

1. What is NRCS Job Approval Authority (JAA)?

JAA serves as the quality assurance process that ensures adequate consideration by competent NRCS, SWCD, and other conservation partner employees in the planning, design, and installation of NRCS Ecological Sciences (ECS) and Engineering (ENG) conservation practices. JAA is granted by NRCS to an individual who has demonstrated the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to plan, design, and/or certify installation of a given NC NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) conservation practice standard.

JAA also ensures that the practice will perform as intended for the planned service life and serves to maintain the credibility and trust of NRCS and SWCD with State boards of licensure, accrediting organizations, other agencies, units of government, and the public. For additional information about NC NRCS JAA, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#)>Table A-JAA Policies>NC JAA Handbook.

2. What are Controlling Factors, Job Classes, and Practice Phases?

JAA is comprised of several major elements known as Controlling Factors, Job Classes, and Practice Phases. These elements are used to further define a conservation practice level of complexity and planning phase in which it applies.

- Controlling Factors are the elements which describes the scale, complexity, or hazard potential associated with a given practice.
- Job Classes are subdivisions for conservation practices based on controlling factors of scale, complexity, or risk. Job Classes are described in roman numerals, and can range from Level I through Level V. The higher the Job Class level, the higher the practice complexity and greater proficiency level will be expected by the employee.
- Practice Phases defines the planning phase in which it applies. There are three practice phases in JAA: 1) Inventory & Evaluation (I&E), 2) Design (D), and 3) Construction & Certification (C&C).

For practice phase definitions, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#)> Table A-JAA Policies>NC JAA Handbook>Section NCH681.2.

3. What's the difference between ECS and ENG JAA?

For one, ECS and ENG JAA policies are considered two different technical disciplines, directed by two separate NRCS Divisions at the national level, the Ecological Sciences Division (ESD) and the Conservation Engineering Division (CED), respectively. As a result, the technical competency criteria, requirements, and procedures may differ. In NC, JAA technical competency reviews for ECS practices are conducted by the NRCS Area Resource Conservationist (ARC), whereas the NRCS Area Supervisory Engineer (ASE) is responsible for completing technical competency reviews for ENG practices. For ENG practices, JAA is delegated to the Area Supervisory Engineer (ASE) based on NRCS Engineering Policy through the State Conservation Engineer (SCE), who holds a Professional Engineering (PE) license to practice engineering in North Carolina. Delegation and/or assignment of ENG JAA to other NRCS/SWCD employees is at the discretion and ultimately reserved to the NRCS ASE. Employees must work directly with their assigned ASE to establish a working-relationship and clearly communicate desired expectations for obtaining ENG JAA.

Although differences exist between ECS and ENG JAA, they are still designed to ensure technical assistance will result in practices which: (1) Address the identified resource concerns, (2) Comply with NRCS standards, technical criteria, and policies, (3) Function as planned to address the requirements of site-specific concerns, and (4) Provide cost-effective solutions with consideration given to installation, operation, and maintenance costs.

4. What are the expectations and criteria for obtaining JAA?

Criteria for obtaining JAA includes a wide array of factors, such as possession of KSAs for desired practice phases, have met the practice Technical Competency Criteria requirements, have demonstrated desired technical competency, and fulfil the expectations established by the State Resource Conservationist (SRC) and/or State Conservation Engineer (SCE). Employees are also expected to have acquired the necessary on-the-job training (OJT) and experience prior to making the formal request to acquire JAA.

To view the latest expectations and criteria for JAA in NC, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#)>Table A-JAA Policies; and [Table B-Technical Competency Criteria & Controlling Factors](#).

5. What are the steps for requesting and acquiring JAA?

The steps for requesting and acquiring NC JAA are illustrated in the NC-JAA-A flowchart (Exhibit A). Before undertaking any actions to grant JAA to partner employees, NRCS must obtain written verification that the recipient has the partner organization's permission to pursue JAA. In NC, partner recipients will obtain written verification and permission from their immediate administrative supervisor (i.e. SWCD Administrative Supervisor, Dept. Head, or SWCD Chairperson) through form NC-CPA-07.

To view the latest flowchart, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#) > *Table D. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for JAA* > *Process for the Request and Approval of NC Job Approval Authority (NC-JAA-A)*. All administrative information and supporting documentation associated with the employee's JAA technical competency determination, must be first coordinated with the NRCS Supervisory Soil Conservationist (SSC) and transmitted electronically using the NC-CPA-07 Form (Request for NRCS Job Approval Authority (JAA)) through the [NC Job Approval Authority \(JAA\) Tracker](#) available in the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#).

6. Can JAA lapse/expire?

Yes, it can, but it does not mean the employee will automatically lose their JAA authority. All JAA limits must be reviewed and updated at least once every three years from the date it is issued. Reviews typically occur during scheduled Field Office appraisals, regular quality assurance review activities, or as needed to comply with NRCS policies. A record of reviews are recorded and tracked in the NCJAA database application.

Time limits ensures integrity of JAA by verifying employees still possess the desired technical competency levels to independently carry any of the three practice phases (e.g. I&E, Design (D), C&C.) for any given conservation practice.

7. How can I maintain my JAA status active?

Maintaining existing JAA will require continuous technical competency and may require the submittal of at least one (1) additional complete set of I&E, Design, and/or C&C documentation. Employees are responsible for retaining or enhancing expected KSA proficiency levels and demonstrate technical competency for continued delegated JAA limits.

The latest administrative procedures for maintaining JAA are found in the NCJAA Handbook, Section NCH681.10 (Procedures for Maintaining and/or Reissuing JAA). For NCJAA Handbook, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#) > *Table A-JAA Policies* > *NC JAA Handbook*.

8. I just transferred to NC or within NC NRCS Administrative Areas, what will happen to my existing JAA?

Reviews for existing JAA limits will be completed by the appropriate first-line technical competency reviewer, (i.e. ARC or ASE for Local Field Offices and NRCS Administrative Areas) within 90-working days of the employee's entry at their new duty station. JAA will be recognized when the incoming controlling factors are correlated with North Carolina's NRCS controlling factors.

If a transfer employee does not possess JAA for a practice in another state or administrative area, then the documentation requirements are equivalent to obtaining new JAA in North Carolina. With exception to ENG JAA, ECS JAA limits are portable across NC administrative areas. The latest administrative procedures for the Transfer of JAA are found in the NCJAA Handbook, Section NCH681.12 (Procedures for the Transfer of JAA). For NCJAA Handbook, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#) > *Table A-JAA Policies* > *NC JAA Handbook*.

9. Where can I find ALL the latest NC JAA information?

All relevant NC JAA information can be found and accessed through the "NC JAA Portal" NC SharePoint Site. Open the following link to access the Portal: [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#)*

*Individuals must have USDA Network access and an active LincPass Card to be able to access the Portal. If you are a non-Federal employee, click [HERE](#) for Network Access process and instructions.

10. Where can I find my latest official JAA report?

The NCJAA Database is the official repository and record for JAA in NC. The Microsoft Access database and application is available through the "NC Job Approval Authority (JAA) Portal". Open the following link to access the Portal: [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#)

Click [HERE](#) to download the installation and deployment of the NCJAA database application. For the latest installation instructions, refer to the [NC JAA Portal SharePoint Site](#) > *Table E- NC JAA Database Application (Official Repository)*