

Iowa NRCS Public Affairs & Communications Guide

Introduction

All Iowa NRCS employees are responsible for carrying out planned public information activities to help them meet the objectives of the agency's Strategic Plan.

This guide is a quick reference to the rules, regulations and processes for the delivery of information from Iowa NRCS employees to our audiences, including producers, conservation partners, the media and the general public.

Planning

Strategic communication planning is the basis for successful public information activities in NRCS. Communication strategies should support achievement of measurable management objectives.

Purposes of providing information to our audiences:

1. Achieve and maintain a high level of participation in voluntary conservation programs.
2. Reach the most people with information about natural resource conservation and management and the need for resource conservation.
3. Keep the public informed about the natural resource conservation work carried out with public funds and about its effects and benefits.
4. Respond fully to information requests from the public, communications media and agencies.

Rules, Regulations & Processes

Agency Identification

Design standards have been established to bring consistency and readability to the Natural Resources Conservation Service's information materials. When materials are recognizable by their consistent appearance, the identity of the Agency is enhanced. Establishing standard formats eliminates the time spent determining what form a publication will take every time a new message is developed.

Use of Agency Logo

The NRCS symbol always consists of two elements:

1. the icon of a blue raindrop atop a green land contour and
2. the NRCS acronym appearing to the right of the raindrop.

The NRCS symbol is to be used with all information materials, including print material, exhibits, video, Internet and news media. It should not be altered, constructed or redrawn in any manner from the electronic format.

The NRCS symbol is the exclusive identifying mark of the agency. It supersedes all logos created for programs, activities, and staffs within NRCS. You can download the NRCS logo at www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/logo/. You can also access several versions of the NRCS logo in the "Logos" folder on the Iowa NRCS statewide shared drive.

Materials distributed to a public audience should contain both the symbol and "Natural Resources Conservation Service" spelled out, as well as the Department of Agriculture (USDA) symbol and the name "United States Department of Agriculture" spelled out.

When the NRCS symbol appears with the name and symbol of USDA, it shall appear in a subordinate position.

Do not use the NRCS symbol in a manner that constitutes endorsement of private sector organizations, products, services, or endeavors.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land
www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov

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Rules, Regulations & Processes Cont...

Clearance Procedures

News releases and feature stories, whether written, oral or electronic, must be technically accurate and conform to USDA and NRCS policy.

All documents for a statewide audience or larger must be cleared through the State Public Affairs Specialist.

Local news and feature stories prepared at the field or area office level must be reviewed by the assistant state conservationist for field operations or district conservationist.

News Releases

News release layout and grammar should follow the Associated Press Style Book and the USDA Office of Communications Guidelines: *Style Guidelines for Media Materials*. This document can be found at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/Guidelines/Style_Guidelines.pdf.

There are three basic steps to creating effective news releases—formatting, writing and getting noticed. These and other tips on how to write an effective news release are available at [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/intranet/Newsrelease.pdf](http://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/intranet/Newsrelease.pdf).

News Release Template

A suggested template for NRCS news releases is located at [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/news/NEWSTemplate.doc](http://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/news/NEWSTemplate.doc).

Sample News Release



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service • 210 Walnut Street
Room 603 • Des Moines, IA 50309 • Phone: (515) 284-4262 • Web: <http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov>

EQIP Provides \$21.3 Million to Iowa Farmers in 2007

Iowa farmers received more than \$21.3 million in financial assistance and incentive payments through EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) in fiscal year 2007. Under EQIP, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps farmers apply conservation practices that optimize environmental benefits on working agricultural lands.

In 2007, Iowa NRCS received 3,156 EQIP applications; 1,511 of those applicants, or 48 percent, were awarded assistance. There were 1,645 unfunded applications requesting \$22.8 million in assistance through EQIP.

"EQIP is a popular conservation program for Iowa producers," said Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Rick Van Klaveren. "This was another great year in terms of EQIP contracts and allocations."

Primary conservation practices applied in the 2007 EQIP include waste storage facilities, terraces, nutrient management, grade stabilization structures, prescribed grazing incentives, fences for livestock grazing systems, pesticide management and grassed waterways.

Of the \$21.3 million in payments, \$19.9 million, or about 93 percent, went to local Iowa NRCS offices. The other \$1.4 million was allotted to special projects across the state. "The majority of the EQIP funds help implement local EQIP projects to address locally identified issues," said Van Klaveren.

Harrison County in western Iowa received the largest county allocation in 2007 with \$611,292 for placing conservation on 4,230 acres through 43 EQIP contracts. Next was Sioux County in northwest Iowa with \$378,680 that covered 4,511 acres through 34 contracts. The third largest Iowa county in terms of 2007 EQIP financial assistance was Allamakee County in northeast Iowa with \$535,451, covering 579 acres in 16 contracts.

Notable special projects to receive EQIP funding in 2007 include:

- \$288,311 for the Rainbow Lake Special Project to address water quality issues
- \$55,100 to Agren, Inc. through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) to educate and train firefighters over a three-year period in western and southern Iowa to plan and conduct safe, ecologically beneficial prescribed fires
- \$436,056 to 43 southeast Iowa producers to seed down switchgrass for use as a biomass energy crop and for other alternative energy uses
- \$600,000 to develop comprehensive nutrient management plans

EQIP was originally established under the 1996 Farm Bill. It provides technical and financial assistance to landowners to voluntarily address soil, water and related natural resource concerns on private lands.

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Contact:
Larry Beeler, Asst. State Conservationist for Programs, Iowa NRCS, 515-284-4769
Dave Brommel, EQIP Coordinator, Iowa NRCS, 515-284-4222

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Publications

To propose a brochure, fact sheet or other statewide publication, send a written proposal to the State Public Affairs Specialist with the following factors:

- Specific need for and purpose of the publication.
- Target audience and approximate size of that audience.
- Distribution plan for the majority of copies to the target audience.

Design Standards

Management of the NRCS visual identity and production of visual information materials are governed by USDA standards and departmental regulations. NRCS design standards are in the NRCS Visual Management Handbook located at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/Guidelines/H_260_VMH.pdf.

Another useful tool, *Graphic Design Basics*, covers typography and page layout. This quick guide can be accessed online at [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/intranet/DesignBasics.pdf](http://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/intranet/DesignBasics.pdf).

Joint Publications

All publications prepared in cooperation with other agencies must prominently display the NRCS logo and must be cleared through the State Public Affairs Specialist.

How to Order Publications

All national publications, displays and exhibits are available via 1-888-LANDCARE or by visiting <http://landcare.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

To order Iowa-based NRCS publications or displays, call 515-284-4262, or go online to www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/brochures/publications.html for publications and www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/IA/intranet/Displays/displays.html for displays.

Photography/Video

All photographs, digitals and stock video footage taken by NRCS personnel on official duty are the property of NRCS, regardless of the source of film, tape or camera.

NRCS Photo Gallery

Thousands of natural resource and conservation related photographs are available on the NRCS Photo Gallery. Photos in

the Gallery are available free of charge in two common image formats, TIFF (primarily used for print publications) and JPEG (often used for websites and PowerPoint presentations). The Photo Gallery is located at <http://photogallery.nrcs.usda.gov/>.

Digital Camera How to Guide

For tips on how to use a digital camera, visit <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/intranet/Digital-Cameras.doc>.

Photography Basics

Anyone can take a picture, but it takes considerable more thought and skill to make a picture. A guide entitled *Photography Basics* tells you how to improve your skills and your pictures. The guide is online at <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/IA/intranet/photography.pdf>.

Endorsements

Employee endorsement is prohibited. Employees shall not allow the use of their names as endorsers of commercial enterprise or products.

Mission and Vision

Mission Statement

NRCS has adopted the phrase “Helping People Help the Land” as its mission statement. This mission supersedes all other mottoes, slogans, tag lines, and catchphrases that have been used within NRCS.

Non-discrimination Statement

The USDA non-discrimination statement is required on all materials produced by USDA agencies for public information, public education, and public distribution. The most recent version of the statement can be found at www.usda.gov. Click on the non-discrimination at the bottom of the page.

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA’s TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

If the material is too small to permit the full non-discrimination statement to be included, the material will, at a minimum, include the statement in a font size equal to the body text:

“USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

The mission statement should appear on Agency public information materials whenever possible as a separate element from the Agency symbol and name.

For more details about the mission statement, refer to the NRCS Visual Management Handbook located at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/Guidelines/H_260_VMH.pdf.

Vision Statement

NRCS has adopted a vision statement, “Productive Lands—Healthy Environment.” If you use the vision statement, it should be in the same typeface and location as the mission statement, but on a separate line to itself, above the mission statement.

More Tools and Processes

Iowa NRCS Process Step Tables:

(www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/QualityAssurance.html)

Event Planning

News Release Development

Talking Points Development (for speeches, interviews, etc.)

VIP List Development

Iowa Media List

A statewide media list is located on the statewide shared drive in the “Public Affairs” folder. The file is called IowaNRCSMedialist.xls. To make additions or edits to the media list, contact a public affairs specialist.

News Release Distribution Process

Most news/press releases are distributed statewide by the public affairs staff via e-mail from the public affairs media list. These releases are also sent to every district conservationist in Iowa. Even though media outlets may have received the release, district conservationists are still encouraged to contact pertinent local media to be sure they have the information they need.

All Iowa NRCS news/press releases are placed online at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/.