

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
May 11, 2017
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



Secretary Perdue Announces Newly-Named Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today announced the newly-named undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation mission area, which is to focus on domestic agricultural issues. Locating Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service under this domestically-oriented undersecretary will provide a simplified one-stop shop for USDA's primary customers, the men and women farming, ranching, and foresting across America.

“The men and women of American agriculture are hardy people, many of whom were born into the calling of feeding America and the world,” Perdue said. “Their efforts are appreciated, and this adjustment to the USDA structure will help us help them in even better ways than before.”

Under the reorganization plan, the undersecretary for natural resources and environment will retain supervision of the U.S. Forest Service. A reduction in USDA workforce is not part of the reorganization plan.



Chris Smith has been hired as a Pathway Student Trainee. He will be working out of the Blair Field Office starting May 15. Welcome Chris.



UPDATE ON NEBRASKA CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE REVIEWS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been working with Nebraska's farmers and ranchers to protect natural resources for over 80 years. During that time, one thing has remained the Agency's main goal – help prevent soil erosion.

Since the passage of the 1985 Farm Bill, farmers have been required to control erosion on fields that are classified as highly erodible in order to be eligible for some USDA programs. Each spring, NRCS conducts compliance reviews on a random selection of highly erodible fields to determine if erosion has been controlled as outlined in Farm Bill requirements.

Recently, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed compliance review procedures in several states, including Nebraska. In their report, OIG recommended some modifications to NRCS' compliance review procedures to provide more consistency across the nation. Nebraska NRCS will be making some adjustments during this year's compliance reviews that may impact several producers in Nebraska.

So, what does this mean for Nebraska farmers and ranchers?

The main impact will be on farmers whose cropland has been determined by NRCS to be highly erodible. They will need to consider installing additional conservation practices to better control ephemeral gully erosion.

Ephemeral gully erosion is characterized by small ditches in fields that farmers often smooth over with disks. Previously, ephemeral gully erosion was only cited as a compliance problem if sediment was leaving the field and causing off-site damages. Now, all ephemeral gullies on fields determined to be highly erodible will need to be controlled to meet the national standard.

NRCS employees will be working closely with farmers to help them meet the erosion control requirements. Farmers will not be expected to make these changes overnight. If erosion control issues are identified during this spring's compliance reviews, producers will be given time to make adjustments and install needed conservation practices.

Practices used to control ephemeral gullies include no-till farming, cover crops, grassed waterways, and terraces. NRCS has conservation programs available to provide financial assistance for producers to install additional conservation practices, and Nebraska NRCS has set aside additional funding this year to help meet this need.

It is stressed the importance for farmers to meet these erosion control requirements so they will remain eligible for Farm Bill program benefits – which include things like farm loans, conservation program benefits and Federal crop insurance premium subsidies.

NRCS wants to help Nebraska's farmers be successful in meeting the conservation compliance requirements on highly erodible land. The bottom line is NRCS staff will be available to help farmers identify where ephemeral erosion is or may occur, and then assist them with a conservation plan to identify conservation practices that best fit their farming operation.

For more information, visit your local NRCS office located within the USDA Service Center or www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.

Fix it, Don't Disc it

Stop Ephemeral Gully Erosion with Conservation Systems



Got a Gully?

Runoff water flowing from uneven landscapes tends to concentrate in natural, depressional channels. These channels, called ephemeral gullies, can be reshaped and farmed across, but continued, concentrated flow takes away the soil. Ephemeral gullies sometimes are described as silent erosion because they can be easily smoothed over, hidden and planted to crops. Discing an ephemeral gully leaves nutrient-rich topsoil vulnerable to erosion. Fixing ephemeral gullies through conservation practices protects productivity and water quality and allows farmers with highly erodible land to continue receiving USDA farm program benefits.



Ephemeral Gully

Fix it, Don't Disc It.

Below are examples of just a few of the natural resources conservation practices and management options available to help farmers voluntarily fix ephemeral gullies in their fields. Additional practices to consider include: conservation crop rotation, contour buffer strips, contour farming, stripcropping, critical area planting, and water and sediment control basin. Contact your local NRCS office for help deciding which options are best for you and your farm, and to learn about financial assistance options.



No Till



Cover Crops



Grassed Waterway



Terraces

Conservation Compliance

The 1985 Farm Bill required Conservation Compliance for all USDA program participants if they farm highly erodible land (HEL). ANY tillage not accounted for in your conservation plan may put you out of compliance.

Should you be concerned? If you have highly erodible land, and you have small gullies forming in your fields you should check with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Discing or smoothing the gullies will not fix the problem. And you risk losing your USDA farm program benefits.

When in doubt, visit your local NRCS office before performing any tillage that is not part of your conservation plan on HEL land.



More Information

For more information visit your local USDA Service Center or the NRCS Nebraska website at: www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov

Find your local NRCS office
<http://offices.usda.gov>

Helping People Help the Land



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