

FINAL
OVERSIGHT AND EVALUATION
REPORT

South Dakota Onsite Review

October 28, 2013

Confidential



NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
Oversight and Evaluation Team
Office of the Regional Conservationists

NOTICE-THIS REPORT RESTRICTED TO OFFICIAL USE

This report must be safeguarded to prevent publication or other improper disclosure of the information it contains until official action has been taken by the Agency.

Study Team Members:

Teresa Stewart, Study Team Leader, O&E, Fort Worth, Texas

Chris Tippie, Oversight and Evaluation Team (O&E) Team Leader, Fort Worth, Texas

Lee Davis, Biologist, Central National Technology Support Center, Fort Worth, Texas

Paul Flynn, Prairie Pothole Wetland Project Manager, St. Paul Minnesota

Jim Gertsma, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Sioux City, Iowa

Jason Outlaw, Acting National Wetland Compliance Specialist, Klamath Falls, Oregon

Executive Sponsors:

Thomas W. Christensen, Regional Conservationist-Central, NRCS, Washington, DC

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

Table of Contents

Purpose.....	0
Background.....	1
Objectives	1
Scope.....	1
Methodology	1
Results of the Study	1
Finding 1 – Job Approval Authority and Training	2
Finding 2 – General Wetland Determination Methods (including labels).....	3
Finding 3 – Onsite and Offsite Wetland Identification Methods.....	4
Finding 4 – Appeal Process	5
Finding 5 – Data & Final Determination	6
Finding 6 – Wetland Certification Production Goals	7
Finding 7 - Use of Consultants in Wetland Determination Work	7
Recommendations for Deputy Chief of Science and Technology.....	8

Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of Recommendations.....	9
Appendix 2: NCWCI Level 2 & 3 – Measure Summary.....	11
Appendix 3: NCWCI Level 2 & 3 – NCWCI Checklist.....	17
Appendix 4: Employees Interview and Interview Summary.....	27
Appendix 5: Briefing of Draft.....	32

Purpose

This report is a result of a quality assurance effort in association with “North Central Wetlands Conservation Initiative (NCWCI) in the Prairie Pothole Region.” The oversight and evaluation is being conducted in a two-phased approach.

- Phase I - Has been completed and consisted of a quick response review which was conducted to analyze wetland determination procedures in the Prairie Pothole Region (final report was completed March 3, 2011).
- Phase II - Is being implemented and will include a series of reports such as this one, which outline progress being made within the NCWCI.

Background

Phase II includes approximately 80 certified wetland reviews (two in each state/fiscal year). Each review will consist of 10 sites (samples) that will review both onsite and offsite procedures. Upon completion of each state review, a report is written and an exit conference conducted with the State Conservationist, the State point of contact (POC) and any additional staff the STC designates to attend.

Objectives

The objective is to achieve consistent application of national policy in rendering technical determination (certified wetland determinations) within the initiative.

Scope

The scope of this project concentrates on the Prairie Pothole Region and includes portions of the following states: Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Methodology

Each state review consist of 10 sites that include offsite and onsite processes. A checklist consisting of 97 questions is used in the review of each site, with a state report following each review. At the end of the fiscal year a combined report will be generated for the states within NCWCI region that were reviewed. A conference call will be held with the State Conservationists and POCs to review the overall report. A total of eight reviews and reports will be generated.

Upon completion of all 8 reviews (total of 80 sites) a final report will be generated for the initiative. This report will include two years' worth of combined reviews on the four-state area and will be titled Phase II – Consistency.

The long range plan is to have States annually review each other (include writing a report with the Findings & Recommendations) with a team headed up by the National Wetland Compliance Specialist. The National Wetland Compliance Specialist should then review a percentage of those wetland certifications reviewed by the States and write a report with Findings and Recommendations.

Results of the Study

Two teams conducted this review with a combination of the following team members: Jason Outlaw, Jim Gertsma, Lee Davis, and Paul Flynn. This second round of reviews for South

Dakota included the counties of Miner, Jerauld, McCook, Hutchinson, Minnehaha, Lincoln, Lake and Turner. Data were collected April 15 - 19, 2013.

The samples were selected from a list of determinations completed by each Designated Conservationist. Samples were randomly selected from those that appeared to be viable determination requests. The results of the review are as follows:

Commendable:

The South Dakota staff were polite, helpful and professional. Any request made by the review team was serviced promptly.

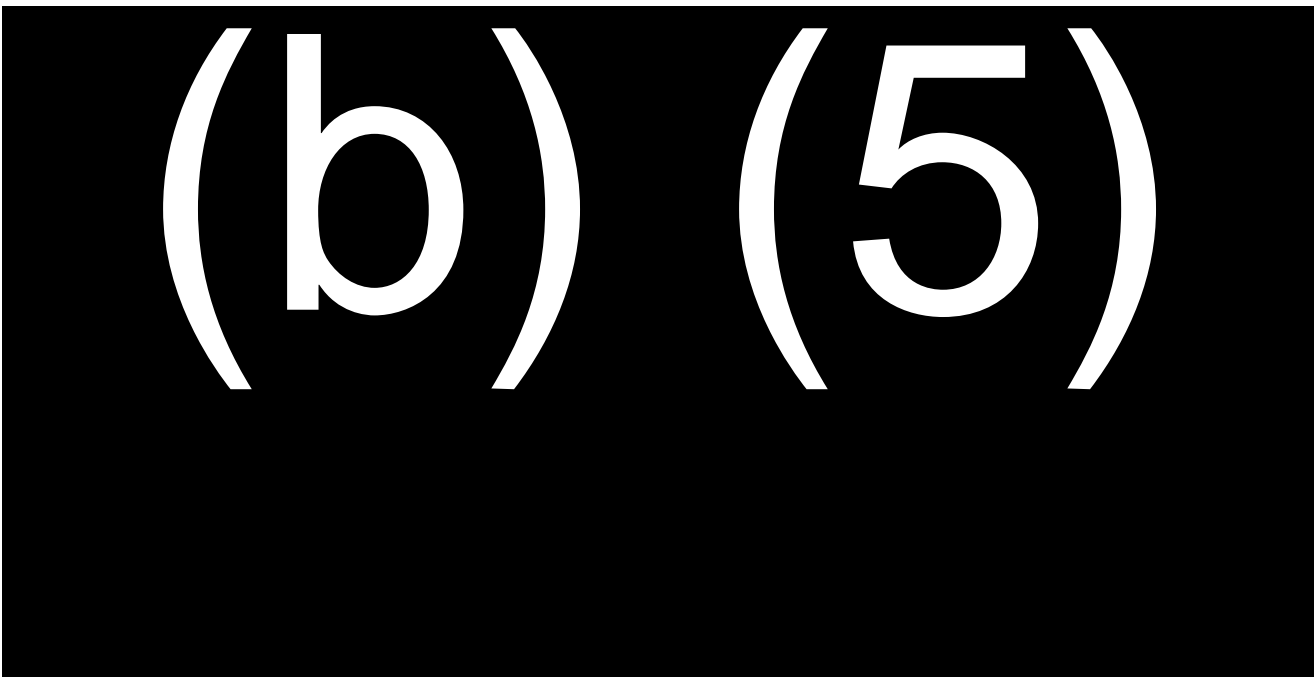
The staff demonstrated a desire to administer the wetland conservation compliance (WCC) authorities and responsibilities according to the language in the statute, regulations and internal agency policy.

The priority being given to Wetland Conservation Compliance by the State Conservationist and State Office staff was obvious throughout the review. The show of support was demonstrated by State Office staff who attended the reviews.

South Dakota's State office staff should be highly commended for taking the lead on development of State Off Site Mapping Methods (SOSM) that will be utilized for the North Central Wetlands Conservation Initiative. This draft document adheres to national policy.

Finding 1 – Job Approval Authority and Training

Some designated conservationists had not received adequate training as required. This lack of adequate training risks putting the agency in an indefensible position in wetland certification disputes and appeals.



(b) (5)

Finding 2 – General Wetland Determination Methods (including labels)

The methods utilized for wetland determinations (i.e. maps, numbering sites/sampling points, appropriate precipitation data sources, evidence & documentation of pre-1985 drainage, slide review data sheet, and the three level approach) failed to meet NRCS policy. This failure to meet policy risks putting the agency in an indefensible position in wetland appeals and lawsuits.

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

Finding 3 – Onsite and Offsite Wetland Identification Methods

The State Offsite Mapping (SOSM) or State Mapping Conventions (SMC) currently being used do not meet NRCS policy as they fail to require the independent consideration of all three factors. A revised version of the SOSM has been drafted but has been withheld from distribution through an agreement with NRCS Chief Weller. This risks putting the agency in an indefensible position in wetland certification disputes and appeals.

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

Finding 4 – Appeal Process

The appeals process is not being carried out according to policy. This risks putting the agency in an indefensible position in wetland certification disputes and appeals.

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

Finding 5 – Data & Final Determination

This review indicated that the correct wetland identification decisions (vegetation, soils and hydrology) and proper wetland conservation labels are not always being made, according to policy and the decisions are not consistently being documented sufficiently. The inconsistencies found by the reviewers risk putting the agency in an indefensible position in wetland certification disputes and appeals.

(b) (5)

Other Findings and Recommendations, indirectly related to the review checklist, for South Dakota State Conservationist (gathered during interview process or observed during the review).

Finding 6 – Wetland Certification Production Goals

During the interview process it was discovered that wetland certification production goals had unrealistically been set at approximately 200 per year for wetland specialists in one area. This could result in the avoidance of adverse decisions.

(b) (5)

Finding 7 - Use of Consultants in Wetland Determination Work

In an effort to provide a more timely decision, South Dakota has implemented a state policy allowing producers to hire private consultants that conduct most portions of a certified wetland determination. This policy includes the criteria that NRCS staff must field verify the consultants work (100%) prior to NRCS certifying the determination. The field verification is not necessarily the collection of additional data, but visual verification of the decision made in writing.

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

(b) (5)

APPENDIX 2

NCWCI LEVEL 2 & 3 – MEASURE SUMMARY

NCWCI - MEASURE SUMMARY		
SECOND REVIEW		
Success Rate =		
100%	99% -90%	89% -80%
79% -70%	69% -0%	
Measures (Expected Performance)	SOUTH DAKOTA	Comments
JAA and Training	91%	
Wetland Determination Request	100%	
Wetland Determination Methods	74%	
Offsite Methods- all Level 1 Determinations and Level 1 portion of Level 3 Determinations	50%	
Onsite Methods (inspection necessary) - Level 2-3 and Onsite Determination Required	89%	
Appeals	57%	
Reviewer Agreed with Determinations	71%	

NCWCI - MEASURE SUMMARY

SECOND REVIEW

Success Rate = 100% 99% -90% 89% -80% 79% -70% 69% -0% Not Applicable

		SOUTH DAKOTA	
Measures (Expected Performance)		Success Rate	Comments
JAA and Training		91%	
1	The Designated Conservationist attended the Phase 2 Wetland Delineation Training.	40%	
2	The individual completing the offsite determination work had the appropriate Job Approval Authority.	100%	
3	The individual completing the onsite determination work had the appropriate Job Approval Authority.	100%	
4	The individual completing the Certified Wetland Determination had the appropriate Job Approval Authority.	100%	
5	There was a State job-approval list.	100%	
12	The person assigning the label had job approval authority.	100%	
29	The 2nd tier staff had job approval authority on the state roster.	100%	
Wetland Determination Request (Admin)		100%	
6	If the request was on the AD-1026, box 10A, 10B or 10C was checked "yes".	100%	
7	There was a county log of AD-1026 request or an access database.	100%	
8	The request was entered on the county log or an access database.	100%	
Wetland Determination Methods (including labels)		74%	
32	A modification/justification of the standard wetland ID methods was made, per paragraph 23 of the Corps Manual and Section A – Introduction; Corps Manual as provided by NRCS policy the FSA Procedures (5-5).	33%	Soil probe used but not documented.
33	If yes, the purpose of the modification was explained as required in paragraph 23.	100%	
34	A base map was developed for the determination.	95%	No base map.
35	The base map was by Tract per regulations (either field per national policy or resulting from request for determination on 569).	100%	
36	The numbering of sites and sampling points was appropriate. i.e. FSA Field Number/Sampling Unit Number (e.g. 1,S1,A)	58%	No representative observation points identified.
37	The acres of the project area (entire project size) were placed on the base map per policy.	0%	Acres not placed on base map.
38	The FSA Variance (5-9) was followed (identify drainage prior to 1985 or post 1985 drainage).	89%	Not identified (tile shown on base map but nothing documented in file).
39	An appropriate precipitation data source was used for the pre-1985 remote data source.	100%	
40	The precipitation data source was noted and appropriate for the "current" remote data source.	50%	No precipitation analysis. Nothing indicated on normalization.

41	FSA Normal Circumstances, related to disturbance, were considered and documented as required in (5-5).	78%	NEC not met/not identified.
43	If 'yes', the drained conditions (considered the new normal circumstances) were considered in the wetland identification decision for each factor.	83%	No' due to veg.
44	If drainage was noted after 1985, it was documented.	100%	
45	The data sources considered were consistent with what is provided in the Corps Manual (items a - j in paragraph 54) and if so were the items considered noted on the COE forms.	43%	COE forms not used, also no soils or topo map.
46	A remote source (slide review) data-sheet was included and complete.	100%	
47	The facts support the decision on data sources used.	85%	No NWI, soil or topo map provided
48	The FSA Variance (5-11) was followed.	100%	
49	The three-level approach was considered by the agency expert (Designated Conservationist).	84%	Not field verified. Dug hole & did not consider 3-level approach.
50	If 'yes' for Level 1 determination, each of the three wetland diagnostic factors were assessed independently and remote data sources for each factor were cited.	0%	Off-site methods do not address veg.
51	If 'yes' for Level 1 determination, State Offsite Methods or State Mapping Conventions were used for one or more of the factors and they were applied appropriately.	94%	Off-site methods not used.
42	Evidence of pre-1985 drainage was documented.	82%	Inadequate documentation to support decision.
Offsite Methods- all Level 1 Determinations and Level 1 portion of Level 3 Determinations		50%	
52	The agency expert did document that he/she considered the unique definition of hydrophytic vegetation provided in the Food Security Act.	6%	Not considered or documented.
53	If variance (5-18) related to the veg. reference site was used, it was cited on the data sheet.	33%	Not cited
55	The agency expert documented that he/she considered the unique definition of hydric soils provided in the FSA.	6%	Not considered or documented.
56	If the process provided for in 7 CFR 12.31 and repeated in the FSA Variance (5-18) was used, it was used correctly and cited.	75%	Used but not cited
58	The agency expert documented that he/she considered the unique definition of wetland hydrology provided in the FSA Procedures (no set days of inundation or saturation).	12%	Not considered or documented.
60	The decisions were based on the data sources providing in the Corps Manual (Steps 4-8 of Section B – Preliminary Data Gathering and Synthesis) or SMC/SOSM.		
61	NRCS followed the 7-step procedures in paragraph 64, pg 46 of the COE Manual.		
62	This 7-step procedure was cited or supported by documentation.		
63	The field review did (quality assurance) support the decision for each of the three factors.		
64	The agency expert properly followed the three steps.	79%	No base map. Inadequate documentation.
65	If the sampling unit was over 5-acres, this variance was used and cited.	0%	No consideration on routine greater than 5 ac. Not cited.
67	The decision was made at the diagnostic factor scale (using the 3-factor approach).	95%	Decision based on soils only.
69	If an atypical situation was determined to occur for vegetation the methods were (par. 73; pages 74-77) applied appropriately and documented in the remarks section of COE form.	50%	Inadequate reference site not applied or documented. COE forms not used with undrained reference site for drained area.
70	Chapter 5 was used appropriately (can only be used for one of the three factors).	67%	Problem Area Methods mentioned but not used.

71	The Normal Environmental Conditions (NEC) decision was made at the diagnostic factor scale.	67%	Documentation doesn't narrow down to diagnostic factor scale. NEC considered for veg or soils only.
73	If problem area methods (Section G of the Corps Manual) were used, they were applied appropriately.		
74	Chapter 5 of the supplements were also used appropriately.	0%	Unaware of a Chapter 5
75	Were the representative observation point(s) identified on the base map.	0%	None
77	This variance was possible and applied correctly.		
78	The sampling methods (Basal areas, height, percent cover...) from the Corps Manual (standard method) were used, and if so, applied properly.	63%	Inadequate documentation &/or not used.
79	The plot size and shape from Chapter 2 of the appropriate supplement (pg 16) was used (alternative method) and the reason documented in the notes.	40%	Inadequate documentation &/or not used.
80	The plot size and shape was modified per the flexibility provisions in par. 23.		
81	The 50/20 rule was applied correctly.	100%	
82	The indicator was applied correctly from Chapter 2.	78%	One large sampling unit missed. No indicators considered.
83	The possibility of a false positive or false negative was considered in context with the unique FSA definition of hydrophytic vegetation and normal circumstances PRIOR to rendering a decision on this factor and documented.	31%	Inadequate documentation. False positive for veg considered but no decision rendered.
85	This variance was used and applied correctly.		
86	The location of the hydrology indicator observed was different than the representative observation point & the location of the hydrology indicator identified on the base map.		
87	The Corps indicators were applied correctly from Regional Supplements Chapter 4.	56%	Incorrectly/inadequately documented.
88	The flexibility provisions (par. 23) were utilized and documented as required.	0%	
89	Prior to decision making for this factor, the possibility of a false positive or false negative was considered in context with the unique FSA definition of wetland hydrology and normal circumstances and documented in notes.	50%	Considered but not documented.
91	The hydric soils factor was considered and followed according to policy.	89%	Doesn't consider variance 5-54.
92	If atypical, methods were in the atypical situation for soil (par. 74 COE Manual; pg. 77 – 79) and/or Chapter 5 was used appropriately and cited.	100%	
93	If a soil probe was used, par. 23 COE Manual was cited and the reason explained.	0%	Not cited.
94	If field indicators were used, they were applied correctly.	56%	No description supporting soils or not used.
96	The wetland identification decision was based on recent/current normal circumstances and not 1985 conditions?	100%	
97	The adjacent wetland sampling units within the project were joined into a single wetland identification map based on the boundaries of the original sampling units identified on the base map.	89%	Did not separate sampling units adequately.
Onsite Methods (inspection necessary) - Level 2-3 and Onsite Determination Required		89%	
9	The target date of 1985 was considered in the selection of the remote data sources.	100%	
10	The SOSM separated the wetland ID process (based on normal circumstances) from the determination of exemption (based on specific dates within 7CFR12.5(b)).	90%	Did not consider veg.

11	The remote date sources used targeted the time period in question.	100%	
13	The SOSM/SOM were used in the assignment of the proper Wetland Conservation (WC) label.	100%	
15	The 026(e) was completed correctly and completely.	55%	No field #'s. No dates. Certification date same as determination date.
16	The CPA-026(e) was signed by the Designated Conservationist.	100%	
17	A copy of 026(e) was provided to the producer/landowner.	100%	
18	A copy of the 026(e) was provided to Farm Sservice Agency.	100%	
19	The size and location of each area was identified.	80%	No acreages identified on final map.
20	The identification on the project map was carried over to the certified wetland determination map.	68%	SU#'s not on final map. No decision on base map.
Appeals		57%	
21	The "NFSAM FSA Wetland ID Procedures" was cited regarding wetland identification (step 1).	0%	No template letter. Not cited or included in letter.
22	The 7 CFR 12.2 & 12.5(b) was cited regarding labels (step 2).	0%	Not indicated or cited.
23	The Clean Water Act (CWA) paragraph was included.	100%	
24	The appeal process followed 7 CFR 614.	0%	Adverse decision not elevated to STC w/in 24 hrs.
25	The reconsideration visit was conducted in the field.		
26	The reconsideration was conducted by the original decision-maker (designated conservationist that issued the original 026).		
27	The adverse decision was elevated to the STC within 15 days of the site visit.		
28	The 2nd tier process (STC level) provided for an independent review (different NRCS staff decision maker).	100%	
30	Appeal rights to NAD or FSA were provided with the final determination.	100%	
31	If appealed to FSA, another site visit was conducted per 7CFR 614.	100%	
Reviewer Agreed with Determinations		71%	
14	The reviewer agreed with the assigned Wetland Conservation (WC) label based on CFR 12.5(b) and the NFSAM.	70%	PC mis-labeled, most likely FW. Inadequate notes to document PC call.
54	Data collected during the review was consistent with the original data sheets.	92%	
57	The facts supported the decision for hydric soils.	70%	No soil description to justify
59	The facts supported the decision for wetland hydrology.	85%	
66	The site visit associated with the QAR supports the numbers & locations of the sampling units used in the determination.	82%	
68	The facts support the decision to use or not use Atypical Situations.	79%	Atypical should have been used; no reference site
72	The facts support the decision to use or not use Problem Area methods.	87%	
76	The facts support the number and location of representative observation point(s) used in the determination.	0%	No observation points

84	The reviewer agreed with the hydrophytic vegetation decision (reviewer must consider NC and the FSA definition of hydrophytic vegetation).	58%	Minimal documentation; no reference site
90	The hydrophytic soils factor was considered and followed according to policy.	74%	Not adequately documented
95	The facts support the decision on hydric soil decision based on the FSA unique mandate of (1) a predominance and (2) the FSA definition of a hydric soil.	82%	

APPENDIX 3

NCWCI Level 2 & 3 – CHECK LIST

Review Number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
State (Use two letter symbol):	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD	SD
County:	Miner	Miner	Jerauld	Jerauld	Jerauld	McCook	Hutchinson	Hutchinson	McCook	Minnehaha	Minnehaha	Lincoln	Lincoln	Lincoln	Lake	Lake	Lake	Turner	Turner	Turner
Tract Number:	8857	1636	2824	2652	1700	4546	9700	506	3731	1950	376	828	3757	2377	3986	3183	459	851, site #3	851, site #2	3664
Date of Review:	04/17/13	04/17/13	04/18/13	04/18/13	04/18/13	04/15/13	04/16/13	04/16/13	04/15/13	04/15/13	04/15/13	04/18/13	04/18/13	04/18/13	04/15/13	04/15/13	04/15/13	04/17/13	04/17/13	04/17/13
Participant Name:	Colin Wunder	Daryle Kuhle	Ranch Corp Firesteel	Swenson Partnership	Al Meier	Leitheiser, G and R.	Oak Lane Colony	Phil Hofer	Boyd DeKramer	Jeff Oyten	Greg Van Zanten	VR & Sons/Barthels	Buse Brothers	John Stratmeyer	Tom Park	Minor Enterprises	Thomas Heirigs	Bernard Poppenga	Bernard Poppenga	Orlyn Kriens
Certified Determination made by:	Kezar	Vaillancourt	Maras	Maras	Maras	Kory Kezar	Deke Hobbick	Deke Hobbick	Nyle Herbener	Nathan Blankers	Nathan Blankers	Andrew Champa	Kevin Luebke	Mary Lou Lacey	Darrell Granbois	Craig Veldkamp	Jeremy Todoroff	Miller	Miller	Champa
Certification Date:	01/07/13	01/08/13	10/04/12	09/21/12	11/16/12	10/04/12	11/05/12	10/18/12	01/03/13	12/17/12	12/11/12	07/10/13	08/10/12	01/07/13	12/11/12	11/17/12	01/08/13	06/16/12	06/16/12	01/30/13
Reviewed by:	Outlaw	Outlaw	Outlaw	Outlaw	Outlaw	Davis	Davis	Davis	Davis	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma	Gertsma
Type:	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	Off-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site	On-Site

NCWCI Oversight and Evaluation

FOR OFFSITE REVIEW (LEVEL 1) ANSWER ONLY THE QUESTIONS IN GREEN

I. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW																					
1	Did the Designated Conservationist attend the Phase 2 Wetland Delineation Training?	N	Y	N	N	n	N	y	y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
2	Did the individual completing the offsite determination work have the appropriate Job Approval Authority?	Y	Y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	Did the individual completing the onsite determination work have the appropriate Job Approval Authority?	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4	Did the individual completing the Certified Wetland Determination have the appropriate Job Approval Authority?	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5	Was there a State job-approval roster?	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

6	If the request was on the AD-1026, were any of the boxes (10A, 10B or 10C) checked	Y	Y	X	Y	X	X	x	y	Y	X	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	X	Y
7	Was there a county log of AD-1026 request or access database?	Y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
8	Was the request entered on county log or access database?	Y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
9	Was the target date of 1985 considered in the selection of the remote data sources reflective of conditions prior to 1985?	Y	Y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
10	Did the SOSM (or offsite methods used) separate the wetland ID process (based on normal circumstances) from the determination of exemption (based on specific dates within 7CFR12.5(b)).	Y	Y	y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Labels																					
11	Did the remote data sources used target the time period in	Y	Y	y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
12	Did the person assigning the label have job approval authority?	Y	Y	y	Y	y	Y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
13	Were state off-site methods (or state mapping conventions) used in the assignment of the proper Wetland Conservation (WC) label?	X	X	x	x	x	y	Y	y	x	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

14	Does the reviewer agree with the assigned WC label based on CFR 12.5(b) and the NFSAM?	Y	Y	y	y	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
CPA-026 & Transmittal Letter																					
15	Was the 026(e) completed correctly and completely?	Y	Y	y	Y	y	y	N	N	y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
16	Was the CPA-026(e) signed by Designated Conservationist?	Y	Y	y	Y	y	y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
17	Was a copy of 026(e) provided to the producer /landowner?	Y	Y	y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
18	Was a copy of the 026(e) provided to FSA?	Y	Y	y	Y	y	y	Y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
19	Was the size and location of each area identified?	N	N	y	Y	y	N	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
20	Was the identification on the base map carried over to the certified wetland determination map?	N	N	x	N	y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
21	Was the "NFSAM FSA Wetland ID Procedures" cited in transmittal letter regarding wetland identification (step 1)?	N	N	n	n	n	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
22	Was 7 CFR 12.2 & 12.5(b) cited regarding labels (step 2)?	N	N	n	n	n	N	N	n	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
23	Was the Clean Water Act paragraph included?	Y	Y	y	y	y	Y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Appeals																					
24	Did the appeal process follow 7 CFR 614?	X	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
25	Was the reconsideration visit conducted in the field?	X	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
26	Was the reconsideration conducted by the original decision-maker (designated conservatorist that issued the original 026)?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
27	Was the adverse decision elevated to the STC within 15 days of the site visit?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
28	Did the 2 nd tier process (STC level) provide for an independent review (different than the original NRCS staff decision maker)?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
29	Did the 2 nd tier staff have job approval authority on the state roster?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
30	Were appeal rights to NAD or FSA provided with the final determination letter?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
31	If appealed to FSA, was another site visit conducted per 7CFR 614?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
B	WETLAND DETERMINATION METHODS																				
Section A - Introduction																					
32	Was a modification /justification of the standard wetland ID methods made, per paragraph 23 of the Corps Manual and Section A- Introduction; Corps Manual as is provided by NRCS policy the FSA Procedures (5-5)?	N	N	x	N	x	X	x	x	x	X	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	Y	X

33	If yes, was the purpose of the modification explained as required in paragraph 23?	X	X	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	Y	X
Section B - Preliminary Data Gathering and Synthesis																					
34	Was a base map developed for the determination?	Y	Y	N	y	y	Y	y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
35	Was the base map by the Tract per regulations either Field per national policy or resulting from request for determination on 569)?	Y	Y	X	y	y	Y	y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
36	Was the numbering of sites and sampling points appropriate? i.e. FSA Field Number/Sampling Unit Number (e.g. 1,51,A)	N	N	x	y	y	Y	y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y
37	Were the acres of the project area (entire project size) placed on the base map per policy?	N	N	x	n	n	N	n	n	n	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
38	Was the FSA Variance (5-9) followed? (identify drainage prior to 1985 or post 1985 drainage)	Y	Y	x	y	y	Y	y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
39	Was an appropriate precipitation data source used for the pre-1985 remote data source?	Y	Y	x	Y	y	Y	x	x	y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X
40	Was the precipitation data source noted and appropriate for the "current" remote data source?	N	Y	X	N	N	y	y	y	y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	X	X	X	N	N	N

41	Were FSA Normal Circumstances, related to disturbance, considered and documented as required in (3-1 thru 3-5)?	Y	Y	y	y	y	N	x	x	n	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
42	Was the evidence of pre-1985 drainage documented?	X	Y	x	y	y	y	x	y	n	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
43	If 'yes', were the drained conditions (considered the new normal circumstances) considered in the wetland identification decision for each factor?	X	Y	x	y	y	N	x	y	x	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	X	Y	X	X	N
44	If drainage was noted after 1985, was it documented?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	Y
45	Were the data sources considered consistent with what is provided in the Corps Manual (items a - j in paragraph 54) and if so were the items considered noted on the COE forms?	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	x	x	x	N	N	X	X	X	N	N	N	N	N	N
46	Was a remote source (slide review) data-sheet included and completed?	Y	Y	x	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
47	Do the facts support the decision on data sources used?	Y	Y	y	y	y	Y	y	Y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
	Section C: Selection of Method																				
48	Was the FSA Variance (5-11) followed?	X	X	x	x	x	Y	y	y	y	X	Y	Y	X	Y	X	X	X	Y	Y	Y
49	Was the three-level approach considered by the agency expert (Designated Conservationist)?	Y	Y	y	y	y	Y	y	y	y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y

Section D - Routine Determinations																					
50	If this is a Level 1 determination, were each of the three wetland diagnostic factors assessed independently and remote data sources for each factor cited?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
51	If this is a Level 1 or 3 determination, were State Offsite Methods or State Mapping Conventions used for one or more of the factors and if so were they applied appropriately?	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	X	X	N
For ALL Level 1 & Level 3 determinations and the Level 1 (offsite) portion of the Level 3 determinations:																					
Vegetation																					
52	Did the agency expert document that he/she considered the unique definition of hydrophytic vegetation provided in the Food Security Act?	X	Y	x	n	n	N	n	n	n	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
53	If variance (5-41) related to the veg. reference site was used, was it cited on the data sheet?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	n	x	X	X	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	X	Y
54	Are data that was collected during the review consistent with the original data sheets?	y	Y	X	X	X	x	y	X	x	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Soils																					
55	Did the agency expert document that he/she considered the unique definition of hydric soils provided in the FSA?	X	Y	X	n	n	n	n	n	n	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N

56	If the process provided for in 7 CFR 12.31 and repeated in the FSA Variance (5-18) was used, was it correctly and cited?	X	X	N	x	N	x	y	x	x	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	X	X	X	X	Y
57	Do the facts support the decision for hydric soils?	N	N	Y	N	y	Y	y	N	n	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Hydrology																				
58	Did the agency expert document that he/she considered the unique definition of wetland hydrology provided in the FSA Procedures (no set days of inundation or saturation)?	X	Y	N	n	n	N	y	n	n	X	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
59	Do the facts support the decision for wetland hydrology?	y	y	Y	y	y	n	y	y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
	If the Corps off-site methods were used for one or more of the factors, rather than NRCS state off-site methods:																				
60	Were the decisions based on the data sources providing in the Corps Manual (Steps 4-8 of Section B - Preliminary Data Gathering and Synthesis)?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
61	Did NRCS follow the 7-step procedures in paragraph 64, pg 46 of the COE Manual?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
62	Was this 7-step procedure cited or supported by documentation?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
63	Do the facts support the decision for each of the three factors?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

		Subsection 2 – Onsite Inspection Necessary (Level 2 and Level 3 determinations) (Either all or part onsite)																			
64	Did the agency expert properly follow the three steps?	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	X	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
65	If the sampling unit is over 5-acres, was this variance used and cited?	X	X	N	N	x	x	x	x	x	X	N	X	X	N	N	N	N	X	X	X
66	Did the site visit associated with the QAR support the numbers & locations of the sampling units?	Y	Y	x	y	y	y	y	y	Y	X	X	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y
67	Was the decision made at the diagnostic factor scale?	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
68	Do the facts support the decision to use or not use Atypical Situations?	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y
		Vegetation																			
69	If an atypical situation was determined to occur for vegetation were the methods (par. 73; pages 74-77) applied appropriately and documented in the remarks section of COE form?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	Y	Y	X	X	X	Y	N	Y	X	N	X	N	N
70	Was Chapter 5 used appropriately (can only be used for one of the three factors)?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	Y	X	X	X	Y	X	X	N	X	X
71	Was the Normal Environmental Conditions (NEC) decision made at the diagnostic factor scale?	Y	Y	Y	y	y	x	x	x	x	X	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
72	Do the facts support the decision to use or not use Problem Area methods?	Y	Y	Y	y	y	x	y	y	y	X	Y	Y	X	X	Y	Y	Y	N	N	X
73	If problem area methods (Section G of the Corps Manual) were used, were they applied appropriately?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

74	Was Chapter 5 of the supplements also used appropriately?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	n	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
75	Were the representative observation point(s) identified on the base map?	N	N	x	n	n	x	n	n	n	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
76	Do the facts support the number and location of representative observation point(s)?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	n	X	X	X	X	X	N	N	N	N	N	N
77	If variance (5-48) was used, was it applied correctly?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
78	Was the sampling methods for vegetation (Basal areas, height, percent cover...) from the Corps Manual (routine method) used, and if so, was it applied properly?	Y	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	Y	Y	Y	X	N	N	N	Y	X	X
79	Was the plot size and shape from Chapter 2 of the appropriate supplement used (alternative method) and was the reason documented in the notes?	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	N	N	N	Y	Y	X
80	Was the plot size and shape modified per the flexibility provisions in par. 23?	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
81	Was the 50/20 rule applied correctly?	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	Y	Y	X
82	Were the indicators applied correctly from Chapter 2?	Y	x	y	y	y	x	x	x	x	X	Y	Y	X	X	N	X	X	Y	N	X
83	Was the possibility of a false positive or false negative considered in context with the unique FSA definition of hydrophytic vegetation and normal circumstances PRIOR to rendering a decision on this factor and was it documented?	Y	Y	Y	y	y	x	x	n	n	X	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
84	Did the reviewer agree with the hydrophytic vegetation decision (reviewer must consider NC and the FSA definition of hydrophytic vegetation)?	Y	Y	Y	Y	y	n	y	n	y	X	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N

		Wetland Hydrology																				
85	Was this variance (5-62) used and applied correctly?	X	x	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
86	If the location of the hydrology indicator observed is different than the representative observation point was the location of the hydrology indicator identified on the base map?	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
87	Were the Corps indicators applied correctly from Regional Supplements Chapter 4?	y	y	X	y	y	x	y	n	y	X	Y	N	X	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	
88	Were the flexibility provisions (par. 23) utilized and if so was documentation provided as required?	x	x	X	x	x	x	n	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
89	Prior to decision making for the hydrology factor, was the possibility of a false positive or false negative considered in context with the unique FSA definition of wetland hydrology and normal circumstances documented in notes?	Y	Y	Y	y	y	x	y	n	x	X	N	N	Y	N	X	X	X	N	N	N	
90	Do the facts support the decision on wetland hydrology (reviewer must consider NC and the FSA definition of wetland hydrology of hydrophytic vegetation)?	y	y	Y	Y	y	n	y	N	y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	
		Hydric Soils																				
91	Was the hydric soils factor considered and followed according to policy?	Y	Y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y
92	If atypical, were the methods in the atypical situation for soils (par. 74 COE Manual; pg. 77 – 79) and/or was Chapter 5 used appropriately and cited?	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	
93	If a soil probe was used, was par. 23 COE Manual cited and the reason explained?	N	N	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	N	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
94	If field indicators were used, were they applied correctly?	Y	N	x	y	x	x	x	N	x	X	Y	X	X	X	Y	X	N	Y	N	X	

95	Do the facts support the decision on hydric soil based on the FSA unique mandate of (1) a predominance and (2) the FSA definition of a hydric soil?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	n	Y	N	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	X	Y	N	Y
96	Was the wetland identification decision based on normal circumstances and not 1985 conditions?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
97	Were the adjacent wetland sampling units within the project joined into a single wetland identification map based on the boundaries of the original sampling units identified on the base map?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	x	Y	Y	n	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SD Question	Was the consultant data that was utilized for the determination field-verified for accuracy? Answer in remarks below: How do you think this is working and do you think this is saving time?	X	X	x	Y	x	x	x	n	x	N	X	X	X	X	X	N	N	Y	Y	X
									Not if field verification is required 100% of the time. Consultant work.												

APPENDIX 4 – EMPLOYEES INTERVIEWED AND INTERVIEW SUMMARY

EMPLOYEES INTERVIEWED

EMPLOYEE & TITLE	INTERVIEW METHOD/DATE
Jerry Jasmer, SRC – State Office	VTC – April 23
Deke Hobbick, Wetland Specialist – Parkston FO/Pierre AO	Teleconference – April 23
Steve Meyer, AC – Brookings AO	VTC – April 23
Kory Kezar, Wetland Specialist – Salem FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 23
Mary Lou Lacey, Wetland Specialist – Sioux Falls FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 23
Nathan Blankers, Wetland Specialist – Sioux Falls FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 23
Craig Veldkamp, Wetland Specialist – Brookings FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 24
Kelly Stout, AC – Pierre AO	Teleconference – April 24
Eugene Preston, Wetland Specialist – Sioux Falls FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 24
Andrew Champa, Wetland Specialist – Canton FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 24
Jeremy Todoroff, Wetland Specialist – Flandreau FO/Brookings AO	VTC – April 25
Kevin Luebke, Biologist – State Office	VTC – April 25
Mary Ellen Vaillancourt, Wetland Specialist – Huron FO/Pierre AO	VTC – April 25
Nyle Herbener, Wetland Specialist – Canton FO/Brookings AO	Teleconference – April 25

Full time Wetland Specialist

State Office or Area Office

Part time (20/year) Specialist

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

General Information

From the interviewer's perspective, all South Dakota staff were cooperative and appeared to be honest with their answers. The majority of staff interviewed were full time 'Wetland Specialist' with past experience in making wetland determinations and they seemed to enjoy making wetland determinations. However, there was one part time (20 determinations/year) employee that did not feel comfortable conducting wetland determinations and felt lacking in the training, skills and experience needed to be proficient and felt like they were set up to fail. This employee explained the majority of their past work experience was working in planning/contracting and they would be willing to fill in behind an employee that was strictly working wetlands by assisting that office with planning/contracting work.

Wetlands Training

When asked about wetlands training received, most employees felt good about the quality of training they have received from NHQ even though the amount of training each employee has received was quite varied. With four out of ten receiving the 'Advanced' course prior to Phase II Training but said they were scheduled for Phase II within a few weeks. One employee states they have not had Phase I or Phase II (in fact stated that they were not even aware of the courses) but did have the 'Advanced' course (same employee mentioned above that does not feel comfortable making determinations). One part time wetland employee stated that when asked to work an additional county they had asked for additional training and was told that the additional training was for wetland specialists, then they asked again a year ago and was told that the training would be coming out when they got together and figured it out.

Information asked and received

This group of questions pertained to who the employees called for information and how they felt about the answers they received:

- Who do you call when you have wetland questions? The answers to this question varied from a peer to Area or State Office staff (one employee said Brookings AO will try to figure out an answer among themselves).
- Do you get a timely answer? All answered "yes" especially at the area office....one employee said it could be a struggle from state office.
- Do you feel like the answers are based on laws, regulations and policy? These answers were split between yes, no, and not sure; with most employees saying yes (one person saying it was difficult to get anything in writing from the state office).
- Do you feel answers given are consistent within the area/state? These answers were also split with most answering yes (two employees answered yes across the area but not the state).

Quality Assurance

When asked questions pertaining to quality assurance the following was stated:

- All answered no QAR's were taking place from the state office; most employees stated that last year a peer to peer review took place reviewing a few counties each.
- Answers received indicated that very little quality assurance was taking place within the office, other than asking questions as needed. One employee said they were reviewed for the first few months when they became a full time wetland specialist. One employee (the one mentioned above that does not feel adequate being a wetland specialist) indicated all of their work is reviewed.
- Quality assurance for Contractors is not being done on 100% of their determinations, including field work, as required by the state office. They are all aware of the state policy requirements. Most determinations are quickly reviewed looking for 'red flags' and reviewers do not go to the field unless it is a questionable call.... due to workload and due to the fact that the majority of Consultants are retired NRCS's with vast amounts of wetland knowledge. However, one employee said an email went out saying only 10% had to be checked.
- Most employees were not aware of a wetland determination being overturned but have had to send Consultants work back on several occasions to correct an item or two. One employee has had numerous problems with two Consultants turning back several determinations to be re-worked. One employee knew of 4 or 5 overturned NRCS employee determinations in the last year that should have been "CW".

Appeals

During the interview process when asked about the reconsideration/appeal process some employees did not appear to understand the process. One employee stated, "We are disconnected on this issue", with others not understanding there has been a change in the process for SD and now if the reconsideration remains adverse the final determination is sent from the State Office. Most understand their portion of the appeal process but very little understand once the reconsideration leaves their office.

Pressure to NOT render an adverse decision or expansion of wetland acreage

- All employees said they did not feel pressure to NOT render an adverse decision from the agency with two saying they did feel some pressure from the producers but would still make the correct call. A few felt pressure from themselves to get it done or get it correct. One employee felt NRCS is becoming laxer (i.e. a guy wanted to clean out a natural channel next to a wetland & the reviewer wanted to give them a minimal effect call but when they spoke to a full time specialist they told him to have the producer check with the COE and if they said it was ok then we would accept the COE answer).
- Most employees said they did not feel pressure to expand wetland acreage; however one said they did feel pressure especially if they knew their work would be reviewed. One employee felt they were getting mixed signals from the state office.

Wetland Determination Request Timeframes

When asked how long it takes to complete a wetland request on an AD-1026, including both with the backlog and without a backlog. Most employees answered one to two plus years with a backlog, and one day to one week without a backlog.

Consultants

- Only one employee said they are checking 100% of the Consultants work thru a process that removes the 'home' specialist from reviewing them by having another specialist come over from another office. Most employees are only checking 'red flags' or close calls with very few of those actually going to the field; however a few employees indicated they do a 'drive by'.
- Most of the employees feel like the Consultants are working out and they are saving us time (by assisting with the backlog especially if NRCS doesn't have to review 100% of their work). All employees mentioned the fact that when a producer comes for a determination (because they are ready to tile) it gives them the option to hire a Consultant to complete the determination in a few days as opposed to a few years. Most employees feel like the retired NRCS's do a better job than the non-NRCS Consultants. One employee expressed it was 'uncomfortable' trying to do quality assurance because the Consultant use to be the DC in that office.

Production Goals and Backlog

- Employees indicated they annually receive 30-400 requests for determinations per office.
- All employees have production goals in their performance plan and they range from (20 part time) to 200 (full time).
- When asked if they felt their goals were reasonable the majority answered 'no' especially if they had to uphold national and state policies/procedures (several indicated that they were not filling out the COE forms). Most felt they could conduct 60-150 if all national and state policies/procedures had to be followed.

State Office and Area Office reviews

- Most agreed that 100% field verification of Consultant work is not actually occurring.....with one Area Office making the statement that 100% of Consultant work is checked.
- All agree the current wetland goals are too high and should be around 80/year.
- All believe Consultants are an asset to NRCS and most agree that they do save time.
- Most agree that full time Specialist's do the best job over part time Specialists.
- The Specialists were told, not asked, that they were going to do wetland determinations.

Employee Suggestions/Concerns

- One person designated to answer wetland questions so everyone would get the same message.
- More consistent training (the training the state office and area office put on jointly was a disaster the instructors could not agree) from Lee Davis.
- Consultants should receive training and 100% quality assurance up to a certain number. Once they have had the training & showed a proficiency in making determinations allow them to make the entire determination.
- Have several additional full time employees working only on wetlands instead of designating 20 determinations for Soil Conservationists. This would require less hand holding and employees would be more proficient.
- If/when the weekly wetlands teleconferences are continued include the part time employees.
- Policy/procedures from the state office should be in writing.
- Would like to see one manual for wetland policy/procedures plus the mapping conventions.
- Not good idea to put Biologist in charge of wetlands should be SRC.
- How are we going to deal with the thousands of NI labels that are out there? How are other states dealing with this issue?
- Would like to see more on off-site reviews.
- One State Office employee suggested training only from CNTSC, for consistency sake.
- State Office employee believes the State Office should lead the QAR process, including selection of the offices to be reviewed with participation of the area office.
- State Office employee suggests 2-3 Specialists handle the Consultant verification full time versus using part time employees.
- State Office employee suggests that NHQ needs to ensure the NFSAM is in line with regulations.

Considerations based on review information

- State Office should be involved in QAR process; most effective method is to check a percentage of what the Area Offices are checking.
- Based on the interviewee response, there appears to be a big discrepancy in workload from one area to another. If one has not already been done it might be a good idea to conduct a workload analysis which may indicate a need to either move employees to where the workload is or detail employees during high workload times of the year.
- Part time wetland specialists need to be eliminated and instead of having 40 part time have a few more doing full time (that want to do it full time, received the training and have demonstrated proficiency) with placement dependent on workload.
- The part time wetlands specialists are not included in the weekly wetlands teleconferences and if they continue to be required to complete wetland determinations they need to be receiving the same information.

- Currently both areas are doing weekly staff conferences on wetlands. Would be best if one weekly staff conference led by SO that includes both areas.
- Regular training led by NHQ needs to take place.
- Production goals need to be lowered to around 80-100/year (200 is impossible to do with any QA).
- If consultants are going to be allowed to continue to assist with wetland determinations; it might be best for the review process if a couple of dedicated people that strictly review the Consultants work verses every office reviewing consultant work (placing and number dependent on workload, also would take the burden off the local specialists).
- If consultants are going to be allowed to continue to assist with wetland determinations; require the same training as NRCS employees and then require them to demonstrate proficiency before they are added to the consultant list.

APPENDIX 5 – Briefing of Draft

A briefing of the draft version of this report was completed on September 10, 2013.

Those present included:

Jeff Zimprich, State Conservationist

Kevin Lubke, Biologist

Jerry Jasmer, State Resource Conservationist

Lee Davis, CNTC Biologist

Paul Flynn, Prairie Pothole Wetland Project Manager

Jim Gertsma, Area Resource Soil Scientist, Iowa

Jason Outlaw, Acting National Wetland Compliance Specialist

Teresa Stewart, O&E Staff