SAMPLE

WASHINGTON
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
GUIDE FOR APPRAISING OPERATIONS
IN FIELD OFFICES

Appraisals assess conformance to legal requirements, rules, regulations, and established policy and determine if functions, activities, and programs are being carried out in accordance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) mission, objectives, and priorities. They are to be performed with a helpful and positive attitude which will produce benefits for all. Appraisals in conjunction with quality reviews, direct supervision, direct assistance, and performance appraisals provide management with the means to determine conformance to policy and procedures. They also provide the means for determining the effectiveness and efficiency of programs and activities. Appraisals are an opportunity to share information and to understand how the operations are being managed. It is a learning process for all participants.

This guide suggests activities to be appraised in field offices. Appraise only those activities applicable to the office and level of operations being appraised.

Commendations are an important part of the appraisal process. These are to be described in sufficient detail so it is clear why the activity was commendable. Pertinent findings for each deficient activity also should be explained in the narrative report. These findings should be sufficiently detailed to support the deficiency determination. Agreed-to actions should set forth: (1) what is to be done, (2) the person or position responsible for correcting it and (3) a date by which corrective action should be completed. In addition, recommendations may be listed. These require no written response but it is expected that the person or position responsible will take some corrective action on these items. The cover letter transmitting the appraisal report should state when progress reports are to be made.

For those activities requiring a more extensive appraisal the narrative report should document the activity, the reasons for recommending a more extensive appraisal, and the agreed-to or recommended immediate corrective actions that need to be taken pending completion of a more extensive appraisal.

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NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
GUIDE FOR EVAULATING QUALITY ASSURANCE, COMPLIANCE, AND CONTROL IN FIELD OFFICES

I. **Previous quality reviews** *Sherre Copeland*

1. Date of last appraisal.
2. Have corrective actions been taken from previous audits and appraisals?
3. Has last appraisal been closed out?
4. If appraisal has not been closed out, list pending items.

II. Operations Management

A. Planning *Paul Taylor/Frank Easter/Dave Brown*

1. Workload Analysis (WLA) and Program Assessment.

   A. Is the workload analysis and program assessment complete?
   B. Has the Locally Led process been utilized to develop a long-term plan?
   C. Was the staff involved in the development?
   D. What resource inventories or other data was used?
   E. Are resource needs and problems displayed? What are the most effective and useful displays?
   F. Has a needs assessment for volunteer services been completed with staff and district officials?

2. Priority determination.

   A. What are the priorities and how are they determined?
   B. Do the priorities relate to the national and state priorities?
   C. Are Geographic Priority Areas designated? Why?

3. Business and Performance Plan of Operations. (Not required at field offices)
   A. Is the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations being used to direct the NRCS programs and is it following priorities?
   B. How often are the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations reviewed and updated?
   C. Are goals in the narrative Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations quantified and/or qualified?
   D. Are action items specific and measurable?
   E. Are Congressional Earmarks and agency priorities noted as applicable?
   F. Is there a means for accounting for all staff time by program area?

G. Does each employee go through the accounting for all staff time process?
H. Are there goals for progress items? Are they realistic and achievable?
I. Does the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations relate to the workload analysis and program assessment?
J. Is the staff involved in the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations process?
K. Does each staff member have a copy of the narrative Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations?
L. Is the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations reflective of the anticipated resources i.e., technical and financial assistance?
M. Are volunteer program needs and staff included in the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations?
N. If priority needs are not being addressed or solved with available resources, is there a specific action item and plan to recruit and train volunteers to help solve these priority needs?
O. Are Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations activities being carried out to assure program and fund integrity?

B. Directing

1. Employee Development (Training). *Sherre Copeland*
   A. Do all employees have an employee development plan?
   B. How are training needs determined?
   C. Are EDPs being carried out and training documented?
   D. Are the employees actively involved in preparation of their EDP?
   E. Do employees know how to do their jobs?
   F. Do employees and volunteers have the necessary skills to perform effectively?

2. Scheduling. *All*
   A. What scheduling system is being used and is it effective?
   B. Are activities documented to show what was done?
   C. Is work organized to provide effective use of time?

3. Servicing.
   A. Is the system used for maintaining the cooperator/client operation record complete?
      i. Is it current?
      ii. Is it automated?

4. Communication and Coordination. *Ron Nichols*
   A. How often are staff meetings held?
   B. Is there effective coordination with other agencies and organizations?
   C. Do employees and volunteers know what is expected and why?

5. Follow-up.
    A. Is there a system in place to assure that staff and volunteer assignments are being carried out?

C. Evaluating

1. Progress Reporting. *Paul Taylor*
    A. What system is used to report progress?
    B. How often is progress reported?
    C. Is the progress reporting system used as a management tool? How?
    D. Do employees understand the needs of different organizational levels for progress data?
    E. Are side records kept for office entries into PRMS?
    F. Do district and state employees utilize PRMS?
    G. Are progress data results used in planning work to meet responsibilities of assuring equal access by all to program benefits?
    H. What quality control process does the staff use to assure accurate reporting (nothing missed, nothing duplicated)?

2. Quality Reviews. *Sherre Copeland and Technical Team*
    A. Is a system in place for quality reviews of each employee's work?
    B. Are job approval authorities up to date?
    C. What efforts are underway to assure quality work?
    D. Is special recognition given for quality work?
    E. Are the results of quality reviews linked to employee development?
    F. Are there standards for quality?
    G. Are there reviews and evaluations of volunteers' services?

3. Appraisals.
    A. Is there an established timetable and policy for appraisals?
    B. How are appraisals conducted?
    C. Are appraisals used as an effective management tool?

4. Productivity. *Paul Taylor/Sherre Copeland*
    A. Does the Workload Analysis accurately reflect the situation in the Field Office?
    B. Are analyses made on production to determine the time needed to produce units of output?
    C. Are there opportunities to improve work efficiencies and increase production?
    D. Is the Conservation Partnership actively involved in the Workload Analysis?
    E. What quality control procedures are used to assure accurate information is submitted to the state office?
    F. Has there been an effort made to use volunteers to increase quality and quantity of work?

III. Programs

A. Conservation Technical Assistance

1. Conservation Planning. *Technical Team*
   - A. Does the field office staff understand the basic principles of Conservation Planning and the relationship with Farm Bill programs?
   - B. Do the conservation planning activities reflect specific program needs, i.e. the Food Security Act (FSA), and/or multiple resource concern planning in priority areas on lands with a high potential for implementation?
   - C. Are conservation plans achieving the desired results and meeting FSA requirements?
   - D. Are conservation plans meeting needs and priorities of the district?
   - E. What impacts has FSA had on the conservation planning activities?
   - F. Compare FSA planning activities with other conservation plans being developed and have actions been taken to correct inconsistencies and deficiencies?
   - G. Are individual and group conservation plans adequate to meet requirements of the National Conservation Planning Procedures Handbook?
   - H. Are Partnership employees utilized to assist with conservation planning?
   - I. How are the planning contacts screened and selected?
   - J. Are volunteers utilized to assist with conservation planning, including assembling and distribution of conservation plans?
   - K. Customer Service Toolkit and ArcView
     1. Is CST and ArcView installed?
     2. Is adequate training being provided?
     3. What support system is in place to assist users of CST or ArcView?
   - L. Are environmental concerns and priorities included in the planning process?
   - M. Do conservation plans take all resource concerns into account?

2. **Implementation of Conservation Plans.** *Technical Team*
   - A. Is conservation applied in terms of land user's objectives?
   - B. Are conservation plans achieving the desired results on the land in relation to district needs and priorities or requirements of special USDA activities such as the FSA and water quality?
   - C. What is the quality of completed fieldwork?
   - D. Is documentation and supporting data adequate?
   - E. Are applied treatments compatible with planned or potential resource management systems?

F. What is the land user's understanding of maintenance requirements?

3. Follow-up Assistance.
   A. What system is in use?
   B. Is it effective?
   C. Is follow-up carried out as an open ended part of planning and implementation as per the National Conservation Planning Procedures Handbook?
   D. Have priorities been established for follow-up assistance?

B. Soil Survey. *Neil Peterson*

1. Are schedules developed and accomplishments recorded to show that identified needs and priorities are being met?
2. Is data adequate for intended uses?
3. Is there a Memorandum of Understanding and are field reviews adequate?
4. Are soil handbooks up to date?
5. Is there a long-range plan for completion of soil surveys?
6. Are interdisciplinary and interagency inputs adequate for the soil survey?
7. Are published soil surveys adequate and up to date?
8. Is there a plan for keeping the soil survey current and documenting any needed changes?
9. Are soil surveys meeting the customer's needs? What approach is being used to identify these needs?
10. Are Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations activities being carried out to assure program and fund integrity?

C. Watersheds. *Technical Team*

1. Watershed Planning.
   A. What is the understanding by personnel of national priorities for water resources programs, objectives, authorities, policies, etc. of watershed programs and their relationship to field office needs and programs?
   B. Are public participation methods started in the beginning of the planning process and further incorporated as an integral component throughout the planning process?
   C. Is there consideration of alternative measures to solve watershed problems including nonstructural measures, if appropriate?
   D. What is the status of applications, authorizations, and work plans in relations to program potential?
   E. Is land treatment emphasized?
   F. Is there early involvement of all appropriate disciplines?
   G. What is the degree of coordination between disciplines and with other agencies and organizations including districts?
   H. Does the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Work provide direction to carry out the study?
   I. Are there special provisions for low income and minority groups?

2. Watershed Operations.
   - A. What is status of works of improvement in relation to multiyear plan for designs to be completed, permits and approvals needed estimated installation costs, etc.?
   - B. What is status of construction/land treatment?
     - Is work being done on schedule?
     - What is the quality of construction?
     - Are payments processed according to policy?
     - Is there proper compliance with safety and other regulations?
   - C. Have land rights been secured and recorded?
   - D. Has land rights map been completed and signed by STC?
   - E. Is there an understanding of problems and objectives outlined in watershed plan?
     Is copy of plan available for ready reference?
   - F. What degree does watershed plan provide direction for implementation of planned measures and need for plan supplements?
   - G. Are the operation and maintenance (O&M) agreements being carried out?
   - H. Are appropriate management levels fully involved and assuming their responsibility?
   - I. How do sponsors view completed measures?
   - J. What techniques are used to assure that the sponsors understand how landscapes/views will change and how the system will function when completed?
   - K. Is progress being tracked?
   - L. Is there an estimate of sponsor's cost to install measures?
   - M. Are easements being enforced?

3. Operations and Maintenance. *Larry Johnson*
   - A. Who conducts inspections?
   - B. Are inspections current?
   - C. Has maintenance been performed? (Include funds expended by sponsor)
   - D. Is maintenance work completed?

4. Long Term Contracting. *Technical Team*
   - A. Is there an understanding of the program purposes and objectives, the basic policies, regulations, and procedures?
   - B. Are priorities determined on all applications and reviewed with local conservation districts?
   - C. Are program activities included in plan of operations with identification of achievements that can be expected priorities established and followed?
   - D. Is there an indication that cost-share measures are eligible under the plan?

E. Have plans been reviewed for quality and relationship needs?
F. Are there average costs and specified maximum costs for installing practices for the cost-share program?
G. Have planned treatment levels been exceeded?
H. Is cost list current?
I. Are contracts being carried out on schedule, documentation is complete and trackable, and payments made properly?

D. River Basins *Technical Team*

1. Is there an understanding and use of river basin and other water and related land resource studies under NRCS leadership?
   A. Cooperative river basin studies.
   B. Flood Plain management studies.
2. What is degree of participation by field personnel in river basin and other water and related land resources studies?
3. Are studies solving water and related land resources problems?
4. Are studies developing cost effective alternatives?
5. Are studies addressing recognized priorities?
6. Are public participation methods included in the beginning of the planning process and further incorporated as an integral component throughout the planning process?

E. Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). *Shiraz Vira*

1. Council Membership.
   A. Are all council positions filled?
   B. Are all council members attending meetings?
   C. Is there a balance of interests represented?
   D. Are there opportunities for minority membership on the council?
   E. What efforts are made to assure high quality local leadership?
   Council Operations.
   A. Is the area plan current, reflecting objectives, goals and strategies?
   B. Is the council making progress toward these objectives and goals as stated in the plan of work?
   C. Do the measures being implemented reflect the council's goals and priorities?
   D. Are outside funding resources being used?
   E. Are committee assignments being made and the committees functioning successfully?
   F. Is the council using agencies other than NRCS to assist them?
   G. Are measures being implemented in accordance with the measure plan regardless of the source of funding?
   H. Are O&M obligations being taken care of by the sponsors?
   I. Is training being provided to council members?
2. NRCS Management
   A. Are all areas staffed with trained people working full time on RC&D?
   B. Is the RC&D office separate from NRCS office?

C. Are databases, including RCDPROF, up to date?
D. Are informational materials and bulletins reaching all RC&D offices?
E. Are adequate measures plans being written for all measures adopted?
F. Is the coordinator's supervisor supporting the RC&D effort?

F. Farm Bill Programs (Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
Forestry Incentive Program (FIP)
Soil and Water Conservation Assistance Program (SWCA)). *Technical Team*

1. Is there an understanding of the program purposes and objectives, the basic policies, regulations, and procedures?
2. Have priorities been determined on all applications and reviewed with local conservation districts?
3. Is approval and funding of contracts consistent with policy and regulations?
4. Are program activities included in the Field and District Business and Performance identification of achievements that can be expected, priorities established and followed?
5. Have plans been reviewed for quality relationship needs?
6. Are there average costs and specified maximum costs for installing practices?
7. Is cost list current?
8. What is status of contracts?
   A. Are contracts on schedule?
   B. Is documentation complete and trackable?
   C. Are payments made properly and promptly?
9. Are annual status reviews being made?
   A. Are they signed by participant?
   B. Do they reflect problems or potential problems?
10. Are non-compliance and violation procedures being used and followed?
11. Contracts contain other agency-generated documents?
12. Is the exchange of paperwork between agencies smooth and prompt?
13. Are modification requirements understood by all agencies and individuals involved?
   A. When needed?
   B. Who signs?
   C. Number is reasonable?

G. Farm Bill Programs (Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)). *Technical Team*

1. Is there an understanding of the program purposes, objectives, policies, regulations and procedures?
2. Have priorities been established?

3. Are program activities included in the Restoration Plan of Operations with measurable goals and special emphasis items?
4. Have plans been reviewed for quality and relationship needs?
5. Status of contracts.
   A. Are contracts on schedule?
   B. Is documentation complete and trackable?
   C. Are payments made properly and currently?
6. Has the ranking process used been documented?
7. Is cost list current?
8. Are there average costs and specified maximum costs for the cost-share program?
9. Are annual status reviews being made?
   A. Are they signed by participant?
   B. Do they reflect problems or potential problems?
10. Are non-compliance and violation procedures being used and followed?
11. Do contracts contain other agency-generated documents?
12. Is the exchange of paperwork between agencies smooth and prompt?
13. Modification requirements understood by all agencies and individuals involved?
   A. When needed?
   B. Who signs?
   C. Number is reasonable?

H. **Plant Materials.** *Frank Easter*
1. Are specific needs met by currently available plant materials?
2. What is the involvement of the field office/area office in selection/testing of new plant materials for conservation purposes?

I. **Resources Inventory.** *Ron Myhrum*
1. Is NRI data collection, entry, and updating being accomplished?
2. What is the condition and filing of NRI records and maps?
3. Is there quality control documentation?
4. Are inventory tasks included in the Field and District Business and Performance Plan of Operations?
5. Is there coordination of inventory activities?
6. Are inventories being recommended to meet local data needs?
7. Are resource inventory activities used to acquire needed data for national, state, and local needs?
8. Are Wind Erosion Conditions Reports understood and properly utilized?
9. Are districts and others being informed about inventory activities?
10. Is there dissemination and use of inventory data as appropriate to local needs?

J. **Snow Survey.** *Larry Johnson*
1. Is there adequate field support in conducting snow surveys and in maintaining sites and equipment?
2. Are they assisting users of snow survey data and forecasts?

3. Are they integrating snow surveys into other programs?
4. Is there coordination with other agencies?

IV. Technology Development. *Technical Team*

A. Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)

1. Is the FOTG current?
2. Does the Section I index include the needed locally supplemental references?
3. Have locally developed materials received needed approval?
3. Are all staff members using the latest version of technical guide materials in their field office reference?
5. Is there an understanding of how to update the FOTG to meet current needs?
6. Is record copy of FOTG maintained at the field office level?
7. Is the FOTG complete and accurate with appropriate adoption to state and local conditions?
8. Are there reference materials available for Section I, including handbooks and resource maps?
9. Are RMS, BCS and ACS guide sheets in place in Section III to permit identification of systems, which are available to treat problems?
10. Are conservation treatments that are not conservation practices identified and described?
11. What is needed in the FOTG that is not now included?
12. Is an index included in each section showing the items that occur in the section and the date of issuance for that item?
13. Is the area office and field office following the policy in GM 450-401?
14. Does the guide appear professional?
15. Is it ready for public scrutiny?
16. Note other specific comments for each section of the FOTG.
    Section I. Are reference lists, maps, erosion prediction and other locally needed references listed and are they current materials? Give special emphasis to the erosion prediction section.
    Section II. Is soil and site information current and are automated data base locations properly referenced? Are FSA (Highly erodible soils, wetlands) and Water Quality (WQ) information included?
    Section III. Are updated RMS guide sheets for all land uses present? Are FSA Alternative Conservation Systems (ACS) guide sheets properly completed and labeled? Are RMSs representative of what is used in the field? Are all resource concerns being addressed?
    Section IV. Are practice standards current (within 3-5 year) and properly identified as to area of coverage? Is WQ adequately reflected? Are interim standards still current (not expired due to 3-year life limit)?
    Section V. Are the tools and evaluation data being used included in the FOTG?

B. Technology Transfer *Technical Team and Sherre Copeland*

1. Is most recent technology being utilized in activities?

2. Methods of keeping up to date on new developments.
3. Are the staff members of professional organizations?
4. Does staff participate in professional organization activities?

C. Environmental and Natural Resources *Frank Easter*

1. Is there an understanding of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and NRCS policies and responsibilities related to endangered species, prime agricultural land, wetlands, flood plain, historical and archaeological significant matters?
2. Is there availability and understanding of NRCS guidelines for developmental statements on major NRCS actions and environmental concerns in working with individuals, groups, and units of government?
3. Is documentation of environmental evaluations adequate?
4. Is there maintenance of reviewable records for meeting NEPA requirements?
5. Are cultural resources considered in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966?
6. Are federal laws and policy statements understood and followed in planning:
   A. Federal Water Pollution Control Act and amendments?
   B. Executive Orders on Floodplains and Wetlands?
   C. Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA)?
   D. USDA policy on land use (9500-3)?
   E. Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA)?

D. General Cartographic. *Paul Taylor*

1. Have cartographic, GIS and remote sensing coordinator responsibilities been assigned and are they actively fulfilling these roles?
2. Is the field office aware of services and products available from NCC and understand cartographic requisition procedures (Form SCS-CGI-19)?
3. Do states ensure that maps generated in offices at all levels be consistent and meet NRCS standards in the National Cartographic Manual and the National Map Symbol Handbook?

E. Remote Sensing *Paul Taylor*

1. Do employees' training plans include remote sensing/GIS training?
2. Do they understand schedule and funding procedures for the National Aerial Photography Plan?
3. Are aerial photographs used for planning and soil surveys current and of high quality? Are orthophotography requirements for soil survey digitization understood?
4. Are aerial photographic products (prints, negatives, film, etc.) being properly cared for and stored?
5. Are procedures/policies for ordering satellite or other remote sensing products understood?

F. **Geographic Information System (GIS)** *Paul Taylor*

1. Do they understand National NRCS GIS Policy
2. Is there a GIS Specialist hired?
   a. Are job description/duties identified and clear?
3. Is the GIS Plan Current?
   a. Are existing and needed data bases identified?
   b. Has there been a schedule of database development/hardware augmentation/GRASS implementation developed and maintained?
4. Have they explored potential to enter into cooperative agreements with federal, state, and local agencies in support of GIS activities?
5. Are they providing overall GIS support for database development hardware/software installation, system administration and training?

IV. Administration. *Admin and Management Team*

A. Personnel Management

1. Staffing and employment.
   A. Staffing plan reflects priorities and is used to make staffing adjustments with changes in available resources.
2. Is the Merit Promotion Program understood and being utilized?
3. Equal Employment Opportunity.
   A. EEO poster prominently displayed?
   B. Determine employees' understanding of the role and functions of EEO counselors, EEO Committee, and Special Emphasis Program Managers.
   C. Review position descriptions and performance standards to determine whether EEO is adequately addressed.
   E. Review Business and Performance Plan to ensure inclusion of specific action items regarding EEO objectives and goals.
4. Awards Program.
   A. Properly submitted?
   B. Proper documentation to substantiate giving an award?
   C. Proper consideration for all awards given without regard to race, sex and series?
   D. Consistent recognition?
5. Employee Responsibility and Conduct.
   A. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees available to all?
   B. Employees clearly understand Code of Conduct and penalties for violations?
   C. Employees aware of ways to report fraud, waste and abuse?
   D. Employees aware of efforts of bribery and how to report such?
   E. Supervisors aware of how to deal with employee misconduct and employee rights to due process?
   F. Request and approval for outside employment?
   F. Supervisors awareness of Administrative grievance systems and exclusions?
6. Is grade level of positions accurate in relation to responsibilities?

7. Standard of Performance.
    A. Employees have properly prepared and communicated standards.
    B. Employees participated in the development of their Standard of Performance.
    C. Standards are in place minimum of 90 days prior to rating employees.
    D. Supervisors aware of action for poor performers.
    E. Clear understanding of the performance standard between the supervisor and employee.
8. Is employee performing duties described in the position description?

B. Administrative Services. *Stefan Fechter*

1. Procurement.
    A. Is there a Purchase Card Management System (PCMS), credit cards or BPAs available to meet their needs?
    B. Does the staff know their authority to buy?
2. Office space and other facilities.
    A. Condition and amount.
    B. Collocation with other USDA agencies. Problems and opportunities. Resource sharing and cross utilization.
3. Automotive equipment.
4. Other equipment and property.
5. Energy conservation.

C. Financial Management. *Stefan Fechter*

1. Timekeeping.
2. Collections, travel, travel advances, verification of year-end and transmission of obligations and payables promptly to paying office, including year-end.
3. Meeting approvals.

D. Safety and Physical. *Stefan Fechter*

1. Understanding and carrying out NRCS policy relating to public and private utilities.
2. Physical protection plan.
3. Office safety and fire protection.
4. Safety practices in the field.
5. Accidents and injuries.
6. Access to agency resources and records (including computer files) is limited to authorized individuals.
7. Accountability for the custody and use of resources is assigned and maintained.

E. International Conservation

1. Are they providing and participating in technical and courtesy exchanges and visits for foreign nationals?
2. Are they aware of long-term resident positions which are advertised through vacancy announcements?
3. Do they relate short-term assignment interest to their supervisor and the International Conservation Division?
4. Do they participate in International meetings by paper and poster presentations or serving on committees?

VI. Information. *Ron Nichols*

1. Timely and effective use of information to support local program activities and objectives.
   - A. Do information activities support priority programs?
   - B. Does the workload analyses and program assessment include information activities and need?
   - C. Are cooperators contacted and asked to identify their specific informational needs?
   - D. After information is developed and distributed, does the staff make follow-up contacts to insure that cooperators understand the materials and that these materials meet their information needs?
2. Balanced use of information efforts.
   - A. Are audiences targeted and specific information materials prepared?
   - B. Are all available media and information tools being used?
   - C. Is the "campaign" approach used for high-priority goals?
3. Relations with groups.
   - A. Are contacts initiated and maintained with specific groups?
   - B. Are groups provided information keyed to their interest?
   - C. Is information coordinated with other responsible agencies?
4. Environmental Education.
   - A. What is the status of environmental education in the district?
   - B. Is assistance given in planned manner?
   - C. Is assistance provided to collegiate and adult education programs?
5. Use of equipment and materials.
   - A. Does field office staff know how to operate and maintain camera and audiovisual equipment?
   - B. Are bulletin boards and popular publications readily available to the public?
   - C. Are publications and other information material distributed through available channels?
6. Information Assistance.
   - A. Is information assistance requested in a timely manner?
   - B. Is information assistance adequate?
   - D. Does state PAS receive feedback?

7. Training.
   A. Do staff members have adequate training for camera and audiovisual equipment?
   B. Is information technique training being provided?
   C. Are information training needs reflected in EDPs?

VII. Relations. *Ron Nichols/All*

A. Other Agencies and Units of Government

1. Is there an annual review of basic and supplemental Memorandums of Understanding between NRCS and the Conservation District?
2. Is there a good working relationship with other local units of government?
3. Do they work with RD, Extension Service, FSA, BLM, BIA, ARS, F&W Service, Army Corps of Engineers, universities, farmer organizations, etc.?
4. Use of Volunteers.
   A. Are volunteers utilized to assist with information activities?

VIII. Information Resources Management. *Stefan Fechter*

1. Security of equipment and data.
   A. Physical site security locks on doors and cabinets, controlled access.
   B. Responsibility for equipment has been assigned.
   C. Procedures are followed with respect to passwords, backup procedures, and preventing unauthorized access.
2. Personnel, safety, housekeeping.
   A. Fire suppressant system in place.
   B. Computer area and building exits clear and unobstructed?
   C. Does computer work area provide adequate workspace? Are good housekeeping practices being followed?
3. Equipment utilization.
   A. Equipment is adequately utilized; number of workstations, peripherals, disk storage, and memory capacity is reasonable for the usual workload.
4. Assistance and training.
   A. Adequate assistance is provided when requested; employees and volunteers know procedures for obtaining assistance.
   B. Systematic on-the-job training is provided.
   C. Manuals and users' guides are kept current.
   D. Training provided to appropriate staff members.
5. Data administration.
   A. Data is managed in a cost-effective manner.
   B. Data collection efforts does not duplicate data available elsewhere; uses of data are appropriate and comply with federal, USDA, and NRCS requirements.
   C. Backup tapes and disks.

6. Telecommunications.
   A. Telephone system adequate to conduct business.
   B. Telephone system adequate to conduct business
   7. Records Management.
   A. Records, reports and forms.
   B. Directives, including FOTG, GM, etc.
   C. FOIA, Privacy Act, and Paperwork Reduction Act.

NOTE: NRCS programs are to be carried out in compliance with all requirements regarding nondiscrimination as contained in nondiscrimination statues, rules and regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7 CRF [Part 15]) and NRCS policy as contained in applicable civil rights directives. For each item listed in this section, **A COMPRESHENSIVE RESPONSE WITH SUPPORTING DATA (WHERE APPLICABLE) IS REQUIRED.**

IX. Civil Rights. *Shiraz Vira*

1. Review position descriptions and performance standards of supervisors and program managers to determine assigned staff and volunteer responsibilities in carrying out civil rights compliance requirements relating to program delivery.
2. Review Narrative Plan of Operations for inclusion of specific items regarding civil rights objectives and goals which are in accordance with GM 230-EOP, Subpart A, Section 405.5(b)(1).
3. Review and document civil rights files to determine if they are being maintained and updated (directives, bulletins, memorandums, etc.)
4. Review, evaluate, and document the adequacy of state-conducted civil rights program appraisals and follow-up actions. Identify field offices with date of scheduled civil rights program appraisals for next fiscal year.
5. Public Notification Program:
   A. Report on the display of "..And Justice For All" poster and its clear visibility to program participants or persons seeking NRCS assistance.
   B. .Review and report on the inclusion and adequacy of the nondiscrimination statement on all NRCS publications used by staff for public information.
   C. Review and report on the status of newspaper articles and/or news releases prepared by NRCS staff regarding the inclusion of the nondiscrimination statement. (May appear on news release or incorporated in the text to indicate NRCS assistance is available to all.)
   D. Review and report on efforts made to utilize minority media or other media (newspapers, television, etc.) that caters to the needs of minorities and/or females to disseminate NRCS program information.
   E. Review and report on efforts made to inform grassroots organizations, community leaders, females, and handicapped persons of the availability of NRCS programs and services.

6. Review and document the compliance posture and use of mailing lists for program outreach targeted to females, elderly, handicapped, and minorities with NRCS programs and activities.
7. Review and examine data on minority, non-minority, and female operating units (code 125). List data source and year.
8. Review and document program participation data to evaluate the level of participation by minorities, nonminorities, males and females for the Performance Results Measurement System (PRMS).
9. Are there disparities in participation (A disparity of ten percent or more is considered significant)? Document the corrective actions that you have taken or plan to take to remove disparities.
10. Interview staffs and document their participation in civil rights training (formal courses, staff meetings, etc.) during the past two years. Indicate dates, places, and number participating.
11. Interview staffs and assess their understanding of civil rights responsibilities including the handling of a program discrimination complaint involving NRCS program delivery and/or assistance.
12. Review and document the adequacy of nondiscrimination provisions in memorandums of understanding, agreements, contracts, and project documents between NRCS and recipient groups.
13. Review and document the number of females and minorities on local conservation district boards, councils, and committees. Assess actions taken by NRCS staffs during the past year for increased participation of minorities and females on such bodies in accordance with Section 405.22 in Subpart B of GM 230-EOP.
14. Review data to determine whether NRCS employees are working across racial lines to provide service or assistance to all potential beneficiaries.
15. Review and document actions taken by NRCS staffs during the year in providing services and/or assistance to handicapped potential beneficiaries.
16. Review office facilities to ensure accessibility to persons with physical handicap(s). If not, inquire and document corrective actions taken and/or planned to accommodate such individuals.
    A. Check offices and restrooms to see if they are accessible to wheelchair confined individuals.
    B. Check to see if water fountains are accessible to wheelchair confined individuals.
    C. Check to see if designated parking spaces are available to handicapped individuals near office facilities.

17. Inquire and evaluate NRCS employee and volunteer participation and/or involvement regarding:
    A. Attendance at private group/organization meetings where females and minorities are excluded.
    B. Assistance to groups/organizations that prohibit membership and/or exclude participation of females and/or minorities from their programs and activities.
18. Review efforts to recruit women, minorities, and handicapped persons to work as NRCS volunteers.