

United States Department of Agriculture



**WASHINGTON FISCAL YEAR 2009
QUALITY CONTROL AND
ASSURANCE PLAN**

Washington Quality Control and Assurance Plan

PURPOSE

Quality control is the process used to ensure that agency activities are conducted in accordance with rules and regulations, and the laws and executive orders on which they are based. This is often referred to as oversight, which is intended to be preventive and evaluative of risks that could hinder mission accomplishment. Quality assurance is the comparison of actual accomplishments to planned goals and other measures of performance, after the fact. Evaluations determine whether the intended outcomes of activities and programs are being achieved in an efficient and effective manner. General Manual 340, Part 404 establishes the general policy for quality assurance requirements. The purpose of the Washington Quality Control and Assurance Plan is to provide guidance on implementation of that policy and to document oversight and evaluation activities within the State. This plan applies to all Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) programs and activities. Additional quality assurance requirements are contained in Appendix A and are incorporated into this plan by reference.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of quality control and assurance are to ensure that NRCS in Washington:

- Performs in compliance with policy and within legal authorities;
- Achieves a high level of quality and productivity in all aspects of its operations;
- Recognizes commendable work;
- Prevents the incidence of error and minimizes risks;
- Implements corrective measures when errors or risks are identified;
- Uses resources efficiently and obtains maximum benefits;
- Effectively furthers resource conservation programs through its operations;
- Provides a high level of customer satisfaction and partnership.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- State Conservationist (STC):
 - Overall responsibility for ensuring program accountability and fund integrity, implementing corrective actions resulting from reviews, and requesting State Management Reviews to address state concerns.
 - Developing a State Quality Assurance Plan by September 30 of each year for implementation in the coming fiscal year in accordance with General Manual (GM) 340 (Part 404, Subpart C).
 - Prepare a State Quality Assurance Report by December 30 of each year for the fiscal year that just ended and submit it to the Regional Assistant Chief and the Director, Operations Management and Oversight Division.

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- Organizing and conducting State quality assurance reviews (QARs).
- State Leadership Team (SLT):
 - Implementing the Washington State Quality Assurance Plan.
- Area Conservationists (ACs) and District Conservationists (DCs):
 - Ensuring the quality of practices installed with NRCS technical assistance within their purview.
 - With input from Program Managers and technical leaders, facilitating the development of an action plan for carrying out quality assurance responsibilities within their respective Areas.
 - Conducting quality reviews, consistent with state and national policy:
 - Scheduling reviews within the Area;
 - Assigning qualified personnel to carry out reviews;
 - Assuring follow-up to correct identified deficiencies;
 - Providing training and/or appropriate guidance to personnel performing unacceptable work;
 - Reporting results of the annual quality reviews to the STC and SLT.

GUIDELINES

National policy on strategic planning and accountability states that oversight and evaluation activities are to be conducted continuously to ensure accountability and results, as well as assist in identifying needed changes in operations and policies and integrating these changes to optimize human, financial, and other resources.

Actions and responsibilities for quality control and assurance are to be identified in the "State Quality Assurance Plan" developed in conjunction with state business plans. General guidance for developing State Quality Assurance Plans is included in a number of national policy documents, including the Conservation Programs Manual, National Food Security Act Manual, and GM. Specific policies on quality control and assurance processes for various programs and activities are cited in the text and listed in the references section of this plan.

METHODS

The agency uses four principle types of reviews:

- Oversight and Evaluation Reviews are conducted to assess compliance with policy, laws, executive orders, rules, and regulations; program management; technical quality; customer service; and implementation of strategic initiatives. These are planned and conducted by National Headquarters' Operations Management and Oversight Division (OMOD). (GM 340 Part 404.40)

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- Program Evaluations, also conducted by OMOD, support program management and decision-making by providing information to plan more effective and efficient programs and to identify programs or program activities that are no longer relevant.
- Management Reviews, which are conducted at the National, Regional and State Office levels, determine the operational effectiveness of programs, policies, disciplines, and offices. These are lead by the Associate Chief on a national level. (GM 340 Part 404.40)
- Functional Reviews are conducted when a potential deficiency exists within a specific function or discipline at any level in the organization. They are the responsibility of the appropriate Deputy Chief, but can also be proposed by the Regional Chiefs. (GM 340 Part 404.40)

Within Washington, the methods that will be used to carry out the purpose and achieve the stated objectives of the quality control and assurance program are:

- National/regional reviews;
- State QARs;
- Team Reviews
- Field office visits;
- Spot checks;
- Program and activity evaluations;
- Performance measurement;
- Annual quality control and assurance review meeting;
- Individual accountability.

NATIONAL/REGIONAL REVIEWS

Annually, the Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability requests proposals for Program Evaluations and Oversight and Evaluation Reviews. States have an opportunity to provide input on areas of concern that could be the subject of an evaluation or review. Using this input, the Chief identifies priority evaluations and reviews for each fiscal year and incorporates these into the Agency Business Plan. Typically, several states per evaluation or review are used as input points for the study. However, as these are national studies, individual states do not receive a report of findings. Corrective actions are addressed by management action plans that guide and assign responsibilities, usually to Deputy Chiefs, for implementing policy and operational changes. Leadership will remain abreast of findings or recommendations that may affect Washington in their respective areas and take appropriate action to implement improvements locally as necessary.

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STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS

State QARs are conducted by the STC (GM 340 Part 404.22). In Washington State, QARs are formal reviews conducted by the State Office of the Area Offices that include all aspects of the operational, managerial, technical, programmatic, and partnership activities being carried out in the Area. Soil Survey Offices and RC&D Offices will be reviewed in conjunction with the QAR of the Area. Such reviews will be conducted as follows:

1. Each Area will be reviewed once every four years. Every fourth year is a bye year.
2. The schedule at Appendix B specifies the order in which the QARs will occur.
3. The dates for the QAR will be agreed upon by the SLT and will be held on the master calendar. Dates, times, and expectations of all participants will be communicated well in advance of the QAR. This includes prior contact with landowners, conservation district supervisors, and others who have been selected to be interviewed and visited.
4. The QAR will be conducted by a team consisting of members of the SLT and, optionally, a field peer (from the Area being visited in the following year).
5. All employees at the locations to be reviewed will be involved in the process.
6. QARs will include opportunities for the review team to meet with landowners and conservation partners to discuss our service and programs.
7. Team members will evaluate both the efficiency and effectiveness of programs.
8. When applicable, QARs will be used to demonstrate competencies, such as those required for conservation planning or practice implementation.
9. The review schedule will include both entrance and exit briefings. The exit briefing will include a discussion of the team's findings and recommendations.
10. Preparation of the final report:
 - a. Team members will be responsible for providing the narratives for their individual areas of responsibility for inclusion in the final report.
 - b. Upon agreement by the AC and the STC, all items needing corrective action will be documented in the final report.
 - c. The final report will be made available to NRCS Washington employees to highlight innovative methods being used in the field and also to initiate improvements throughout the state, if needed.
11. Administrative files containing information on the reviews will be maintained under Operations Management (File Code 330).

The fiscal year 2009 QAR will be of the Central Area and is scheduled for the week of May 11, 2009.

TEAM REVIEWS

General Manual 340 Part 404.22 requires a minimum of five percent of offices in a State to be reviewed annually. There are currently 38 field offices in Washington, not including Soil Survey Offices and RC&D Offices, which are included in the State level QARs described above. Applying the five percent to the remaining offices, at least two offices should be reviewed per year. In Washington, offices will be reviewed on a Team

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wide basis. The *Guide for Field Office Reviews* may be used as the basis for conducting the review. The AC will assemble and lead a team from the Area Office staff to conduct the review. The AC may solicit assistance from members of the State Leadership Team. The review will be scheduled in advance and dates held on the master calendar. The AC will provide a written report of findings, recommendations, and corrective actions to the STC within 30 days of completion of the review. The written report will include a schedule for completing corrective actions and a plan for submitting periodic reports of progress for completing the actions. The DC is responsible for implementing the corrective actions and the AC is responsible for ensuring completion of all actions. Upon completion of all corrective actions in the team, the AC will evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken to correct any documented deficiencies and will determine if further action is required. The AC will notify the STC when all deficiencies have been satisfactorily corrected.

FIELD OFFICE VISITS

Field Office visits are an integral part of the quality control program in Washington. Program Managers, State Technical Leaders, and other members of the SLT will conduct informal Field Office visits to learn field issues and to recognize, encourage, and train field staff. Field Office visits should be used by state leaders to focus on positive motivators as a means to prevent errors and improve quality. They can, to a lesser degree, assess the quality of conservation planning and application, documentation, and practice installation, but only as a means to provide assistance in improving the quality.

1. The schedule at Appendix B provides the order in which the visits will occur to ensure that each office is visited by either the Technical and Programs Group or the Operations and Administrative Group every two to three years. This schedule may be modified if practicality dictates, however, in all cases, visits to a field office by any member of the State Office will be preplanned and coordinated with the DC and any affected field office personnel. The AC will be informed of any planned field office visits. It is strongly encouraged to enter these dates on the master calendar to avoid any overlap.
2. It is recommended that smaller offices be visited by individual SLT members so that the office is not overwhelmed by the visit. Larger offices can be visited by small groups of SLT members and staff.
3. All field units (FO, Area Staff, Soils, etc.) at the location should participate in the field visits to the extent possible.
4. The DC does not need to be present during the visit unless the office being visited is their duty station.
5. A trip report will be emailed to the DC and SLT following each visit. Electronic copies will be maintained on the SLT Shared Drive.

SPOT CHECKS OF CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Under a number of programs, NRCS has responsibility for installing conservation practices to protect natural resources. All work, including work by non-NRCS

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personnel, for which NRCS has technical responsibility, is subject to quality review requirements as defined by this Quality Assurance Plan and the policies incorporated by reference. GM 340, Part 404.22 and GM 450, Part 407, and its Washington Supplements, set forth the policies for conducting quality reviews and spot checking practices. All reported conservation plans; practices; program activities, such as eligibility determinations, application ranking, contract development, contract implementation, contract modifications, and payments; highly erodible lands determinations; and wetland determinations are subject to spot-checking. Regardless of the program, quality reviews will ensure that conservation practice application results in achieving protection of the identified resource concern and that adequate documentation for practice certification exists in the case files. The method for spot checking is as follows:

1. ACs are responsible for conducting quality reviews, consistent with state policy and national program manuals and the Washington State Food Security Act/FACTA Quality Control Plan at Appendix D. This includes:
 - a. Scheduling reviews within the Area
 - b. Assigning qualified personnel to carry out reviews
 - c. Assuring follow-up to correct identified deficiencies
 - d. Providing training and/or appropriate guidance to personnel performing unacceptable work
 - e. Reporting results of the annual quality reviews to the STC and the SLT.
2. Quality reviews will be conducted by fiscal year.
3. Teams are responsible for maintaining records for three years for work subject to quality review, assisting the reviewing personnel, and for responding to required follow-up.
4. Personnel conducting quality reviews are responsible for objectively reviewing all pertinent aspects of the work to ensure conformance with national and state policy and procedure.
5. All reviewers must have the appropriate job approval authority to implement the work being reviewed and must also be knowledgeable of all policy and procedure requirements for its implementation. When qualified personnel are not available within the Area, assistance should be requested from another Area or the State Office.
6. Each team will ensure that quality reviews are conducted each year for every employee who completes plans, practices, or program activities.
7. A minimum of 5% (at least 1) of the above listed activities will be spot-checked in each team.
8. When there has been a large number of a specific activity performed (e.g., CRP plans) no more than five (5) spot-checks will be made for that activity, unless:
 - a. More are needed to ensure that at least one spot-check is conducted for each employee completing a specific activity, OR
 - b. The reviewer identifies quality problems and determines that additional spot-checks are needed to define the extent of the problem.
9. Fiscal year summaries, review reports, and follow-up reports will be submitted through the ACs to the STC within 15 days of completing the spot checks. Specifically, the following will be submitted:

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- a. One copy of each Plan/Practice/Program Activity Quality Review
 - b. Follow up action taken on each deficiency found
 - c. Multi-county Field Team and Field Office Quality Review Summary
 - d. Report of Quality Review Follow-up (use WA-TCH-13 Quality Review Worksheets at WA450-GM, Amend. WA13, July 24, 2001).
10. State Technical Leaders will provide technical review of quality assurance summaries.
 11. ACs and DCs should ensure that work of exceptional quality is identified and personnel responsible are recognized.
 12. Any training needs identified during the review process are to be documented and requested through the Employee Development Program.

PROGRAM AND ACTIVITY EVALUATIONS

QUALITY ASSURANCE ON WORK PERFORMED BY CONSERVATION CONTRACTORS

Technical work by conservation contractors, including work performed under cooperative or contribution agreements, will be spot-checked under the normal quality assurance provided by NRCS. In addition, the individual with approval authority is required to provide a complete review of at least one of the conservation contractor's jobs annually. When conservation contractors provide technical work on more than one conservation practice, or under several task orders, at least one of each type will be checked. The annual reviews will be documented and filed with the original determination of acceptability for the conservation contractor. Refer to WA 450 GM, Part 407, Amendment WA 12, WA 407.11(d)(3) for guidance and sample documents.

QUALITY ASSURANCE ON WORK PERFORMED BY TECHNICAL SERVICE PROVIDERS (TSPs) REGISTERED IN TECHNICAL REGISTER

NRCS will evaluate the quality of the services rendered by certified TSPs, in accordance with GM 340, Part 404.22 (D) and GM 450, Part 407. TSPs are required to make certain information available to be used by NRCS in its quality assurance process, enabling the identification of any deficiencies and allowing the TSP to take remedial action before any decertification action becomes necessary.

Quality assurance will be conducted by NRCS in accordance with additional policies as established under the 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act and/or the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bills).

The specific procedure for review of TSP work in Washington is:

1. Responsible Official/AC will determine appropriate individual/team to conduct the review.
2. Reviewer determines what jobs, practices, and functions should be reviewed within the following guidelines:

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- a. All contracts and agreements (including contribution agreements) must be reviewed.
 - b. First time reviews will be conducted for each provider for each type of practice they perform. The initial review should be conducted within 90 days after completion of the first practice.
 - c. Subsequent reviews will be conducted using the same procedure as described for spot checking (5%) above.
3. Report of findings will be included in the Area summary due on November 30.
 4. If a deficiency is revealed, the Responsible Official or AC will notify the provider and State Office.

QUALITY ASSURANCE ON INSTALLED PRACTICES REQUIRING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES

NRCS is responsible for ensuring that installed conservation practices funded by NRCS are maintained and operated within specified requirements. NRCS operation and maintenance (O&M) responsibilities are outlined in the National Operation and Maintenance Manual (NOMM). O&M activities usually fall into two categories:

- Formal agreements for O&M activities between NRCS and a participant, typically referred to as the project sponsor.
- Non-agreement O&M activities.

1. Formal O&M Agreements

Formal O&M agreements and plans are required by some NRCS programs, traditionally, RC&D and Small Watershed (WF-08) programs. Formal agreements provide specific information regarding required O&M activities, the life of the agreement, and project sponsor and NRCS annual responsibilities. The State Conservation Engineer (SCE) is responsible for maintaining the agreements and plans for RC&D and Small Watershed Projects (WF-08).

During Team Appraisals, each Area Office will conduct reviews of the O&M agreements and related plans to ensure that NRCS and the project sponsor are adhering to the requirements and responsibilities outlined. The State Office will review Area Office Team Appraisal reports during Area Appraisals. The SCE will verify that all active O&M agreements are current or that corrective measures have been initiated for documented deficiencies.

2. Non-agreement O&M Activities

As specified in the NRCS Conservation Practice Standards, O&M plans are developed and provided to recipients of this technical and financial assistance as a required component of the contracted design. Typically the O&M plans accompany construction drawings and specifications that are provided to the program participant. According to program rules and the associated contract, recipients are

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required to operate and maintain the practice for the specified design life as outlined in the eFOTG Section I.

For open contracts, each Area Office will review and verify that all practices are being reviewed for O&M compliance in accordance with the O&M Plan. Annual status reviews will document all deficiencies and actions to correct deficiencies.

After contract completion, it is Washington State practice not to conduct compliance reviews for contract participant O&M activities during the remaining design life of a practice. However, if it is observed during other NRCS activities that a practice is not being maintained, and the practice is still within the expected design life, the deficiency will be documented and forwarded to the next level of management for review. During the management review of the deficiency all potential enforcement activities shall be considered. The AC will make all final decisions on enforcement actions to mitigate for documented deficiencies.

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF THE FIELD OFFICE TECHNICAL GUIDE (FOTG)

On a national level, the FOTG is reviewed and revised in accordance with agency policy; revisions to the standards and specifications of Section IV coincide with national practice standards updates. New technology and new laws may also impact the frequency and timing of reviews and revisions to the FOTG.

The State Resource Conservationist will conduct biannual reviews of the Washington FOTG to determine completeness and currency. The Washington FOTG will be compared and evaluated with those of adjoining states to ensure consistency, in accordance with policy and procedures developed by the West Region Technology Work Group (WRTWG). The State Resource Conservationist will also conduct spot checks during field office visits and the annual State QAR of the Area to ensure that field staff is using the electronic-FOTG for conservation planning and implementation.

CONSERVATION PLANNING AND COMPREHENSIVE NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING (CNMP) CERTIFICATIONS

Conservation Planning and CNMP certifications are required of all individuals conducting conservation planning activities. Certification is also required for appropriate technical approval authority. Refer to GM 180, Amendment WA4, Part WA409, for policy on conservation planning and CNMP certification.

Policy requires the successful completion of at least two plans each year for employees to maintain a Level 4 Job Approval Authority (JAA). Annually, ACs (or their designated representatives) will ensure that planners complete this requirement. Employees who fail to maintain their required JAA levels will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

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CIVIL RIGHTS REVIEWS

Civil Rights reviews are required every three to five years and will be accomplished in conjunction with the formal state QARs whenever possible. Reviews are conducted in accordance with the "Civil Rights Compliance Review Guide" (NRCS/Civil Rights Division, May 4, 2001).

During the State QAR of the Area Office, a Civil Rights questionnaire will be distributed to each employee in the offices scheduled for review for optional completion prior to the beginning of the review. The information gathered from these questionnaires will be used to focus on needed training, issues of concern, and commendations, if applicable.

Washington State is scheduled to undergo a national Civil Rights Review in Fiscal Year 2009, tentatively scheduled for the week of June 22, 2009.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) REVIEWS

Formal comprehensive program appraisals of the RC&D Offices will be conducted in conjunction with the State Quality Assurance Reviews of the Area Offices (once every four years). Additionally, each year AC and the RC&D Program Manager will conduct quality assurance reviews of each of the seven RC&D operations.

The reviews will cover the following:

1. Council Operations: area plans and plans of work, projects, grants management, council membership, council member training, council support, council fiscal responsibilities, volunteers, working with legislature, meetings, and minutes.
2. Program Administration and Management: RC&D database, the RC&D Coordinator position (including the role of the Coordinator in program management, effectiveness and accountability), the Administrative Assistant position, procurement, equipment, fiscal management, and the RC&D Office.

SOIL SURVEY REVIEWS

NRCS has leadership responsibilities for all soil surveys completed on private land within Washington State, and provides technical consultation on other land, including federally-owned land. Quality control and assurance procedures for soil surveys are contained in Part 609 of the National Soil Survey Handbook (NSSH) dated 2007, and amended as needed. NRCS ensures the quality and data integrity of every progressive soil survey in Washington by annually conducting a Progress Field Review (PFR) as required by the NSSH 609.05. A schedule of all PFR activities is circulated to all National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) cooperators in the first quarter of each fiscal year.

Refer to Appendix C of this plan for the PFR schedule and specific information.

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QUALITY ASSURANCE OF NATIONAL RESOURCES INVENTORY DATA

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) program is operated on the basis of rigorous, scientifically-developed sample survey (e.g., statistical) principles and protocols (G.M.290.400.11). Quality assurance processes are required to ensure that NRCS provides scientifically credible data to its customers.

Quality assurance processes are established for each inventory cycle. Training and support for these processes are provided prior to and during the collection of data. NRI data collection is a collaborative process between the state and the West Remote Sensing Laboratory (RSL) in Portland, Oregon. Both the state and RSL have quality assurance responsibilities. The state will have responsibility for conducting prescribed quality reviews of state collected data during active data collection cycles and for review of preliminary estimation products. The West Remote Sensing Laboratory (RSL) will conduct prescribed quality reviews of remotely sensed data collected within the lab environment.

AUDIT OF DELEGATED EXAMINING OPERATIONS

In accordance with appointments as Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) examiners under the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Human Resources Office (HRO) is required to arrange for an annual audit of its delegated examining operations using non-DEU staff from outside of the Washington State Office. The audit focuses on:

- organization and jurisdiction
- recruitment
- application processing and
- certification/selection.

The DEU must certify to OPM that the audit was completed in accordance with the Interagency Agreement for Delegated Examining Authority. HRO will maintain a record of all discrepancies and corrective actions for a period of three years after the audit.

REVIEW OF TOTAL COST ACCOUNTING SYSTEM (TCAS) DATA

Semi-annually, ACs, DCs, and Program Managers will review TCAS reports for each field office or area of responsibility. Reviewers will pull reports by program and activity for the current fiscal year. Data reported will be evaluated to determine if time is properly charged to the program, activity, county, and modifier for that county. ACs, DCs, and Program Managers have joint responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of the data.

If deficiencies are noted, documentation will include the nature of the deficiency and any corrective action taken. Copies of the documentation will be forwarded to the respective AC, DC, or Program Manager, and the State Administrative Officer.

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Individuals are responsible for accurately recording time charges and coding to the appropriate programs and activities on a daily basis.

REVIEW OF STATE WEB SITE

The Washington State NRCS website is produced with the goal of providing timely and pertinent information to end users, both internal and public, following the guidance in the NRCS Web Handbook and its associated Style Guide (version 1.0). To the extent possible, information is displayed in .html format, so as to make it accessible and 508-compliant. However, due to the technical nature of our agency, a considerable amount of information posted to the site must be displayed in formats other than .html, in which cases, accessibility and reasonable accommodation information is provided. The site, including all associated pages and links, will be checked periodically, at least semi-annually, by the Web Master to ensure that it meets accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and security standards.

REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT PURCHASE CARD ACTIVITY

In accordance with Departmental Regulation 5013-6, government purchase cardholders must reconcile their accounts no later than 30 calendar days after a transaction appears in the Purchase Card Management System (PCMS).

The Local Agency Program Coordinator (LAPC) will monitor purchase card transactions through the PCMS alert system, statistical sampling, and query tool software. On a monthly basis, the LAPC will review 20% of the government purchase card accounts to ensure compliance with Departmental, Agency, State Office, and procurement policy.

Cardholders are required to comply with any requests by the Department, Agency, or LAPC, the Office of the Inspector General, and other authorized individuals for information and cooperate in investigations regarding questionable purchases.

Cardholder supervisors will monitor purchasing activity of cardholders in their units. Supervisors will require cardholders to generate reports of purchase card transactions for their review at least quarterly. On reviewing a cardholder report, the supervisor shall initial it and retain it on file. Supervisors shall notify the cardholder's LAPC if they identify questionable transactions or possible misuse of the card. Supervisors shall notify the cardholder's LAPC if the cardholder leaves the unit or no longer requires a card. Supervisors should collect purchase cards from cardholders separating from their agency, and return the cards to the LAPC for disposal.

REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT DATA

Performance monitoring is required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. The monitoring of activities and accomplishments assures that the agency is on track in accomplishing strategic, performance, and business plans. It also provides a mechanism to assist organizational units maintain focus on priority activities. It will be used to:

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- Improve effectiveness of operations;
- Ensure that desired results are achieved;
- Provide early feedback to identify obstacles to achieving organizational goals;
- Provide adequate opportunity to make management adjustments to reach organizational goals;
- Ensure program and fund accountability.

All managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- Monitoring the operations and progress reported by their programs or units at least quarterly, and comparing accomplishments to performance plan and business plan goals, as appropriate.
- Identifying adjustments needed and recommending management actions to correct or compensate for deficiencies in progress toward specific goals.

Semi-annually, the DC will review 5 randomly-selected customer reports for each employee they supervise that has entered accomplishments in the Performance Results System (PRS). The DC will pull reports by customer reference, for the current fiscal year, using the “View Prior Entry” option, or other means, in PRS. Data reported for that customer will be evaluated to determine if entries are consistent with objectives of the conservation plans and are accurate and complete.

When deficiencies are noted, the documentation will include the nature of the deficiency and any corrective action taken. Each semi-annual review report will be filed in the DC’s office under 330-19 in the NRCS directives system and a copy forwarded to the next higher organizational level.

At least quarterly, all SLT members will review PRS products reported for their areas of responsibility in order to:

- Assess the quality of the data entered into PRS;
- Compare accomplishments with business and performance plan goals;
- Identify possible items needing follow-up or corrective action (e.g., additional PRS training); and
- Provide guidance and assistance, as needed.

All employees are responsible for monitoring their accomplishments and notifying their supervisors, at least quarterly, of any needed adjustments or actions to achieve and accurately report business and performance goals. At the discretion of the supervisor, notification may be required at more frequent intervals.

Refer to GM 340, Part 403 “Performance Measurement” for additional guidance.

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ANNUAL QUALITY CONTROL/QUALITY ASSURANCE ROUND TABLE

At least annually, usually in early September, members of the SLT will participate in a Quality Control/Quality Assurance Round Table in which specific findings and observations that were made during Team Reviews, Field Office Visits, QARs, and spot check processes will be discussed. The meeting will identify trends appearing across the state or issues that have occurred at specific locations that need to be addressed. Lessons learned will be incorporated into future reviews, and methods and processes will be adjusted as appropriate.

INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Every NRCS employee is responsible for ensuring quality in NRCS activities and providing input for improvements in delivery, productivity, and services. Every member of the team, whether in the State Office, Area Office, or Field Office, must own their part in any deficiencies found in the implementation of the State's programs and activities and is responsible for preventing errors and for implementing corrective actions resulting from appraisals and reviews. Any employee may request informal QARs in areas of concern.

ANNUAL QUALITY CONTROL/QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT

By December 30 of each year, the STC will prepare a State Quality Assurance Report for the fiscal year that just ended and submit it to the Regional Assistant Chief and the Director, Operations Management and Oversight Division.

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Appendix A

REFERENCES

General Manual 340 Part 404 provides general guidance for quality assurance. Additional policies for quality assurance for the conservation programs and activities for which NRCS provides technical and/or financial assistance are contained in a number of manuals, the Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning Policy, the FOTG, the National Planning Procedures Handbook and other handbooks. Specific policies are listed and linked below and incorporated into the Quality Control and Assurance Plan by reference.

The STC may supplement this quality assurance policy as needed to provide specific guidance and to comply with State, tribal and local laws, and regulations.

Reference	Citation	Description and Link
General Manual	340.404 Subparts A and C	Establishes NRCS policy for quality assurance requirements. NRCS eDirectives - Part 404 - Evaluations, Audits, Investigations, and Reviews
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-514.45	<i>Quality Control</i> Documentation, Certification and Spot Checking for Wetland Reserve Program http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/m_440_514_g.htm
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-515.131	<i>Evaluation and Assessment Process</i> For Environmental Quality Incentive Program http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_440_515_M_131.htm
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-515.82	<i>Quality Assurance and Oversight for EQIP Planning and Implementation</i> NRCS eDirectives - Subpart I - EQIP Plan of Operations
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-517.110	<i>Program Evaluation</i> for Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program NRCS eDirectives - Subpart L - Program Evaluation
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-518.75 and 518.106	<i>Quality Assurance</i> for the Conservation Security Program http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_440_518_H.htm and NRCS eDirectives - Subpart K - Contract Administration

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Reference	Citation	Description and Link
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-519.88	<i>Administrative Appraisal Review Checklist for Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/m_440_519_l_x_i.pdf
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-522.47	<i>Quality Assurance For Soil and Water Conservation Assistance</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_440_522_D_47.htm
Conservation Programs Manual	440-V-CPM-522.48	Annual Status Reviews Of Soil and Water Conservation Assistance Contracts http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_440_522_D_48.htm
Farm Service Agency Handbook, Agricultural Resource Conservation Program	2-CRP Part 17, 403	<i>Compliance and Spot Checks for Conservation Reserve Program</i> ftp://165.221.16.16/manuals/2-CRP.PDF
Field Office Technical Guide	Washington eFOTG	http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx?map=WA
General Manual	GM 120 Part 404.51 and .52	<i>Land Treatment – Long Term Contracting</i> Contract status review and Practice documentation, certification, and spot checking http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_120_404_f.htm
General Manual	GM 130 Part 404	<i>Internal Management Control</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_130_404.htm
General Manual	GM 300 Part 400	<i>Land Treatment Programs Administration of Long-Term Contracts</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_300_400.htm Provides guidance on Regional and State quality review of long term contracts and agreements.
General Manual	GM 340 Part 401	<i>Performance Management Planning</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_340_401.htm
General Manual	GM 340 Part 401 Subpart D	<i>Activity Costing</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_340_401_D.htm

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Reference	Citation	Description and Link
General Manual	GM 340 Part 401 Subpart E	<i>Business Planning</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_340_401_E.htm
General Manual	GM 340 Part 403	<i>Performance Measurement</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_340_403.htm
WA General Manual Supplement	Supplement WA 14	<i>Documentation, Certification, and Spot Checking</i> ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/WA/Intranet/GM/WA450-GM_Part407_TCH_Supplement_WA14_Spot_Checking_Policy.pdf
WA General Manual Supplement	Supplement WA 11, Part 409.3	<i>Conservation Planning and Application Policy, Requirements for Providing Conservation Planning Assistance</i> WA180 GM Part409 SupplementWA11_1107 Planning Policy.pdf on ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov
General Manual	GM 340 Part 403 Subpart B	<i>Performance Documentation</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_340_403_B.htm
General Manual	GM 340 Part 403 Subpart C	<i>Performance Monitoring</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/gm_340_403_c.htm
General Manual	GM 340 Part 404	<i>Evaluations, Audits, Investigations, and Reviews</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_340_404.htm
General Manual	GM 420 Part 401	<i>Cultural Resources (Archeological and Historic Properties), Subpart B – Administrative Responsibilities</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_420_401_b.htm Identifies Cultural Resource Specialists as the individuals who are responsible for providing policy and procedural guidance for considering and managing cultural resources and historic properties, including oversight and quality control or assurance.

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General Manual	GM 450 Part 407	<i>Technology: Documentation, Certification and Spot Checking</i> , Subparts A, B, and C, http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_450_407.htm
National Biology Manual	190-V-NBM-510.04	<i>Quality Assurance Appraisals of biological resource activities</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_190_NBM.pdf
National Engineering Manual	210-NEM-501.05 (b)	<i>Post Reviews</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_210_NEM.pdf
National Engineering Manual	210-NEM-511.05	<i>Design Checking and Review</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_210_NEM.pdf
National Engineering Manual	210-NEM-512.32	<i>Construction Quality Assurance Procedures</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_210_NEM.pdf
National Engineering Manual	210-NEM-512.50	<i>As-Built Drawings</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_210_NEM.pdf
National Engineering Manual	512-NEM-512.41	<i>Records</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_210_NEM.pdf
National Engineering Manual	512-NEM-512.52	<i>Documentation</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_210_NEM.pdf
National Food Security Act Manual	180-V-NFSAM-519, Subpart A	<i>Highly Erodible Land Conservation/Wetland Conservation Quality Assurance Reviews</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_180_519.htm
National Forestry Manual	190-V-NFM-535.04	<i>Quality Assurance Appraisals of forestry and agroforestry activities</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_190_NFM.pdf
National Operation and Maintenance Manual	180-V-NOMM-500, Subpart E	<i>Inspections of installed practices</i> http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/M_180_500_E.htm
National Plant Materials Manual	190-V-NPMM-539.06	<i>Quality Assurance Review of plant materials activities</i> http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_190_NPMM.pdf

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Reference	Citation	Description and Link
USDA Departmental Regulation	5013-6	Use of the Purchase Card and Convenience Check http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/files/dr/DR5013-006.htm Use of the Purchase Card and Convenience Check

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Appendix B

SCHEDULE FOR STATE LEADERSHIP TEAM FIELD OFFICE VISITS

TECHNICAL AND PROGRAMS GROUP

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Ephrata Service Center	Goldendale Service Center	Okanogan Service Center	Yakima Service Center	Ellensburg Field Office
Colfax Service Center	Waterville Service Center	Wenatchee Service Center	Dayton Service Center	Prosser Service Center
Pasco Service Center	Colville Service Center	Davenport Service Center	Ritzville Service Center	Zillah Service Center
St. John Field Office	Pomeroy Service Center	Republic Service Center	Lynden Service Center	Clarkston Service Center
Chehalis Service Center	Walla Service Center	Longview Service Center	Port Orchard Service Center	Newport Service Center
Mt Vernon Service Center	Everett Service Center	Port Angeles Service Center	South Bend Field Office	Spokane Service Center
Toppenish Tribal Office	Olympia Service Center	Renton Service Center	Taholah Tribal Office	Brush Prairie Service Center
PMC, Pullman	Puyallup Service Center	Nespelem Tribal Office		Montesano Service Center

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Okanogan Service Center	Yakima Service Center	Ellensburg Field Office	Ephrata Service Center	Goldendale Service Center
Wenatchee Service Center	Dayton Service Center	Prosser Service Center	Colfax Service Center	Waterville Service Center
Davenport Service Center	Ritzville Service Center	Zillah Service Center	Pasco Service Center	Colville Service Center
Republic Service Center	Lynden Service Center	Clarkston Service Center	St. John Field Office	Pomeroy Service Center
Longview Service Center	Port Orchard Service Center	Newport Service Center	Chehalis Service Center	Walla Service Center
Port Angeles Service Center	South Bend Field Office	Spokane Service Center	Mt. Vernon Service Center	Lake Stevens Service Center
Renton Service Center	Taholah Tribal Office	Brush Prairie Service Center	Toppenish Tribal Office	Olympia Service Center
Nespelem Tribal Office		Montesano Service Center	PMC, Pullman	Puyallup Service Center

SCHEDULE FOR STATE QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS OF THE AREA OFFICES

(Note: Soil Survey Offices and RC&D Offices are reviewed as part of the Area QARs)

2009	2010	2011	2012
Central Area Week of May 11	East Area	West Area	Bye Year

FY 2009 SCHEDULE FOR AREA QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEWS OF THE TEAMS

Central Area	East Area	West Area
Bye Year	Northeast Team (3) Week of May 11, 2009	Southwest Team (6) Week of June 15, 2009

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Appendix C

SOIL SURVEY AND TECHNICAL SOIL SERVICES SCHEDULE

FFR= Final Field Review

PFR = Progress Field Review

DATE	LOCATION	ASSISTANCE	PERSONNEL
10/13-16/08	Spokane, WA	ID-OR American Planning Assn. conference (Exhibit)	Duncan, Myhrum
11/3-7/08	Mt. Vernon, WA	Island County FFR	Myhrum
11/13-55/08	Spokane, WA	Wheat Growers League (Exhibit)	Duncan
11/17-19/08	Zillah, WA	Yakima Indian Reservation PFR	Myhrum
12/1-4/08	WA	WACD (Exhibit)	Duncan
12/10-11/08	Portland, OR	MO-1 Technical Team Meeting	Myhrum, Lindsay, Lefferts, Duncan, Bare, Scriptor
12/15-19/08	Mt. Vernon, WA	North Cascade NP PFR	Myhrum
1/26-30/09	Spokane Valley, WA	Spokane County update FFR	Myhrum
2/2-5/09	Spokane, WA	PNW Farm Forum (Exhibit)	Duncan

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Appendix D

WASHINGTON STATE FOOD SECURITY ACT QUALITY ACTION PLAN

Objective: Implement the Quality Assurance Provisions of the National Food Security Act Manual.

Goals and Actions:

Action Item	Action	Responsibility	Start	Complete	Comments
Goal 1: Match Training with Employee Needs, as they Relate to FSA / FACTA Compliance Requirements					
1	As needed, provided training to field office staff on amendments to the 5 th Edition NFSAM.	State Office Program Liaisons	April		
2	As needed, provide training to status reviewers on the web-based Status Review Program.	State Office Program Liaisons	April		
3	Review quality of prior year status reviews, and evaluate for training needs.	ACs Program Liaisons	April		
4	As needed, provide training to status reviewers on policy and procedures related to conducting and documenting status reviews.	State Office Program Liaisons	Aug		
Goal 2: Determine a Course of Action for Deficiencies Noted in Prior Years Quality Reviews					
1	Where needed, ensure that actions are taken in a timely manner to correct deficiencies identified in prior year quality reviews conducted by the State Quality Control Team.	ACs DCs	April		
2	Review, and as needed, edit or amend the state-developed status review support documentation worksheets.	State Office Program Liaisons	April		
Goal 3: Conduct Status Reviews of Washington State Producers with HELC / WL Compliance Requirements					
1	Ensure that all NRCS-owned tracts with compliance requirements are identified using form NRCS-CPA-1, and that reviews are conducted on required tracts.	DCs Program Liaisons	Feb		
2	Ensure that the appropriate rescheduled tracts (Category S) and Agency-requested tracts (Category A) are added to the tract list.	DCs Program Liaisons	Feb		
3	Identify status reviewers and the counties they will conduct reviews. Provide this information to the ASTC-Programs.	ACs	Jun		

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Action Item	Action	Responsibility	Start	Complete	Comments
4	Ensure that NRCS responsibilities are carried out for conducting reviews on Ag-Credit borrower tracts as outlined in the Washington MOA between NRCS and FSA.	DCs Program Liaisons	Mar		
5	Ensure that status reviews are conducted in a timely manner, with field work and documentation completed by November 1.	ACs DCs	Apr		
6	Ensure that certified wetland delineators assist with review of all tracts that have potential wetland violations.	ACs DCs Program Liaisons	Apr		
7	Ensure that State and / or Area Agronomists are involved in all instances where there is a need to determine system equivalency to an ACS level of treatment.	ACs State Office Program Liaisons	Apr		
Goal 4: Facilitate All Appeals Resulting from Status Reviews in an Appropriate and Timely Manner					
1	As requested by FSA County Committees, review technical determinations and provide the STC with recommendations.	State Office	Jan		
2	As necessary, represent NRCS at hearings conducted by the National Appeals Division.	DCs	Jan		
3	As requested, provide training to ACs and DCs on policy and procedures related to the appeal process.	Program Liaisons	Feb		
Goal 5: Implement Quality Control for Status Reviews and Other Current Year FSA / FACTA Activities					
1	Designate State Quality Control Team members.	STC	Jan		
2	Ensure that FSA / FACTA activities (determinations, appeals, etc.) are reviewed in conjunction with the State Quality Assurance Plan. This includes CRP determinations conducted by NRCS. For wetland determinations, ensure that maps are included that correctly outline the location of all wetland labels on the tract.	State Office ACs DCs Program Liaisons	Feb		
3	Ensure that any edits made to existing wetland inventories are made using the approved wetland conventions.	ACs DCs	Feb		
4	Assist ACs with review of current year FSA / FACTA activities through requested technical assistance. This includes conservation compliance plans developed and conservation systems applied.	Program Liaisons	Mar		
6	Assign QCR tracts to Quality Control Review Team	State Office	May		

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Action Item	Action	Responsibility	Start	Complete	Comments
	members.				
7	As needed, provide training on and ensure use of the national Quality Review Worksheet (NRCS-CPA-19) and associated state-developed documentation worksheets.	State Office	May		
8	Conduct Quality Control Reviews of assigned tracts.	QC Team	May		
9	Ensure that all QCRs are conducted and documentation submitted to the state office by November 30.	ASTC(P)	Aug		

DESIGNATED CONSERVATION / WETLAND COMPLIANCE CONTACTS

State Contact	Dave Brown
East Area Contact	Sharon Bromiley
Central Area Contact	Alan Fulk
West Area Contact	Jeff Harlow

DESIGNATED STATE QCR TEAM

Program Liaisons
Area Specialists
Tim Dring