

AUTHORITY: 7 CFR 2.62.

SOURCE: 43 FR 58079, Dec. 12, 1978, unless otherwise noted.

**§ 653.1 General.**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for the technical adequacy of conservation practices installed under all NRCS programs, and those practices applied under programs administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) where NRCS has the technical responsibility. NRCS technical or financial assistance will be provided when the practices are applied according to established technical standards.

**§ 653.2 Technical standards and criteria.**

Technical standards and criteria have been established for all conservation practices. They provide the guidance and direction needed to assure that the practices meet the intended purpose and are of the quality needed to assure lasting for the design life. Standards and criteria are developed in consultation with universities, research institutions, and individual industrial and private firms and individuals. Research information and practical experience are used in setting standards. Changes and new technical standards and criteria are prepared in the same manner as set out above.

**§ 653.3 Adaptation of technical standards.**

Technical standards and criteria developed on a national basis may require special adaptation to meet local needs. These adaptations must be approved by the Administrator of the Natural Resources Conservation Service or his designee.

**§ 653.4 Availability of technical standards.**

Information on technical standards used by NRCS is available at field, area, or State offices of NRCS.

**PART 654—OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

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AUTHORITY: Pub. L. 83-566, 68 Stat. 666, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1001-1008). Sec. 1, Pub. L. 86-468, 74 Stat. 131, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1006a); sec. 2, Pub. L. 78-534, 58 Stat. 889 (33 U.S.C. 701a-1); sec. 13, Pub. L. 78-534, 58 Stat. 905; sec. 5, Pub. L. 93-251, 88 Stat. 15; Pub. L. 87-703, 76 Stat. 607 (7 U.S.C. 1010-1011); Pub. L. 74-46, 49 Stat. 163 (16 U.S.C. 590a-f, q); Pub. L. 84-1021, 70 Stat. 1115, as amended (16 U.S.C. 590p(b)); sec. 216, Pub. L. 81-516, 64 Stat. 184 (33 U.S.C. 701b-1); 7 CFR 2.62.

SOURCE: 42 FR 58159, Nov. 8, 1977, unless otherwise noted.

## Subpart A—General

### § 654.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) This part sets forth the operation and maintenance requirements pertaining to measures installed with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assistance. This includes measures installed under the following programs:

(1) Federal financially-assisted projects.

(i) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (WP&FP). See part 622 of this title.

(ii) Flood Prevention (FP). See part 623 of this title.

(iii) Specifically authorized projects.

(iv) Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).

(2) Conservation Operations (CO).

(3) Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP). See part 624 of this title.

(4) Great Plains Conservation Program (GP). See part 631 of this title.

(b) These regulations shall apply to all Federal financially-assisted projects as set forth in subpart B for the duration of their respective operation and maintenance agreements. However, this does not relieve the sponsor(s) of any liability which may continue beyond the evaluated life of the measure under Federal, State, and local laws. Operation and maintenance agreements in effect prior to the effective date of these regulations are not affected by these regulations.

### § 654.2 Definitions.

*Evaluated life.* The time period for which project or measure benefits and costs have been evaluated. The evaluated life starts after the last project measure of the evaluation unit has been completed.

*Landuser.* Those who individually or collectively use land as owner, lessee, occupier, or by other arrangements which give them conservation planning or implementation concern and responsibility for the land involved.

*Maintenance.* The work and actions required to keep works of improvement in a condition to function for their intended purpose and the replacement of portions of project measures as specified in the O&M agreement.

*Operation.* The administration, management, and performance of services needed to insure the continued proper functioning of completed project measures.

*Operation and maintenance agreement.* A written agreement between the sponsor(s) and NRCS or other recipient(s) in which responsibilities and actions are established for the operation, maintenance, replacement, and inspection of project measures.

*Plan of operation and maintenance.* A detailed program of action to provide for performing the operation and maintenance of a specific project measure.

*Project measures.* An undertaking for watershed protection; flood prevention; the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; the conservation and proper utilization of land; or a combination thereof. The undertaking may consist of vegetative, structural, or management measures or a combination thereof. Vegetative measures are those measures involving only seedbed preparation and/or the planting of vegetative material.

*Public recreation and/or fish and wildlife facility.* A project measure or part thereof which (a) creates or improves the potential for public recreational use and enjoyment, or (b) materially contributes to the preservation, production, or harvest of fish and wildlife.

*Sponsor.* An agency or organization with authority to provide local responsibility for a Federal financially-assisted local project under a program administered by NRCS.

*State Conservationist.* The NRCS officer responsible for NRCS activities within a particular State, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Structural measures.* Structural measures are those measures that are excavated or constructed with concrete, earth, masonry, metal, rock, or other materials, and associated vegetation.

### Subpart B—Federal Financially-Assisted Projects

#### § 654.10 Operation and maintenance agreement.

A duly authorized official of the sponsor(s) must execute an O&M agreement with NRCS prior to NRCS furnishing financial assistance.

#### § 654.11 Sponsor(s)' responsibility.

(a) On non-Federal land, sponsor(s) are responsible for financing and performing without cost to the Federal Government, needed operation and maintenance (O&M) of project measures installed with Federal financial assistance.

(b) The Federal agency administering Federal land involving project measures is responsible either for performing or requiring the performance of O&M on land administered by that agency. If project measures benefit both Federal and non-Federal land or interests, the O&M may be performed by the Federal agency, the sponsor(s), or both as mutually agreed by the Federal agency, sponsor(s), and NRCS. If O&M of project measures is performed by mutual agreement, the cost of O&M may be shared by the Federal agency and sponsor(s) as agreed.

(c) The sponsor(s) shall obtain NRCS approval before modifying a project measure of changing land use to fulfill a different purpose.

#### § 654.12 Financing operations and maintenance.

Sources of funds needed to operate and maintain project measures for the duration of the O&M agreement shall be identified in the watershed or RC&D measure plan.

#### § 654.13 Designating responsibility for operation and maintenance.

Those organizations or agencies responsible for the O&M of each project measure shall be identified in the watershed or RC&D measure plan.

#### § 654.14 Duration of sponsor(s)' responsibility.

(a) Sponsor(s)' responsibility for O&M of a completed project measure begins when a part of all of the contract installing such measure is com-

pleted and accepted from the contractor. If the installation of the project measure is performed by force account, division of work, or performance of work methods, the sponsor(s)' O&M responsibilities begin on the date the work or portion thereof is completed as determined by NRCS, except for completed work located on Federal lands which are subject to special-use permits. The O&M agreement shall specify that O&M will continue through: (1) The evaluated life of the project, or (2) the evaluated life of measures that are economically evaluated as a unit, or (3) the useful life of cost-shared measures that are for land conservation or land utilization. The sponsor(s)' duties and liabilities for the measures under other Federal and State laws are not affected by the expiration of the O&M agreement.

(b) For project measures being installed in segments, the sponsor(s) shall be responsible for O&M of completed and accepted segments. However, the NRCS may share in the cost of repairing damages to a completed segment when the damage is attributed to the continuation of work on uncompleted segments of the measure or when due to the fact that the measure was only partially completed.

#### § 654.15 Operation and maintenance.

Sponsor(s) are to operate and maintain completed project measures in:

(a) Compliance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances.

(b) Compliance with any applicable conditions set forth in the instruments by which the landrights were acquired for installing, operating, and maintaining the project measures.

(c) A manner that will not significantly degrade the environment and will permit project measures to serve the purpose for which they were installed as set forth in the watershed or RC&D measure plan.

(d) Compliance with the time frames and O&M work items established in the plan of O&M and inspection reports.

(e) Accordance with agreements with NRCS on admission charges and user fees for public recreation and/or fish and wildlife facility. Admission or user fees shall be charged only as necessary

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to produce revenues required to amortize the sponsor(s)' share of installation costs and to provide adequate O&M for that portion of the project measures pertaining to public recreation and/or fish and wildlife facility. Sponsor(s)' admission or user fee charges require prior NRCS approval throughout the life of the O&M agreement.

(f) Accordance with the schedule for withdrawal of water in water impounding structures as specified in the watershed or RC&D measure plan or other legal documents.

(g) A manner consistent with the project objectives.

### § 654.16 Property management.

Sponsor(s) are to:

(a) Use real property acquired in whole or in part with Federal funds as long as needed for the purpose for which it was acquired and in accordance with the O&M agreement. If real property acquired in whole or in part with Federal funds is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was acquired, the sponsor(s) shall obtain NRCS approval for future use or disposition.

(b) Use nonexpendable personal property acquired in whole or in part with Federal funds as long as needed for the purpose for which it was acquired in accordance with the rules governing Federal grant property (34 CFR part 256).

(c) Establish, adopt, and comply with a property management system which meets the standards governing Federal grant property.

### § 654.17 Inspection.

(a) Sponsor(s) are to make periodic and special inspections of installed project measures as provided in the plan of O&M. For structural measures, inspections are to be made at least annually and after each major storm or occurrence of any unusual condition that might adversely affect the project measures. At the discretion of the State Conservationist, NRCS may assist sponsor(s) with their inspections. NRCS or land-administering agencies may make independent inspections at any time during the period covered by the O&M agreement.

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(b) Sponsor(s) are to maintain a written record of each inspection and furnish NRCS and land-administering agencies a copy of that record. The record should identify items inspected, O&M work that may be needed, a time frame to do the work, and the date of the inspection. The NRCS and land-administering agencies will provide the sponsor(s) a copy of a similar record of independent inspections.

(c) The sponsor(s) shall perform the O&M work listed as needed in the inspection reports within the time frame established for each item of work. Failure to perform O&M work will be considered a violation of the O&M agreement and will be handled in accordance with § 654.20.

(d) Sponsor(s) are to maintain a written record of work performed which is listed in the inspection report and a record of other significant O&M activity. The record will identify the measure, item of work, cost of performance, and date completed.

(e) Sponsor(s)' records relative to the project shall be made available to NRCS for examination.

### § 654.18 Natural Resources Conservation Service responsibility.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service will assist the sponsor(s) in developing a watershed or RC&D measure plan which includes a description of O&M work and estimated cost, assist in the preparation of O&M agreements and plans of O&M, enter into O&M agreements with the sponsor(s), and notify the sponsor(s) of observed failures to comply with the O&M agreement.

### § 654.19 Plan of operation and maintenance.

(a) The plan for O&M shall be incorporated into and made a part of the O&M agreement. A separate plan of O&M shall be prepared for each project measure that is expected to have a unique O&M need. Two or more measures with similar O&M needs may be included in a single plan for O&M.

(b) The plan of O&M shall include the known and anticipated items of O&M, an explanation of how the O&M activities may be carried out, a general time frame for making O&M inspections and

for completing the needed O&M work, and the records and reports deemed appropriate by the sponsor(s) and NRCS.

**§ 654.20 Violations of operation and maintenance agreement.**

(a) The State Conservationist shall investigate alleged sponsor violations of the O&M agreement. If the State Conservationist determines that a violation has occurred that may prevent the project measure from functioning as intended, create a health or safety hazard, or prevent the accrual of project benefits, he shall provide sponsor(s) written notification.

(b) If the sponsor(s) fail to comply with the O&M agreement or fail to take corrective action, NRCS may notify authorities having appropriate jurisdiction, withhold further assistance to the project, require the sponsor(s) to reimburse the government for the NRCS share of the cost of the project, and/or pursue other action authorized by the O&M agreement or law.

**Subpart C—Conservation Operations**

**§ 654.30 Responsibility for operation and maintenance.**

The land user is responsible for O&M of soil and water conservation measures installed with NRCS assistance provided through soil, water, and other conservation districts.

**§ 654.31 Performing operation and maintenance.**

The method of performing O&M is to be at the option of the land user. The NRCS, working through districts, will furnish information and technical assistance as needed and requested to the extent NRCS resources permit.

**Subpart D—Emergency Watershed Protection**

**§ 654.40 Responsibility for operation and maintenance.**

(a) *Non-Federal lands.* The need for an O&M agreement will be determined by the State Conservationist. Where an O&M agreement is necessary, the sponsor(s) will provide the O&M and adopt standards for Federal grant property (34 CFR part 256). Where no O&M agree-

ment is necessary, other arrangements will be made for complying with Federal property management.

(b) *Federal lands.* The Federal agency administering the Federal land is responsible for operating and maintaining emergency measures installed on Federal land.

**§ 654.41 Performance of operation and maintenance.**

(a) *Arrangement.* O&M is a prerequisite for approval of Federal emergency assistance when:

(1) The emergency measure needs to be operated and maintained in order to serve its intended purpose, or

(2) The emergency measure needs to be operated and maintained to insure that it will not become hazardous.

(b) *Time of operation and maintenance.* The sponsor(s)' obligations for O&M begin when the measure is installed and extend for the duration of the time required for the emergency measure to serve the purpose for which it is installed.

(c) *Performance.* Operation and maintenance is to be performed in a manner that will protect the environment and otherwise comply with NRCS, State, and local requirements. The method of performing O&M is at the option of the sponsor(s).

**Subpart E—Great Plains Conservation Program**

**§ 654.50 Responsibility for operation and maintenance.**

Responsibility for practices under the Great Plains Conservation Program are contained in § 631.10 of this chapter.

**PART 655 [RESERVED]**

**PART 656—PROCEDURES FOR THE PROTECTION OF ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PROPERTIES ENCOUNTERED IN NRCS-ASSISTED PROGRAMS**

Sec.

656.1 Purpose.

656.2 Archeological and historical laws and Executive orders applicable to NRCS-assisted programs.

656.3 Policy.