NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service
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NATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES **December 13, 2011**
450 – VI
NOTICE 156
Amend. 14

Purpose. This notice transmits revised National Conservation Practice Standard (CPS), along with an updated index, for insertion into the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). In addition, notes are included to highlight key changes made to the document.

Effective Date. This notice is effective upon receipt.

Explanation of Changes. Revised National Conservation Practice Standard, as follows:

Nutrient Management (CPS Code 590) – changes made to the August 2006 National Nutrient Management Standard includes:

1) Minimum national implementation requirements and guidance for nutrient management are delivered by means of the following NRCS documents:
   a. NRCS National Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Code 590, Nutrient Management,
   b. NRCS Title 190, General Manual (GM), Part 402, National Nutrient Management Policy,
   c. NRCS Title 190, National Instruction (NI), Part 302, Nutrient Management Policy Implementation.

   All NRCS nutrient management policy and guidance documents (a, b, and c above) have been revised effective December 2011.

2) The previous CPS Code 590 dated August 2006, precluded applications to frozen, snow-covered, or saturated soils. With these activities comes a high probability that local water quality will be degraded. Similarly, the updated CPS Code 590 dated December 2011, precludes these applications, but allows for an exemption under certain conditions. It states,

   "Nutrients must not be surface-applied if nutrient losses offsite are likely. This precludes spreading on:

   - frozen and/or snow-covered soils, and
   - when the top 2 inches of soil are saturated from rainfall or snow melt.

   Exceptions for the above criteria can be made for surface-applied manure when specified conditions are met and adequate conservation measures are installed to prevent the offsite delivery of nutrients. The adequate treatment level and

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specified conditions for winter applications of manure shall be defined by NRCS in concurrence with the water quality control authority in the State."

3) The previous standard included controlling water erosion to a quality criteria level (T) as a consideration. The updated standard states that sheet, rill, and wind erosion must be managed to protect water quality, or if erosion rates are greater than "T", that an additional site assessment for nutrient and soil loss be conducted to determine if mitigation practices are needed to protect water quality. With this policy revision, erosion control requirements are covered in 190-GM, Part 402.

4) The previous standard required phosphorus risk assessments by means of a State-approved phosphorus risk assessment. The States were allowed to utilize a threshold, soil test phosphorus, or P-Index approach to phosphorus loss risk assessments. The revised policy requires that all phosphorus risk assessment tools be based on the P-Index approach. States can use risk assessment prescreening tools to reduce the workload associated with the assessments. Requirements for States' P-Index tools and information about standardization of States' risk categories, and interpretation of assessment results are contained in the 190-NI-Part 302.

5) The previous standard required phosphorus risk assessments in accordance with land-grant university guidelines. Guidance for limiting the application of phosphorus to fields was somewhat vague and States could impose application restrictions as they wanted. With the release of the new policy, acceptable phosphorus application rates will be determined based on phosphorus risk assessment results. LOW risk will allow phosphorus applications at rates greater than crop removal; MODERATE risk will require that phosphorus be applied not to exceed the crop removal rate; and HIGH risk will require that phosphorus be applied not to exceed the crop removal rate, that a drawdown strategy be in place, and that a site assessment for nutrients and soil loss be conducted to determine if mitigation practices are required to protect local water quality. Phosphorus applications to meet multiple-year crop-phosphorus needs are still allowed by the updated standard.

6) The previous standard did not include emerging strategies or technologies like adaptive nutrient management, organic crop production, precision agriculture, or enhanced-efficiency fertilizer products. The updated standard includes criteria and considerations for these topics. This enables States to consider their potential use tied to USDA program funding. CPS Code 590 provides an NRCS definition and describes the NRCS role in the delivery and implementation of the adaptive nutrient management strategy at the State level.

7) The updated CPS Code 590 underscores the importance of the 4Rs concept of site-specific nutrient management planning (i.e., right amount, right source, right placement, and right timing). This approach promotes the coordination of a system of conservation practices that will prevent, control, or trap nutrients before they are delivered to surface or ground water.

8) The previous standard omitted biosolids as a potential source of plant nutrients. The updated CPS Code 590 corrects this oversight

9) The previous standard criteria requiring adherence to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations, 40 CFR, Parts 403 (pretreatment) and 503 (biosolids) has been removed from the updated CPS Code 590 per EPA's request.

Filing Instructions. If a hard copy of the NHCP is maintained, replace the "Contents" pages i through vi, dated December 2011, with the revised pages found at http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/H_450_NHCP_Index_156.rtf.

Insert the revised standard listed above in bold in the NHCP in alphabetical order, as designated on the revised "Contents" pages. Remove and archive, as appropriate, the existing practice standard for the following:

Nutrient Management (CPS Code 590), dated August 2006.

This notice, and the conservation practice standard included with this notice, can be accessed electronically through NRCS at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/Standards/nhcp.html or from the FTP server at ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NHQ/practice-standards/standards/.

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 January 11, 2011, for 45-day comment period. Comments from the public were accepted during the comment periods.

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.

/s/

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