

Part 504 – Special Investigations, Studies, and Reports

Subpart D – Field Trials and Evaluations

504.30 General

- A. New products, procedures, and techniques are essential in maintaining a technically strong and current engineering program. These new items become available over time. There are requests from industry and others to put these items into immediate use. Many of these items have great potential for use in engineering. Others, while appearing to have merit, may in fact be inferior and unacceptable. Before NRCS adopts a product or procedure, it must be determined that it will function as designed and last for the design life. This may require detailed study and testing.
- B. Field trials and evaluations, in conjunction with test data, can provide the necessary information to support the approval of a material or procedure for NRCS use. Before a new product or procedure is included in standards or specifications, it must be documented that it will meet the design criteria. Field trials and evaluations are frequently the only methods for developing acceptable data.
- C. Trials and evaluations must conform to policy stated in Title 450, General Manual, Part 403, “Conservation Field Trials.”

504.31 Scope

Field trials and evaluations must be considered if there is a need for determining if a product, procedure, or technique can be used to alter, replace, or supplement existing standards, criteria, or procedures.

504.32 Approval Procedures

- A. Proposed field trials or evaluations that may change procedures, policy, standards, or criteria must be submitted to the Director, Conservation Engineering Division (CED). Proposals must be specific as to the scope of the trial and the materials or procedures to be tested.
- B. The Director, CED, makes a recommendation on each proposal. This may include guidance on the scope and intensity of the study to ensure national application of results. This technical recommendation for the study does not constitute approval for expenditure of resources. If necessary, a request for funds and personnel should be made to the appropriate source by the State asking for the request.
- C. Proposed field trials or evaluations that do not require a variance from standards, criteria, specifications, policies, or procedures may be approved by the State Conservationist.

504.33 Study Plan

- A. Generally, the brief statement describing the trial or test that accompanies the request for approval is not sufficiently detailed to define the scope, intensity, purpose, and plan for the study.
- B. The study plan must fully describe the need, benefits, approach to be taken, anticipated schedule, and resources required. These must be sufficiently detailed to permit a valid assessment of the potential for obtaining the needed data and of the potential demands for resources (personnel, equipment, and costs).

504.34 Reports

- A. Each State must maintain an index and a schedule for all field trials and evaluations.
- B. At the time the study is approved, a schedule must be established for progress reports. These reports must be appropriate to the trials and evaluations.
- C. When the trial or evaluation is completed, a final report must be prepared.
- D. Copies of all reports are submitted to the Director, CED.