

Subject: Considerations for processing cost-share contracts

From: Soil & Water Conservation Program <soil&waterconservationprogram@swcd.mo.gov>

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To: DNR.Soil and Water Conservation Districts staff <dnr.soilandwaterconservationdistrictsstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Cc: DNR.SWC Staff <dnr.swcstaff@dnr.mo.gov>

Subject: Considerations for processing cost-share contracts

Good morning.

This email is to provide some guidance on priorities for soil and water conservation districts to consider in an effort to submit as many state cost-share payments this fiscal year as possible. It is unknown how COVID-19 will affect funding for next fiscal year.

NRCS staff assist districts with check out and sign off for state cost-share. Some priorities for district staff are included for assisting NRCS when time allows and for the NRCS/SWCP shared employees.

Contact Landowners with cost-share contracts as soon as possible and discuss the following information:

1. Districts and NRCS are still operating and doing checkouts.
2. Determine the status of the cost-share practice.
3. Let landowners/operators know the importance of notifying the district as soon as possible once the practice is completed.
4. Notify them that checkouts are still being done but in a different way.
5. Let them know the working schedule of SWCD staff if they need to contact staff. Also if there is a different process or number to contact staff.
6. Discuss the options available to sign cost-share documents and provide invoices.
 - a. Sending through regular mail.
 - b. Sending via email, print to sign and then scan or take pictures to email back to the district.
 - c. Pick up/drop off at the office via a drop box option.

Digital Signatures

Program staff is currently evaluating the process of obtaining electronic/digital signatures with legal counsel to determine what statutory requirements need to be met and if we can implement them within the cost-share program. If it is something that can be done, instructions will be provided.

Contact SWCD Board Members

Determine the best option for board members to sign cost-share documents as described above.

MoSWIMS

SWCD staff can attach needed documentation for payments to the contract in MOSWIMS such as approved contract and any approved change orders, landowner authorization sheet and any other documentation that is not part of the checkout process at any time.

Practice Checkout

Start scheduling and determine which practices will need multiple people at the site to do the final checkout. Work out a schedule who is available which days and what vehicles are available since only

one person is allowed per vehicle. In addition, what equipment is available for checkout and who will be using it when?

Cut-off Date for Contracts

At this time, we don't know what the final cutoff date will be for the program office to approve payments. Based on past history, we anticipate it being the week of June 22 and probably the earlier part of that week. Assuming a cutoff date that week, then it is going to be even more important that contract payments are submitted as soon as possible.

Support for USDA Farm Bill Programs

NRCS currently has ranking and assessment taking place for EQIP using their new CART tool. Assistance may be needed with field visits and other activities to complete assessments for applicants. CRP applications which have been accepted this year will require field visits. Check-out of practices to facilitate payments for EQIP and CSP payments.

The commission and staff realize this is a trying time for everyone, but we need get as much paid this fiscal year as we can. During the April 1, 2020 Commission meeting, the Commission was briefed on a request from the Livingston SWCD to cover roll-over contracts due to the weather and recovering from last summer's flooding issues. The Commission acknowledged that some areas are still impacted from last summer's flooding causing problems on getting contracts completed and this crisis now will also impact some contracts getting completed. The Commission directed staff to evaluate the dollar amount of cost-share contracts rolled over and if any changes need to be made to the supplemental process to address the roll overs to be discussed at a future Commission meeting.

Thank you for all the work district staff and board member have been doing already keeping contract payments and quarterly reports submitted.

Soil & Water Conservation Program
District Assistance Section
Phone 573-751-4932

We'd like your feedback on the service you received from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Please consider taking a few minutes to complete the department's Customer Satisfaction Survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MoDNRsurvey>. Thank you.