



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service, 100 USDA Suite 206, Stillwater OK 74074
Stillwater State Office

Subject: 300 – Guidance for Assisting with 2020 State
Cost Share in Oklahoma

Date: February 7, 2020

To: All NRCS Employees

File Code: 300

Attached is the guidance that has been developed with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission for NRCS assistance with the 2020 state cost share program.

If there are any further questions, please contact your SLT member.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary O'Neill".

GARY L. O'NEILL
State Conservationist

Attachment

USDA-NRCS Guidance for Assisting with the 2020 State Cost Share

NRCS met with OCC leadership in January to discuss potential improvements in how NRCS assists Districts in delivering the 2020 State Cost Share program. One action item will require ranking criteria to be developed by the District prior to funding any applications. The NRCS role in the development of the ranking criteria is only to support and assist the District. The Board will be responsible for the approval of the ranking criteria. OCC guidance will include several example ranking criteria that the Boards can use for building their own system. It is still the expectation that the State Cost Share program will meet NRCS standards and specifications and have a conservation plan supporting each practice that is funded.

The other significant change regarding the program will be about how NRCS documents the need for a practice. The State Cost Share program is not an NRCS financial assistance program, so when possible NRCS will not have to go through the steps to identify a resource concern. NRCS will use the practice standard to determine if a practice is applied correctly but will not be required to document a resource concern as is done for NRCS financial assistance programs. The ranking criteria that is developed by the District will help determine the priority for practices and the desired conservation benefits for the practices included in the program. The primary State Cost Share practices that have been funded in the past include:

- Cross Fencing
- Brush Management
- Pasture Spraying
- Water Well
- Pond
- Grass Planting

The following will be the guidance for NRCS assistance on these practices:

- Cross Fencing - Must be related to rotational grazing system. Can only be a cross fence, no property boundary fencing. No grazing plan is required. NRCS should be able to provide the Conservation District Board an inventory map with information related to the grazing land condition and any related erosion issues that are present in the field.
- Brush Management – Must complete a brush inventory to determine the species of concern and the density of the brush.
- Pasture Spraying – Must complete an inventory to determine the species of concern and the magnitude of the weed problem.
- Water Well – Must comply with the requirements of the well practice and standard. Document the number of head of livestock the producer wants the well to service. Must meet water quality requirements as described in standards and specs. No grazing plan is required. Any “first water” decisions and/or restrictions will be the responsibility of the District Board.
- Pond – Must meet the standard and specs for pond practice. Any “first water” decisions and/or restrictions will be the responsibility of the District Board.
- Grass Planting – Follow practice standard. Use priorities for grass planting established by the District Board.

We must have a conservation plan on file for the producer. If a State Cost Share practice is pulled for a QAR the above guidance will be used to frame the review. State Cost Share is not an EQIP contract, but we still need to be conservation planners and provide the landowner and the Board with the relevant information needed for the practice planning and implementation.