



August 6, 2004

OKLAHOMA BULLETIN NO. OK180-4-7**SUBJECT: CPA – NRCS Technical Assistance for the Oklahoma State Cost-share Program**

Purpose: To reaffirm NRCS's role and responsibility in servicing the state cost-share program and adherence to conservation planning principles and conservation practice standards and specifications.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2004

Oklahoma established a State Conservation Cost-share Program (SCCP) in 1998 to provide financial assistance through cost-share payments to eligible land owners for applying soil and water conservation practices. Authorized and appropriated through state law and operated under rules and regulations published in the Oklahoma Administrative Code (OAC), the program is administered by local conservation districts and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Since the program's inception, NRCS, through the longstanding partnership with conservation districts, has provided technical assistance for the program to conservation districts for conservation planning, practice design, layout, final technical certification, and related support.

NRCS will continue to provide technical assistance support to local conservation districts in conservation planning and conservation practice installation activities necessary for the effective implementation of the SCCP. NRCS assistance will be provided as requested by the conservation district consistent with the district's established locally-led priorities, state rules and guidelines, and SCCP policies. Furthermore, when requested by the conservation district to perform activities associated with the SCCP, NRCS will perform those duties within NRCS policies and procedures.

- A conservation plan, developed consistent with the requirements of NRCS conservation planning policy (General Manual 180, Part 409) and the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH), will be provided to the producer prior to the conservation districts' execution of the performance agreement. Although a conservation plan covering the entire operating unit is desired, the minimum planning area for a SCCP assisted practice will be the field or fields serviced by the conservation practice. OAC paragraphs 155:20-1-5(d)(2); 155:20-1-6(a)(4), (5), and (n)(3); and 155:20-1-7(a) provide state rules regarding the conservation plan.
- Conservation practice planning, design, layout, certification, and operation and maintenance plans will be completed in full conformance with all NRCS policies and procedures. There should be no difference in the practice planning, technical standards, certification procedures, and follow-up applied to the SCCP than all other technical services provided by NRCS. OAC paragraphs 155:20-1-3(e); 155:20-1-6(c)(8), (i)(1), and (n)(8); and 155:20-1-7(c) provide state rules regarding the relationship of cost-shared conservation practices to conservation practice standards and specifications.
- When practices are not sufficiently complete for NRCS to certify the practice as meeting the standards and specification, NRCS will provide written information (field notes or formal correspondence) to both the conservation district and the program participant regarding the remaining actions to be completed. This may include job sheets or other relevant

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information of sufficient detail to communicate the action and timing necessary to complete the practice for certification. For example, if a constructed pond is not yet vegetated, NRCS will include on the engineering notes the practice cannot be certified as meeting standards until vegetated. A copy of an OK-CPA-4 detailing the species, rates, planting dates, and nutrient requirements for vegetation of the pond will be provided to the participant and conservation district. Applicable references are noted in the previous bullet.

- NRCS will include operation and maintenance requirements for all conservation practices in the conservation plan. OAC paragraph 155:20-1-7(a) provides state rules regarding conservation practices operation and maintenance plans.

In summary, conservation districts continue to provide local leadership for the administration and delivery of the SCCP to the program applicants. When requested to provide technical support to the conservation district and program participants, NRCS will maintain the highest standards of technical services and maintain compliance with NRCS policy and regulation. Any deviation from applicable standards or NRCS policy by NRCS personnel, must be requested in writing through appropriate state technical leader.

/s/ John Glover, Acting For

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State Conservationist