

General Manual  
Title 260 – Public Information

Part 400 – Public Information Policy  
Subpart B – Employee Responsibilities

**KS400.12 Kinds of Information Activities**

(a) Furnish information on . . .

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel should establish a working rapport with their local news media to promote delivery of conservation information to the public in a timely manner.

1) Print Media

a) News Releases and Feature Stories

NRCS area and local offices may issue news releases and feature articles covering their appropriate areas. When furnishing articles to the print media, local NRCS personnel must take into consideration the readership, the area of coverage, and interests of the publication. Articles, other than professional technical journals, should be written in terms that are easy to understand. Refer to General Manual Title 260, Section KS400.13, for clearance and review instructions.

Good, clear images that illustrate the major point(s) of the story may accompany all articles. Several images may be supplied so that the editor can make a selection. The publisher may have preference for receiving hard or electronic copies of images. A short caption explaining the image and identifying any people should accompany each image. Credits should be given or, at the very least, state “USDA-NRCS.”

News releases need to be issued on the NRCS news release template that includes the following information: name, address, phone, fax, e-mail of the sender, and the nondiscrimination statement.

Newspapers should be encouraged to publish special conservation editions, but not to the exclusion or reduction of conservation coverage throughout the year. A copy should be sent to the Public Affairs Staff in the state office.

If you author an article, add a by-line that includes your name, title, agency (NRCS), and location, if the article is being used other than locally.

The state office can also issue statewide news releases and feature articles covering wider interest areas. These releases will be sent via

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e-mail to field offices for local release. A local touch at the field level may be added, such as pictures, quotes, or notes of human interest. Other news releases may be sent directly from the state office to specific media, such as large urban daily newspapers, farm magazines and newspapers, and conservation partners.

b) Newsletters

Newsletters complement the use of other news media. A conservation district, interagency, or any other type of newsletter is an important means of reaching a specific segment of the public. NRCS contributions to newsletters must be short and targeted to the intended audience. District personnel should be encouraged to produce district newsletters.

c) Clipping File

All field offices will maintain a current clipping file of published conservation articles of local interest. For easy access, file the clippings in the field office in the Equal Opportunity 230 file. Field offices will send published articles to the area office for review. The assistant state conservationist for field operations will determine what articles will be forwarded to the state office. Articles are to be identified with the name of publication, date of publication, and page number. The state office will also maintain a clipping file of articles of major interest, pattern stories that are published in statewide publications, and feature stories.

2) Radio and Television

District conservationists will provide local news to the radio and television stations covering their county, whether or not the station is located in that county. From time to time, field offices will be provided public service announcements (PSAs) or radio interviews available from Kansas State Agriculture Today to be offered to stations serving their county. They are free of any copyrights and are available for download from [www.oznet.ksu.edu/radio/agtoday.htm](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/radio/agtoday.htm).

The television station(s) covering a local area should be invited to film conservation news events. NRCS personnel should be alert to the opportunities for special feature programming.

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Station managers should be encouraged to help deliver the conservation message.

3) Electronic Media

a) Conservation Editions

Articles developed for the newspapers to use in their conservation editions will be accessible on the Kansas NRCS Web site under News.

b) Special Interest Stories

Periodically special human interest stories will be provided on the Intranet for employees' information. These articles should be short, non-technical news items of general and human interest and of the type that all readers would enjoy reading.

(d) Take and use . . .

1) Products for Public Information Purposes

Plan ahead for the right kind of images that will be useful for news and feature articles, television, and exhibits. Each image must be properly captioned. It is especially important that images are as high-impact and dramatic as possible and that they convey the intended message. The NRCS will furnish electronic files of NRCS images at no charge to conservation districts, newspapers, magazines, and other organizations. (See [General Manual Title 120, Section 406.61J](#), concerning film purchases and processing).

The NRCS Photo Gallery contains natural resource and conservation-related photos from across the United States. The gallery is a joint project between the NRCS Conservation Communications Staff and the Information Technology Center in Fort Collins, Colorado. The gallery can be accessed from the Kansas Web site by selecting "Photo Gallery" under the Quick Access menu.

Photos in the gallery are available free of charge in two common image formats: TIFF or JPEG.

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2) Furnishing Images for State Office

Area and field offices will send high quality electronic images of subjects suitable for the state office file, statewide or nationwide publication, and/or display use to the state office with proper caption information.

a) Identifying Images

All images shall be identified as follows:

Date Taken  
Subject  
Location  
Conservation District  
Identifiable People  
Caption/Description

Digital images can be identified in an electronic file; i.e., spreadsheet or Word, which should accompany the digital image.

b) Filing of Images

All offices are to use the filing system described in General Manual Title 120, Section 408.63, File Code 260-20.

Each office will establish and maintain its own system for numbering and filing of images. No two images will have the same number. Numbering of local images will contain the county prefix for that county (such as SA for Saline County or SN for Shawnee County). It is important that images are filed in a numbered sequence and keyed to a subject file so they can be located easily. In instances where images are exchanged between area, field, and state office levels, the county prefix of the originating office can be used.

Digital images need to be sorted and labeled. Since these are electronic files, they will be stored in an electronic format. There are numerous ways to store the image files. They can be saved on the hard drive, if room allows, or copied to a portable medium, such as a compact disc-recordable (CD-R). Each CD could hold several categories. Always keep

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the original in tact—that is, do not edit. Copy the original, rename, and then edit.

Digital image information may be kept in a spreadsheet, such as Excel. The spreadsheet would have headings, such as filename, keywords (several columns listing keywords could be used), image date (year only), photographer, and image description. When an image is needed, use the spreadsheet file, sort by any of the headings, and then go to the CD where the image is stored.

3) Audiovisuals and Exhibits

The state office has programs on videocassette tapes, digital versatile discs (DVDs), compact discs (CDs), and slides and exhibits available on a loan basis. Some historic photographs are also available. These are requested from the Public Affairs Staff.

Periodically, a notice will be issued giving descriptions of the programs and exhibits currently available. Photos of exhibits and instructions for ordering are available from the Kansas NRCS Web site under “Kansas NRCS Employees - Audio-Visual Media for Loan.”

4) Publications

Field offices should maintain a small supply of current and useful conservation brochures for distribution to the public. At the beginning of each fiscal year old, outdated, and damaged or faded publications should be removed. The state office will also maintain a small supply of current brochures. NRCS and other federal publications are to be ordered, in reasonable quantities from the state office via an e-mail to the Public Affairs Staff or offices can order publications online directly from LANDCARE. To order large quantities of a publication to be shipped directly to an office, go to the Kansas Web site and select “Publications” from the left-hand Quick Access menu. This is a direct link too LANDCARE. The name or number of the publication desired can be entered or the entire list of publications available can be browsed. Make your selection(s) and follow instructions to place the order.

Kansas brochures should be requested from the Kansas State Office Public Affairs Staff.

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Publications for an event should be ordered with as much advance notice as possible to avoid the possibility of not receiving them in time. Many publications can now be downloaded from the Internet or photocopied for general distribution.

All publications prepared or distributed by NRCS must contain a nondiscrimination statement - [www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civilrights/nondiscrimination\\_statement.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/civilrights/nondiscrimination_statement.html). A shorter version of the statement can be stamped on publications developed by others that NRCS will distribute.

(e) Participate in radio . . .

Conservation programs to be presented to the public; i.e., a speech, radio, or television broadcast, or PowerPoint presentation, should be well planned with accurate information. Sharing responsibility for such a program with others—conservation district personnel, other agency people, conservation partners, and other NRCS personnel—is recommended.

(g) Arrange meetings and . . .

Field offices are encouraged to promote special observances such as Earth Day, National Wildlife Week, National Agriculture Week, or Stewardship Week. Partnering with others in the community to hold activities or celebrations, such as water festivals, should be considered. Some events can be held anytime during the year.

(i) Assist in planning . . .

It is the policy of NRCS in Kansas to assist our Kansas conservation partners; i.e., State Conservation Commission (SCC) and Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD), in the selection, planning, and development of outdoor classrooms and to provide information and technical assistance in the establishment and use of instruction areas.

1) Technical assistance may be provided in the following areas:

- (i) selection of suitable sites
- (ii) development of base resource data
- (iii) development of long-range plans

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- (iv) layout and installation
  - (v) conservation training for educators with natural resource interests and others using outdoor areas. This does not include routine teaching of pupils by NRCS personnel.
- 2) Outdoor education will be the responsibility of the district conservationist. Technical support and assistance will be provided through the state resource conservationist.
- 3) The purpose of outdoor education is to enrich and expand in-classroom teaching methods to include outdoor hands-on experience.
- 4) Increased soil and water conservation efforts can be achieved by educating youth and molding their ideas during their formative years.
- 5) Outdoor classroom objectives:
- (i) Outdoor classrooms are to be located on or near school grounds.
  - (ii) Outdoor classrooms are to be designed in such a manner as to maximize the teaching opportunities of all major curriculums.
  - (iii) Planning efforts are to be directed at groups of teachers representing many disciplines, as well as administrative and parent-teachers organizations.
  - (iv) Planning efforts should result in a long-range plan, which stresses installation over a period of time. This allows for maximum student input and low maintenance costs. Continual work on the area keeps it functional.
  - (v) Effective conservation education stresses the total resource base but in perspective with uses, demands, and economic considerations.

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**KS400.13 Clearance and Review**

To ensure that statements for public use contained in manuscripts, articles, papers, electronic presentations (such as PowerPoint), speeches, poster papers, newsletters, exhibits, etc. are accurate and conform to U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, employees are to submit [Form KS-INF-16](#), Assistance and/or Clearance Request, along with the materials to be reviewed. Clearance is needed only for materials presented outside of the Natural Resources Conservation Service at statewide, regional, or national meetings.

Form KS-INF-16 should be completed and submitted through the supervisor and/or Management Team member to the public affairs specialist in the state office. Requests should reach the state office 30 to 45 days in advance of the meeting to allow time to complete the review and clearance process.

Refer to [General Manual Title 450, Section 410.11](#), for additional information.

This form is also to be used to request assistance needed in preparation of any information to be published.