



United States Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Technician Promotion Guidance (GS-6 to GS-7)

Job Description: This person assists the Supervisory Conservationist and staff in the implementation of total resource management system plans and provides assistance in conservation planning. This person is responsible for surveying, staking, information gathering, designing, engineering plan preparation, and construction inspection as well as providing training to NRCS and Conservation District personnel in these areas.

To ensure field staff are meeting the standard for duties, competencies, and qualifications, all conditions below must be met. These duties, competencies and qualifications are integrated in the field staff's current performance plan and/or Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) Name: _____ **Office:** _____

- Independently performs in field investigations to determine the problems landowners face and collects the data needed for field offices to develop structural solutions.
- Independently checks completed practices to determine if goals were met and continually follows-up to determine if additional interventions are required.
- Independently conducts surveys and designs of conservation practices.
- Able to identify at least four or more resource concerns in the field (land use) and discuss with producers.
- Increased job approval authority for engineering and ecological conservation practices common in the management unit.
- Can perform complex tasks in Conservation Desktop and ArcGIS for conservation plan development.
- Demonstrates and meets the training curriculum requirements for the SCT GS-6 and develops conservation plans based on possession of Conservation Planner Level I role in accordance with National Conservation Planning Policy and state supplements.
- Complete required documentation (i.e., simple and clear cut conservation plans (where these are assigned to SCTs), conservation assistance notes, cultural resources, simple and clear cut CPA 52 (where these are assigned to SCTs), designs, specifications, and job sheets, etc.) in accordance with established policy and guidelines.
- Provides technical guidance and assistance to producers in making complex revisions to conservation plans and contracts.
- Explains conservation programs independently using straightforward narrations of facts and uncomplicated descriptions of conservation practices.

- Understand and explains in depth Farm Bill programs and state conservation programs rules and requirements to producers.
- Provides on the ground training and/or assistance to Field Office conservationists and district staff in conservation planning - data collection and analysis, practice design, and implementation.
- Actively contribute to field office contract management by assisting with reviews of: prior year items not paid; contract reviews; and reviewing expiring contracts as assigned.
- Prepares supporting documentation for Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations and annual Food Security Act compliance reviews.
- Independently assist with walk-ins and assists supervisor with office operations.
- Participates in outreach events and able to speak publicly in a small group setting.

Occupational Competencies (Must meet at least 5)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Data Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning - Analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Engineering Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Engineering Implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning - Follow-up & Maintenance |

Foundational Competencies (Must meet at least 10)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to Detail | <input type="checkbox"/> Accountability | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing & Prioritizing Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity & Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive Judgement & Decision Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability and Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Tolerance & Resilience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Representing the Agency |

Note: One year of employment at the GS-6 level does not guarantee promotion to a GS-7.

I am certifying that the named Soil Conservation Technician meets the above stated conditions and competency requirements.

Name: _____

Title: _____



United States Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Technician Promotion Guidance (458 GS-7 to GS-8)

Job Description: This person assists the Supervisory Conservationists and staff in the implementation of total resource management system plans and provides assistance in conservation planning. This person is responsible for surveying, staking, information gathering, designing, engineering plan preparation, and construction inspection as well as providing training to NRCS and Conservation District personnel in these areas.

To ensure field staff are meeting the standard for duties, competencies and qualifications, all conditions below must be met. These duties, competencies and qualifications are integrated in the field staff's current performance plan and/or Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) Name: _____ **Office:** _____

- Independently performs field investigations to determine the problems landowners face and collects the data needed for field offices to develop structural solutions.
- Independently checks completed practices to determine if goals were met. If deficiencies are found, works with participant to find and implement solution that meets policy.
- Gathers and compiles planning data. To include preparing soil maps, farm and field boundaries maps, drainage area calculations, and inventory of existing on farm practices.
- Independently conducts complex engineering surveys and designs by gathering field data, recording notes, and prepares final designs. Able to train staff on completing field surveys and designs.
- Independently explains complex engineer designs (self-prepared or prepared by others) to participants. Able to accurately layout design requirements in field prior to construction.
- Independently works as construction inspector during practice installations. Recognizes potential issues and provides appropriate modifications. Works with contractor and participant to ensure standards and specifications are followed.
- Able to identify at least six resource concerns in the field (land use) and discuss with producers.
- Increasing Job Approval Authority (JAA) for engineering and ecological conservation practices common in the management unit and surrounding management units above authority when at GS-7 level. The appropriate JAA level is defined in the field staff's current performance plan and/or Individual Development Plan IDP.
- Demonstrates and meets the training curriculum requirements for the SCT Grade 7 and develops conservation plans based on possession of Certified Conservation Planner Level III role in accordance with National Conservation Planning Policy and state supplements.

- Completes and can train others on completing required documentation (i.e., simple and clear-cut conservation plans [where these are assigned to SCTs], conservation assistance notes, cultural resources, simple and clear-cut CPA 52 [where these are assigned to SCTs], designs, specifications, and job sheets, etc.) in accordance with established policy and guidelines.
- Provides technical guidance and assistance to producers in making complex revisions to conservation plans and contracts.
- Explains NRCS, emergency, and partner conservation programs independently using straightforward narrations of facts and uncomplicated descriptions of programs to producers.
- Completes and can train others on the completion of Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations and annual Food Security Act compliance reviews. Prepares supporting documentation of the determination.
- Independently determines priorities and manages assigned workload in field office and surrounding counties.
- Participates in outreach events and able to speak publicly in a large group setting.

Occupational Competencies (Must meet all 6)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Data Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning - Analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Engineering Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Engineering Implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning - Follow-up & Maintenance |

Foundational Competencies (Must meet at least 12)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to Detail | <input type="checkbox"/> Accountability | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing & Prioritizing Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity & Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive Judgement & Decision Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability and Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Tolerance & Resilience |

Resource Management

Teamwork

Representing the
Agency

Note: One year of employment at the GS-7 level does not guarantee promotion to a GS-8.

I am certifying that the named Soil Conservation Technician meets the above stated conditions and competency requirements.

Name: _____

Title: _____



United States Department of Agriculture

Employee Development Expectations for Soil Conservationist Technician (SCT) GS-0458

These expectations are meant to demonstrate the progressive development by an employee during the first two years of employment and supplements their Performance Plan by detailing specific requirements.

This document should be a tool used by both an employee and supervisor to determine the needed training and Individual Development Plan (IDP) curriculum, so core competencies and qualifications are obtained.

At 0 – 6 months, the Soil Conservationist Technician:

- Complete onboarding activities. Refer to onboarding checklist.
- Complete basic skills and abilities assessment (proficiencies with tools and knowledge application).
- Meet applicable field, area, and state office teams and staff.
- Learn and know where to locate and use Planning and Policy documents (eDirectives, National and State Bulletins, electronic Field Office Technical Guide).
- Demonstrates knowledge of the content and sections of the Field Office Tech Guide.
- Has accessed AgLearn to complete introductory trainings as well as an IDP, in coordination with supervisor.
- Has accompanied a District Conservationist, Soil Conservationist, and/or engineer on visits with landowners for on-the-job training and customer service experience.

At 6 months, the Soil Conservation Technician:

- Has reviewed national, state and local [strategic plans](#) and understands agency mission, goals and priorities (and been provided the Organizational Chart of Agency).
- Can access [e-Directives](#) to study handbooks, manuals and policy and has obtained a copy of the [National Planning Procedures Handbook \(NPPH-180-Part 600\)](#).
- Has accessed [eFOTG](#), knows what information can be found per section and has obtained a copy of National and State Resource Concerns and Planning Criteria – Version 10/1/2013 (Resource Quality Criteria for RMS document).



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- Can identify the common agricultural crops and land uses in the work area and can describe what farming operations, land management systems, implements, equipment and cultural are present.
 - Able to communicate effectively and establish productive relationships with customer and staff.
 - Can utilize Conservation Desktop/ ArcGIS and geographic layers to locate a specific point/tract/farm of land for location, topography, aerial map, and soil map.
 - Has studied the soil survey of the management unit/ resource team (and accessed Web Soil Survey) for soil mapping units and soil descriptions and is working towards understanding each soil's capacity for soil loss to aid in determining vulnerability and/or limitations for planning purposes.
 - Following training, adheres to guidance and policies for Time and Accounting ([USDA Departmental Regulation 4070-735-001](#)); Employee Responsibility and Conduct (GM 360, Part 413); Ethics (GM 110, Part 405); and Safety and Physical Protection (GM 360, Part 420).
 - Reviewed Certified Conservation Planner requirements with supervisor and working towards obtaining appropriate certification.
 - Develops understanding of the importance for keeping NRCS-CPA-6 (Cons-6 Notes) in a timely, legible, and complete manner.
 - Assists staff in conducting surveys and develops understanding of basic surveying principles.
 - Takes "before" and "after" photographs of sites in the field to document the condition of the site prior to treatment and the improvement after treatment.
 - Understands the importance of the partnership of the District Board and Staff.
 - Has reviewed and understands the Memorandum of Agreement and Cooperative Agreement and understands how those agreements affect NRCS/SWCD operations.
 - Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of local area, land uses, and resource concerns.
 - Demonstrates the basic knowledge of employee engagement as a fundamental business concept in the effort to understand and describe the nature of the relationship between NRCS and its employees.



At 12 months, the Soil Conservation Technician:

- Recognizes and can explain the relationship between land uses, crops, management, and the content of conservation practices within a conservation plan and the resource conditions on-site.
- Can identify the natural resource issues and concerns that are most critical in the management unit/resource team and can provide planning options for conservation practices according to standards and specifications, especially focusing on applicable rates and dates for vegetative practices.
- Aware of the need for conservation practices to fit within customer's production objectives and mesh well with the surrounding landscape.
- Knowledgeable of the [nine-step conservation planning process](#).
- Has accompanied the District Conservationist on visits with landowners who had potentially sensitive issues that needed to be resolved, and/or has observed the District Conservationist explaining requirements to landowners to guard against any future misunderstandings.
- Has achieved Conservation Planning Certification Level ____.
- Can complete Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations including gathering data in the field, calculates soil loss, and identifies alternatives for reducing soil loss.
- Has prepared basic conservation plans (using Conservation Desktop) for at least ten landowners.
- Has had experience in setting up and using a surveying instrument, using a rod, and recording the survey notes on at least ten sites.
- Can utilize the GPS equipment and Conservation Desktop/ ArcGIS to generate check-out, as-built and as-applied maps.
- Has spent time in the field with a soil scientist to observe the process of soil mapping and has demonstrated the knowledge and ability to identify prevalent soils in the county.
- Knowledgeable of the Food Security Act Manual and requirements for compliance on Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) for eligibility to USDA benefits and payments.
- Participated in Farm Service Agency, Food Security Act 5% Compliance Reviews.



- Taken part in the Area's 5% Conservation Practice Quality Reviews and understands importance of adhering to standards and specifications.
- Has requested to participate on a technical or administrative team outside the employee's management unit/ service area.
- Can accurately identify the Conservation Programs that are best suited for addressing resource problems on specific sites.
- Assists the District Conservationist with resource evaluation of program applications.
- Has a working knowledge of Farm Bill programs application management and contract management.
- Has met with SWCD Board Member to learn about their operation and had the Board Member familiarize them with the land uses in the part of the county where the board member lives.
- Makes presentations to the District Board about the resource problems that landowners want to address using cost-share funds (photographs or videos are used to illustrate the resource problems that have been identified).
- If applicable, review Soil Conservation Technician Promotion Guidance document.
- If applicable, attended meetings of the state/area New Employee Cadre, utilized training (and network of colleagues) and demonstrated the ability to use the [nine-step conservation planning process](#).

At 18 months, the Soil Conservation Technician:

- Performs all routine duties with only limited supervision or assistance.
- Proficient in resource concerns in the field by observing the landscape, assessing the problems, and discussing issues and objectives with the landowner (this encompasses all areas of a planning unit including cropland, forest land, pastureland/rangeland, hayland, critical areas, streams and other water bodies).
- Understand how to plan, design, and install a practice in accordance with that standard to address identified resource concerns.
- Recognizes all applicable types of erosion and can identify the cause and potential solutions.



- Completes National Environmental Policy (NEP)A evaluation, Form NRCS CPA 52 - Inventory of Resource Concerns in accordance with established policy and guidelines with minimal supervision.
- Has obtained Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) and Ecological Sciences Job Approval Authority (ESJAA) for the common practices in the management unit/ resource area, understands how to obtain increased Job Approval Authority, and has identified three additional practices for which increased Job Approval Authority is needed.
- Is comfortable in directing and carrying out all aspects of surveying (setting up and using an instrument, using a rod, recording the notes, and conducting a survey involving benchmarks, turning points and the calculations to close out).
- Prepares check-out and as-built notes in accordance with engineering note-keeping procedures.

At 24 months, the Soil Conservation Technician:

- Plans and manages own schedule and work assignments with only limited direction from supervisor.
- Understand and explain basic Farm Bill programs and state conservation programs rules and requirements to producers.
- Can function independently in carrying out customer consultations, conservation planning and application activities.
- Has experience in treating major resource concerns associated with cropland, forest land, pastureland/rangeland, hayland, and critical areas as applicable in the management unit/ resource area.
- Makes recommendations to the District Conservationist on how to accomplish the goals for the new fiscal year and identifies how those goals can be met without compromising completing all tasks by established deadlines.
- Recognizes potentially sensitive issues and presents alternatives to those issues to the supervisor/landowner at a time and in a manner that will lead to a satisfactory outcome for both the agency and the landowner.
- Has aided in neighboring field offices to gain more diverse experience and exposure to the management styles of other District Conservationists.



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- Is proficient in the use of all applicable business tools; RUSLE II/IET, Conservation Desktop (CD), ProTracts, and the Performance Results System (PRS).
 - Is familiar with the "Quality Assurance Management Guide" and understands what needs to be done to follow the items listed in the Guide.
 - Has participated in at least one Quality Assurance Review or spot check conducted by the Area or State Staff.
 - Introduces the District Board to a new, different, or innovative approach to meeting their conservation objectives.
 - As allowable, attended at least one State Associate of Conservation District Area meeting to gain an understanding of how the District Boards influence program policy and strategic direction.
 - Identifies opportunities for outreach to underserved clients and develops and implements a strategy to reach those clients.
 - Has made presentations on conservation topics/programs to at least two groups.
 - If applicable, review Soil Conservation Technician Promotion Guidance document.
 - Has obtained Level _____ Conservation Planner certification.
 - Obtained approximately 70% of Job Approval Authority (JAA) necessary to perform conservation planning and implementation in area responsibility.
 - Proficient and actively "engaged" in carrying out employee engagement principles and actions for positive outcomes to further the agency's mission, increase employee satisfaction and heighten the customer experience.



United States Department of Agriculture

Soil Conservation Technician Promotion Guidance (458 GS-5 to GS-6)

Job Description: This person assists conservationists in the implementation of total resource management system plans and provides assistance in conservation planning. This person is responsible for surveying, staking, information gathering, designing, engineering plan preparation, and construction inspection as well as providing training to NRCS and Conservation District personnel in these areas.

To ensure field staff are meeting the standard for duties, competencies, and qualifications, all conditions below must be met. These duties, competencies and qualifications are integrated in the field staff's current performance plan and/or Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Soil Conservation Technician (SCT) Name: _____ **Office:** _____

- Assists in field investigations to determine the problems landowners face and collects the data needed for field offices to develop structural solutions.
- Checks completed practices to determine if goals were met and continually follows-up to determine if additional interventions are required.
- Independently conducts surveys and designs of conservation practices.
- Able to identify at least two resource concerns in the field (land use) and discuss with producers.
- Obtaining job approval authority for basic engineering and ecological conservation practices common in the management unit.
- Can perform basic tasks in Conservation Desktop and ArcGIS for conservation plan development.
- Demonstrates and meets the Core Curriculum requirement for the SCT GS-5 and develops conservation plans based on possession of Conservation Planner Level I role in accordance with National Conservation Planning Policy and state supplements.
- Provides technical guidance and assistance to producers in making minor revisions to conservation plans and contracts.
- Explains conservation programs with direct guidance using straightforward narrations of facts and uncomplicated descriptions of conservation practices.
- Understand and explain basic Farm Bill programs and state conservation programs rules and requirements to producers.
- Prepares supporting documentation for Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations and annual Food Security Act compliance reviews.

- Assists supervisor with office operations and walk-ins.

Occupational Competencies (Must meet at least 4)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Data Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning - Analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Engineering Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning – Engineering Implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Planning - Follow-up & Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying |

Foundational Competencies (Must meet at least 9)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attention to Detail | <input type="checkbox"/> Accountability | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizing & Prioritizing Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Technology Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Awareness | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Initiative | <input type="checkbox"/> Integrity & Honesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Written Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Decisive Judgement & Decision Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability & Flexibility | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Tolerance & Resilience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Representing the Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving | <input type="checkbox"/> Information Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal Skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Influence and Negotiating | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity and Innovation | |

Note: One year of employment at the GS-5 level does not guarantee promotion to a GS-6.

I am certifying that the named Soil Conservation Technician meets the above stated conditions and competency requirements.

Name: _____

Title: _____