



Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180

September 23, 2013

IOWA INSTRUCTION 270-385 - GUIDELINES ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON USDA
INFORMATION SYSTEMS

IA385.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this instruction is to give guidance to Iowa NRCS and Partner employees on the proper use of social media on USDA information systems. Specifically, this instruction will help employees to know when it is appropriate for Field offices and Iowa's Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) to use social media on our information systems.

IA385.1 SCOPE

These instructions will be followed by all NRCS, state, and district employees.

IA385.2 FILING INSTRUCTIONS

Guidelines for internet use by USDA employees and partners using USDA IT systems are found in Departmental Regulation (DR) 3300-001, Appendix I at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR3300-1-I.pdf>.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jay T. Mar".

Jay T. Mar
State Conservationist

E

(IA Instruction 270-385 First Edition – September 2013)

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

IOWA INSTRUCTION 270-385 - GUIDELINES ON DISTRICT USE OF NRCS
SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON USDA INFORMATION SYSTEMS

1. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this instruction is to give guidance to Iowa NRCS and Partner employees on the proper use of social media on USDA Information Systems. Guidelines for Internet use by USDA employees and Partners using USDA IT systems are found in Departmental Regulation (DR) 3300-001, Appendix I at <http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/DR3300-1-I.pdf>.

The term "social media" in this instruction is used to refer to internet activity in which users participate in online communities and forums to share official and personal messages and other information and content, such as pictures and videos.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

All NRCS and NRCS Partner employees are responsible for following USDA guidelines on internet use on USDA information systems. Social media is a powerful internet tool that can be utilized to market conservation programs for the NRCS and Partners. Employees should be permitted to utilize social media for mission-related purposes but must refrain from personal use that violates USDA policy.

3. PROCESS:

DR 3300-001 states, "USDA mission areas and staff offices may utilize the Internet to support departmental and mission area responsibilities. The Internet may be used for ... the communication and exchange of data between state and local governments, private sector organizations, and educational and research institutions..." It is recognized that some Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and even the NRCS itself, use social media as a marketing tool. Where social media will be used to support the common mission of the NRCS and the Partners, it may be accessed during duty hours and with USDA systems. Social media use will only be allowed when such use

- is for the express purpose of advertising, marketing, or distributing information for the furtherance of NRCS, State, or District conservation programs and policies.
- facilitates communication that is accurate and congruent with the NRCS mission and vision.
- does not interfere with higher priority tasks that must be completed on the USDA system.
- if for personal use, complies with the "limited personal use policy" and is approved by the local NRCS office manager/supervisor, as discussed further below.

Where the above criteria are met, social media use in Iowa NRCS offices is permissible.

DR 3300-001 states, "This policy authorizes the limited personal use of telecommunications resources by USDA employees in the workplace on an occasional basis provided that the use involves minimal expense to the government and does not interfere with official business. Occasional personal use of telecommunications resources shall normally take place during the employee's personal time." The DR allows for the possibility of personal social media use on a limited basis; however, we leave the specifics on implementing this personal use policy up to the discretion of the local NRCS office manager/supervisor (this will be the District Conservationist in most cases). There may be legitimate reasons for prohibiting personal social media use in an office, and the local office manager/supervisor has the authority to do so. When local office managers/supervisors allow employees to use social media for personal reasons, they will do so under the following conditions:

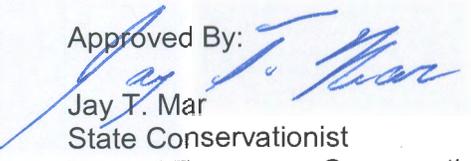
- Personal use will be limited to personal time only i.e., during breaks and lunch periods.

(IA Instruction 270-385 First Edition – September 2013)

- All other internet use guidelines in DR 3300-001 must be followed. Use of the USDA internet for gambling, online gaming, running a private business, or viewing pornography is strictly forbidden.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Adam Stiegelmeier, Assistant State Conservationist for Management, at 515-284-4525.

Approved By:


Jay T. Mar
State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180

Date:

