



# Standards Oversight Council (SOC)

Developing effective technical standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources

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## NRCS Stream Restoration Standards Team

### MEETING NOTES

Tuesday, March 24, 2020 ▲ 9:30am – 12:30pm ▲

Remote meeting – online and/or via phone

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#### 9:30 Welcome & Introductions (Kate, Team)

Goal: Familiarize team with other members and their experience related to these standards.

Welcome everyone

Team Attendance: **Steve** Becker (Sponsor and Team Leader) – NRCS  
**Nate** Anderson – DNR  
**Bart** Chapman – DATCP  
**Stacy** Dehne – DATCP  
**Mike** Dreischmeier – NRCS  
**Seth** Ebel – Dane County LCD  
**Faith** Fitzpatrick – USGS  
**Jeff** Hastings – Trout Unlimited  
**Ben** Lee – Fish Creek Restoration  
**Marty** Melchior – Inter-Fluve  
**Bob** Micheel – Monroe County LCD  
**Ken** Potter – UW Madison  
**Joe** Schmelz – NRCS  
**Jeff** Schure – DNR

Guests: None

Thank you for taking time to join us today, and committing to this project to improve the 4 NRCS conservation practice standards.

- In this remote meeting, many of us are working from home. We acknowledge that it's harder for all of us to focus and participate but should make our best attempt.
- This process in general is a team conversation, though today will be mostly supplying basic information on what to expect. I may call on different people when it seems appropriate, but if you have something you'd like to discuss, please use the Chat Box and Steve or I will call on you. You can use the chat box to message everyone or to just me.

- This isn't so critical today but in future meetings we'll have more collaboration, and you always have permission to get into any conversation if your ideas, questions, and views have not yet been expressed. The default for remote meetings will be to mute your microphone so we don't have accidental interruptions but you can turn that off if you'd like to speak.

Some other logistics:

- Kate may be recording audio for meetings. No one raises immediate issue with this; please talk to Kate or Steve if you have concerns about recordings.
- Overall Meeting Goal Today: Build our understanding of the SOC process and broad team expectations.  
Next meeting: understand some of the team member's perspective and start to identify the main standard issues to be addressed, thinking about a logical order to address them.

Introductions:

- Kate emailed around a list of team member names. On the password protected part of our website there's a full contact list for those on this team.
- We had a very large pool of people who applied. This team was selected to add a variety of expertise to the collaboration.
- Kate has worked for WI Land+Water for the past 3 years, 2 in this SOC role. I'm the facilitator here and not a team member. I've worked for 20 years with soil and groundwater contamination issues so I know some of the concepts you'll be discussion. I have not worked in stream restoration so I'll probably still need support in my notetaking efforts.
- Each of the team members then introduces themselves—name, employer, and a brief description of your expertise related to stream restoration.
- We'll get to meet each other in person soon, though it looks like not for a couple months at least.

**SOC Process, Team Responsibilities, Team Timeline (Kate)**

Goal: Establish understanding of SOC process & member expectations.

SOC Handbook contains many details on the SOC process and responsibilities of all participants, including Team Members. Team members will help identify the issues with the current standards and approaches. You'll share your knowledge and experience and opinions, and also collaborate and learn from each other.

Kate leads a PowerPoint presentation on SOC process and what to expect.

SOC Program Manager role and responsibilities:

- Coordinate and facilitate standard teams – meeting logistics, agenda, facilitation, recording & distributing meeting notes, maintaining communication via listserv & website, food, drink;
- Monitor team progress, follow up on action items, ensure multiple perspectives are represented;
- Facilitate the initial & broad review periods, including distributing comments to team;
- Assist Team Leader with tracked changes documents as needed;
- Draft Meeting Notes for Team Leader review;
- Distribute final standard to tech standard users;
- Lead team evaluation process and implement changes as needed; and
- Finally, outreach and training upon final publication.

NRCS Custodian Responsibilities:

- Authorize staff time to commit to standard projects;
- Provide resources as needed for standard completion;
- Assist with identifying broad goals and sideboards; and
- Assist in clarification of goals, provide background materials.

Steve is the Team Leader and will identify the NRCS needs and restrictions to the process. He is the primary “chairperson” during team meetings. Steve will elaborate on some of this later in the meeting, but generally his role as Custodian and Team Leader is to:

- Oversee training & education associated w/ proper implementation of the standards;
- Assist SOC Program Manager with team discussions, meeting management, agenda development;
- Call out when group is on a tangent or when topic needs focus. Kate will keep a “parking lot” list to track things we set aside to be discussed at another time;
- Help identify and assign tasks to appropriate team members;
- Serve as main editor of draft standards and revisions;
- Review & edit Meeting Notes prior to sharing with the full team;
- Communicate team progress and getting input from others at NRCS.

General SOC timeline is a about a year to teamwork to get the standard published. This may be aggressive, since this team is working on 4 documents but this is our target:

- Initial Review (invited experts only) around October 2020;
- Broad Review (open to public) around Dec 2020;
- Publication early 2021.

We'll need to set up meeting dates for the rest of this year.

- a. Expect it will be a remote meeting for April and possibly more. Please reach out to Kate privately if you have concerns about technology and availability for webinar style meeting like today. Kate has other online and phone conferencing tools we could try.
- b. Monthly meetings for at least 8 months; let's pencil in the second Tuesdays.
- c. Please review your calendars and let Kate and Steve know if you have any conflicts these days, especially recurring monthly commitments that you know you are booked.
- d. Meeting attendance is important. At another meeting, we will decide on the numbers needed to have a quorum to make team decisions. We'll strive not to discuss issues multiple times so if you need to miss a meeting, please get up to speed by talking with Steve or Kate and thoroughly reviewing the meeting minutes.

#### **Current Resources, Goals & Sideboards (Steve)**

Goal: Provide an overview of the 4 standards, including NRCS requirements and how each are used and by whom. Define team mission & set sideboards.

Steve describes his experience, including NRCS's role and responsibly in implementing standards. Steve leads a PowerPoint presentation. Some key points from presentation and team discussion are below:

- History, evolution, and purpose of the standards (6 slides)
  - Our work doesn't create new standards, but will start with the federal standards and customize them to Wisconsin conditions. We'll also be building connectivity between the 4 standards this team is looking at.
  - Standards are primarily created for NRCS personnel but also used by state—cost-share, permitting, and enforcement.
  - CPS 395 was updated on a federal level in 2019, and the others are not really due for review but we are looking at them as a package because they are so interrelated.
- NRCS's goals (1 slide)

- Goal #1 - Supplement the CPSs with criteria and instructions that are specific to Wisconsin stream restoration work based on science and experience.
- Goal #2 - Encourage state-wide adoption of the CPSs among conservation agencies, permitting agencies, and the private sector. CPSs should establish technical consistency among practitioners so as not to undermine our common efforts.
- Standard format - what sections in the standard can and cannot be changed
  - Definition – Describes the technology, cannot be changed
  - Purpose – Resource concerns the practice treats, we can delete but not add purposes
  - Condition Where Practice Applies – Site conditions where it's suitable and will function (or where not suitable). These standards cannot be used around the Great Lakes (that's ACOE) or watersheds <290,000 acres like WI River. These practices can be applied to very small streams, at spring creek level.
  - Criteria – Minimum requirements to achieve the purpose(s). Design requirements, methods, instructions—not a design procedure but can include the tools or software or citations to narrow down the references specific to WI. Can also call out limitations.
  - Considerations – non-critical or optional information
  - Plans and Specifications – how plans and specs are to be prepared like plan drawings, construction and material specs, narrative report requirements
  - Operation and Maintenance -
- Overview of the 4 standards (9 slides)
  - **CPS 582 Open Channel** – used to make adjustments in channel and floodplain geometry (increase cross sectional area to minimize hydraulic stress for flood resilience or reduce cross sectional area to improve sediment transport. Could be used to adjust planform of a stream that has been straightened or to cut an inset floodplain.
  - **CPS 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection** – often slope to 3:1 or 5:1 and rock at toe, timber cribbing, soil bioengineering, flow changing techniques (stream bars, bendway weirs, jetties, vanes)
  - **CPS 584 Channel Bed Stabilization** – stabilize channel bed grade, stabilize head cuts, prevent channel down cutting, lift or reconnect channel with the floodplain, including constructed riffle sequences and cross vanes
  - **CPS 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management** – used to add habitat elements like boulder placements, large woody material, root wads, lunkers – could include a cross vane or weir but the upstream effect may need evaluation so there aren't negative results on sediment

- For the next meeting we'll put together a list of issues from the team's perspective and we want to hear from each of you. The key issues for these standards based on NRCS experience
  - Issue #1: Reference a multitude of channel design methods
  - Issue #2: Sediment competency and hydraulic criteria are vague
  - Issue #3: Missing site-specific hydrology & hydraulic modeling or analysis
  - Issue #4: Soils & geologic investigation criteria is unclear (is this necessary? if so, how often should we collect samples and for what testing?)
  - Issue #5: Minimum criteria for site assessments is vague - Apply CPSs without a clear understanding of the problem or how to interpret and review overall context of the stream geomorphology and classification
  - Issue #6: Conditions where the practice applies is stand alone, lacking context of stream restoration – instead look at bigger picture like stream connection to floodplain, for example
  - Issue #7: Minimum criteria for riparian treatment missing – a lot of trees are being removed from riparian area for a variety of reasons but there is value in trees. We may be missing valuable ecological or historical site descriptions. Roots reinforce streams.

Some additional points from the team discussion:

- NRCS typically requires the practice use the standard in place at the time the time the practice was contracted (for NRCS). ATCP 50 may cite an older standard but DATCP tries to implement most current versions in practice. DATCP follows NRCS lead on applicable standards.
- DATCP can only cost share 580 work per ATCP 50 rule. The other 3 standards aren't in their rule. Even if we cross-reference these standards with each other, the rule would need updating for cost sharing to apply. Restriction of funding means restricted implementation.
- SOC teams aren't here to dispute or renegotiate a rule, but we can advise on recommended changes.
- More severe climate events should be included in the team's considerations for the standard. NRCS is putting an emphasis on adaptability and stream resiliency. We don't want inflexible streams – but instead have durable, long-term restorations.
- Artificial treatments are more stabilization than restoration.

**Next Meeting Topics and Plan of Action (Kate, Steve)**

Goal: Identify priority topics, concerns, and goals for next meeting. Review Action Items and agenda items for next meeting.

Action Items:

1. **Kate:** prepare draft meeting notes, reviewed by **Steve**, then reviewed by full **Team**
2. **Kate:** Coordinate future meetings
  - a. Set up venues and create calendar entries for future meeting dates
  - b. We'll pencil in second Tuesdays. Get in touch with Kate if you have regular conflicts and we'll then poll to re-set dates as a team.
  - c. Next meeting in April will also be remote. Probably 3 hours again, though Steve and I will create the agenda together in the coming weeks.
  - d. Kate stresses the importance of ATTENDING!
3. Full **Team**, review the existing standards and identify problem areas or what could use work.
4. Next Meeting Agenda Ideas (April and beyond)
  - a. Team presentations on case studies, about 10-15 minutes each. Tell us about your successes and failures in stream restoration related to these 4 technical standards. Not just a success story but your issues or concerns in context with these 4 standards. Steve presented some of his thoughts on Key Issues earlier today--We want to hear varying experience and opinions.
    - i. **Jeff Hastings**, with **Bob**
    - ii. **Mike** (in conjunction with Jeff and Bob or to avoid duplication?)
    - iii. **Marty**
    - iv. **Faith**
    - v. **Stacy**
    - vi. **Ben**
  - b. Key issues
    - i. Kate emailed around the compiled list of issues that were identified by the applicants to this team. In reviewing this list or reading the standards themselves, is there a common theme to focus our discussions, or has your experience led you to feel strongly about an aspect where there is weakness to the existing standards?
    - ii. Steve also pointed out some things in his presentation. Is there anything generally known to be an issue with these standards that you'd like to discuss and address?

- iii. **Kate** will create a document/tool for full team to collaborate on one Issue List. **Team** will help populate the list and identify which standard(s) are affected.

Look out for an email from Kate confirming the next meeting dates and key issues.  
Respond promptly if possible.

**12:30 End Meeting**