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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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MEMORANDUM 2017-010

DATE: November 15, 2016

TO: All Soil and Water Conservation Districts

FROM:  Colleen Meredith, Director
Soil and Water Conservation Program

SUBJECT: October 12, 2016, Commission Changes to Grazing System, Animal Waste Management and Cover Crop Practices

Over the past several months, there have been some clarifications provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) about the technical implementation that affects commission cost-share practice policies. During the Soil and Water Districts Commission meeting on October 12, 2016, the commission made some adjustments to practice policies to align their policies with the technical guidance provided by NRCS. The policy changes impact the grazing system practices, animal waste management practices and cover crop practice.

Grazing Systems

In the policies for the DSP 3.4 Grazing System Lime, the specification required the NRCS N590 Nutrient Management standard be followed. The intent of requiring the N590 Nutrient Management standard was to insure that the nutrients are being applied at the proper rates. The program received clarification from NRCS that if the N590 standard is being required then a complete nutrient management plan must be written and followed, not just referencing N590 in the conservation plan. The commission approved removing the N590 reference from the specifications in their policy and added a statement that the lime and fertilizer (NPK) applications shall be based on soil test recommendations to achieve minimum forage cover improvement specified by NRCS planning criteria. The NRCS planning criteria allows for nutrients to be applied according to soil test and a pasture condition score to prevent water degradation due to nutrient runoff. The condition score will be determined using NRCS's Midwest Pasture Condition score sheet.

A second policy change for the grazing system practices is regarding grazing schools. The commission heard a request at their December 1, 2015, meeting to remove the grazing school requirement from the grazing system practices due to concerns about consistency of materials presented at schools. There were also questions about the need to require grazing school

attendance. The commission referred the request to the Plan for the Future's Current Practices Committee to discuss. The committee's recommendation was to continue with the grazing school requirement and to consider offering a cost-share incentive for attending a school. Members of the committee also met with the Regional Grazing School Coordinators to express the concerns of the districts and committee members about the grazing schools. At their October 12, 2016, meeting, the commission maintained the policy of requiring attendance of the system operator at a grazing school to be eligible to receive cost-share. The commission approved offering a one-time payment of \$75 for attending a grazing school to be paid when the landowner receives payment on a grazing system contract. The incentive payment will be included in the total cost-share dollars received and applied to the practice per acre maximums. A component has been added to the grazing system practices in MoSWIMS for the grazing school payment.

Animal Waste Management Systems

The commission also discussed current policies in the animal waste management resource concern regarding the implementation or development of a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP). NRCS's General Manual requires a landowner to provide a current CNMP if NRCS staff will be providing the technical assistance on an animal waste storage facility. Due to the CNMP requirement prior to a landowner receiving technical assistance, the commission approved offering a \$2,000 cost-share incentive per CNMP to help defray the cost of the development of a CNMP by an NRCS approved Technical Service Provider (TSP). There is not an incentive payment for development of a CNMP without following through with an animal waste system practice. The incentive payment will be made when a landowner receives a state cost-share payment for the completed animal waste management practice. The incentive payment will be included in the total cost-share dollars received and applied to the maximum for the practices, which is currently \$50,000. A component has been added in MoSWIMS to the animal waste management practices for the CNMP incentive payment.

Cover Crops

The final policy change was related to the N340 Cover Crop Practice. The commission reviewed the policy of the no-till requirement for planting cover crops. The commission amended policy to allow tillage on 25 percent of a field to smooth ruts caused by harvest equipment. This policy change is in line with what is allowed in the maintenance section of NRCS's Residue and Tillage Management Standard (329).

All of the policy changes are effective as of the commission meeting date of October 12, 2016. A change order can be completed on active animal waste or grazing management contracts to add the incentive payments. Policy changes will be added to the Cost-Share Handbook at the time it is updated. If you have any questions regarding these changes, please contact your district coordinator. Thank you.

CM:jpd