

2013 UPDATED STANDARDS

The following standards were announced through the SOC listserv and website as updates occurred. Several standards were open for public comment. All comments receive careful consideration and review.

- 560 - Access Road
- 575 - Animal Trails and Walkways
- 397 - Aquaculture Ponds
- 327 - Conservation Cover
- 342 - Critical Area Planting
- 512 - Forage and Biomass Planting
- 666 - Forest Stand Improvement
- 655 - Forest Trails and Landings
- 561 - Heavy Use Area Protection
- 595 - Integrated Pest Management
- 670 - Lighting System Improvement (new)
- 468 - Lined Waterway or Outlet
- 484 - Mulching
- 391 - Riparian Forest Buffer
- 578 - Stream Crossing
- 580 - Streambank and Shoreline Protection

Special thanks to
our cooperating
agencies &
partners



"I am glad to see that Wisconsin still allows conservation professionals from all employment sectors (public and private, conservationist and farmer) to participate on a team and provide comment on proposed changes to the standards. Not every state is like this. Thank you NRCS, WLWCA, DNR, and SOC."

- 2013 survey respondent

Photo Credits: NRCS

TECHNICAL STANDARDS PROCESS 2013 ANNUAL REPORT



The Standards Oversight Council oversees a collaborative process for developing effective technical practice standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources.



The Standards Oversight Council (SOC) is an inter-agency effort that facilitates a team approach for practice standard development that is science-based, encourages broad participation and strives for quality and uniform use of the standards across a broad spectrum of Wisconsin conservation programs.

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2013 OVERVIEW

For nearly 20 years, Wisconsin has done what few states can claim: developed integrated conservation practice standards that local, state and federal agencies can use. This effort, led by the Standards Oversight Council (SOC), develops common standards that improve efficacy and implementation of conservation on the ground. This year, SOC's work was dominated by facilitating two teams of technical experts deeply engaged in the issues of two very different conservation practice standards. With carefully selected team composition, the SOC Program Manager facilitated each meeting in a way that valued members' time and input and kept them engaged and focused on their charge in standard development. While coordinating the process for these comprehensive standard projects, SOC further developed outreach strategies, refined the process for revising standards, and considered opportunities for continuing partner engagement. The new website reflects SOC's professionalism, improves participation and communication with our audience, and offers a streamlined process to comment on draft standards. The website also allows easier data collection for the biennial Technical Standards Needs survey.



Attendees at WLWCA's fall technical tour featuring a managed-grazing, robotic dairy operation that used cost-sharing opportunities for improving their waste management practices.

experts the opportunity to submit comments to improve the new standard. More than 25 practitioners took advantage of this opportunity and provided comments. At the end of the year, the standard was in the final drafting phase with a tentative release date of February 2014. The greatest challenges for the team were: determining pollutant removal credit with limited data; deciding design criteria, such as run-on ratio and source areas, to ensure desired functioning of the system; and being generic enough to not stifle innovation of new products that still achieve the water quality benefits. Given that permeable pavement is a new and developing practice, the team agreed to meet annually to review current research, field experience and new technologies, and evaluate the standard for potential improvements.

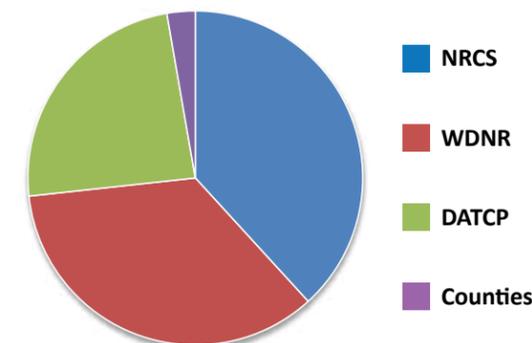
Outreach and Participation

SOC launched a brand new website in December of 2012. Much of the first half of 2013 was spent monitoring the new website and developing content to make the website more useful to our audience. We have used the website's new features to track team progress and resources and to solicit comments on newly revised standards. Another improvement instituted this year involved better communication of the changes in draft standards available for comment. When draft standards are announced for comment, the standard Custodians are now providing brief explanations of the revisions along with a 'marked-up' copy of the standard to help technical standard users more efficiently understand and comment on the proposed changes.

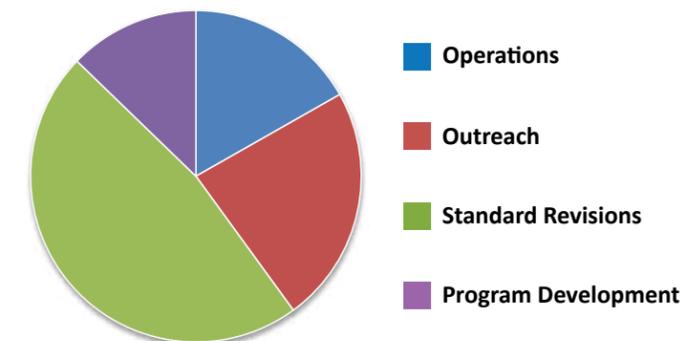
We also revamped the format and delivery of our biennial Technical Standards Needs survey, which resulted in broader and more substantial statewide input. The results of this survey were used to determine and prioritize the standards in the 2014 – 2016 SOC Work Plan. The survey results also provided information on suggested revisions to practice standards, training needs, and overall process improvements. The five practice standards that ranked the highest in need for revision included 1) NRCS Standard 632, Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility, 2) NRCS Standard 393, Filter Strip, 3) NRCS Standard 395, Streambank Habitat Improvement and Management, 4) NRCS Standard 658, Wetland Creation, and 5) a new WDNR Standard, Filtration Devices.

2013 FINANCIALS

Income



Expenses



These financial graphs provide an annual summary of SOC income and expenses. Staff time is primarily dedicated to standards revision (54%) and the following activities that contribute to this primary purpose: outreach including web development (24%), program development and management (14%), operations (11%).



Team members look at a soil pit and consider impacts of tillage options on nutrient management strategies.

Nutrient Management

In February of last year, the NRCS Standard 590, Nutrient Management, revision team began meeting monthly to understand the complexities of the technical issues requiring attention in this revision process. The diverse experience and technical background of the team members consisting of 13 agency staff, university researchers, county technicians, crop consultants, and farmers has provided the variety of important perspectives needed to debate the appropriate balance between agronomic impacts and resource concerns. Since the last revision of this standard in 2005, the agricultural industry has advanced with technological innovations and also expanded its operations across the state. Throughout the revision, the team will be considering the latest scientific data and research and the practical implications of any new requirements in light of new and ongoing resource concerns.

The team is evaluating several aspects of the existing 590 standard to ensure compliance with the new NRCS national 590 practice standard, released in 2012. Among the most important technical issues to consider are developing risk management options to reduce nitrogen leaching; to minimize the impacts from winter spreading of nutrients; and to reduce surface water contamination through tile drainage. The team used the first several months to gain elevated understanding of the environmental and agronomic impact of the technical issues listed above, before discussing potential revisions. This year's 11 team meetings included on-farm field tours, explanation of current data and research, new modeling efforts, and consideration of statewide concerns. This team tentatively plans to have a draft of the revised standard for public input by the end of 2014.



A permeable asphalt system in Waukesha County.

Permeable Pavement

The team charged with developing WDNR's permeable pavement standard is a prime example of the increased efficiencies in using the SOC process that encourages involvement of all stakeholders. After less than a year and a half, this team developed a new practice standard that was nearly ready for WDNR approval at the end of 2013. The WDNR led the development of a Wisconsin customized standard focused on achieving the water quality benefits associated with compliance with the WDNR's stormwater quality performance goals for new development, redevelopment and existing urban development. This standard does not address structural and stormwater flood control aspects of permeable pavement systems. Developers and designers can use this conservation practice as a tool to increase stormwater infiltration and reduce overall runoff volume and pollutants from stormwater to surface waters.

Last fall, this draft standard was evaluated through SOC's initial review and broad review processes, providing multiple industries, practicing engineers, consultants, municipal reviewers and nationwide

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2014

In the upcoming year, we'll finalize and publish WDNR's permeable pavement standard, continue making progress on the revisions to the nutrient management standard, distribute updates for minor standard revisions, and engage in professional training opportunities that promote successful practice design and implementation. We are grateful for the continued support from federal and state agencies, counties, and all team members for their financial contributions, shared expertise, and commitment to this effort. We are looking forward to continuing to foster relationships with all of our stakeholders and building additional avenues for collaboration with the NRCS State Technical Committee, private sector engineers and agronomists, land conservation departments, and the many others that rely on uniform technical standards for conservation programs across the state. With ongoing support and involvement from our many partners, we will continue to play an important role in maximizing efficiency, addressing unique resource conditions, and sustaining cooperation across Wisconsin's soil and water conservation programs.

HIGHLIGHTS

16
revised
practice standards



19
full team
meetings



48
new listserv
subscribers



157
comments on
draft standards



260+
attendees at
SOC presentations



400%
response increase
in 2013 survey



3057
website
visits