United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

June 7, 2010

GENERAL MANUAL (GM)
180-CPA
Circular No. 3, Part 409

Subject: CPA – Phase One of the Transition of the National Conservation Planning Database (NCP) to a Future Streamlined Conservation Delivery Business Model

Purpose. To provide national instructions for conservation planning using Customer Service Toolkit to begin transitioning to one practice schedule per customer folder.

Effective Date. This circular is effective upon receipt.

Background. Customer Service Toolkit, commonly referred to as "Toolkit," is the primary tool used by NRCS for documenting conservation planning decisions at the field level. Planning data from Toolkit is stored in the National Conservation Planning Database (NCP) where it can be accessed by Toolkit and other NRCS applications. Due to a lack of standardized guidance, each State has created separate policies and direction for the use of Toolkit, the organization of Toolkit files, and the specific data required for a conservation plan. This lack of national consistency has resulted in a database that is not reliable for tracking application of conservation on the ground, predicting workload, and measuring effectiveness of NRCS programs; it also creates inefficiencies that waste time for field staff.

The Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) is striving to address the issues that have created the current state of the NCP. The vision for the future is to eliminate the need for field planners to think about file folder organization or structure for plans, and make all technical and financial information about a client accessible through a single conservation desktop. A key component of the future model is to have only one digitized land unit for any unit of land. In the interim, as the CDSI teams work toward the long-term solution, the agency will work to limit additional overlap and duplication of plan data in the NCP by putting into place a national standard for conservation plan development using Toolkit. This policy is designed to be an initial step towards a larger NCP cleanup effort, while minimizing the workload and impact to field office staff.

Explanation. Starting immediately, the following instructions apply to folders and plans currently being created or revised:

(1) Any particular land unit should be located in only one Toolkit folder.

(i) When creating a new Toolkit customer folder, users should first make sure the customer does not already have a folder that includes the relevant land units.

(ii) If multiple customer folders exist for a unit of land, the duplicate folders should be deleted when possible.

(2) Only one practice schedule will be created per customer folder. When working with existing customer folders that contain multiple conservation plans—

(i) Identify the primary plan and begin doing all future planning as a revision to that plan's practice schedule.

(ii) The extra conservation plans in the folder should be deleted or archived unless they contain practices linked to a contract.

(3) All land unit boundaries must be digitized and attributed in Toolkit using the primary plan's land unit layer. This policy was originally transmitted by National Bulletin-170-5-1 in 2005.

Digitizing nonmanagement planned practices will be required when the new business model is implemented. Therefore, offices are encouraged to begin digitizing these in the primary plan's practice layer.

(4) Exceptions.—The following plans and folders are exempt from the above rules:

(i) CSP 02 and CSP 08 stewardship plans and folders (follow current CSP manual and instructions for stewardship plans).

(ii) Plans and folders with practices linked to active contracts.

The future business model, when Toolkit plan data is captured, managed, and analyzed in a geospatial format, will be significantly more efficient for the field. However, NRCS cannot implement tools that take advantage of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) until plan data is consistently digitized across all States.

See attachment for detailed information on how to carry out the above requirements in Toolkit.

Contact. Questions should be directed to Arlen Ricke, Natural Resource Specialist, Conservation Technical Assistance and Planning Team, at (202) 720-1868.

/s/

ANTHONY J. KRAMER
Deputy Chief
Easements and Landscape Planning

Attachment – Using Toolkit for Maintaining One Customer Folder for Any Particular Land Unit and One Practice Schedule per Customer Folder in the National Conservation Planning Database (NCP)