

NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority

Introduction

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a national workforce of engineers and engineering technicians that have technical expertise to deliver a wide array of complex conservation engineering services.

Engineering practices have the potential, upon failure, to affect public health and safety and cause loss of life and significant property damage, depending on the size, location, and complexity of the work.

NRCS has policies for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the technical excellence in engineering that result from the knowledge of engineering principles and the ability to apply that knowledge effectively.

This fact sheet provides general information regarding NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority and does not replace or supersede official NRCS policy.

How does the PA Engineering Law affect NRCS and its activities?

In Pennsylvania, the practice of engineering is regulated by State law and requires licensure and professional registration. However, there are allowed exemptions and NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority is used to work within those exemptions.

What is NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority?

Engineering Job Approval Authority is the quality assurance process that ensures adequate consideration and review by competent NRCS employees in the planning, design, and installation of conservation engineering practices that, with proper operation and maintenance, will perform the intended functions for the planned practice service life. Engineering Job Approval Authority serves to maintain the credibility and trust of NRCS engineering with State engineering boards of licensure and with the public.

Engineering Job Approval Authority is reviewed and updated by the Area Engineer at least every three years with more frequent reviews at supervisor or engineer discretion. Engineering Job Approval Authority can be reduced or removed at the discretion of the Area Engineer.

Can partners obtain NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority?

Yes, NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority may be granted to partners and affiliates performing engineering work for others under cooperative working agreements, in memoranda of understanding, or under any other agreement entered into by NRCS. These employees include volunteers, employees of cooperative organizations or units of government, and other partners performing public services similarly to NRCS employees and, therefore, appearing to the public as NRCS employees. These partners with Engineering Job Approval Authority can only exercise this authority when working on conservation practices in the official capacity of carrying out NRCS work.

What determines whether NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority is required for a particular conservation practice?

Conservation Practices that can be considered to involve the practice of engineering are identified in the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) with engineering (ENG) listed in the “Lead Discipline” column of the printable Index of Conservation Practices. For example, Contour Farming is not an engineering practice, but Grassed Waterways and Stream Crossings are engineering practices.



How is NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority Used?

All conservation engineering practice plans, designs, and installations must be approved by a qualified person who has appropriate Engineering Job Approval Authority. The work may be done by others under the direction of the qualified person.

How do NRCS employees obtain NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority?

Each NRCS employee providing engineering technical assistance must be assigned an appropriate Engineering Job Approval Authority based upon training, experience, and demonstrated competence.

Approval is assigned to three categories within each conservation practice: planning; design; and construction. For each conservation practice and category, the NRCS employee's District Conservationist must recommend Engineering Job Approval Authority to the NRCS Area Engineer.

If approved by the Area Engineer, Engineering Job Approval Authority may be delegated and documented by NRCS.

How do partners obtain NRCS Engineering Job Approval Authority?

Each partner employee operating under the technical supervision of an NRCS employee and providing engineering services must be evaluated and assigned an appropriate Engineering Job Approval Authority based upon training, experience, and demonstrated competence.

Approval is assigned to three categories within each conservation practice: planning; design; and construction. For each conservation practice and category, the employee's supervisor must submit a request to the local District Conservationist.

If approved, the District Conservationist may recommend Engineering Job Approval Authority to the NRCS Area Engineer. If approved by the Area Engineer and the partner employee's supervisor, Engineering Job Approval Authority will be delegated and documented by NRCS.

For more information,
contact the NRCS Area
Engineer:

Northeast:

Robert Deecki, Area Engineer

570-784-4401 (x121)

Robert.DeECKi@usda.gov

Bloomsburg Technical Office
570-784-4401 (x6)

Southeast:

Wayne Carvell, Area Engineer

717-274-2597 (x122)

Wayne.Carvell@usda.gov

Lebanon Technical Office
717-274-2597 (x5)

West:

Zach Aukamp, Area Engineer

814-297-5258

Zachary.Aukamp@usda.gov

Clarion Technical Office
814-226-8160 (x4)

Somerset Technical Office
814-445-8979 (x6)