



10-Minute Supervisor Trainings

Kentucky Soil and Water Conservation Commission

July 2019

Kentucky Division of Conservation Technical Assistance Program

The Division of Conservation continues to transition field representative staff time into providing conservation technical assistance services in support of Farm Bill programs, Kentucky Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share program, and local cost share programs.

Background:

During the summer of 2018, The KY Division of Conservation entered into a five-year contractual agreement with Kentucky NRCS to provide Conservation Technical Assistance on Farm Bill, state cost share, and local cost share programs. The agreement is very similar to the 50/50 contracts that NRCS maintains with local conservation districts around the state. This provides the Division of Conservation an opportunity to take a more active role in implementing conservation programs and becoming a stronger conservation partner.

Technical Assistance Program Benefits:

This transition has many positive benefits, including but not limited to,:

- Increased number of soil and water conservation projects getting on the ground.
- Providing technical assistance to conservation districts that have been underserved due to low staffing levels and limited budgets.
- Reducing a portion of the ever increasing workload burden on NRCS and local conservation district technical staff.
- More complete geographic coverage of technical staff to address soil and water conservation issues.
- Improved customer service in all areas due to an overall increase in staff availability.

What type of Technical Assistance Can the Division of Conservation Currently Provide?

At this time field representatives are all performing technical assistance at the beginning "Soil Conservation Technician" working level. This means that we can currently complete the following tasks with minimal oversight:

- Provide guidance and information to district supervisors, district staff, and landowners regarding funding opportunities and other related government programs.
- Assist landowners with completing Agriculture Water Quality Plans
- Initial site visits with landowners for Farm Bill, state cost share, and local cost share project applications
- Conduct project spot checks and completion inspections

Types of Technical Assistance, Continued

- Complete the administrative portion of HEL Determination requests.
- Develop KY Nutrient Management Plans
- Provide technical assistance to landowners who receive Letters of Warning or Notices of Violation from the Division of Water.

Technical Assistance Process:

DOC Field Representatives complete their work similarly to NRCS and district technical staff.

- They coordinate work with the district administrative staff to ensure the best customer service is delivered to the district and landowners.
- They provide documentation for each field visit and will include photos, maps, and notes to update district records.
- They coordinate initial site visits with district administrative staff and schedule with the landowner prior to the visit.
- Documentation from site visits is provided to the NRCS Natural Resource Planner for review and guidance on how to move forward with applications.
- DOC Field Representatives work with NRCS and district technical staff for project design and layout for training purposes and to support the conservation partnership.

How Do Conservation Districts Get Technical Assistance Help?

The process for requesting technical assistance hasn't changed.

1. District staff should be maintaining a list of needs and communicating those needs to the NRCS Work Unit Managers.
2. NRCS Work Unit Managers will compile the work needs and assign to NRCS, conservation district, and DOC staff depending upon individual workloads, workload complexity, and the experience of those individuals.
3. The NRCS Work Unit Managers also communicate work needs to the Division of Conservation Technical Assistance Coordinator in Frankfort.
4. If needed, District Staff can make a direct request for technical assistance to DOC in Frankfort by submitting an e-mail to conservation@ky.gov.
 - a. Please make sure to clearly state that you are requesting technical assistance, provide contact information, and describe your request in as much detail as possible.

What Can You Expect In The Future?

- Field Representatives will continue to gain experience and receive training on the technical aspects of implementing soil and water conservation programs.
- As Division of Conservation staff increase abilities, they will be taking on a greater share of the workload and more complex work products.
- One additional Field Representative will be hired and stationed in Paducah to provide services to provide both administrative support and technical assistance for the Purchase Area. This will bring the Division's field staffing level up to eight (8) full time positions providing assistance to agricultural producers with their soil and water conservation needs.