Ohio Nutrient Management Standard (Code 590) Revision Process

**Nutrient Management Standard (Code 590)**

The Nutrient Management Standard (Code 590) is used to manage rate, source, placement and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments while reducing environmental impacts. Conservation planners can use this practice on all fields where plant nutrients (commercial fertilizer and/or manures) are applied. We use this practice to accomplish one or more of the following purposes: improve plant health and productivity, reduce excess nutrients in surface and ground water, improve air quality, reduce the risk of potential pathogens from manure, biosolids, or compost application from reaching surface and ground water and/or improve or maintain soil organic matter.

**Revision Process**

In January of 2020, NRCS began to revise the FOTG for Nutrient Management Standard. NRCS formed a 19-member sub-committee of the NRCS State Technical Committee (590 Task Force), which brought diverse and experienced expertise to collaborate on the revision.

The 590 Task Force included representatives from the following organizations:

- State of Ohio ODA
- State of Ohio ODNR
- State of Ohio EPA
- Ohio Lake Erie Commission
- Ohio State University
- Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- National Wildlife Federation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Lake Erie Foundation
- Ohio Ag Business Association
- Central State University
- Ohio Farm Bureau
- Ohio Livestock Industries
- Ohio Commodity Groups
- Ohio Certified Crop Advisers
- Ohio Ag Producers

**Background**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) uses voluntary conservation planning to meet the needs of farmers while protecting the natural resources. Conservation plans are made up of conservation practices to address these needs. Conservation practices are based on technical standards contained in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). These standards are updated every 5 years, to incorporate the current scientific understanding of resource protection. These conservation practice standards are not regulatory, but are a technical standard governing participation in USDA Farm Bill Cost Share and Technical Assistance programs. These standards are also available for use by other partners and government agencies.
After much deliberation, the group reached a consensus for a revised standard that will protect Ohio’s water quality and is practical and realistic for Ohio farmers to implement and adopt.

- The new draft standard will better protect Ohio’s Water Quality by reducing losses of nutrients from Ohio crop fields.
- Simplified the language and made the standard more practical and usable at the field/farm level.
- The recommendations align with the newly revised *Tri State Fertility Guide* and are converted to the now standard Melich III soil test extraction method.
- Developed a more defined path to draw down high soil test phosphorus fields.
- Updated numerical criteria, including establishment of an upper soil test phosphorus limit on manure applications.
- Wider use of in-field and edge-of-field trapping practices was incorporated into the recommendations.
- Updated nutrient assessment procedures and tools identified to help farmers reduce risk of phosphorus loss at all soil test levels.
- Made a commitment to continue the work of the 590 Task Force to improve and refine assessment tools and procedures to evaluate nutrient loss risk.

The Way Forward

NRCS will involve the 590 Task Force and its expertise as the process moves forward through the public comment period, and to the adoption and implementation phase. The 590 Task Force will assist NRCS and the other agencies with the public information, education, and training needed to adopt and practice the new standard on Ohio farms and improve Ohio’s water quality.