorities.

Attend a District Issues Meeting and/or an Area Spring or Fall Meeting to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting the Partnership across the Area.

Develop an organizational chart to get a clear understanding of how NRCS, SWCDs, and the Division of Soil and Water Conservation are set up. Review the chart with your Supervisor and the District Conservationist.

Put together a list of partner agencies and organizations in the work unit and introduce yourself to each one.

Work on developing an updated community map for use by the office staff.

GETTING TO KNOW THE WORK UNIT

Identify the important agricultural land uses in the Work Unit and take photographs that illustrate how the farming operations associated with those land uses affect soil and water resources.

Identify the grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees that are typically found on farmland in the Work Unit.

Review the soil survey information for the Work Unit and compile the soils information for three conservation plans. Use the information to identify soil conditions in the field.

Locate specific tracts of land on a topographic map, an aerial photograph, and a soils map.

Become familiar with all of the different conservation programs that are used in the Work Unit and review Participant contracts to identify the most commonly planned practices for each Program.

Accompany other members of the staff on planning and follow up visits with farmers and record the notes of those visits.

Work with the District Conservationist, district staff and others as needed in developing conservation plans in different parts of the county. This includes pulling topographic maps and aerial photos, taking notes while meeting with the landowner, photographing the resource concerns, and completing other tasks associated with data collection during the planning process.

ENHANCING TECHNICAL SKILLS

Gain an understanding of the Commission Rules & Job Approval Authority Chart and become familiar with the Field Office Technical Guide and what can be found in the different Sections.

Recognize the components of a conservation plan and be able to explain the relationship between the contents of a particular plan and what can be found on-site.

Gather data in the field, calculate soil loss, and identify alternatives for reducing soil loss on three sites in the field.

Gain experience in setting up and using a surveying instrument on three sites, using a rod on three sites, and recording the survey notes for three sites.

Assist other members of the staff in checking out completed practices and documenting the “As-Built.”

Take “before” and “after” photographs of sites in the field to document the condition of the site prior to treatment and the improvement of the site after treatment.

Interview a landowner who has been successful in implementing conservation practices and prepare a narrative which highlights the landowner’s accomplishments (make the narrative available for inclusion in a news article, newsletter, PowerPoint, or other presentation).

Work with the District Conservationist, district staff or others as needed in evaluating resource concerns and the conservation treatments that are needed in fields that are being considered for cost-sharing through a Conservation Program, and assist in ranking the applications for that Program.

Assist in the installation of specific practices that are under construction as part of a Program contract.

Gain exposure to NRCS and other available software used in conservation planning.

Attend appropriate technical training classes that will help you in learning your position, and prepare for and attend “Basics of Conservation Planning.”

Work towards gaining Job Approval Authority for the six most commonly applied cost-shared practices in the county as identified by the District Supervisors, and report the progress you are making in gaining JAA at each District Board Meeting.

OPPORTUNITIES TO DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP

Participate fully in overseeing the installation of a comprehensive best management practice or project. Document installation of the project by taking pictures of each phase as it is installed. Prepare a document with photographs and narrative.

Use comprehensive projects to help train other employees who have never worked on these types of projects.

After a project is complete, visit all of the sites in the field where the remaining practices in the landowner's contract are to be installed. Document the landowner's progress in completing the practices, and review with the landowner the schedule for installation of each practice to ensure that practice installation remains on schedule.

SUGGESTED TRAINING TIERED TIMELINE (as applicable):

Six months

History of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Knowledge of General Statutes (GS139; administrative rules)
Excellent customer service skills
NCASWCD Strategic Plan
District's Annual Plan
County Policies

One Year

Familiarity with county maps; aerial photographs
Topographical maps
RUSLE & RUSLE2
PLAT
Proficient with county soil survey/soils
NLEW
Cultural Resources Training
State Cost Share Program Policies (NCACSP & CCAP), planning and field assessment
State Easement Program Policies (CREP, ADFP/Farmland Preservation), planning and field assessment

Two Years

Proficient in surveying and note keeping
Job approval on two non-engineering and two engineering agricultural BMPs
Job approval for two non-agricultural BMPs
GIS/GPS field use
Drainage/Erosion Inventory and Evaluations
Public Presentations
Proficient use of computers
Conservation Field Assessment and Planning (not just Toolkit or NCACSP)
Basic Conservation Planning
Nutrient Management Training
Waste Utilization Planning including development of waste utilization plan
Pond Construction Preliminary Assessment
Technical Specialist Designation for Animal Waste Management (SWC Commission)

Three - Five Years

How to diversify a locally-lead District program

How to create/cultivate relationships with local and state officials

Grant writing

Watershed & Buffer Rules

Ag Cost Share job approval for 5-10 additional engineering NCACSP BMPs

CCAP job approval on the main BMP's used in that county optional

Environmental Education Program

Knowledge of Federal Cost Share Programs

Job Approval on all non-engineering BMP's used in your county

Conservation Marketing Skills