



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

NATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES

450 – NHCP
NOTICE 171

September 30, 2020

Purpose. This notice transmits revised national Conservation Practice Standards (CPSs), along with an updated index for insertion into the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). Notes are included to highlight key changes made to each CPS. States have until October 1, 2022, to adopt these changes into the state editions of these standards except for Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595) which must be updated by October 1, 2021. The update of Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595) is a pen and ink change. Extra time is provided given the number of changes as a result of the 2018 Farm Bill. States are instructed to focus on updating those standards that are used most frequently in their States prior to those used less frequently.

Effective Date. This notice is effective October 1, 2020.

Explanation of Changes. New and revised national CPSs are as follows:

Dam (Code 402) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes.

Dam, Diversion (Code 348) – The Criteria section was updated, and references were added. Other changes were made to improve the clarity of language used in the standard.

Drainage Water Management (Code 554) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes.

Forage Harvest Management (Code 511) – Most changes were minor in nature. Added content to reflect current agency policies and science. The definition was reworded for improved clarity. Two new purposes were added including “Optimizing soil microbial life and aggregate stability” and “Reduce soil compaction” to address soil health resource concerns. The remaining purposes were reworded slightly for improved clarity. New additional criteria for the two new purposes were added. Considerations section was reworded for improved clarity. Considerations section updated with valid new considerations. References were updated.

Grade Stabilization Structure (Code 410) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes.

Groundwater Testing (Code 355) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes.

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Herbaceous Weed Treatment (Code 315) – One purpose statement was determined to be a duplicate and was deleted along with the additional criteria for that purpose. Terminology was changed to be consistent throughout the standard. An additional requirement was added to the Plans and Specifications section. A few wording changes were made for clarity and readability.

Irrigation Canal or Lateral (Code 320) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. The Considerations section has a new paragraph that suggests ways the practice can be implemented that enhances the practice for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Irrigation Ditch Lining (Code 428) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Updated missing units, tabular values, and reworded the term flexible membrane to geosynthetic to meet current industry standards. Moved items related to energy use from the Criteria section to the Considerations section.

Irrigation Field Ditch (Code 388) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. In addition, a sentence on spoil disposal was added in the Criteria section. The Considerations section was significantly re-written.

Irrigation Land Leveling (Code 464) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Added text to Criteria section to include responsibilities of the landowner and contractor to follow laws and regulations, obtain all necessary permits, and locate all utilities. Modified the standard to provide clarity to some requirements.

Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512) – The name was changed from “Forage and Biomass Planting” to “Pasture and Hay Planting” to better convey NRCS’ intending purpose of the practice. Changes were made to reflect current agency policy and science. Air quality was added as a Purpose. “Produce feedstock for biofuel production” was removed as a purpose. The purpose “Improve soil and water quality” was split into two purposes, “Improve water quality” and “Improve Soil Health.” The General Criteria section was updated to reflect the use of ecological site descriptions and forage suitability groups. Additional Criteria section was added for the three purposes added. The Considerations section was revised and updated to better represent the applicability of the standard. Plans and Specifications and References sections were updated to support the content and changes made.

Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595) – This standard revised the Conditions Where Practice Applies section to improve clarity and removed the word “drift” from a bulleted list of predicted pesticide movement pathways based on soil properties in the Criteria section. Additionally, there was a clarification of an item in Plans and Specifications section. These revisions are considered “pen and ink” changes and do not impact the scheduled standard revision cycle. The date on this standard has been changed to October 2019R to indicate this is a pen and ink revision.

Prescribed Burning (Code 338) – This standard was last revised in 2010 and needed updating to reflect new policy and science. Definition was changed from controlled to planned to better reflect the practice. Added soil health to Purposes section. Criteria section changes included adding smoke management and reordered to reflect burn planning. Split Operations and

Maintenance section to reflect the difference between during the burn and post burn. Added and updated References section.

Riparian Forest Buffer (Code 391) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes. The Purposes section was updated to better correlate with resource concerns. Criteria section was adjusted to match changes in purposes. The References section was updated.

Saline and Sodic Soil Management (Code 610) – The name of the standard has changed slightly from “Salinity and Sodic Soil Management.” Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes. The Criteria section was reordered to better match criteria to intended purposes.

Streambank and Shoreline Protection (Code 580) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes. References were also updated.

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (Code 490) – Formatting and writing style were updated to meet current agency requirements. Minor revisions were made for clarity and readability purposes. Criteria section was updated to add for avoiding or mitigating soil damage and hydrologic impacts, and for evaluating pesticide risks. A new consideration was added, plans and Specifications section was expanded to align with conservation plan requirements, and Operations and Maintenance section was expanded to include safety plans for chemical exposure. The References section was also updated.

Water Well (Code 642) – This standard has undergone minimal changes. Changes in the Criteria section included adding a new “roles and responsibility,” “screen and filter pack installation,” and “well performance aquifer testing” criteria.

Filing Instructions. If a hardcopy of the NHCP is maintained, replace the “Contents” section (pages i through vi, dated October 2020) with the revised pages found at <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=22299>

Replace the prior existing practice standards and archive, as appropriate, with the practice standards contained in this notice.

This notice and each of the conservation practice standards included with this notice can be accessed electronically through the NRCS website at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849

Federal Register Notice

NRCS published a notice to solicit public comments about how to improve specific agency conservation practice standards in the *Federal Register* on October 23, 2019 and March 24, 2020 for a 30-day comment periods. Comments from the public were accepted during the comment period.

Guidance to the States and the Pacific Islands and Caribbean Areas for complying with the provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill that require advertising for public comment prior to revising NRCS State-level technical guides can be found in Title 450, General Manual, Part 401, Subpart B, Section 401.19.

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