

**STATE GUIDELINES
FOR THE
CONSERVATION COST-SHARE PROGRAM**

**SOIL HEALTH INITIATIVE
PROGRAM YEAR 21**

Program Year Begins: August 19, 2019
Program Year Ends: March 31, 2021

Allocation Period Begins: August 19, 2019
Allocation Period Ends: March 31, 2020

Oklahoma Conservation Commission
in cooperation with
Oklahoma's 84 Conservation Districts

Approved by the Conservation Commission on, August 1, 2019.

I GENERAL

The Conservation Cost-Share Program Soil Health Initiative (SHI) will focus on the natural resource concerns of:

- soil erosion caused by wind and water due to poor land practices
- unprotected soils and decreased infiltration
- soil health degradation caused by a loss of organic matter
- erosion and compaction due to poor land management practices
- water quality degradation due to excess nutrients and sediments.

Conservation district participation in the SHI is voluntary. Districts that choose to participate shall work together based on the 21 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) teams (see attached). Conservation districts within each team shall establish a Soil Health Initiative Work Group (SHIWG) made up of conservation district directors and staff. Working with your team's district conservationist a NRCS technical representative will be selected to work with the SHIWG.

The Conservation Commission herein establishes the complete list and description of the SHI policies and conservation practices approved for use by conservation districts during Program Year 21. See Section II for the approved list of conservation practices with their respective cost-share rates. State cost-share average costs (unit cost) are based on Oklahoma NRCS data.

Any exceptions from these established SHI policies and guidelines shall be approved by the Conservation Commission.

II ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

A. Soil Health Initiative

The Conservation Commission allocates \$1,008,000 of FY 2019 appropriations to the Conservation Cost-Share Fund for the purposes of providing cost-share payments to eligible participants for implementing approved soil health cost-share conservation practices.

B. Conservation District Allocation

The amount of funds allocated to each conservation district from the FY 2019 appropriation for the Soil Health Initiative Program Year 21 is \$12,000. These funds will be available to conservation districts on August 19, 2019. Allocations for conservation districts that choose not to participate will be returned to the Conservation Commission Cost-Share Fund.

III POLICIES

A. Soil Health Initiative Work Group (SHIWG)

Each participating conservation district board must designate a SHIWG member that is authorized to make decisions on behalf of the conservation district. The

work group member can be a conservation district board member or a conservation district employee. The primary duties of a SHIWG member is to vote the interest of their conservation district board and report monthly on SHIWG activities. Conservation district board members participating in the SHI are not eligible to be a member of the SHIWG.

The SHIWG shall work with the NRCS team district conservationist to designate a work group technical representative. The designated technical representative will assist in developing conservation plans and determining the need for conservation practices. The representative will also be responsible for design and layout of approved conservation practices, determining compliance with approved standards and specifications, and certifying conservation practice quantities and completion of conservation practices.

Members of the SHIWG shall select a work group leader and recorder. The leader will be responsible for conducting SHIWG meetings and communications. The recorder will be responsible for recording the minutes of SHIWG meeting.

B. Allocation Period

The allocation period shall start August 19, 2019 and end March 31, 2020. Any funds allocated to conservation districts and not obligated during the allocation period for Program Year 21 will be released by the conservation district and made available for reallocation by the Conservation Commission. Funds become obligated to a participant after approval of the application by the SHIWG and a performance agreement has been signed and dated by the conservation district SHIWG member and the participant.

C. Conservation Practices

Each SHIWG may select any of the approved cost-share conservation practices within the SHI for inclusion in their guidelines. The selection should be based on practices that will best address the SHI's natural resource concerns. Cost-share practices shall be implemented according to NRCS standards and specifications.

D. Average Costs

State average cost (unit cost) for these practices is based on Oklahoma NRCS data. In order for a variance to be considered the request must be in writing and accompanied by supporting data compiled by the SHIWG. The variance rate must be approved by the Conservation Commission prior to the SHIWG's approval of applications and performance agreements being signed.

E. Cost-Share Payments

The minimum cost-share payment amount that shall be made to any participant from these funds is \$100. The maximum cost-share payment amount that shall be made to any participant from these funds is \$5,000.

F. Cost-Share Rate

The Conservation Commission establishes a cost-share rate of 85% for SHI practices.

G. Eligibility

Applicants for the SHI must be a conservation district cooperators with a conservation plan. Applicants approved in Program Year 20 cannot be approved for the same conservation practice on the same property in Program Year 21.

Conservation Commissioners, Conservation Commission staff, conservation district employees or the spouses of any of these people shall not be eligible to participate in the SHI.

Conservation district directors are eligible to participate in SHI. Due to the limited amount of funds available for Program Year 21 individual directors should give careful consideration to public perception when making their decision to participate in the Program. If the local board votes to allow board members to apply for Program Year 21 the guidelines below will be followed.

1. Individual conservation district board members applying cannot discuss any element of the Cost-Share Program including but not limited to practices, rates, average costs, selection criteria, application approval/disapprovals, cost-share payments, and extensions.
2. Individual conservation district board members applying for the Cost-Share Program must abstain from voting on all elements of the Program.
3. Individual conservation district board members cannot use their position as a conservation district board member to improve or elevate their individual chances of becoming a successful applicant.

H. Agreements

All Program Year 21 performance agreements must be signed and dated by the SHIWG member that represents the participant's home conservation district on or before March 31, 2020. All Program Year 21 performance agreements must be completed and the check in the hand of the participant on or before March 31, 2021. Installation of conservation practices cannot begin until an effective performance agreement is in place. A performance agreement becomes effective on the last date of signature. Each participant should have only one performance agreement.

Each participant is required to sign a maintenance agreement. Completion of the maintenance agreement and signature of the participant are required prior to the disbursement of the cost-share payment.

IV APPROVED CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Contained in this section is a list of all conservation practice's approved for use in the Program Year 21. The SHIWG shall only use conservation practices listed here unless a special request is approved by the Conservation Commission. In order for a conservation practice special request to be considered the request must be in writing and accompanied by supporting documentation. The special request must be approved

by the Conservation Commission prior to the SHIWG's approval of applications and performance agreements being signed.

State average cost (unit cost) for these practices is based on Oklahoma NRCS data. In order for a variance to be considered the request must be in writing and accompanied by supporting data compiled by the conservation district. The variance rate must be approved by the Conservation Commission prior to performance agreements being signed.

Below are the conservation practices approved for Program Year 21.

327 – Conservation Cover

Definition: Establishing and maintain permanent vegetative cover.

Purpose:

- Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion and sedimentation.
- Reduce ground and surface water quality degradation by nutrients and surface water quality degradation by sediment.
- Reduce emissions of particulate matter (PM), PM precursors, and greenhouse gases.
- Enhance wildlife, pollinator, and beneficial organism habitat.
- Improve soil health.

328 – Conservation Crop Rotation

Definition: A planned sequence of crops grown on the same ground over a period of time (i.e. the rotation cycle).

Purpose:

- Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion.
- Maintain or increase soil health and organic matter content.
- Reduce water quality degradation due to excess nutrients.
- Improve soil moisture efficiency.
- Reduce the concentration of salts and other chemicals from saline seeps.
- Reduce plant pest pressures.
- Provide feed and forage for domestic livestock.
- Provide food and cover habitat for wildlife, including pollinator forage, and nesting.

329 – Residue and Tillage Management, No Till

Definition: Limiting soil disturbance to manage the amount, orientation and distribution of crop and plant residue on the soil surface year around.

Purpose:

- Reduce sheet, rill and wind erosion and excessive sediment in surface waters.
- Reduce tillage-induced particulate emissions.
- Maintain or increase soil health and organic matter content.
- Increase plant-available moisture.
- Reduce energy use.
- Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.

338 – Prescribed Burning

Definition: Controlled fire applied to a predetermined area.

- Purpose:
- Control undesirable vegetation.
 - Prepare sites for harvesting, planting or seeding.
 - Control plant disease.
 - Reduce wildfire hazards.
 - Improve wildlife habitat.
 - Improve plant production quantity and/or quality.
 - Remove slash and debris.
 - Enhance seed and seedling production.
 - Facilitate distribution of grazing and browsing animals.
 - Restore and maintain ecological sites.

340 – Cover Crop

Definition: Grasses, legumes, and forbs planted for seasonal vegetative cover.

- Purpose:
- Reduce erosion from wind and water.
 - Maintain or increase soil health and organic matter content.
 - Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excessive soil nutrients.
 - Suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles.
 - Improve soil moisture use efficiency.
 - Minimize soil compaction.

393 – Filter Strip

Definition: A strip or area of herbaceous vegetation that removes contaminants from overland flow.

- Purpose:
- Reduce suspended solids and associated contaminants in runoff and excessive sediment in surface waters.
 - Reduce dissolved contaminant loadings in runoff.
 - Reduce suspended solids and associated contaminants in irrigation tailwater and excessive sediment in surface waters.

528 – Prescribed Grazing

Definition: The controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing animals, managed with the intent to achieve a specific objective.

- Purpose:
- Improve water infiltration.
 - Maintain or improve riparian and upland area vegetation.
 - Protect stream banks from erosion.
 - Manage for deposition of fecal material way from water bodies.
 - Promote ecological and economically stable plant communities which meet landowner objectives.

550 - Range Planting

Definition: Establishing of adapted perennial or self-sustaining vegetation such as grasses, forbs, legumes, shrubs and trees.

- Purpose:
- Restore a plant community similar to the ecological site description reference state for the site or the desired plant community.
 - Provide or improve forages for livestock.

- Provide or improve forage, browse or cover for wildlife.
- Reduce erosion by wind and/or water.
- Improve water quality and quantity.
- Increase carbon sequestration.

590 – Nutrient Management

Definition: Managing the amount (rate), source, placement (method of application), and timing of plant nutrients and soil amendments.

- Purpose:
- To budget, supply, and conserve nutrients for plant production. To minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution of surface and groundwater resources.
 - To properly utilize manure or organic byproducts as a plant nutrient source.
 - To protect air quality by reducing odors, nitrogen emissions (ammonia, oxides of nitrogen), and the formation of atmospheric particulates.
 - To maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil.

595 – Integrated Pest Management

Definition: A site-specific combination of pest prevention, pest avoidance, pest monitoring, and pest suppression strategies.

- Purpose:
- Prevent or mitigate off-site pesticide risks to water quality from leaching, solution runoff and adsorbed runoff losses.
 - Prevent or mitigate off-site pesticide risks to soil, water, air, plants, animals and humans from drift and volatilization losses.
 - Prevent or mitigate on-site pesticide risks to pollinators and other beneficial species through direct contact.
 - Prevent or mitigate cultural, mechanical and biological pest suppression risks to soil, water, air, plants, animals and humans.

V CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Refer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service standards and specifications book.

IV SOIL HEALTH INITIATIVE COST-SHARE STATE AVERAGE COSTS

Code	Practice Name Component	Unit	Unit Cost	Rate
327	<u>CONSERVATION COVER</u>			
	Native Species with Forgone Income	AC	\$206.02	85%
	Pollinator Species with Forgone Income	AC	\$345.48	85%
328	<u>CONSERVATION CROP ROTATION</u>			
	Basic Rotation	AC	\$6.63	85%
	Irrigated to Dryland Rotation	AC	\$386.70	85%
329	<u>RESIDUE AND TILLAGE MANAGEMENT, NO-TILL</u>			
	No-Till/Strip-Till	AC	\$13.73	85%
338	<u>PRESCRIBED BURNING</u>			
	Level Herbaceous	AC	\$8.90	85%
	Steep Terrain, Herbaceous Fuel	AC	\$18.99	85%
340	<u>COVER CROP</u>			
	Cover Crop - Basic	AC	\$47.15	85%
	Cover Crop - Multiple Species	AC	\$53.21	85%
393	<u>FILTER STRIP</u>			
	Filter Strip, Introduced species, Forgone Income	AC	\$271.26	85%
	Filter Strip, Native species, Forgone Income	AC	\$279.63	85%
528	<u>PRESCRIBED GRAZING</u>			
	Standard	AC	\$6.41	85%
550	<u>RANGE PLANTING</u>			
	Cropland to Grassland with Heavy Seedbed Preparation	AC	\$222.95	85%
	Cropland to Grassland, Standard Prep	AC	\$211.44	85%
	Highly Diverse Mixtures of Native Plants	AC	\$129.26	85%
590	<u>NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT</u>			
	Basic NM	AC	\$4.14	85%
	Basic NM with Manure and/or Compost	AC	\$8.95	85%
	Basic NM with Manure Injection or Incorporation	AC	\$15.96	85%
	Small Farm NM	Each	\$142.96	85%
595	<u>INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT</u>			
	Basic IPM One Resource Concern	AC	\$8.39	85%
	Basic IPM, More than One Resource Concern	AC	\$11.31	85%

<u>NRCS Team</u>	<u>Conservation District</u>
01	Cimarron County Texas County
02	Beaver County Harper County Woods County
03	Blaine County Dewey County Ellis County Major County Woodward County
04	Greer County North Fork of Red River Upper Washita
05	Custer County Deer Creek Washita County
06	Harmon County Jackson County
07	Kiowa County Tillman County
08	Alfalfa County Garfield County Grant County
09	Kay County Noble County Pawnee County Payne County
10	Central North Canadian River Cleveland County East Canadian County Kingfisher County Logan County McClain County Oklahoma County
11	Creek County Konawa Lincoln County Okfuskee County Shawnee
12	Grady County North Caddo South Caddo West Caddo

<u>NRCS Team</u>	<u>Conservation District</u>
13	Comanche County Cotton County
14	Arbuckle Garvin Jefferson County Love County Murray County Stephens County
15	Caney Valley Craig County Nowata County Osage County
16	Adair County Cherokee County Delaware County Ottawa County Sequoyah County
17	Mayes County Muskogee County Okmulgee County Rogers County Tulsa County Wagoner County
18	Checotah Hughes County McIntosh County Pittsburg County Seminole County
19	Haskell County Latimer County LeFlore County Talihina
20	Atoka County Bryan Coal County Johnston County Marshall County Pontotoc County
21	Kiamichi Little River Pushmataha