

Part 517 – Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

Subpart A – General Information

517.3 NRCS Responsibilities

Figure 517-A2

Activity	Details
Chairperson	Chair the State Technical Committee (see 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart B, Section 501.11)
Delegation of Authority	<p>Designate staff and delegate authority to certify and approve payments at State and field office levels consistent with agency policy</p> <p>Designate the authorized NRCS representative, in writing, to obligate funds, disburse payments, and act as approving official, as instructed in 440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart A, General Information, Section 512.3, and State supplement to 130-GM, Part 400</p> <p>Delegate appropriate roles and responsibilities to designated conservationists for each jurisdiction of the State</p>
Leadership	<p>Ensure that all program activities are in compliance with NRCS rules, regulations, and policy</p> <p>Develop additional guidelines for conservation needs assessments</p> <p>Establish State program management policies, procedures, and program performance indicators to support WHIP national priorities, conservation initiatives, and measures</p> <p>Maintain program and fund integrity and accountability</p> <p>Verify accuracy of payment requests and authorize payments</p> <p>Establish State resource concerns and priorities, and eligible practices</p> <p>Provide leadership for planning and implementation, including evaluating the qualifications of other officials who provide technical assistance</p> <p>Approve or revise payment schedules used in the State that provide a cost basis for conservation program payments for WHIP (see 440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart D, Program Payment Schedules, Section 512.33)</p>

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	<p>Determine fund allocations within the State, including priority natural resource concerns and conservation initiatives</p> <p>Ensure compliance with appropriate internal controls, including separation of duties regarding contract development, contract obligation and modification, and payment certification</p> <p>Administer offsets, collections, and claims</p> <p>Provide program and technical training needed to implement the program effectively</p> <p>Review the local application process and ranking to ensure program’s compliance with NRCS regulations and policy and that USDA civil rights responsibilities are met</p> <p>Provide leadership for quality assurance</p> <p>Sign, on behalf of the Chief, any and all documents necessary to implement the program</p> <p>Grant waivers or, if allowed, identify designees to grant waivers to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start a practice prior to application for the program or contract approval • Waive all or part of recovery costs • Liquidated damages • Perform other tasks, as indicated by policy <p>Manage and review requests to the Chief for waivers regarding payment, contract limitations, and AGI</p> <p>Establish program performance goals</p> <p>Provide recommendations to the Chief on what national priorities should be identified</p> <p>Grant equitable relief to eligible participants</p> <p>Post WHIP ranking criteria, signup periods, and other informational materials on NRCS Web sites to make them available to the public, as required by program regulations and policy, and according to 440-CPM, Part 517, Subpart K, Information and Outreach, Section 517.101</p> <p>Establish contracting responsibilities, as defined in 440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart A, General Information, Section 512.3</p>
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>Identify, monitor, and analyze performance indicators</p> <p>Determine appropriate distribution method for WHIP agreements and associated documents, ensuring that records are readily available when required</p> <p>Evaluate and report program accomplishments</p>

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<p>Coordination</p>	<p>Coordinate with State and Federal agencies to streamline the permit process, such as wetlands and endangered species permits</p> <p>May accept recommendations from the State Technical Committee and Tribal Conservation Advisory Council – State Level for tribal lands in implementing the program and in establishing program direction for WHIP in the applicable State or Tribal land</p> <p>Note: Although the State Conservationist has authority to accept or reject the State Technical Committee and Tribal Conservation Advisory Council – State Level for Tribal lands recommendation, the State Conservationist will give strong consideration to the committee’s recommendation for—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordination across State lines with other State Conservationists.• Participation in the appeals process, as appropriate. <p>Maintain effective working relationship with FSA</p> <p>Develop an application evaluation and ranking system</p> <p>Develop an eligible practice list for WHIP and associated payment schedules</p> <p>Develop agreements with other agencies and groups for the most efficient use of personnel and other resources, so that their roles and responsibilities meet WHIP’s workload demand</p> <p>Coordinate public outreach and information activities with partners</p> <p>Execute other responsibilities, as assigned by the Chief or Regional Conservationist</p>
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