

## **409.3 Requirements for Providing Conservation Planning Assistance**

### **409.3(a) (3), Technical Approval Authorities**

**(3) State Conservationists may establish additional certification levels and criteria as needed to degrees of scope and complexity in planning environments.**

A. General. Technical approval authority is part of the overall NRCS process to ensure both efficiency and quality during the planning and installation of resource management systems and their component practices. The primary purposes for providing job approval authority to NRCS personnel and others receiving technical supervision from NRCS include:

(1) Assurance that personnel are used efficiently by delegating work to qualified personnel who are in close proximity.

(2) Communicate technical authorities and responsibilities associated with the planning and application of conservation practices to staff.

(3) Ensure conservation practices that, with proper operation and maintenance, will support the resource management system and perform their intended functions for the planned life of the practice.

(4) Ensure technical work complies with established practice standards, as well as applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and codes.

(5) NRCS employees, and others receiving technical supervision from NRCS, are to be evaluated and assigned an appropriate level of job approval authority.

(i) The level is based on the individual's training, experience and proven competence.

(ii) The approval authority will reflect the level needed at the specific work location to meet position and grade requirements. 180-GM, Part 409.03(b) requires the state conservationist to ensure all conservation planning assistance meets minimum NRCS training and approval requirements.

B. Establishment of Job Classes within Certain Practices. Resource management systems and the individual practices vary in complexity from site to site. A method of classifying specific practices, by site-specific controlling factors and units, has been established.

(1) Training and experience are required to plan and apply a resource management system and the associated practices.

(2) Various management system options and practices that may be components for these systems are included in guidance documents in Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

(3) In Idaho, from one to five job classes have been established for specific conservation practices. These job classes are specified as Management/Vegetative or Engineering/Structural in category.

(4) The lower class jobs are less complex and require less training and experience than higher class jobs.

C. Categories of Technical Approval Authority. In Idaho, each employee who has conservation planning and application responsibility will have current management/vegetative job approval authority as outlined in 409.3 - Exhibit A - Management/Vegetative Job Approval Authority Table.

(1) Planning (Inventory & Evaluation) - Planning policy guidance is provided in 180-GM, Part 409. The development of a Resource Management System (RMS) plan, or progressive plans, will be the basis for the application of all conservation treatments as outlined in the National Planning Procedures Handbook. Planning shall not proceed to application until a review is made by the individual(s) having appropriate JAA for management/vegetative and engineering practices. The skill level limit will be assigned to an employee on the basis of demonstrated planning and/or application skills for the resource management system.

(2) Design - Involves approval of designs and associated specifications for site-specific practices which meet both NRCS practice standards and the objectives of the selected resource management system. The design/specifications shall include the preparation of site-specific operation and maintenance plans and/or inspection reports where appropriate.

(3) Implementation - Ability to assist with the installation and inspection of a practice and authority to accept the job as having been properly installed according to the design and specifications. Also includes the ability to recognize unforeseen site-specific conditions requiring design or specification adjustments during installation.

D. Execution of Technical Approval Authority. In Idaho, the specific categories of technical approval authorities shall be executed in the following manner:

(1) All conservation practices applied with NRCS technical assistance shall be planned and have approved designs, drawings, and/or specifications before any installation begins. Any modifications or field changes for the installation shall be approved by an individual who has appropriate approval authority for the practice(s) being installed. The individual executing their design approval authority is responsible to ensure that designs, drawings, and specifications are in accordance with NRCS practice and technical standards.

(4) Design/specification approval is shown when the individual with the required approval authority signs the plans or specifications. 409.3— Exhibit A - Management/Vegetative Job Approval Authority, lists the control factors for the job class for selected management/vegetative practices.

(5) An individual with implementation approval authority shall certify all conservation practice installations. A statement of acceptance and signature executes this acceptance.

(6) Revision of job approval authority is initiated by a request from the individual or by their supervisor.

(7) If an employee is planning a system which includes practices for which they do not have adequate job class approvals, it shall be necessary to seek assistance, review and approval from an employee(s) who have the adequate approvals.