

## ***Standard Conservation Projects - PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS***

Depending on the complexity of each proposal, more or less planning will be required. An applicant should provide sufficient information for VSWCD to fully understand the projects. That may include drawings or photos or may be more extensive and include a Site Conservation Plan (see below) or engineering designs.

For example, a landowner could apply for reimbursement for a rain barrel and not be required to produce a Site Conservation Plan nor design drawings for the project, as long as this person could demonstrate that the rain barrel was properly installed and serving the intended conservation function, reimbursement could occur. However, in the instance of a proposal that is complicated and multi-faceted, or that presents a need for more baseline site assessment, the District may require more supporting documents/drawings to insure project approval and success.

**Site Conservation Plan (SCP):** An SCP outlines soils, water availability, natural habitat and other landscape features as well as the project, appropriate implementation and materials, timeline and a budget. An SCP is typically required to demonstrate a well-thought-out process for laying out conservation practices in order to achieve the greatest impact on the resources and in a cost-effective manner. Technical assistance can be provided by VSWCD at no cost to complete an SCP for the applicant whether they are awarded or not. We can also help to recommend appropriate materials, plant species, installation procedures, etc to help ensure success. We will help create a budget for a project according to NRCS conservation practice line items, which the applicant will need to approve and sign. SCP's can also help an applicant plan for an appropriate timeline for completing the project due to workloads, seasonal timing, water availability, practical crop rotations, or other mitigating circumstances.

**Exceptions to developing a Site Conservation Plan:** A simple, straightforward project that does not need much planning. Or when an applicant already has an SCP they developed themselves or developed by another service provider. An SCP is highly encouraged so efficiency and so more conservation can be achieved. Our ***Stand-Alone Application*** may be more appropriate for simple projects.

**Engineering practices:** Some practices will require an engineering design and or drawings. Examples: complicated drip irrigation systems, solar wells and pumping plants, and especially when associated with erosion control efforts such as retaining walls, etc. The applicant can obtain these from the supply companies, agencies, private engineers, etc. For instance, well drilling, the capacity of the well must be logged by the drilling company and provided to the applicant so that the proper type and size of pump can be determined, this also applies to solar installations. The applicant must follow NM State Law and supply a full copy of the engineering to the VSWCD prior to any funding obligations. A design and a set of drawings will be absolutely required in those cases where the work to be performed is complex and must be designed by a Professional Engineer for project success and legal compliance.



**Permitting:** The Applicant must obtain any required permits with completed application to show they are ready for installation once awarded. VSWCD can help direct Applicants to appropriate entities.

**Landowner Permission:** The applicant must secure written permission from landowner if the project is completed on land the applicant does not own. That includes permission from an adjoining landowner if the practice is to be partially or wholly constructed on their land.

**Soil Testing:** Soil testing is required by applicants and is 100% paid for by VSWCD. Soil information is

collected for VSWCD research and locations and homeowner information kept anonymous. Refer to **Soil Testing Application** for this practice.

**Cost Effectiveness:** Consider materials that appropriate for completing projects. Materials or practices that are exorbitantly or unnecessarily expensive when there is an appropriate, effective and less expensive alternative may not be considered. Determined on a case-by-case basis.

**Noxious Weed Control:** Any noxious weed control where herbicides are involved must be coordinated with the NMDA Noxious Weed Coordinator and have an approved written plan before starting work. This plan will contain the location of the noxious weeds, type of weeds, how they will be controlled and when this can take place, what chemicals will be used and estimates of how much; and must have before and after treatment documented photos.

**Hazardous Fuel Reduction (removal of dead and down trees and shrubs which increase risk of catastrophic fires):** In certain instances, this type of work must be coordinated with NM State Forestry and have a complete written plan developed before starting work. This plan will contain the location of the hazardous fuels, type of fuels to be controlled, how they will be controlled and best times to conduct this work. And must have before and after treatment documented photos. Again, the SCP process will flesh out what information is needed for project success.

**Conservation Education:** In the District's ongoing commitment to advance conservation education, we will look for opportunities to report upon and highlight Financial Assistance projects that have strong educational dividends for the community. Applicants that are interested in showcasing their projects or connecting to our education programs should note that in their applications.

**Public Outreach Descriptions:** The VSWCD website includes photos, descriptions of the Financial Assistance Programs and their pertinent application Forms. Success stories of past conservation practices installations and outcomes are present for obtaining good information. Links to more sources of information are available.

**The 10 most used conservation practices** from 2017 to 2020 are: land leveling, pollinator plantings, alfalfa (organic) seeding, crop seeding, soil testing, pipelines, drip systems, native grass seedings, composting/mulching, and erosion control practices.

