

Subpart A – General Conservation Practice Standards Information

620.1 Preface

A. Title 450, National Handbook of Conservation Practices, Part 620 (450-NHCP-620) contains NRCS national conservation practice standards (CPSs) for conservation practices and the procedures for maintaining them. The conservation practices are used to improve natural resources with respect to soil, water, air, plants, animals, and energy, with human considerations a factor in every decision (SWAPAE+H).

B. CPSs in 450-NHCP-620 evolve in accordance with advancement in farming and ranching techniques used throughout the world and with changes in technology as documented by research, conservation field trials, and accumulated experience. CPSs, the associated conservation practice physical effects (CPPE) matrix, and other related documents are reviewed periodically. Reviews ensure that standards—

- (1) Provide timely incorporation of new technologies.
- (2) Address or facilitate addressing resource concerns.
- (3) Are consistent in format and content.
- (4) Enhance interagency cooperation.
- (5) Account for the varied conservation activities expected of NRCS in the future.

C. Each State must adopt the CPSs needed in that State. The national CPS can be used within a State without modification, or the CPS may be supplemented to include additional requirements to meet State or local needs, according to the policy in NRCS Title 450, General Manual, Part 401, Subpart B. State standards are to be equal to or more rigorous than the national standard. At a minimum, all practice standards adopted for use in a State will contain the name or abbreviation of the State in the footer of the standard. State-adopted CPSs are published in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV.

D. The CPSs are developed for the protection of the resources, landowner, conservation contractors, soil and water conservation district (SWCD) employees, and NRCS employees. When a conservation practice is installed according to the criteria specified in the CPS—

- (1) Landowners receive a conservation product that addresses or mitigates the identified resource concern.
- (2) Contractors and technical service providers understand their responsibility to provide a quality job product on the ground and are not required to warranty a product beyond the requirements of the standard.
- (3) NRCS employees are assured they are working within the scope of their employment.

E. Although 450-NHCP-620 is prepared primarily for use by NRCS personnel, it is available for anyone having an interest in or a responsibility for conservation of natural resources.