Environmental Compliance Requirements for Planning Certification in Montana

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In order to receive Conservation Planner Certification in Montana, an employee is required to participate in the Environmental Compliance Training Course that is instructed by the Area Offices. This course covers a range of topics including how to properly evaluate and document potential short, long, and cumulative effects on the environment resulting from the implementation of NRCS Conservation Practices. The course also provides guidance and instruction on a wide range of tools available to ensure that specific environmental laws, policies, and executive orders are identified, evaluated, and documented on the Environmental Evaluation Worksheet (NRCS-CPA-52).

The State Office Technology Division and Area Office staff are responsible for providing environmental compliance training, and also certify that employees have met the minimum qualifications to provide conservation planning assistance in Montana as outlined in the General Manual, Montana Supplement [MT409.9(a)(1)(i)]. The Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (ASTC-FO) will assign Environmental Compliance Training responsibilities to an Area Office staff member (e.g., biologist or resource conservationist). ASTC-FO will ensure that Field Offices have received Environmental Compliance training and document this on the Checklist for Planner Certification form. In addition, the State Office will also perform Area and Field Office Quality Assurance Reviews to ensure that field staff are thoroughly evaluating and correctly documenting the Environmental Evaluation Worksheet.

The Montana State Office Technology Division has developed the following Environmental Compliance training curriculum as a partial requirement for Conservation Planning Certification for employees.

**Environmental Compliance Course Curriculum:**

- Environmental Compliance (Environmental Evaluation Worksheet (NRCS-CPA-52), and *Power Point Presentation*)
- Review the Special Environmental Concerns Evaluation Procedure Guide Sheets
- Review the Special Environmental Concerns Guide and Fact Sheets
- As part of submitting an Resource Management System (RMS) plan for review, the employee will complete and include the Environmental Evaluation Worksheet and associated Guide Sheets.
**Natural Resources Information Links:**

- Montana NRCS Cultural Resources: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/mt/technical/?cid=nrcs144p2_056685
- Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP): http://mtnhp.org/
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Fisheries Information System (MFISH): http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/mFish/

**Science and Technology Training Library (Recommended Training Material):**

Environmental Evaluation Series:

- Primer on NRCS Environmental Compliance, Number 1.
- Documenting the Environmental Evaluation on the NRCS-CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, Number 2.
- Planning for Floodplain and Riparian Area Special Environmental Concerns, Number 3.
- Planning for Wetlands and Clean Water Act Special Environmental Concerns, Number 4.
- Planning for Prime and Unique Farmland and Invasive Species Special Environmental Concerns, Number 5.
- Planning for Endangered Species/Migratory Birds/Bald and Golden Eagles Special Environmental Concerns, Number 6.
- Planning for Natural Areas, Scenic Beauty, and Wild and Scenic Rivers Special Environmental Concerns, Number 7.
- Planning for Clean Air and environmental Justice Special Environmental Concerns, Number 8.
- Planning for Essential Fish Habitat, Coastal Zones, and Coral Reef Special Environmental Concerns, Number 9.