

General Manual  
Title 180 – Conservation Planning and Application

Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy

**KS409.0 General.**

(b) Kansas conservation planning principles are as follows:

(1) The desired end-product of the conservation planning process is for land users to understand natural resource issues and treatments necessary for resource sustainability.

(2) The planning process requires a voluntary approach and a series of on-site visits carried out over an extended period of time.

(3) The land user (decision maker) and the planner must be on the land together to effectively apply the conservation planning process.

(4) Good relationships established through the planning process are the key to success.

(5) The land user, not Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), decides what treatment will be applied based upon sound options offered by NRCS.

(6) Conservation plans are voluntary, confidential, non-binding, and may be modified or cancelled as desired by the land user.

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**KS409.1 Conservation Planning Objective.**

(a) The objective in . . .

(2) Progressive conservation plans will be developed with land users who want to treat some, but not all, resource concerns. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will make follow-up contacts with land users with progressive plans and encourage them to revise their plans to treat all resource concerns to the Resource Management System (RMS) level. Progressive plans will be developed into RMS plans as land users make decisions to treat all resource concerns.

Field offices will maintain a follow-up system as an integral part of providing service to its customers. Follow-up contacts will be made to initiate or continue the conservation planning process with land users who are ready, willing, and able to treat resource concerns.

The follow-up system will include:

- The person to be contacted
- The reason for the follow-up contact
- The NRCS employee assigned to make the follow-up contact
- When the contact is to be made
- Other information to make the system effective

Follow-up assistance will be prioritized using criteria developed in consultation with the conservation district board of supervisors and based on the district's resource concerns. Conservation plans will be developed with conservation district supervisors and tribal council members and/or governments. Follow-up assistance will be provided to supervisors to fully engage them in the conservation planning process and increase their understanding of how NRCS provides assistance to land users.

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**KS409.2 Conservation Planning Assistance Delivery.**

(b) The conservation plan is the basis for all assistance Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides to its customers. A request for assistance to evaluate resource conditions or apply a conservation practice will be treated by NRCS as a request to develop and/or revise a conservation plan. Requests will be prioritized using criteria developed in consultation with the conservation district board of supervisors, tribal conservation districts, and/or tribal governments, and based upon the entity's resource concerns. Conservation plans will be developed according to the assigned priority.

(2) Conservation district and/or tribal cooperative working agreements will be utilized whenever possible and will be a main component of the conservation plan.

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**KS409.3 Requirements for Providing Conservation Planning Assistance**

(a) All Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees with conservation planning listed as a duty in their position description, NRCS area and state staff employees with planning assistance or oversight responsibilities, and other providers of NRCS-related conservation planning assistance will be certified. Conservation planner certification went into effect as of October 1, 2001.

(b) All conservation plans will be approved by certified planners with the appropriate level of planning expertise as documented on the Form KS-CPA-20, Conservation Planner Certification. Certified conservation planners with the appropriate planning certification level will sign plans for technical adequacy.

(d) The State Conservationist . . .

(1) A list of certified conservation planners will be developed and maintained by each assistant state conservationist for field operations (ASTC-FO) for those at the area and field office levels. Records for each individual will consist of Form KS-CPA-20; Form KS-CPA-1, Kansas Practice Approval Certification; dates and results of any completed planning reviews; and any identified training needs. For Kansas Practice Approval Certification policy, refer to National Engineering Manual Section KS501.04(b). Records will be maintained in administrative file Title 180 Conservation Planning and Application. In the event that an employee is transferred to another area or state, those records will be forwarded to the appropriate gaining office.

(2) A summary list of certified conservation planners in the state, including NRCS employees, volunteers, employees of other state conservation agencies that have requested to participate, and other providers of NRCS-related conservation planning assistance will be maintained at the state office level.

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**KS409.5 Documentation of Conservation Planning Data**

Conservation plans developed with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will be documented using the Customer Service Toolkit (Toolkit). The NRCS will use ArcGIS to produce conservation plan maps.

Toolkit plans will be stored within a single customer folder with one planned land unit layer for the customer's agricultural operation. Exception to this policy allows for a separate customer folder for a Conservation Security Program (CSP) plan or easement programs.

Conservation plans will be documented in hard copy and filed by the name of the person contacted when providing assistance.

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**KS409.9 Minimum Criteria to Achieve an NRCS Certified Conservation Planner Designation.**

(a) Certified planner candidates will complete the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Planning Course Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 is a Web-based training session that may be accessed by going to [www.aglearn.usda.gov](http://www.aglearn.usda.gov). Part 2 is provided at the state level and includes classroom and field exercises.

(c) Candidates must meet . . .

(1) The planner certification process will be carried out at the area level except for those employees located at the state office. The planner certification process will consist of the following three steps:

- Each candidate will complete the NRCS Conservation Planning Course Part 1.
- Each candidate will submit three conservation plans for review to an area interdisciplinary team prior to delivery to the customer. Planner certification levels will be assigned based on the results of the review plus an assessment of the planner's knowledge, skills, and abilities as related to conservation planning. The appropriate assistant state conservationist for field operations (ASTC-FO) may waive this requirement if the employee has previously demonstrated competence in plan development as evidenced through recently conducted planning reviews, quality assurance reviews, or direct supervision. Similarly, the state resource conservationist (SRC) as the assigned designee for the state conservationist (STC) may also waive the three plan review requirement for state level employees that have planning or oversight responsibilities.
- Each candidate will complete the NRCS Conservation Planning Course Part 2 within three years of receiving initial planner certification.

Completion of each step will be documented on the Form KS-CPA-20, Conservation Planner Certification.

(2) Conservation planner certification will be approved by NRCS line officers (ASTC-FO or the SRC) as the assigned designee for the STC with recommendations from the planner's supervisor and appropriate technical specialist. The assigned level of planning certification will be documented on the Form KS-CPA-20. The most limiting criteria on the Planning Certification Level Matrix will determine the assigned level of planning certification.

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**KS409.9 Minimum Criteria to Achieve an NRCS Certified Conservation Planner Designation (continued).**

(e) NRCS certified conservation . . .

(2) Supervisors will determine conservation planning training needs and carry out the training for each employee and other providers in accordance with this policy. Individual planners are responsible for keeping their own personal training plan updated to reflect conservation planning training needs and accomplishments in order to maintain or increase their skill level. Planners should strive to achieve Level 3 planning certification to enhance customer service and career potential. At a minimum, planners should reach a planning level appropriate to address the resources and planning needs of their area of responsibility.

(f) The State Conservationist . . .

(1) A review of an individual's conservation planning knowledge, skills, and abilities must occur at least once every three years for recertification. The date and results of the review will be documented on the Form KS-CPA-20. The review will be conducted by the appropriate ASTC-FO or the SRC. Based on the results of the review, the assigned level of planning certification may be adjusted. A review may occur at any time and be initiated by state or area technical specialist, supervisor, or by the respective planner.

(2) Certified planners are subject to quality assurance/quality control reviews of a sufficient number of completed conservation plans to determine compliance with conservation planning policy, and procedures and guidelines provided in the National Planning Procedures Handbook and the Kansas Quality Assurance Plan.

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**KS409.10 Minimum Standards for Providers of Conservation Technical Assistance Associated with Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.**

(a) Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) must contain a signature page, which includes a signature line for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Certified Conservation Planner's approval and the person for whom the plan is developed. The CNMP signature page (Exhibit KS409.20), provides an example of an acceptable signature page.

(g) The minimum requirements associated with certification of individuals to approve development and/or design and implementation of elements of a CNMP in Kansas are as follows:

(1) General Requirements.

(i) Complete NRCS "Conservation Planning Modules 1-5" and on-line exam available at [www.aglearn.usda.gov](http://www.aglearn.usda.gov).

(ii) Complete a review of the video, "NRCS's Agricultural Waste Management Systems: A Primer Course." Information regarding this video may be obtained at [www.aglearn.usda.gov](http://www.aglearn.usda.gov).

(iii) Review the pertinent contents and understand the applicability of the Kansas Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), specifically Section IV, Conservation Practice Standards, as related to specific elements of the CNMP for which expertise is being provided. Additional information can be obtained from the "CORE 4 Conservation Practices Training Guide" at my.NRCS.

(iv) Review the various elements of a CNMP as contained in the NRCS "Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning Technical Guidance." This information is available in the National Planning Procedures Handbook.

(v) Meet applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations that impact the elements of a CNMP.

(vi) Successfully complete a certification course designated by the Kansas State Conservationist (STC) for each element of interest.

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(2) Requirements Specific to Elements of a CNMP.

(i) Manure and Wastewater Handling and Storage.

(A) At a minimum, the ability to plan and implement the following conservation practices is required:

- Waste Storage Facility (Code 313)
- Waste Treatment Lagoon (Code 359)
- Heavy Use Protection (Code 561)
- Composting Facility (Code 317)

(B) Complete the NRCS Agricultural Waste Management Systems Level 2 Course or its equivalent. This is a self-paced computer-based training course. Information regarding completion of this course can be obtained [www.aqlearn.usda.gov](http://www.aqlearn.usda.gov).

(C) Successfully complete Manure and Wastewater Handling and Storage Course designated by the STC as an approved educational course toward manure and wastewater handling and storage element writer certification. Successful completion of the course may include passing a written exam in conjunction with the course.

(D) Maintain registration as a professional engineer in the state of Kansas, or in the case of NRCS, hold appropriate engineering approval authority.

(E) Develop one CNMP manure and wastewater handling and storage element in accordance with the NRCS conservation practice standards for submission to the STC for review.

(ii) Land Treatment Practices.

(A) Knowledge adequate to design and implement conservation practices typically used to address this element of a CNMP is required. At a minimum the ability to plan and implement the following conservation practices are required:

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- Crop Rotation (Code 328)
- Residue Management, No Till and Strip Till (Code 329A)
- Residue Management, Mulch Till (Code 329B)
- Residue Management, Ridge Till (Code 329C)
- Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332)
- Cover Crop (Code 340)
- Residue Management, Seasonal (Code 344)
- Diversion (Code 362)
- Riparian Forest Buffer (Code 391)
- Filter Strip (Code 393)
- Grassed Waterway (Code 412)
- Prescribed Grazing (Code 528A)
- Contour Stripcropping (Code 585)
- Crosswind Stripcropping (Code 589B)
- Pest Management (Code 595)
- Terrace (Code 600)

(B) Skill in using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE).

(C) Skill in using the Kansas Phosphorus Risk Index Assessment Tool for field-by-field assessment to assess the potential for phosphorus movement from the landscape into water resources.

(D) Skill in using the Leaching Index assessment tool for field-by-field assessment to assess the potential for nitrogen movement from the landscape into water resources.

(E) Develop one CNMP land treatment practices element in accordance with the NRCS conservation practice standards for submission to the STC for review.

(F) Successfully complete a land treatment practices course designated by the STC as an approved educational course toward land treatment practices element writer certification. Successful completion of the course may include passing a written exam in conjunction with the course.

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(iii) Nutrient Management.

(A) Complete NRCS Introduction to Water Quality Course or its equivalent. This course is self-study and utilizes video and student workbook and can be accessed through [www.aqlearn.usda.gov](http://www.aqlearn.usda.gov).

(B) Skill in using the Kansas Phosphorus Risk Index assessment tool for field-by-field assessment of the potential for phosphorus movement from the landscape into water resources.

(C) Complete the nutrient management portion of the NRCS NEDC course “Nutrient Management and Pest Management Considerations in Conservation Planning” found in [www.aqlearn.usda.gov](http://www.aqlearn.usda.gov).

(D) Knowledge adequate to design and implement conservation practices typically used to address this element of a CNMP is required. At a minimum, the ability to plan and implement the following conservation practices is required:

- Nutrient Management (Code 590)
- Irrigation Water Management (Code 449)

(E) Successfully complete a nutrient management course designated by the STC as an approved educational course toward nutrient management element writer certification. Successful completion of the course may include passing a written exam in conjunction with the course.

(F) Develop one CNMP nutrient management element in accordance with the NRCS conservation practice standards for submission to the STC for review.

(k) Certified Specialists.

The ASTC-FO will maintain a list of NRCS certified specialists. Each NRCS recognized provider of a certification program(s) for third parties will maintain a current list of certified specialists.

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**KS409.20 Exhibit.**

**CNMP Signature Page**

OWNER/OPERATOR:	Phone:
Address:	
Farm(s)#:	Tract(s)#:

The following people have assisted with the development of the CNMP and certify that their element meets all applicable NRCS standards.

**Manure and Wastewater Handling and Storage**

Signature:	Date:
Name:	
Title:	

**Nutrient Management**

Signature:	Date:
Name:	
Title:	

**Land Treatment Practices**

Signature:	Date:
Name:	
Title:	

**NRCS Certified Conservation Planner & Certified CNMP Specialist**

As a Certified Conservation Planner, I certify that I have reviewed this plan for technical adequacy and that the elements of the CNMP are compatible, reasonable, and implementable.	
Signature: _____	Date: _____

**OWNER/OPERATOR**

As the owner/operator, I certify that I, as the decision maker, have been involved in the planning process and agree the items/practices listed in each element are needed. I understand that I am responsible for keeping all necessary records associated with the implementation of this CNMP. It is my intent to implement/accomplish this CNMP in a timely manner as described in the plan.	
Signature: _____	Date: _____