

Subpart A - USDA Conservation Program Delivery

501.0 Introduction

A The products of the locally led process specified in Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual, Part 500 provide USDA with conservation needs, resource concerns, priorities, and recommendations regarding program administration and implementation. USDA seeks input from State Technical Committees and local working groups on State and local conservation program delivery.

B. Although State Technical Committees and local working groups are advisory in nature and have no implementation or enforcement authority, USDA gives strong consideration to their recommendations.

C. Each State Technical Committee and local working group may provide information, analysis, and recommendations for the following activities and programs, as needed and where applicable:

- (1) Agricultural Water Enhancement Program
- (2) Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program
- (3) Conservation compliance
- (4) Conservation Innovation Grants
- (5) Conservation Reserve Program
- (6) Conservation Security Program
- (7) Conservation Stewardship Program
- (8) Conservation of private grazing land
- (9) Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
- (10) Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- (11) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
- (12) Grassland Reserve Program
- (13) Grassroots Source Water Protection Program
- (14) Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative
- (15) Great Lakes Basin Program
- (16) Technical service providers
- (17) Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program
- (18) Wetlands Reserve Program
- (19) Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
- (20) Other programs and issues as requested by the State Conservationist or other USDA agency heads at the State level

D. According to 16 U.S.C. Section 3862(d), these State Technical Committees and local working groups are exempt from the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App. 2).

501.1 Conservation Program Delivery Process

A. The conservation needs assessment and the conservation action plan developed during the locally led conservation effort form the basis for collaboration in carrying out the community stakeholder's priorities and identified programs, including USDA's conservation programs.

B. When community stakeholders, working through conservation districts, have identified USDA programs as a tool to meet their conservation needs, USDA personnel and others, in the form of a USDA local working group, will review and submit recommendations on local and State conservation program delivery priorities and criteria. Examples of recommendations that may be submitted are found in Figure 501-A1.

Figure 501-A1

Examples of Local Working Groups Recommendations Submitted to the Local Designated Conservationist	Examples of Local Working Group Recommendations Submitted to the State Technical Committee
Locally identified natural resource concerns, priorities, and opportunities	State or regional identified natural resource concerns, priorities, and opportunities
Local conservation program priorities	State or regional conservation program priorities
Local program application screening and ranking criteria	State and national program policy changes

Local conservation practices offered in specific programs to address locally identified resource concerns (conservation practices must be included in the Field Office Technical Guide)	Revision or new interim conservation practices in the Field Office Technical Guide
Program payment percentages documented in practice payment schedules and/or maximum payment on conservation practices	Program payment percentages documented in practice payment schedules and maximum payment on conservation practices
	Levels of financial and technical support from available programs needed to address identified resource concerns
	Need for special initiatives focusing on priority resource concerns or areas

C. Recommendations for local program delivery should be submitted to the local designated conservationist. The local designated conservationist considers the recommendations from the local working group, along with technical expertise and national and State program policies, to develop the local NRCS conservation program available in the assigned geographic area.

D. Recommendation for State program delivery should be submitted to the State Technical Committee. The State Technical Committee considers the recommendations from the local working group to develop State conservation priorities and program delivery recommendations to the State Conservationist.

E. The State Conservationist considers the recommendations from the State Technical Committee, along with technical expertise and national program policies, to develop the NRCS conservation program available in the State.

[M_440_501_A - Amend. 70 - September 2010]