

# WA Part 501 – Authorizations

## WA Subpart A – Review and Approval

### WA501.0 General

E. This supplement establishes Washington Natural Resources Conservation Service (WA-NRCS) engineering conservation practice job approval authority policy.

### WA501.3 Compliance of Engineering Work with Laws and Regulations

D. Approving and sealing of engineering plans and specifications.

- (1) NRCS shall not seal plans, unless required by a Local or State unit of government for the sole purpose of processing permit application(s) for a NRCS assisted project.
- (2) When NRCS seals the plans, all Washington State RCW's and WAC's pertaining to "The Practicing of Engineering" in Washington State shall be followed. The latest RCW's and WAC's governing the Engineering Practice Law and Regulations can be found at the following web link: [Engineers | Board of Registration for Professional Engineers & Land Surveyors \(wa.gov\)](http://www.enr.wa.gov)
  - i. The Area Engineer is required to be licensed in WA State as a Professional Engineer.
  - ii. For Area sealing of plans, the Area Engineer will be immediately notified by field staff when the sealing of plans is anticipated. The Area Engineer shall provide all guidance regarding the technical and supervisory requirements necessary to seal the plans. If the Area engineer is not technically qualified to provide the engineering seal the SCE will be contacted as required in WA501.3.D.(2)ii.
    1. When technically qualified as described by Washington State Law, the Area Engineer will be responsible for sealing all plans within their job approval authority delegations. Field engineers, if licensed, are permitted to seal plans in lieu of the Area Engineer sealing the plans.
    2. The engineer of record may seal each sheet for which they have provided the professional engineering services.
    3. The Area Engineer shall seal the cover sheet and all pages for which they are the engineer of record.
  - iii. For State level sealing of plans, the SCE will be immediately notified by Area Engineer when the sealing of plans is anticipated. The SCE shall provide all guidance regarding the technical and supervisory requirements necessary to seal the plans.
    1. When technically qualified as described by Washington State Law, the SCE will be responsible for sealing all plans for projects that are above the job approval authority delegation or technical competency of the Area Engineer.
    2. The engineer of record may seal each sheet for which they have provided the professional engineering services.
    3. The SCE shall seal the cover sheet and all pages for which they are the engineer of record.

iv. Non-NRCS sealing of plans.

1. All non-Federal Washington licensed engineers (e.g. Private Engineering Consults, Conservation District, Tribal and State Employed Professional Engineers) are required to seal their engineering plans according to Washington State Law for NRCS assisted projects.
2. When required for permitting, all other Federal agencies (e.g. USACOE, USFWS, and NMFS) are required to Seal their engineering plans according to Washington State Law for NRCS assisted projects.

#### **WA501.4 Engineering Job Approval Authority**

G. The following State Job Approval Authority policy for Class I through Class V shall be adhered to for all NRCS engineering conservation practices.

- (1) General - Job Approval Authorities are part of the overall NRCS process used to ensure both efficiency and quality during the planning, design and implementation of conservation plans and their associated practices. Job Approval Authorities are used to:
  - i. Assure that personnel resources are used efficiently by delegating Job Approval Authority at the local level.
  - ii. Communicate to NRCS personnel the extent of their technical authorities and their responsibilities associated with the planning, design and application of conservation plans and associated practices.
  - iii. Provide for implementation of conservation practices that, with proper operation and maintenance, will support resource management systems that perform their intended function for the appropriate life span of the practice.
  - iv. Assure that technical work complies with established practice standards, as well as applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and codes.
  - v. Job Approval Authorities are assessed and delegated by demonstrated ability.
  - vi. JAA delegation for each practice shall be re-authorized no less than once every three years.
  - vii. Formal assignment of Job Approval Authority to NRCS personnel is documented and maintained in the WA Job Approval Authority Database. (See WA501.4.H)
- (2) Execution of Engineering Job Approval Authority (JAA). There are three categories of Job Approval Authorities for Practice Standards that will be used in Washington State. They are Inventory and Evaluation (I & E), Design, and Construction. Each NRCS practice is assigned one or more controlling factors. Controlling factors are the basis for assigning the specific job approval thresholds for each practice. Job Approval Authorities are assigned based on the maximum scope for which an employee is qualified to work independently on each of the three components shown below.
  - i. Inventory and Evaluation (I & E) – An individual with I & E JAA will have adequate knowledge, skill, and ability to independently plan conservation practice and resource management system alternatives. The individual must be able to plan practices or systems that will be technically, socially, and economically feasible, meet the objectives of the landowner or decision maker and solve identified resource problems.
  - ii. Design – An individual with design Job Approval Authorities will have adequate knowledge, skill, and ability to independently design site-specific NRCS conservation practices including design drawings, specifications, job sheets and operation/maintenance requirements. The individual must be able to prepare complete design work, construction drawings, specifications and job sheets that will meet NRCS policy and standards and the objectives of the conservation plan.

- iii. Construction – An individual with construction Job Approval Authorities will have adequate knowledge, skill, and ability to independently assist a producer with layout and installation of a practice and to certify the installed practice as meeting applicable NRCS standards. The individual must be able to determine if the completed practice is functional and installed according to site-specific practice specifications.
- iv. Delegation of Job Approval Authority (JAA) for engineering Conservation Practices.
  - 1. Job Approval Authority Delegations
    - a. The State Conservation Engineer is responsible for all engineering Conservation Practice JAA delegations to State Office Engineering Specialists and Area Engineers.
    - b. The Area Engineer is authorized to delegate JAA to Area and Field office staff.
    - c. Each employee’s job approval authority delegation shall be established according to the delegate’s training, experience, and demonstrated competence. The measures used to evaluate an individual’s experience and demonstrated competence shall be commensurate with the level of complexity of the practice. For example, Job Class I projects may not merit the same level of analysis as Job Class V projects; therefore, the delegating individual shall determine experience and demonstrated ability accordingly.
    - d. Field office engineering staff may delegate to NRCS personnel within their administrative area with Area Engineer approval.
    - e. The conservation practices applicable to the geographical location are to be considered in assigning and managing job approval authority.
    - f. JAA delegations or a revision of the JAA can be initiated by the employee or the delegating official with concurrence from the employee’s supervisor.
    - g. NRCS employees transferring into WA State shall have their JAA from their previous state adopted and migrated into the WA JAA Database.
    - h. JAA delegators, supervisors, and the Area Conservationist have the authority to reduce or remove an employee’s JAA as appropriate.
      - (i) In cases where an employee has not performed a specific practice for a number of years, or practice standards and/or specifications have changed and a QAR has not been performed for that same time period, JAA may be adjusted to reflect the individual’s current ability to apply the practice for the categories: Inventory & Evaluation, Design, and Construction. For example, adjustments may be based on the number of years since the practice was performed, the complexity of the practice, and/or the skill set of the employee, at the discretion of the JAA delegator, supervisor, or Area Conservationist.
      - (ii) In the event of multiple deficiencies for the same practice and reason for deficiency, it is recommended that the JAA delegator remove all JAA for that practice with concurrence of the direct supervisor and/or the Area Conservationist.
      - (iii) If multiple or significant NEM policy violation(s) have occurred, it is recommended that the JAA delegator remove all JAA.

- (3) Washington Area and Field office staff Engineering Conservation Practice JAA Delegations for Job Classes I through V.
    - i. Area Engineering staff shall be responsible for delegating JAA to field staff throughout their respective administrative Area.
    - ii. JAA Delegations shall be completed for each Field Office employees that have demonstrated ability for NRCS engineering practice “Inventory & Evaluation”, “Design” and “Construction”.
    - iii. Area staff shall not delegate JAA to Area or Field staff outside of their Area without the permission of the AC’s.
    - iv. Non-engineer Field staff are not authorized to delegate engineering JAA.
    - v. The direct administrative supervisor shall concur with the delegations before they are considered official.
  - (4) Washington Engineering Conservation Practice JAA Delegations for VI through VIII.
    - i. Class VI through VIII design approval authority can only be delegated by the State Conservation Engineer.
    - ii. The SCE shall be consulted by the Area Engineer for direction and technical support prior to providing I&E, Design and Construction assistance.
    - iii. Engineering design folders, construction plans, specifications, and supporting documentation developed in accordance with the National Engineering Manual (NEM) by an individual without adequate design JAA shall submitted for review and approval as directed by the SCE.
  - (5) Approval of Implementation Requirements, Construction Plans and Specifications: (Job Class I - V)
    - i. Implementation Requirements, Construction Drawings and Specifications developed by NRCS employees that **do not** possess adequate JAA shall be reviewed and approved by an NRCS employee possessing the appropriate level of JAA. Approval will be completed as required in section 501.4.E.
    - ii. Implementation Requirements, Construction Drawings and Specifications developed by NRCS employees possessing adequate JAA may approve all documents. Approval will be completed as required in section 501.4.E.
  - (6) Job Approval Authority, Employee Development, and Quality Assurance.
    - i. The Job Approval Authority process should be used to increase efficiency in planning and application of engineering conservation practices in facilitating employee development. Supervisors should match specific needs at the location with the job approval authorities of individuals to provide adequate Job Approval Authority nearest to the work location.
    - ii. When a need for additional Job Approval Authority is identified, those needs should be identified on individual development plans and appropriate training should be requested and scheduled.
    - iii. Quality assurance will be conducted in accordance with GM 450-WA Amendment, Part 407 and consistent with the State Quality Assurance Plan.
- H. The Official List of Washington NRCS employees that have engineering practice job approval authority delegations will be maintained in the Washington Job Approval Authority database.
- (1) The Washington Job Approval Authority Database is an MS Access database is comprised of two parts, a front-end and back-end.
    - i. There is one back-end database which is located on the State Office server. All the data for all employees in the State is stored on the back end.

- ii. The front-end is the portal that accesses the data stored in the back-end database for all employees. The front-end is an access database with forms and reports developed for querying reports from the stored backend JAA data.
  - 1. All employees have access to the basic querying front end database tool that allows for viewing delegations for all employees within Washington State.
  - 2. Technical discipline leaders and Supervisors have access to the editing and delegating front end database tool that allows viewing as well as delegating, approving, and maintaining JAA for Washington NRCS employees.
- (2) User guides have been developed for utilizing the front-end database. There are two user's guides: one for the viewing front end tool and one for the delegating, approving, and maintaining JAA front end tool.
  - i. The viewing front end tool users guide is located on the WA SharePoint Site.
  - ii. The delegating, approving, and maintaining JAA front end tool and users guide can be requested from the State Conservation Engineer (SCE).
- (3) The SCE will be responsible for maintaining and revising the Washington Job Approval Authority database.
  - i. Any changes or additions to engineering practice limiting factors must be approved by the SCE.
  - ii. Area and State office technical staff members are encouraged to make recommendations to the appropriate technical leader for recommended revisions and updates.

## **WA501.5 Engineering Job Review**

### **C. Design Reviews**

- (1) Design reviews will be performed as follows:
  - i. Classes I – V:
    - 1. A design review is not required for engineering job class I-V practice design work unless the practice is considered to be a “High Risk Practice” as shown in GM WA 450, Subpart D – Exhibits.
    - 2. High Risk Practices for engineering job class I-V shall have one level of design review.
    - 3. In state review and approval shall be completed by an individual possessing the appropriate design JAA delegation.
  - ii. All Classes: Engineering designs that originate at the Field or Area office that require approval by the State Conservation Engineer shall first be reviewed by the Area Engineer prior to submittal and shall verify that all the information is complete and accurate.

### **D. Post Reviews**

- (1) WA engineering Quality Assurance Reviews “Spot Check” will be the process for fulfilling the Post Review policy for engineering practices that are Job Class I through VI.

## **WA501.8 Classification of Engineering Jobs**

- E. Controlling factors for assignment of job class for all WA NRCS practices is maintained in the Washington Skills matrix database.