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October 15, 2012

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-13-2

Subject: LTP–Easement Monitoring

Action required by: Field Office–July 15, 2013
Area Office–August 1, 2013

Purpose. To provide guidance for completing annual monitoring requirements for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Easement Programs for fiscal year (FY) 2013.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2014

Background. Since 1995, the NRCS has protected thousands of acres on hundreds of Kansas properties through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program for Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE), Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP), the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). As a result, NRCS has a long-term responsibility to ensure the different program objectives are achieved and statutory requirements are met on these lands. Program specific monitoring policy is in place to help NRCS meet these responsibilities and maintain working relationships with landowners. Additionally, the Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standards 29 (SFFAS 29) considers easements held by the United States as “Stewardship Lands” which must be accounted for as part of the agency’s annual financial accountability reporting. The SFFAS 29 requires that the “Condition” of all Stewardship Lands be reported regularly. Therefore, monitoring procedures and policy have been revised through the issuance of Circular 21 in June 2011 and Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual, Part 527, Subpart P, Monitoring, January 2012.

Below is a brief description of each type of monitoring and guidance for answers to complete on the [Annual Monitoring Worksheet](#), located on the Kansas SharePoint site. A listing of all recorded easements and the type of monitoring to be completed for each is attached to this bulletin.

Methods of Monitoring

The following monitoring methods apply to all Stewardship Lands.

Ownership Review—involves making landowner contact to verify ownership. No on-site visit is required. This method of monitoring is only applicable in the year immediately following on-site monitoring that did not require any administrative follow-up (e.g., development of a Compatible Use Authorization), corrective actions, or have violations. Question 1 is to be completed on the Annual Monitoring Worksheet.

Off-site—is a review of the most recent aerial photography available. Currently, this is done at the state office (SO) level. In the future, this will be performed by remote sensing labs using GeoObserver.

DIST: A, F, S, Ramsey

In the years off-site monitoring is conducted, field offices (FO) will need to perform ownership verification and provide the SO an Annual Monitoring Worksheet with Question 1 completed.

Summary Review—this method is only applicable after the Stewardship Land has been attained but before restoration has been completed. A summary review includes a cursory on-site visit and landowner contact to verify ownership. Questions 1-4 are to be completed on the Annual Monitoring Worksheet.

On-site Monitoring—is the most thorough monitoring method involving a landowner contact to verify ownership, use of the most current available aerial photography, and completing an appropriate biological assessment. Landowners will be notified prior to each field inspection of the enrollment area and provided an opportunity to participate. All questions are to be completed on the Annual Monitoring Worksheet. For any issue that is found, the applicable action item (1-9) should be noted in the corresponding action item box. See the attached Action Items—Definitions reference sheet (attachment 2) for additional information on each action item.

Monitoring also includes the completion of [Form NRCS-CPA-13](#), Contract Review, for all Conservation Program Contracts (CPC) with landowners for restoration, maintenance, or repair activities on WRP easements. The monitoring list identifies those easements with CPCs. CPC contract reviews should be conducted in order to address the following items on the NRCS-CPA-13.

1. Maintenance of practices previously applied
2. Application of practices scheduled in the current year
3. Items in noncompliance
4. Need for changes to time schedule or practices
5. Items needing attention for next year
6. Agreement items not carried out as scheduled and reason for the delay

Ownership verification must be completed through some form of landowner contact. Methods may include phone contact, letters, post cards, etc. Passive methods may be used, such as a postcard, to be returned only if land ownership has changed or assistance is requested.

In order for the SO to meet the National Easement Staging Tool (NEST) data entry requirements, monitoring completed by the FOs must be forwarded to the Area Office (AO) by **July 15, 2013**. The AO should have all Annual Monitoring Worksheets forwarded to the SO by **August 1, 2013**. Please route the Annual Monitoring Worksheets electronically to the SO as soon as they are completed; do not wait to batch and send several reviews at once.

Direct completed monitoring worksheets and or questions regarding the new monitoring process to Steven M. Ramsey, Economist, at steve.ramsey@ks.usda.gov or 785-823-4517.

(Signed)
ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments