

## **WABASHA SWCD LOCAL COST SHARE POLICY**

### **Staff Credentials**

The Wabasha Soil & Water Conservation District (District) will ensure staff has the necessary skill and training to install and maintain projects according to standards and specifications. Building credentials and maintaining or seeking certifications to retain knowledgeable staff is a high priority of the District. Budget allocation determined annually according to program work plans.

Technical expertise of the District includes:

- 3 Staff with USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service Job Approval Authority under Ecological and/or Engineering Science

When professional engineering is required or specific conservation practices require expertise above current technical capacity, the District will utilize professional engineers or staff from consultants, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Joint Powers Board and The Nature Conservancy.

### **Delegation**

Landowner contracts for the installation of conservation practices and supporting project documents such as cost share vouchers will be signed by the Technical Representative, the District Board Chair (as needed) and the landowner (and land occupier).

### **Noncompliance**

Cost Share contract noncompliance will be reviewed by the District Board in consultation with the District Manager and Technical Staff. Resolution with the landowner will be attempted through corrective actions or alternative avenues. Unresolved issues that the District Board is not able to address will be taken to the County attorney for resolution.

### **General Policies Applied to all Funding Programs (including nonstructural policies)**

- All funding program contracts and requests for payment require the approval of the District Board of Supervisors (Board).
- All funding programs are subject to fund availability and may be discontinued or subject to program policy revisions by the District Board as it deems appropriate.
- The landowner shall allow District staff access to property for which the installed conservation practice is located during the life of the contract. The installed practice will be subject to periodic inspections by District staff.
- Applicants are responsible to submit application forms, project plans and cost estimates as requested by the District in sufficient detail for the District to complete its review.
- Unless specified otherwise by Minnesota prevailing wage statutes, the value of labor, equipment, materials and/or services that are proposed to be provided by the applicant to complete the project, shall be estimated at:
  1. General Labor rate will be based on the most current Iowa Farm Custom Rate Survey for labor rates. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
  2. Labor rate for chainsaw, brush cutting, etc. will follow the general labor rate from the most recent Iowa Farm Custom Rate Survey. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
  3. Labor rate of \$50 per cubic yard for concrete work.
  4. Heavy equipment operation such as skid steers, tractors, backhoes, and scrapers (including labor) at \$60 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)

5. Materials: \$8 per ton for gravel, \$5 per yard for sand.
6. Professional or semi-professional services, i.e. engineering, contracting for prescribed burns, labor rate up to \$75 per hour. (Date, times and activity must be documented)
7. Invasive plant management will be paid a minimum of \$200/acre rate depending on technical evaluation of the site and Board approval.
8. Vegetative plantings (including site prep and native seed used) will have a minimum payment of \$200/acre depending on technical evaluation of the site and Board approval.
9. \$30/acre for Cover Crop planting

- Unless otherwise approved by the District Board, a portion of a project becomes ineligible for funding if construction begins on that portion before a cost share contract has been approved.
- Upon District Board approval, the applicant will receive a letter with a copy of the executed cost share contract stating what practice(s) have been approved, the funding amount, time schedule to start, completion date and an Operation and Maintenance Plan (OMP).
- Work on the practice shall not start until the District Board has approved a cost share contract at an official meeting. If work begins before the contract has been approved, the practice is not eligible for funding.
- The project must be completed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Cost Share Program Contract and maintained in compliance with the OMP. (See Contract and O&M Plan)
- The applicant is responsible to pay, in full, all receipts and invoices directly to the contractor or vendor.
- The funding amount will not exceed the amount specified on the original cost share contract. The landowner, prior to completion of the project, shall obtain a District Board approved contract amendment to increase funding amounts depending on available funding.
- At project completion the District Staff or consultant with the proper Job Approval Authority shall verify if the practice is complete and meets standards and specifications before final payment is issued. The applicant must submit seed tags, invoices or receipts of actual costs in sufficient detail for the District's review. Requests for reimbursement shall include a Voucher and Practice Certification Summary Form.
- A one-time cost share reimbursement payment will be made upon certification that the project has been installed and completed to specifications. To receive a partial payment the landowner will need to meet with technical representative to assess progress of work, submit all invoices from contractors to-date to the Board for approval.
- District Technical Standards will follow the most recent NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Minnesota Stormwater Manual, or be a professionally accepted engineering or ecological practice. The District will also utilize guidance and technical specifications from agencies such as the MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Pollution Control Agency, MN Department of Agriculture, and University of MN, where appropriate.
- Compliance inspection intervals will be based on minimum State requirements, the amount of total project funding received and the complexity of the project. District staff will develop a process for compliance inspection intervals.
- It is the District's goal to support and leverage federal USDA – Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding through the District technical assistance.

- If USDA – Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) dollars are secured for a project, the landowner must sign a Freedom of Information Act release form that allows the District access to applicable information with the landowners CRP project case file.
- The landowner is responsible for the O&M of practices applied under this program to ensure the conservation objective of the practice is achieved for the minimum amount of time specified in the contract.
- If the title to the land where the practice is installed is transferred to another party before the expiration of the life of cost share contract, it shall be the responsibility of the land occupier or landowner who signed the contract to advise the new owner that the contract is in force.
- The practice shall be seeded according to project design requirements. Mulching, erosion control blanket or other erosion control devices may also be required. These items shall be completed or agreed to before certification and approval of the practice. A soils test may be required depending on practice or seed mix.

### **Policies Applied to the Nonstructural Land Management Practices and Vegetative Practices**

- Include all the above mentioned
- A list of some (not all) practices and programs utilizing funds. Practices shall meet NRCS eFOTG standards unless otherwise noted by technical staff.
  1. NRCS eFOTG practices included but not limited to: 314 – Brush Management, 315 – Herbaceous Weed Control, 327 – MN Conservation Cover, 338 – Prescribed burning, 528 – Biological Brush Management and Biological Herbaceous Weed Control, 342 – Critical Area Planting, 666 – Forest Stand Improvement
  2. Vegetative reestablishment between field and forest edge. NRCS eFOTG practices included but not limited to: 386 – Field Border, 327 – Conservation Cover, 338 – Prescribed Burning, 612 – Tree/Shrub Establishment and 490 - Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
  3. Buffer Law – assistance with vegetative establishment if CRP is not an option. NRCS FOTG practices included but not limited to: 391- Riparian Forest Buffer, 327 – Conservation Cover, 393 – Filter Strip, 386 – Field Border
  4. Contour Strips - NRCS eFOTG practices included but not limited to: 332 – Contour buffer strip
  5. Cover crops - NRCS eFOTG practices included but not limited to: 340 – cover crop