Standards Oversight Council

Technical Standards Process Handbook

Overseeing a collaborative process for developing effective technical standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources.

Prepared by the Standards Oversight Council

As updated December 2022

COOPERATING AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension (Extension)

Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water)

https://www.socwisconsin.org/

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Chapter One: Background Information

Purpose of this Handbook

This Standards Oversight Council Technical Standards Process Handbook (also referred to as the "Handbook") documents the step-by-step processes for developing and revising technical standards for Wisconsin's conservation programs, as well as related policies and procedures adopted by the Standards Oversight Council (SOC or the "Council"). The Handbook is intended to provide a framework for the cooperating conservation agencies and organizations to collectively assemble high quality technical teams with shared resources to review and develop technical standards. In doing so, the responsibility for the development and maintenance of soil and water conservation *technical standards* for urban and rural areas is spread among a broad base of stakeholders. As a result, everyone involved with these programs, including those in the private and public sectors, will benefit from better and more up-to-date technical standards, and a more accessible, effective and accountable process for standard development and maintenance.

The Handbook is designed to provide the necessary guidance for people involved in maintaining current technical standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources. The SOC process is designed to secure input from users of the technical standards and others involved in the process. This input, which is strongly encouraged, is the best way to continue improving the process.

SOC is responsible for the continued maintenance of the Handbook contents. Copies of the Handbook are available at www.socwisconsin.org.

What is the Standards Oversight Council?

SOC is an inter-agency collaboration responsible for overseeing the process used in Wisconsin to develop and maintain technical standards for urban and rural soil and water conservation practices. This Handbook describes the SOC process of facilitating the development and revision of technical standards. The SOC process focuses on the technical considerations of a standard, rather than legal and/or political issues. For more details on the duties of SOC participants, see Chapter Four.

SOC's mission statement is: *"Oversee a collaborative process for developing effective technical standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources."*

History of the Standards Oversight Council

Rural soil and water conservation efforts in the state historically relied heavily upon the Conservation Practice Standards published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These standards are referenced by a number of federal, state and local programs and have been used throughout the state for more than 50 years. In this context, the NRCS had assumed the lead role for the development and maintenance of these standards. Cooperation between conservation agencies and organizations became even more necessary with a number of significant changes which occurred in the state since the early 1980s, including:

- An increase in conservation programs, agencies and regulations at the state and local levels;
- Emphasis placed on the protection or improvement of water quality;
- Numerous new rural and urban *conservation practices*, requiring new and revised technical standards;
- A variety of legislative mandates; and
- Agencies' budget cuts and staff reductions.

These changes resulted in a number of problems relating to the development and maintenance of technical standards that needed to be addressed to preserve the credibility of soil and water conservation efforts. In November 1994, at the request of the Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees (WALCE), an interagency problem-solving team was assembled to develop recommendations to resolve these problems. SOC and its process, documented in this Handbook, are the direct result of that team's recommendations. This Handbook was initially created and adopted by cooperating federal, state and local agencies in the state of Wisconsin in 1996.

Cooperating Agencies & Organizations

The Council is composed of the following cooperating agencies and organizations in the state who are involved with developing technical standards and the delivery of soil and water conservation programs.

- **USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

  State Resource Conservationist and State Conservation Engineer

- **Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)**

  Bureau of Land and Water Resources, manager or unit leader for conservation engineering

- **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)**

  Storm Water Runoff Section, Chief or Appointee

- **Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)**
- **University of Wisconsin Madison – Division of Extension (Extension)**

  Appointee from UW Madison – Division of Extension

- **Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water)**

  Executive Director and Board of Directors LCD appointees

From among these cooperating agencies and organizations, certain agencies (Custodians) are ultimately responsible for the development, maintenance and content of standards within its charge. Currently, these Custodian agencies include NRCS, WDNR and DATCP.

Each of the cooperating agencies and organizations has committed at least one representative to serve on the Council. These Council Representatives must be able to offer the services needed to ensure that the Council is effective (See Chapter Four). Between 2006 and 2012, the Wisconsin

Department of Safety and Professional Services was a formal Council partner of SOC. In 2012, Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees, which had served as a member since SOC's inception, merged with WI Land+Water, which now represents both county officials and conservation employees on SOC.

Each of the SOC partners contributes differently towards funding and support for the *SOC Program Manager*[1] position. For a financial breakdown of SOC activities, please visit the SOC website.[2]

Council Meetings

The Council Representatives typically hold quarterly meetings. The SOC Program Manager schedules the meetings and posts the schedule to the SOC website at the beginning of each year. The SOC Program Manager works with the SOC Chair to develop the agenda and posts the agenda at least one week in advance of the meeting. All Council meetings are open to the general public unless otherwise stated on the agenda. The SOC Program Manager records and distributes meeting minutes.

Funding & Administration

The SOC Program Manager position and related program activities are funded by grants from participating agencies and voluntary annual dues from counties. Agencies that currently provide grants include WDNR, DATCP, and NRCS. WI Land+Water and each of the supporting agencies enter into grant contracts, which include terms governing payment (usually on a reimbursement basis), and carry-over of unspent funds. Extension has provided in-kind support for projects on an as-needed basis. WI Land+Water is responsible for meeting all agency grant requirements, including the submittal of reimbursement requests, progress reports and other record keeping and submittals.

Through the grants, WI Land+Water pays the salary and benefits of one full-time SOC staff position, the SOC Program Manager. The WI Land+Water Executive Director is responsible for the daily supervision of the Program Manager. The Council Representatives oversee the technical standards process, set policy for the SOC Program Manager to implement, and provide input to the WI Land+Water Executive Director for the annual performance review of the SOC Program Manager. The Executive Director may also consult with other involved individuals, such as SOC Technical Standard Work Team Leaders as part of the SOC Program Manager's performance evaluation. Results of the annual evaluation will be documented on the SOC Performance Evaluation Form, shared with the Council Representatives, and stored in WI Land+Water personnel files.

Appendix B contains a Position Description for the SOC Program Manager.

Appendix C contains the Performance Evaluation Form for the SOC Program Manager.

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[1] Terms that are defined in the Glossary of Terms in Appendix A are italicized when mentioned for the first time in the body of the text.

[2] https://socwisconsin.org/

Annual Budget

The SOC budget follows the calendar year and is separately tracked within the WI Land+Water budget, which is approved by WI Land+Water Board of Directors. Each year, the SOC Program Manager and WI Land+Water Executive Director will apply for agency grants on behalf of the SOC. Any significant changes proposed to the grant applications compared to current year's budget will be communicated to the Council Representatives.

Each fall, the SOC Program Manager and Treasurer will prepare a draft SOC budget for the following year based on anticipated grant/fee revenues and program expenses. By March of the following year, the SOC Program Manager will prepare a budget that shows a comparison of the current year's budget and the previous year's actual expenditures and revenues, and it must be presented for review by Council Representatives before publication on the SOC website.

The SOC Program Manager provides quarterly fiscal reports, showing budgeted amounts compared to actual revenues and expenses for each line item. SOC budgets and fiscal reports follow the general format shown in Appendix D.

WI Land+Water may charge the SOC program an appropriate percentage of total actual office expenses. These expenses may include, but are not limited to, rent, telephone, office supplies, financial audits, payroll services, and computer support. Expense types and amounts vary based on the terms of each contract with the funding agency. Expenses will be identified through the use of separate budget lines (e.g., rent, office expenses) as shown in Appendix D. All budgets and contract agreements are available through open records law. SOC will publish the current year's budget on the SOC website by March 15 of the given year, including a comparison to the previous year's actual expenses and revenues and any remaining fund balance.

Please refer to the SOC budget posted on the SOC website for more specific and current budgetary details.

Annual Report

Each year, the SOC Program Manager will prepare an Annual Report that summarizes the previous year's accomplishments. The annual report will highlight revised and new agricultural and urban technical standards and summarize the annual budget.

Chapter Two: Technical Standards

The Importance of Technical Standards

Technical standards are a very important component of soil and water conservation efforts in Wisconsin. The main purposes for technical standards are:

- Providing uniform planning, design, installation, and operations and maintenance criteria for conservation practices based on current research, field experience and the best available technology; and
- Providing a sound basis for the expenditure of public funds and compliance with certain environmental regulations.

The use of technical standards in applying conservation practices helps protect the state's natural resources while minimizing risks to the landowner/manager, the conservation professional, and the taxpayer. A significant ongoing effort is required to keep each technical standard current. Technical standards by themselves are voluntary, but can become mandatory in some settings. Some examples include:

- A technical standard is referenced in an ordinance, administrative rule, statute or other form of law;
- Compliance with a technical standard is required as a condition of eligibility for grant programs; and
- A court decision or settlement in a legal dispute requires compliance with a technical standard.

What is a Technical Standard?

The terms technical standard, "conservation practice standard", and "*practice standard*" are synonymous, and may also simply be referred to as "standards." The following definition applies to all of these terms:

A ***Technical Standard*** is a document that specifies minimum criteria for a practice or system of practices to provide a predicted benefit to soil and water resources. The minimum criteria can be in the form of:

- Planning / site assessment requirements
- Performance expectations
- Design parameters
- Operation & maintenance needs

***Refer to Appendix E for a detailed technical standard template.**

What is Not a Technical Standard?

Some related terms have been mistakenly used interchangeably with the term "technical standard" in the past, such as performance standard, conservation practice, *Best Management Practice (BMP)*, or companion documents. Technical standards may reference the following companion documents:

- Construction and material specifications;
- Design and construction methodologies;
- Testing procedures;
- Other criteria necessary to ensure the appropriate design and installation of the practice(s).

See Appendix F for more detail on what is **not** a technical standard.

Technical Standards Covered by SOC

The technical standards developed and maintained through the SOC process are housed by custodians in these locations:

- Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide[3], published by NRCS;
- The Storm Water Technical Standards[4] webpage of the Storm Water Runoff Permits webpage, published by the WDNR Storm Water Runoff Section; and
- DATCP webpage for ATCP 50: Wisconsin's Soil and Water Resource Management Rule[5] .

Technical standards are referenced by these state programs:

- All technical standards for BMPs used in the Animal Waste Management and Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Programs, administered by the WDNR Storm Water Runoff Section; and
- All technical standards for conservation practices used in the Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) Program, administered by the Wisconsin DATCP Bureau of Land and Water Resource Management.

3 https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/

4 https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stormwater/standards/

5 https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ATCP50.aspx

Chapter Three: Developing and Revising Technical Standards

SOC Guiding Principles

SOC has adopted the following guiding principles for the development and maintenance of all technical standards:

- Ensure the quality of the standards and their effectiveness in protecting the environment and the general public:
    - Base standards on the latest research, field experience and available technology;
    - Strike a balance between effectiveness and economics; and
    - Remove politics from the process as much as possible.
- Seek uniformity of technical standards among public agencies and programs:
    - This helps maintain program credibility and fairness to the land owner/manager.
- Ensure openness and accountability in the process and the end products:
    - This is achieved through a broad public review process, accurate record keeping, continuous evaluation, and up-to-date website communication and presence.

These guiding principles are the basis of the SOC process and should serve as a guide to all those participating in the processes described herein.

Technical Standard Custodian

A *technical standard Custodian* is the agency ultimately responsible for the development, maintenance and content of standards within its charge, in accordance with individual agency policies or mandates. In limited circumstances, more than one agency may be the custodian of a standard. (Refer to Chapter Four for the responsibilities of Joint Custodianship.) For purposes of this Handbook, and by written agreement of the agencies listed, the Custodians currently include the following:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture – NRCS (WI);
- WDNR – Storm Water Runoff Section; and
- DATCP – Bureau of Land and Water Resource Management.

Processes for Standard Development or Revision Projects

Based on recommendations from the Custodian of the standard, SOC uses one of three different processes to develop or revise a technical standard, depending on the complexity or depth of the anticipated update. The three processes are briefly described below and illustrated in Figure 1.

It is the duty of the Custodian to identify the scope of the project, recommend the appropriate process to SOC and implement the process in accordance with this Handbook. It is also the duty of the Custodian to track and record which process was used and the dates the work was completed.

SOC, under direction of the Custodian, will determine which of the following three processes applies to the development or revision of a specific technical standard:

1. **Minor Process**. The Minor Revisions Process requires fewer steps than other Processes, and is appropriate in the following circumstances:

    a. When updating an existing technical standard with revisions that do not significantly alter the planning criteria, performance expectations or design parameters of the standard;

    b. To complete regularly scheduled reviews and updates to ensure continued accuracy and compliance with applicable program rules or laws;

    c. To issue a state standard required to replicate a standard published at the federal level.

    The Custodian is responsible for planning and implementing *minor revisions* for all of its technical standards and notifying SOC when the updates are completed and published. For this process, there is no posting of drafts or public review comment period. The final standard is shared via the SOC listserv and website, and additional outlets managed by the Custodian such as newsletters or mailing lists. If significant negative comments are received after the minor revisions are distributed, SOC may ask the Custodian to consider other revisions.

2. **Modified Process**. The Modified Process offers options to streamline the standard development process while maintaining opportunity for public comment and remaining consistent with the guiding principles. This process is appropriate under these circumstances:

    a. Limited Use: The standard is not likely to be used by other agencies or organizations;

    b. Time Sensitivity: The Custodian requires a timely completion due to programmatic reasons beyond its immediate control;

    c. Minimal Impact: The revision will have minimal impact on the users of the standard;

    d. Limited Involvement: The standard or changes in select criteria are limited in the amount of resources required to complete, and may be driven by outside sources (e.g., targeted research, new program or regulation) that do not require full team input, but are substantial enough to warrant professional review (the "Initial Review") and public review (the "Broad Review"); or

    e. Limited Resources: Available resources are too limited to support the Full Process.

    At a minimum, the Modified Process must implement the following steps:

    a. The Custodian designates a person to lead the process of developing or revising the standard;

    b. The standard is revised or developed based on a review of the literature, collected data, or input from the prior team [if any] (Step 2, see Full Process below for details for each Step);

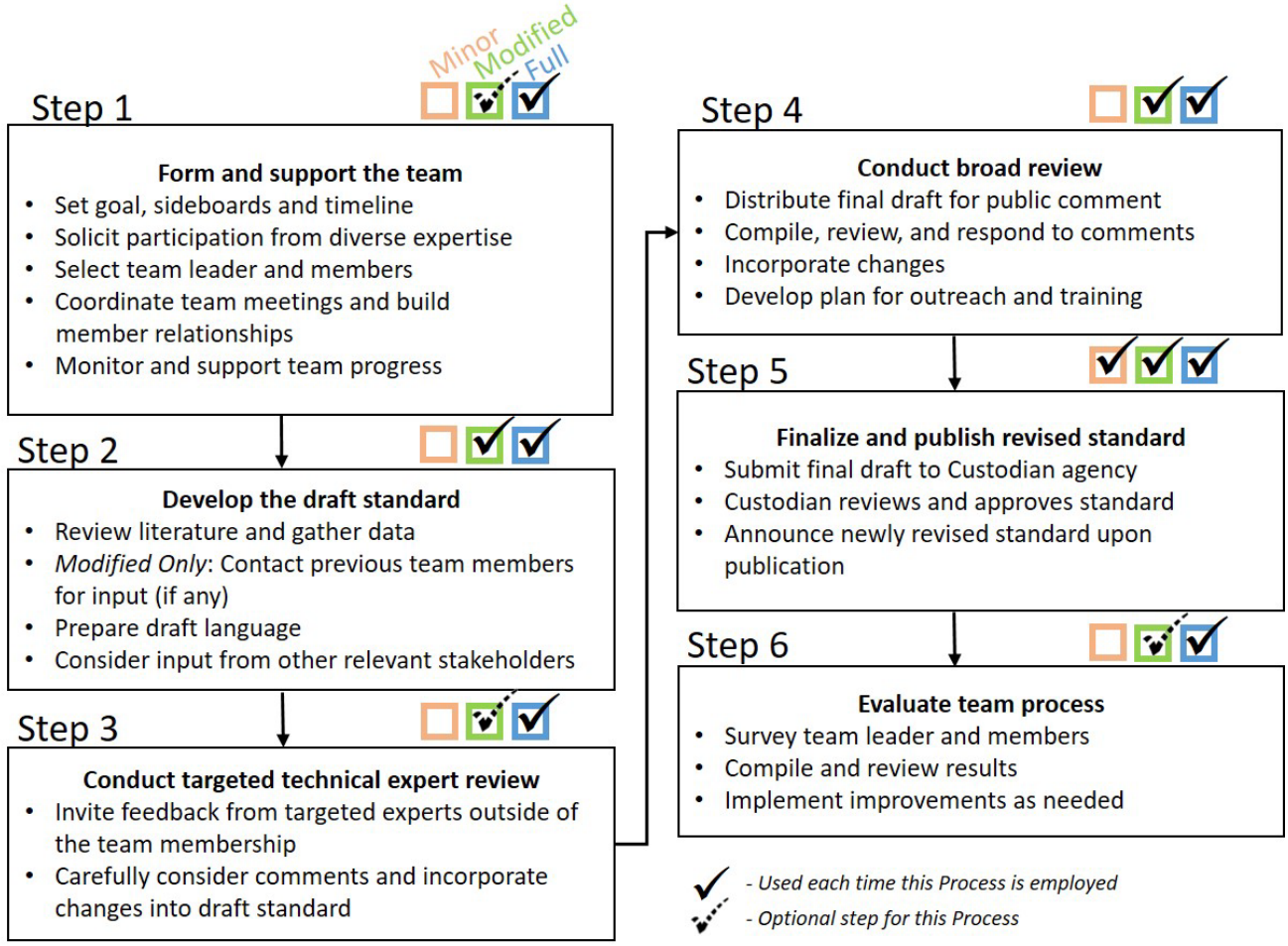
    c. A draft standard is submitted for broad review and comment solicited through the SOC website and email listervs (Step 4); and

d. A final standard, when approved by the Custodian, is published by the Custodian (Step 5).

The Modified Process may include the formation of and support for a work team (Step 1), and targeted review by technical experts (Step 3). Depending on the options selected, the SOC Program Manager's role may be limited to draft distribution and collection/compilation of comments received and draft distribution.

3. **Full Process**. The Full Process is used to develop a new technical standard (not intended to replicate a standard published at the federal level) or make *major revisions* to an existing technical standard. A major revision is defined as any revision to an existing technical standard that will significantly alter the planning criteria, performance expectations, or design parameters. The multiple steps in the Full Process are described In Figure 1. The process is iterative and subject to variation depending upon many factors, such as the complexity of the standard, the level of interest, and the availability of staff and/or financial resources.

Figure 1.
Generalized Steps in the Three SOC Processes for Technical Standard Development.



Step 1: Form and Support the Team

Set Goals & Sideboards for Work Team

Setting clear project goals and sideboards is an essential task that will be completed by the Custodian in consultation with SOC. The amount of up-front preparation for a work team depends on the nature of the standard, level of interest, the scope of the project, and possible controversy that may be involved. For complex projects, SOC may coordinate a separate interagency "Scoping Team" to prepare project goals and sideboards for an upcoming work team. The Team *Sponsor* is encouraged to reiterate sideboards as necessary throughout the process to keep the team focused on the primary issues at hand. For any project employing the Modified Process, project goals and sideboards can serve to prevent the drafter(s) from going beyond the limited scope that allowed the project to use the simplified process.

Invite Participation and Select Team

SOC will strive for teams with diverse experts and affiliations. At a minimum, SOC will solicit interest for involvement in the development/revision process from agencies and organizations represented by SOC, including all county-based NRCS and Land Conservation Department (LCD) offices, including other governmental agencies. The SOC Program Manager and the Custodian will also solicit interest from former team members on previous revisions of the standard (if any). Ideally work teams should include engineers, consultants and other technical experts from the private sector who may use the standard. The solicitations may include other relevant groups or individuals. The Custodian will select the Team Leader for the technical standard team. For projects employing the Modified Process, the Custodian will usually appoint the lead staff involved in the project.

Each person who is interested in participating on a work team will submit a summary of their relevant experience to the SOC Program Manager. The SOC Program Manager will distribute this information to SOC for input. The Team Sponsor and Team Leader will make the final decision in selecting which applicants will participate in the team.

Members of a technical standard team are selected based upon a variety of criteria, but the following are of particular importance:

- A demonstrated knowledge and technical expertise in the relevant field – by vocation or academic record; and
- Geographic and/or discipline diversity.

Team members do not need to be affiliated with any particular agency or organization. They may serve as individuals or as representatives of a larger group, but they should disclose the interests they are representing upfront.

For optimal conditions, work teams must be restricted in size. Based upon past experience, it is strongly recommended that a work team have no more than ten people, though it may have as many as twelve people under special circumstances. As a result, not all who are interested may be selected as work team members. Irrespective of who is included on a work team, anyone is welcome to take part in the draft public review process. Members of the public who are not chosen as team members may attend work team meetings if they agree to abide by the following set of rules:

- Inform the SOC Program Manager sufficiently in advance of planned meetings to allow the SOC Program Manager to make the necessary arrangements; and

- Non-team members will not be allowed to speak at the meeting. They are invited to listen, however, and may be given an opportunity to speak for a set period of time as directed by the Team Leader and/or the SOC Program Manager and agreed by the team members in advance.

Each team will decide if a substitute shall be allowed in the event that a team member cannot attend scheduled meetings that require their presence or expertise. This substitute must be approved by the Team Leader and is subject to the same degree of scrutiny in terms of their eligibility to participate as the original team member. It is the responsibility of the team members to keep their substitutes well informed of work team activities to avoid causing delays for the work team. In general, substitution is highly discouraged as it disrupts the work team's activities. If representation of that team member is essential for team progress, member substitutions are allowed if approved by the Team Leader.

Support the Team

Once the teams are selected, the SOC Program Manager will schedule an initial meeting with all team members to lay the groundwork for the practice standard project, including familiarizing them with the SOC process, creating group agreements, facilitating introductions and related expertise, and planning a schedule of meetings.

The key team players including the Custodian, Team Leader and the SOC Program Manager will work together to keep teams on schedule, identify efficiencies, and promote conditions that maximize participation. They can accomplish this by:

- Holding meetings in central locations and facilitate ride-sharing among participants;
- Making use of conference calls, emails, and the online screen sharing options and live conference calls to limit the frequency and duration of meetings;
- Providing advance notice of possible work teams to help local staff plan for participation; and
- Streamlining activities and meeting lengths when appropriate.

The Team Leader and SOC Program Manager will work together to provide appropriate resources to the team, coordinate outside expert contributions, facilitate the process of agenda development and work products through a regular set of ongoing meetings. The Team Sponsor also plays a role in providing resources for the Team, as well as reinforcing sideboards and resolving sticking points in the process. The SOC Program Manager will be attentive to group dynamics and encourage equal participation and perspectives from all team members.

Step 2: Review and develop draft technical standard

Gather Data / Review Literature

A key responsibility of the technical standard work teams is to conduct literature reviews and gather existing data from technically reliable sources. This may include compiling a bibliography or an informal list of research and material reviewed by the work team. Where the Modified Process is followed, the work team will solicit input prior to review period(s) from former team members (if any) on the specific criteria the Custodian recommended for update. Where the Full Process is followed, the input of former team members will be sought during broad review. Such information gathering is intended to provide the work teams with the ability to make the most technically

defensible decisions once they begin to draft the technical standard. Refer to Chapter Four for more details regarding the responsibilities of technical standard work team members.

Prepare Draft Language

All teams must identify responsibilities relating to research and drafting activities and must follow the practice standard format. Appendix E provides a template of the requisite standard format. The SOC Program Manager is generally responsible for making note of the revisions suggested by the work teams during their meetings and may assist in preparing the drafts of the technical standards for distribution.

Technical standard teams charged with developing a new standard must first clarify the "definition" and "purpose" of the standard and its "applicability." This information can usually be interpreted from the guidelines provided by the Custodian. The team must then adopt a general outline for the standard, following the standard format. Minor variations from this format are acceptable, at the discretion of the Custodian, in order to meet specific needs. However, the basic integrity of the format is to be retained. In certain cases, such as the wording of the section on federal, state and local laws, changes in format are not acceptable.

Consider Companion Document Development and Trainings

As standards are developed or revised, work teams should consider the different types of support materials needed to help users understand and correctly apply the standards. Work teams must periodically evaluate the need to create and/or revise companion documents.

Step 3: Request Targeted Outside Feedback

Solicit Initial Technical Comments

Team members will distribute draft standard language to a targeted group of reviewers for comments and feedback. These reviewers will be asked to provide their perspective on the impact, practicality, and technical appropriateness of the draft based on their geographical and technical experience. Team members will be asked to suggest specific individuals for this targeted review process. This targeted review is designed to strengthen the technical integrity of the draft and to work out any major problems prior to releasing it for a more widespread draft distribution.

The SOC Program Manager will compile the comments from this initial group of reviewers. The team will carefully consider each of the comments and decide how to incorporate potential revisions into the standard. Responses to the comments will be crafted by the team and distributed back to the reviewers.

For the Modified Process, a single review period may be used to simultaneously seek professional and public feedback.

Step 4: Solicit a Broad Review and Consider Comments

All teams using the Full or Modified Processes must solicit public comments from a broad source of technical standard users and reviewers before completing a final draft. Every effort should be made to maximize the number of technical standards users who review draft standards by making effective use of WI Land+Water newsletter, email listservs, the SOC website and other appropriate communication channels. The draft standard must be posted on the SOC website to give interested

persons the opportunity to submit comments on the draft during a specified time, typically three weeks. The broad review comment period for WDNR practice standards must also coincide with their respective three-week review for their guidance documents.

After each phase of receiving comments on a draft standard, the team will review and/or change any aspects of the draft standard. The team should decide if any comments warrant the creation of companion documents. If substantive changes to the draft are needed, the team may be compelled to repeat some steps in the process. The team must always respond to all reviewers submitting comments, either through a summary or individual responses.

Step 5: Finalize Standard and Announce Publication

Once the team is confident that the technical standard reflects the best available scientific and technical considerations possible, the SOC Program Manager and Team Leader will ensure final editing and reference checks. The Team Leader will then follow the appropriate process for submitting the final draft to the Custodian leadership for approval.

The authority to approve or disapprove the technical standard submitted by the technical standard team lies solely with the Custodian. Disapproval of the standard should not occur at this point. If it does, it is an indication that the Team Leader, sponsor and Custodian have not met their responsibilities, as outlined in Chapter Four. Communication between these parties is required throughout the standard development process. The Custodian should not reject the work of a technical standard team without compelling and substantiated reasons.

If the Custodian does not approve the technical standard for publication, the team, Custodian, and SOC must agree on a resolution. The solution may include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- Return the standard to the team for revisions;
- Assign a new Custodian; and/or
- Designate a new Team Leader and/or assemble a new team.

Once approved, the standard will be published online by the custodial agency. Links to technical standards posted on agency websites will be posted on the SOC website: www.socwisconsin.org. A current index or single copies of individual standards may be obtained by contacting the Custodian of the standards. Maintenance responsibilities for individual practice standards remain with the Custodian. The index will also include the latest revision date for each of the standards. The SOC Program Manager also will announce any revised or newly developed standards to the appropriate SOC listserv.

Step 6: Evaluate Team Process

After each standard team reaches consensus on the draft standard to send to the Custodian for final review, the SOC Program Manager will lead a team evaluation process through surveys and discussions with the Team Members and Team Leader. They will evaluate how effective they were and the process used to accomplish their project. The SOC Program Manager may interview the Team Leader. SOC reviews the compiled responses and determines whether corrective measures and/or new initiatives need to be included in the SOC process. The various user groups of the technical standards are also encouraged to provide their opinions to SOC.

At the end of the team process, SOC will maintain documents related to the technical standards team work for three years. After that time, SOC will defer to the Custodian for maintaining the records. The SOC Program Manager will offer the materials to the Custodian before destroying the hard copy documents. Digital versions of the documents will be maintained.

All SOC records are subject to Wisconsin Open Records Law. As the entity that houses SOC, WI Land+Water through its Executive Director shall serve as the SOC "records custodian" and is responsible for compliance with open records requests from the general public.

The SOC Work Plan

SOC oversees the development and maintenance of a two-year work plan, as dictated by the needs of Custodians and users of technical standards. Technical standard Custodians present their plans for upcoming technical standard revisions to SOC, including a tentative schedule for completion. In addition, SOC formally solicits User requests for technical standard needs every two years through an online Technical Standards Assessment (TSA) survey distributed to conservation professionals and other interested persons across the state. The TSA asks for input on which technical standards need development or revision and any comments on the SOC process. Requests or proposals for new or revised technical standards are also received by the SOC Program Manager outside of this biennial survey. The SOC Work Plan and future work teams are based on priorities identified by the survey results, agency requirements, and available resources.

The SOC Work Plan guides the activities of the SOC Program Manager and informs interested parties of upcoming technical standard activity and work teams. SOC considers a number of factors in ranking technical standard needs, including:

- Timeliness, including upcoming program deadlines and legislative mandates. Extent of the potential use of the new or revised technical standard;
- Availability of scientific data and research to justify a change or revision to a standard;
- Consequences of inaction;
- Feasibility and available resources including staff capacity, funding, and expertise.

The technical standard Custodian, in consultation with SOC, will determine which of three SOC processes will be followed for the practice standard project. After the practice standard projects are ranked and finalized in the SOC Work Plan, the steps detailed above are used to develop or revise the standard.

Chapter Four: Responsibilities of Key Players

This chapter describes more specifically who is responsible for performing the various tasks outlined in the SOC technical standard process.

The SOC process is a collaborative effort that relies upon the voluntary initiative of numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals. The delineation of responsibilities in this chapter has been reviewed and refined by the Council Representatives based on the many years of experiences gained since SOC's inception. These lists of responsibilities are not intended to be rigid and inflexible, but rather dynamic and to be used as a jumping off point for a successful process.

This process is designed to encourage the participation and inclusion of a broad array of relevant stakeholders, and so the responsibilities outlined below reflect that goal.

The primary players in the SOC process are the:

- Council Representatives;
- SOC Program Manager;
- Technical Standard Custodian/Sponsor;
- Team Leader;
- Team Members;
- Technical Standard Draft Reviewers; and
- Technical Standard Users.

Council Representative Responsibilities

All Custodians of technical standards used in Wisconsin conservation programs are invited to be members of the Council. Each of the SOC member agencies and organizations designate at least one representative to serve on the Council. In addition, the following criteria are used to determine the appropriateness of other members. Each Council Representative must:

- Be directly involved in the delivery of soil and water conservation or nonpoint pollution control programs;
- Have responsibilities for programs and activities involving the use, development and application of a wide variety of technical standards;
- Be able to contribute to fulfilling SOC's responsibilities;
- Have a background in conservation technical issues (or access to staff with this expertise);
- Provide a service to the end user of the standards; and
- Effectively represent and communicate the interests of agency or organization that appointed the person.

In their capacity to oversee the standard development and maintenance process, the specific duties of Council Representatives include the following:

1. Support and Evaluate SOC Process

- Ensure participation by agencies and organizations needed for SOC's operation including facilitating the necessary interagency/organization agreements to support SOC, and share accurate information about the Council, its current participants and activities.
- Maintain an effective governing body to conduct activities necessary to SOC including the election of chair and vice chair positions. The SOC Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected for two-year terms. The SOC Program Manager serves as the Council's Secretary and the WI Land+Water Executive Director serves as its Treasurer.
- The Treasurer will oversee the funding and budgeting for SOC including responsibility to:
    - Facilitate agency and other funding for support of the SOC Program Manager, which may take the form of voluntary annual dues from counties, or grant awards from cooperating agencies;
    - Work with SOC Program Manager to develop an annual budget for upcoming calendar year, and presenting the proposed budget to the Council Representatives in the year prior to implementation. SOC budgets and fiscal reports will follow the general format shown in Appendix D;
    - Track revenue and expenditures for current year through fiscal reports provided by WI Land+Water showing budgeted amounts compared to actual revenues and expenses for each line item. The budget will be presented for review by Council Representatives before publication on the SOC website; and
    - Ensure that any financial review required by funders and performed by WI Land+Water are consistent with requirements of grant contracts. WI Land+Water must report the results of any completed audit or financial review to the Council upon request. SOC may require assurances about the credibility of the financial information offered by WI Land+Water.
- Hold regular (typically quarterly) meetings and special meetings when needed to conduct necessary business of SOC. All meetings will be publicly noticed on the SOC website and through other appropriate channels. Meetings are open to the public unless the agenda specifies otherwise.
- Follow standardized procedures for conducting SOC meetings, including agreed-upon format for preparing agendas and minutes. Decisions will be made on a consensus basis, consistent with the framework described in Appendix G.
- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of the technical standard process and the contents of this Handbook, approving revisions and updates as needed including, updating SOC policies and procedures.
- Oversee the SOC website to ensure effective communication of information about SOC and posting all required documents (see below).
- Coordinate oversight of the SOC Program Manager who is hired and paid for by WI Land+Water. Appendices B and C contain a Position Description and a Performance

Evaluation Form that define and measure the current performance expectations and goals for the SOC Program Manager.

- If requested by the Custodian, assist with project scoping, establishing specific goals and sideboards for technical standard work teams, and team management.
- Recommend to Custodians which of the three SOC processes would be most applicable for a proposed technical standard or revision.
- Coordinate the activities of SOC with other related activities in the state.

2. Maintain

SOC Work Plan

- Maintain a work plan that covers two calendar years, and update the work plan at least once each year to address technical standards issues and user requests. When available, incorporate the results of the Technical Standards Assessment (TSA) into the revised SOC Work Plan;
- Rank proposals or requests for work on technical standards, and coordinate support staff and financial resources to implement the standard development processes in this Handbook;
- Recommend project completion goals/timetables to the Custodians and monitor technical standard work team activities;
- Coordinate the technical standards needs of Custodians, including reviewing schedules for all existing standards covered by this Handbook; and
- Document the currently active and planned SOC work teams, their missions and projected timelines for completion of work.

3. Encourage Participation in SOC Process

- Solicit technical standards needs from users and reviewers, considering proposals or requests for:
  - New technical standards;
  - Updates or revisions to existing standards;
  - Evaluations of conservation practices and their technical standards; and
  - Companion documents.
- Solicit participants for new Technical Standards work teams and monitoring their activities;
- Promote participation in the SOC process at related meetings and events;
- Support activities related to producing companion documents; and
- Identify the Custodian for a new standard and the criteria used to make that determination.

4. Support Services and Conflict Mediation

- Provide support services for work teams including team member selection;

- Mediate related conflicts between Custodians at the request of a Council Representative; and
- Mediate appeals from technical standard reviewers or work team members.

SOC Program Manager Responsibilities

The SOC Program Manager is a full-time staff member who assists SOC in carrying out many of the duties listed as SOC responsibilities and those listed below. See full Position Description (Appendix B) and Chapter Three for additional detail.

1. Facilitate and Coordinate Work Teams in Development and Revision of Practice Standards

- Lead team meeting coordination and facilitation. The Team Leader may assist with the following:
  - Help the team establish ground rules (refer to Appendix H), including:
    1) The team decision-making process;
    2) Attendance/substitution policies;
    3) Work team assignments; and
    4) Comment periods on drafts.
  - Assist with conflict resolution efforts among the team, including arranging for a facilitator at team meetings, if needed.
- Coordinate and assist with the tasks assigned to the team members, including:
  - Conduct literature reviews;
  - Edit drafts of technical standards and companion documents;
  - Collect needed information and materials;
  - Assist the preparation of drafts of technical standards including circulation of drafts for comment;
  - Assist with preparation of the responses to review comments on drafts; and
  - Support activities related to drafting and editing companion documents.
- Process requests for funds to pay for activities such as research and testing authorized in Appendix I.
- Document process for each Full Process technical standard project. This should include:
  - Minutes of all technical standard team meetings including a list of team members present;
  - A list of those who reviewed drafts of the standard; and
  - A summary of significant review comments that were received, and an indication if the comments were incorporated.
- Implement the team evaluation process (see Appendix H) and compiling the results for review by the Council.

2. Provision of Support for the Activities of the Council

- Manage quarterly Council meetings in consultation with SOC Chair to develop meeting agendas, including:
  - Provide agenda at least one week in advance of scheduled meetings;
  - Distribute meeting materials such as draft minutes in a timely fashion;
  - Prepare accurate minutes of each meeting including documenting and accounting for action items identified during meetings; and
  - Post agendas and minutes on the SOC website.
- Provide progress reports on work team activities and, as needed, and recommend strategies to address team performance problems;
- Serve as primary editor of the SOC Handbook. As needed, solicit input from Council Representatives on specific wording or policy references. Ensure adherence to and completion of all adopted SOC policies and procedures. The SOC Program Manager will facilitate the systematic review of the Handbook every even-numbered year;
- Conduct a Technical Standards Assessment (TSA) every odd-numbered year to solicit input from the conservation community on technical standard needs and work priorities. All effective means of communication should be used to maximize participation. The TSA process is summarized in Appendix J;
- Serve as primary editor of the SOC Work Plan. Update status of work teams and repost to website as needed;
- Manage annual SOC budget. Review quarterly financials. Develop annual draft budget with the SOC Treasurer, and have it reviewed by Council Representatives and submitted to WI Land+Water Board; and
- Assist in funding activities including the solicitation of a $350 voluntary annual service dues from counties.

3. Oversight of Outreach and Promotional Communication

- Maintain the SOC website (https://socwisconsin.org/), which includes:
  - Post work team and SOC meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes;
  - Post draft standards that are available for broad review;
  - Post SOC related news and special events;
  - Update links to relevant sites; and
  - Post the most current SOC publications, such as the SOC Technical Standards Process Handbook, Annual Report, annual budget, and SOC Work Plan, when they are approved.
- Maintain a SOC listserv to notify interested parties of news related to technical standards (i.e., work plan related information);
- Send prompt notification of practice standard announcements (newly published and revised standards, formation of teams, etc.) on listserv and website;

- Represent the Council at assigned statewide functions. Deliver SOC presentations at appropriate conferences, meetings, or events. Network and build relationships with partners;
- Provide updates regarding SOC activities to WI Land+Water membership and conservation partners through communication outlets, such as WI Land+Water and DATCP newsletters and participation in the Technical Committee, etc.; and
- Develop and update promotional materials (brochure, Annual Report, videos etc.).

4. Leadership in Program Management, Evaluation and Implementation of SOC-approved Program Improvements

- Lead strategic thinking and evaluation of SOC processes and organizational improvements to identify successes and areas of improvement;
- Conduct surveys and gather input from statewide technical experts to assess needs for WI practice standard development and revision. Provide recommendations to address program needs and identify areas of improvement; and
- Develop ongoing grant applications, maintain communication with grant agreement managers, and develop quarterly reports and reimbursement requests.

Custodian/Sponsor Responsibilities

A technical standard Custodian is ultimately responsible for the development, content and maintenance of standards within its charge, in accordance with individual agency policies or mandates. The custodial responsibilities will primarily be carried out by an appointed Sponsor (generally, the agency representative to SOC). The Sponsor is to serve as the key contact between the work team and the Custodian. The specific duties of a Custodian include the following:

1. Maintenance of Technical Standard Status

- Determine, in consultation with SOC, if a project request requires a new or revised standard;
- Identify the need for revisions to an existing technical standard, as well as schedule the completion of the work;
- Consult with SOC on the use of the Full Process, Modified Process or Minor Process for a technical standard project;
- Approve the final technical standard for publication and provide final version to SOC Program Manager to post to listserv and distribute as needed;
- Establish and following a *review schedule* for standards, in consideration of the recommendations made by SOC;
- Inform SOC of the need for new or revised standards to incorporate into the SOC Work Plan, and assisting with implementing applicable portions of the plan;
- Track and report to SOC on a regular basis all revisions made to technical standards, including the date of the revision and the process used to complete the revision (Minor, Modified, or Full Process);

- Effectively support technical aspects of standards in their implementation including approving variances or waivers to the standard, providing interpretations of standards, monitoring standards implementation including variances granted, and sharing implementation challenges with SOC for purposes of ongoing standards evaluation; and
- Maintain a record of standards implementation activities, including all requests for variances to these technical standards, and interpretations of standards.

2. Work Team Support

- Invite applicable contacts to participate in the standard development process;
- Define the mission for a technical standard team (see below), including the expected product and minimum guidelines/sideboards;
- Appoint a "Team Leader" with the appropriate technical and leadership skills needed to carry out the assigned task;
- Concur with the selection of technical standard team members;
- Contribute supplemental resources and support costs as needed for the technical standard team to complete its mission, and notify SOC of any shortfalls;
- Monitor the progress of a technical standard team and ensuring the timely completion of their mission;
- Intercede to enforce sideboards, resolve sticking points in the process, and manage team conflicts at the request of the Team Leader or a team member; and
- Support the development of companion documents as needed.

3. Administrative Details

1. Maintain a documentation file, including supporting evidence (literature reviews, etc.), reference material, minutes of meetings from the development process and other historical information;
2. Notify the SOC Program Manager of all planned or ongoing activity on the development or maintenance of a technical standard; and
3. Provide technical interpretations of the standard upon request, and notify SOC of significant interpretations that may affect other users.

4. Follow-up [Training, Education and Evaluation]

- Ensure necessary training support in the use of the standard, including coordination with other government agencies, *SITCOM*, and SOC if necessary to accomplish this goal;
- Evaluate the effectiveness and scientific accuracy or currency of the standard, including identifying resource needs to conduct the evaluation and ensuring that those needs are met; and
- Develop companion documents and other supporting materials as needed.

5. Additional Joint Custodianship Responsibilities

a. Agreement between the Custodial agencies concerning the content and applicability of the standard. This should include:

- Agency authorities;
- Administrative requirements and how the standard is intended to be used;
- Scope of standard – general agreement on what should and should not be criteria; and
- Scope of companion documents.

b. Process for finalizing and publishing the standard:

- Location(s) where the standard will be made available; and
- Public notification that standard is completed.

c. Process for jointly determining when minor and major revisions are needed

- Process to be used for carrying out minor revisions to both the standard and associated companion documents; and
- Responsibility for tracking the implementation success and shortcomings of the standard.

d. How to conduct training to accompany the new or revised standard.

e. Work team support – how to share responsibility, including selection of work team members.

f. Agreement between Custodial agencies for administering standards including issuing interpretations and approving variances, and determining what input is necessary to make that decision, in accordance with the procedures of this Handbook.

Team Leader Responsibilities

A Team Leader is the person who initiates and guides the activities of a technical standard team. The Team Leader must ensure that the team meets its responsibilities as a unit. The Custodian of the technical standard selects the Team Leader. The Team Leader is usually an employee of the Custodian to ensure an effective working relationship and clear direction concerning the focus of standard development.

As the driving force behind a technical standard team, the Team Leader must be well versed on the technical issues involved with the team's mission as well as possesses the general leadership skills required to serve in this position. The person must commit the time necessary to lead the team process to completion by the target date. Specific responsibilities of the Team Leader include the following:

1. Leadership Skills

- Assemble a team based on qualifications and responses from inquiries;
- Confirm expectations and minimum guidelines with the Custodian;
- Act as primary "chairperson" during team meetings and assist the SOC Program Manager in preparing meeting agendas; and

- Lead conflict resolution efforts among the team.

2. Work Team Support

- Work with team members to provide the necessary background information and research to reach the goal of the technical standard project;
- Oversee and coordinate any related contracted activities;
- Work with SOC Program Manager to assign various tasks to team members, including:
  - Conduct literature reviews and collecting needed information or materials;
  - Write drafts;
  - Complete editorial work; and
  - Respond to review comments on drafts.
- Identify resources needed to complete team mission, communicating these needs to the sponsor, and ensuring that these needs are met. This may include resources for special training and the development of support documents and graphics;
- Communicate with sponsor on team progress; and
- Ensure that the team meets its charge within the agreed upon time period.

3. Administrative Details

- Help the SOC Program Manager and team establish various ground rules, including:
  - The team decision-making process;
  - Attendance/substitution policies;
  - Meeting schedules and team work assignments; and
  - Comment periods on drafts.

Team Member Responsibilities

The SOC process relies heavily on the contributions of individual members of work teams. As a result, members of work teams must also be committed to the goals of the team in order to make the process work and to ensure that quality technical standards are developed. Specific responsibilities of team members include the following:

1. General Work Team Duties

- Represent the affiliated agency or stakeholder group on the team and clarifying this representation upon team formation;
- Attend team meetings, actively participate in the discussions and abide by the adopted ground rules:
  - Acknowledge the SOC process;
  - Offer to assist with workload items associated with the team effort; and
  - Support team decisions and the final product of the team.

2. Review and Evaluation Process

- Select technical standard reviewers for the various stages of draft review (see Chapter Three);
- Provide responses to the comments submitted by reviewers of the technical standard drafts within the given time periods; and
- Participate in the evaluation of the technical standard process upon completion of a technical standard team mission.

3. Development of Supporting Materials and Companion Documents

New teams will need to anticipate what kinds of documents may be necessary to develop during the course of their work on the technical standard. While teams usually will focus on development of companion documents, they may also recommend other supporting materials. Ordinarily, each solicitation for new work team members will include a request for ideas on companion documents appropriate for the new or revised technical standard. If it is determined that one companion document or several should be developed, the team may need to:

- Evaluate the various kinds of companion documents that already exist, their purpose, and where they are located;
- Identify the form and target audience for any potential companion documents;
- Assist in the preparation of information for companion documents and in reviewing future drafts;
- Keep track of all items that may be included in a companion document over the course of the team's meetings; and
- Assist with drafting the companion documents as needed.

If a Custodian determines that supporting materials including companion documents need to be developed or updated after the standard is published and the team has completed its work, the Custodian will be responsible for updating or creating the documents. The Custodian may solicit the input of team members or others in preparation these materials.

Technical Standard Draft Reviewer Responsibilities

A technical standard reviewer is a person who reviews and comments, individually or on behalf of a group or organization, on draft versions of technical standards that are circulated during development or revision. Submitted comments are based on the reviewer's knowledge of, or experience with, any particular component(s) of the technical standard, or the application of the standard in related conservation practices.

Agencies and organizations represented by SOC are invited to review all technical standards. However, a technical standard reviewer does not need to be affiliated with an agency or organization. Technical standard reviewers play an important role in ensuring the quality of standards. The specific responsibilities of the technical standard reviewers include the following:

- Acknowledge the process outlined in this Handbook;
- Evaluate the application of a draft standard to local conditions and anticipating its effects;

- Coordinate or compile comments to drafts among persons represented by the reviewer including office workmates, in an attempt to submit a consensus comment;
- Review and respond to drafts with constructive comments within the announced time limits. This includes offering an explanation for negative comments and possible suggestions for improvement; and
- Check for consistency among overlapping or similar technical standards and point out any discrepancies.

Note: All persons submitting comments will receive a response individually or in a summary. All comments not incorporated by the team will receive a written response. Reviewers may also submit a written appeal to SOC for mediation of the issue. However, the Custodian will retain approval authority for the content of standard (see Chapter Three).

Technical Standard User Responsibilities

Technical standard users are persons or organizations that rely on the technical standard(s) for the planning, design, installation, operation or maintenance of conservation practice(s) or BMPs. They also include those government agencies and others who reference the technical standards for environmental regulations, program compliance or cost-sharing activities.

Users of technical standards are encouraged to get involved in the technical standard process as reviewers of technical standards. Additional responsibilities of technical standard users include:

- Respond to technical standard surveys from the SOC or other sources;
- Call attention to the need for the development or revision of technical standard(s) and submit proposals or suggestions to the SOC; and
- Request interpretations of a technical standard from the Custodian when uncertainties are encountered.

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

The terms defined below are italicized the first time they appear in the document. Detailed definitions are provided below.

***Best Management Practice (BMP)* –** A BMP or conservation practice is a structure, technique or measure applied to the landscape to address a natural resource management problem. In the case of a BMP, this is limited to preventing or reducing nonpoint sources of water pollution. Other resource management problems, such as loss of soil productivity, wildlife habitat or marketable timber products are also common applications for conservation practices. In other words, a BMP or conservation practice simply identifies what the practice is. The technical standards however, define how the practice is planned, designed or otherwise implemented.

When written into the administrative rules of a particular conservation program, the BMP or conservation practice may also:

- Include a general description of what it is and what resource problem it addresses;
- Reference one or more (usually several) technical standards for proper application; and/or
- List program cost sharing criteria.

***Companion Document* –** A specific category of supporting materials published and maintained by Custodians to provide planning guidelines, design assistance, or specifics regarding technical standards. A technical note is a common companion document that may serve any three of the functions depending on the standard involved. Refer to Chapter Two and Appendix F for more information.

***Conservation Practice* –** A conservation practice (similar to a BMP) is a structure, technique or measure applied to the landscape to address a broad range of natural resource management issues or problems, such as: reducing nonpoint sources of water pollution, loss of soil productivity, property damage caused by soil erosion, loss of wildlife habitat or shortage of marketable timber products.

***Conservation Practice Standard* –** Same meaning as "technical standard". Used by the USDA agencies.

***Construction Specifications* –** Construction and material specifications are detailed methodologies and/or material listings that, when used or followed, ensure the conservation practice or practice component is constructed to meet the intended design, performance and life expectancy. The construction specification describes how the practice or component will be constructed or what materials must be used - not how to plan or design the practice, as with technical standards. Since construction and material specifications are often referenced in technical standards, their development and maintenance will also follow the process outlined in this Handbook.

***Major Revision* –** Major revisions are revisions to existing technical standards that will significantly alter the planning criteria, performance expectations, or design parameters. Major revisions to existing technical standards will follow the SOC Full Process.

***Minor Revision* –** Minor revisions are defined as those that will not significantly alter the planning criteria, performance expectations, or design parameters of the technical standard. (Example: updating references in the technical standard when changes have occurred in the reference material.)

***Nonpoint Source* –** A type of water pollution that enters a lake, stream, wetland or groundwater through runoff (from rainfall or snow melt) or percolation (through the soil) from the surrounding drainage area or watershed.

Practice Standard – Same meaning as "technical standard."

Review Schedule – A review schedule identifies which technical standards are scheduled, for the next 12 months, to be reviewed and updated by the Custodian. The Custodian must update the review schedule as progress is made. The development of the review schedule is an important element of the SOC Work Plan process. Look for the SOC Work Plan on the SOC website or contact the SOC Program Manager.

SOC Program Manager – The SOC Program Manager provides the administrative support and leadership for SOC and is the only hired staff member. (See Chapter Four or the position description in Appendix B).

Sponsor – The sponsor represents the Custodian of the technical standards and acts as the liaison between the technical standard team and the Custodial agency (See Chapter Four).

Technical Standard – A technical standard is a document that specifies minimum criteria for planning, performance expectations, design parameters, and operation and maintenance for a practice or system of practices to provide a predicted benefit to soil and water resources (See Chapter Two).

Technical Standard Custodian – A technical standard Custodian is an agency or organization that develops and/or publishes technical standards for soil and water conservation practices, and has agreed to abide by the procedures outlined in this Handbook (See Chapters Three and Four).

Conservation Organizations (Acronyms)

DATCP	Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection
LCD	Land Conservation Department – a generic term referring to county departments working under the authority of a Land Conservation Committee (LCC)
NRCS	USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service)
SITCOM	State Interagency Training Committee – An interagency team whose mission is to address training needs of conservation professionals through a coordinated and efficient approach to building statewide technical capacity to deliver best management practices for soil and water conservation
SOC	Standards Oversight Council – The Standards Oversight Council is an inter-agency collaboration responsible for overseeing the process used in Wisconsin to develop and maintain technical standards for urban and rural soil and water conservation practices. The SOC process focuses on the technical considerations of a standard, rather than legal and/or political issues. For more details on the duties of SOC participants, see Chapter Four.
Extension	University of Wisconsin Madison – Division of Extension
WALCE	Wisconsin Association of County Land Conservation Employees – a state association of Land Conservation Department employees. The organization merged with WI Land+Water in 2012
WDNR	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
WisDOT	Wisconsin Department of Transportation
WI Land+Water	Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association – a statewide association of county Land Conservation Departments and Land Conservation Committees

Appendix B: SOC Program Manager Position Description

(Edited 12-2022)

POSITION SUMMARY:

This full-time position will serve as Program Manager of the Standards Oversight Council (SOC), an interagency group composed of USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP); Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension; Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT); and Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water). This position will facilitate the development and revision of technical standards for Wisconsin's soil and water conservation practices by coordinating activities with the custodians of the technical standards, managing and supporting the activities of the work teams, supporting the leadership of SOC and the Council Representatives, and conducting outreach and communications activities. This grant-funded position will receive direction and oversight from the Council, and will be employed by WI Land+Water (located in Madison) whose Executive Director will provide direct supervision.

GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES - PART A:

65% GOAL A: Facilitation and coordination of activities related to the development and revision of practice standards.

1. Coordinate the development and revision of agricultural and urban technical standards with NRCS, DATCP and WDNR, the custodians of these standards;
2. Manage work team formation, communications, process, and evaluation;
3. Coordinate logistics of team meetings (e.g., develop agenda, reserve rooms, distribute materials) and provide support services such as taking meeting minutes and editing technical standard drafts;
4. Facilitate team meetings to ensure appropriate participation by team members and timely completion of products;
5. Monitor the performance and progress of work teams and provide necessary feedback and leadership to ensure timely completion of work; and
6. Assist with the compilation of background materials, conduct literature reviews, and support development and publication of technical reference materials.

15% GOAL B: Oversight of outreach, promotional, research, and training events and communication.

1. Maintain the SOC website https://socwisconsin.org/, Technical Photo Gallery https://www.flickr.com/photos/wisconsinlandwater/collections/72157713718570912/ , and the SOC urban and agricultural standards listservs. Coordinate improvements as necessary;
2. Send prompt notification of practice standard announcements (e.g., newly published standards, formation of teams) to listserv and post on website;
3. Coordinate and support standard-related research and training as appropriate;

4. Represent SOC at assigned statewide functions, building relationships with partners. Deliver SOC presentations at appropriate conferences, meetings, or events;
5. Provide updates regarding SOC activities to WI Land+Water membership and conservation partners through communication outlets, such as membership newsletters and participation in the Technical Committee; and
6. Develop reports (e.g., Annual Report) and promotional materials (e.g., brochures, videos).

10% GOAL C: Support for the activities of the Council.

1. Manage quarterly meetings of Council Representatives, including logistics (e.g., rooms, AV), agenda development, meeting material distribution, meeting facilitation, and meeting minutes;
2. Serve as Secretary of the Council;
3. Provide progress reports on work team activities and, as needed, recommend strategies to address team performance problems;
4. Serve as primary creator and editor of the SOC Annual Report, which includes a summary of work tasks and financial status for each calendar year.
5. Serve as primary editor of the SOC Technical Standards Process Handbook. As needed, solicit input from Council Representatives on specific wording or policy references. Ensure adherence to and completion of all adopted SOC policies and procedures;
6. Serve as primary editor of the SOC Work Plan. Update status of work teams and repost to website as needed; and
7. Manage annual SOC budget. Review quarterly financials. Develop annual draft budget, provide it to SOC Council for review, and submit it to the WI Land+Water Executive Director for incorporation in Association budget for Board approval.

10% GOAL D: Leadership in program management, evaluation and implementation of Council-approved program improvements.

1. Lead strategic thinking and evaluation of process and organizational improvements to identify successes and areas of improvement;
2. Gather input from statewide technical experts to assess needs for WI practice standard development and revision. Provide recommendations to address program needs and identify areas of improvement;
3. Develop funding requests, maintain communication with funders, and submit timely quarterly reports and reimbursement requests.

POSITION DESCRIPTION - PART B:

1. Required Knowledge and Skills
   a. Extensive knowledge of organizational techniques and work team facilitation;
   b. Ability to work with representatives from a variety of agencies and units of government, and act with tact in controversial or politically sensitive situations;
   c. Knowledge of program development and evaluation techniques;
   d. Oral and written communication skills;
   e. Editing and publishing technical document skills; and
   f. Experience with Microsoft Word and Excel.

2. Preferred Knowledge and Skills
    a. Knowledge of principles of soil and water conservation;
    b. Knowledge of technical standards and guidance; and
    c. Experience with Wordpress, Microsoft Access and Adobe Creative Suite.

3. Personal Contacts and Their Purpose
    a. With members of the work teams approximately weekly, to support their meetings and monitor their progress;
    b. With other standard users weekly to distribute standards, solicit feedback and to promote participation in the process;
    c. With Executive Director, as needed, to provide supervision, evaluate performance and manage the terms of employment;
    d. With the Council, quarterly, to provide progress reports and to receive direction and feedback regarding performance;
    e. With other groups and individuals involved in development of standards, as needed, to share information and explore new resources; and
    f. With WI Land+Water staff, as needed, for such activities as coordinating schedules, completing personnel matters, sharing information about activities, assisting with SOC outreach through WI Land+Water such as newsletter articles and annual reports, collaborating on training activities including Annual Conference, and facilitating other internal office matters.

4. Discretion and Accountability:
    a. Demonstrate considerable personal motivation, discretion, and the ability to initiate personal contacts and pursue tasks independently;
    b. Be employed by the WI Land+Water office and must work cooperatively with sponsoring agencies;
    c. Receive direction from the Council and supervision from by the WI Land+Water Executive Director for the type and quantity of work from the Council and the standard work teams; and
    d. Prioritize for accomplishing work activities will follow the Position Description goals listed above.

5. Physical Demands:
    a. There are no unusual physical demands placed on an incumbent in this position. An ability to sit and/or operate a computer for long periods of time is essential. Some office duties may require light lifting of 25# or less.

6. Working Environment:
    a. Work is performed in a small office environment, with a mixture of independent work and collaborative work. Sometimes the individual may need to perform office support duties such as answer phones, take messages, interact with walk-ins, collect mail, or perform other office duties while colleagues are absent.
    b. Work includes travel in a wide geographical area of the state and may require occasional overnight stays. Staff is expected to carpool, use public transportation, or use car-sharing when able.

Appendix C: Performance Evaluation Form for SOC Program Manager

(Revised 10-2022)

PROCESS

WI Land+Water staff annual performance evaluations give the executive director and staff members an opportunity, at least once a year, to reflect on what the staff member achieved compared to what was expected and how the staff member is performing overall.

These evaluations occur in September, to inform the budget development process for the subsequent year (any recommended compensation adjustments that come from evaluation process can be incorporated into budgeting).

During the evaluation process, the executive director will review the results that staff members have attained. In addition, the executive director may also reach out to staff members' committees, colleagues, and/or people outside the organization for additional feedback. Specific to the SOC Program Manager, the executive director may request feedback from the Council Representatives or Team Leaders to assist in evaluating the Program Manager's implementation of their directives.

Staff members will complete a self-evaluation (marking the top of page 2 accordingly) and submit to executive director. Executive director will subsequently submit the "manager's evaluation" to staff member, prior to a face-to-face meeting to discuss both evaluations.

Our performance evaluation consists of four main sections:

Section 1. Overall Assessment (overall, how well you did)
How did the staff member do overall? What is the fundamental message of the evaluation?

Section 2. Results (what you got done)
What was the staff member's progress in reaching key goals for the year? ("This year's goals" are those set at last year's performance evaluation.)

Section 3. Performance Factors (how you got it done)
How is the staff member demonstrating our core values and achieving key work factors?

Section 4. Setting Next Year's Goals
What 2-4 goals are your biggest priority for the next year? These will be evaluated at next year's performance evaluation. Make separate and specific reference to personal/professional development goals.

RATINGS SCALE

The following scale is used for all ratings in the review:

E: Exceeds expectations – consistently delivers exceptional results, is a model for others to follow (rare).

M: Meets expectations – consistently meets expectations in all areas.

P: Partially meets expectations – meets expectations in some areas but needs improvement in others.

D: Does not meet expectations – needs significant improvement quickly.

Annual Staff Performance Evaluation

☐ Self-evaluation ☐ Manager's evaluation

Employee name: Click or tap here to enter text. Manager name: Click or tap here to enter text.
Review period: Click or tap here to enter text. Review date: Click or tap here to enter text.

SECTION 1: OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Overall performance rating: ☐ Exceeds Expectations ☐ Meets Expectations
☐ Partially Meets Expectations ☐ Does Not Meet Expectations

What two or three things is this staff member doing best?

-
-

What two or three things should the staff member improve in?

-
-

What's the fundamental message that you want this staff member to take from this evaluation? Or, if filling out a self-evaluation, what's the fundamental take-away for your manager about your self-assessment?

-

SECTION 2: RESULTS (FROM THIS YEAR'S GOALS)

Goals (2-4 top priorities from last year's performance evaluation)	Results (provide comments, if necessary)	Rating

SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE FACTORS

Core Values	Rating
Pragmatism: finds practical solutions to complex challenges.	
Partnership: seeks collaboration with partners to amplify the impact of our work.	
Professionalism: strives for exceptional service.	
Efficiency: performs duties with the least waste of time and effort.	
Education: seeks to continually learn, and enhance skill set in service of his/her work.	

Work Factors	Rating
Problem-solving: identifies issues, analyzes data to produce insights, and generates wise, actionable recommendations.	
Project management: oversees and structures complex projects, plans backwards, and ensures quality end-products are delivered on or ahead of schedule, without crises.	
Communication: produces strong written documents, edits documents effectively, engages in effective verbal communication, and conducts effective large group presentations.	
Leadership: provides clear direction and purpose to relevant colleagues.	
Initiative: seeks out new assignments, finds better/faster ways to accomplish tasks, and expands his/her capabilities.	
External relations: serves as an effective ambassador, builds connections, and maintains relationships with outside constituents.	
Reliability: can be relied upon to complete assigned tasks and follow up as appropriate.	
Adaptability: is open to constructive criticism and suggestions, and takes direction willingly.	
Attitude: acts positively toward the job, colleagues, and the overall mission of both WI Land+Water and Standards Oversight Council.	
Quality of work: overall quality of work performed by the employee meets with the expectations of WI Land+Water staff and Council Representatives.	

SECTION 4: NEXT YEAR'S GOALS

Goals (2-4 top priorities for the next year)
Personal/Professional Development Goals

Employee Signature:* Click or tap here to enter text. Date: Click or tap here to enter text.

Executive Director Signature: Click or tap here to enter text. Date: Click or tap here to enter text.

* Signature acknowledges employee has read this Performance Evaluation.

Appendix D: SOC Budget Format

(Adopted 12-2013, Updated 12-2022)

	Actual	Budget
Income		
45000 - Interest Income	$ -	$ -
52000 · Standards Oversight Council		
52110 · SOC DATCP Grant	$ -	$ -
52210 · SOC DNR Grant	$ -	$ -
52310 · SOC NRCS Grant	$ -	$ -
Total 52000 · Standards Oversight Council	$ -	$ -
Total Income	$ -	$ -
Expense		
60000 · Audit	$ -	$ -
62000 · Business Licensing & Insurance	$ -	$ -
63000 · Rent	$ -	$ -
64000 · Professional Services	$ -	$ -
65000 · Office Expenses	$ -	$ -
66000 · Payroll Expenses	$ -	$ -
67000 · Prof. Development (L+W Staff)	$ -	$ -
67500 · Staff Travel Committee	$ -	$ -
74000 · SOC Team Meetings	$ -	$ -
80000 · Conference	$ -	$ -
86000 · Training Program Events (excl. conference)	$ -	$ -
90000 · Networking (Partner Events)	$ -	$ -
95000 · Outreach	$ -	$ -
Total Expense	$ -	$ -

SOC Reserve Funds:	Annual Change	Total of 12/31/YYYY
SOC Endowment	$ -	$ -
SOC Dues Reserve	$ -	$ -

Note: slight adjustments to the budget line items may be made as WI Land+Water evaluates its accounting process.

Appendix E: Standard Format for Technical Standards

Most commonly asked questions about technical standards:

- **How was the technical standard format created and how open is it to change?**

  Due to its simplicity and ease of use, SOC decided to base its format on the NRCS – National Handbook of Conservation Planning (NHCP) format as determined by USDA policy. This format has proven itself to be efficient and useful over time. Accordingly, a work team is not likely to revise this format unless there is a compelling reason. If such a case can be made for revision/alteration of the technical standard format, changes may be made that do not substantively alter the purpose and function of the technical standard as defined in this Handbook.

- **What criteria in a standard are required and what criteria are recommended?**

  Users of a standard are required to follow criteria in a technical standard except for provisions in the "Considerations" section and specific provisions that indicate that they are not requirements.

- **What is the difference between information in a technical standard and a companion document?** (See Chapter Two and Appendix F for a more in-depth discussion)

  There are several reasons why information might be included in a companion document rather than a technical standard:

  - Information included in the companion document is easier to update since its revision process does not fall under the same stringent standards as those for the technical standards.
  - Typically, the technical standard is the only document that is subject to being cited in cost share and other such programs as part of required management practices. In contrast, the companion document is primarily intended to provide the technical standard users with additional guidance as they attempt to follow the criteria laid out in the technical standard(s).

- **Why is the laws and regulations section included in the standard?**

  This section is included in the technical standard to remind users that they are still subject to other existing federal, state and local laws regardless of how closely they follow the criteria listed in the standard.

- **How do we refer to specific sections of the document?**

  The draft will contain numbered lines during initial and broad reviews. Numbers will run continuously through the document and can be used to identify lines pertaining to reviewers' comments. Numbers will removed for the final publication, and references will be made using page numbers, headers, and bullet point numbers. WDNR and DATCP standard lists may be formatted with an alphanumeric system within Criteria and Considerations.

[CUSTODIAN AGENCY NAME]

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

[OFFICIAL NAME OF STANDARD]

CODE [###]

(Unit of Measurement, NRCS standards only)

DEFINITION

This *section*[1] is intended to briefly describe the practice and may not be subject to change if the Custodian has already provided a definition. Please note that purposes supported by the practice or criteria for design, installation, or performance of the practice, are addressed in subsequent sections of the standard and should not be a part of the definition.

PURPOSE

This section lists the primary reasons for which the practice is applied. Each purpose identifies a resource problem that the practice can be specifically designed to treat. For each purpose listed, corresponding limits of design are described in the CRITERIA section.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This section describes the land uses and site conditions that affect suitability or function of the practice. Conditions where the practice is applicable and conditions for which the practice is unsuitable are explained. Limitations on the extent of the practice standard are also included in this section, and may be listed in paragraph or bullet form. This practice applies to:

- bullet list item A, and
- bullet list item B.

This practice does not apply to:

- bullet list item C, and
- bullet list item D.

CRITERIA

General Criteria

This section contains **requirements** for the design of the practice to accomplish the identified purposes.

Laws and Regulations. This section also contains references to federal, state, and local laws as necessary. For example, 'Users shall comply with all federal, tribal, state, and local laws, rules, or regulations. This standard does not contain the text of federal, tribal, state, or local laws.'

Location. This optional section may state the allowable location parameters, including exclusion from floodplains or flood events.

Design Parameters. Criteria are expressed in terms of allowable limits for:

- Design parameter limits including:
    - minimum allowable hydraulic capacity,
    - minimum service life,

    - maximum allowable velocity, and
    - minimum plant heights and so on…
- Acceptable installation processes including:
    - types of equipment to be used,
    - sequencing and timing of field operations, and
    - safety requirements such as warning signs or ventilation requirements.
- Performance requirements including:
    - defining the conditions to be achieved and including such items as percent residue cover, stand density of established vegetation, earth fill densities and required strength and durability of construction materials.

Dimensions. Minimum and/or maximum dimensions that satisfy the allowable limits for design parameters.

Examples of Dimensions

Examples of dimensions may also be described. Dimensions may include, but are not limited to:

- maximum dimensions for strip widths,
- minimum side slope ratios,
- minimum top widths,
- minimum and maximum mulching rates, and
- minimum fill material heights above conduits.

Installation Processes

Acceptable installation processes and/or performance requirements may also be described.

Incorporating by Reference. Criteria are either described in the Criteria section or established by reference to other documents such as the Engineering Field Handbook or appropriate publications of universities or research agencies. Incorporation by reference is preferred to avoid errors, redundancy, or conflicting statements. Reference material supporting criteria are to be cited in this section, with full reference in the References section.

Referencing within the Document. A section may refer to another portion of the document by stating the referenced item's page, header name, sub-header name, and bullet point or paragraph number. In this example, when a client asks about dimensions criteria, refer her to page two, Dimensions, Examples of Dimensions, bullet points one through five.

Additional Criteria for Specific Categories of this Practice.

As necessary, create sections with criteria specific to subsets, or categories, of this practice. Continue formatting headers as shown under the General Criteria section.

CONSIDERATIONS

This section is the ONLY one in the standard that contains **recommendations** that are not required additional elements of design. They are elements of design that are in the considerations section because they do not directly affect the conservation function of the practice and are therefore not accounted for as required 'Criteria.'

They may address the effects of other practices in the conservation system, or the requirements of the overall farming operation on the design, installation, operation, or maintenance of the practice.

This section may be viewed as a place to locate additional guidance that may otherwise not be deemed appropriate to label as requirements, but otherwise would be useful to the technical standards user.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

This section contains plans and specification requirements for the proper preparation of specific field sites based on the standard. Plans and specifications include:

- construction plans,
- drawings,
- job sheets,
- construction specifications,
- narrative statements in conservation plans, and
- similar documents.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

This section describes the minimum requirements needed in an Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plan for the practice.

REFERENCES

This section may be added as needed to incorporate a list of the publications helpful in planning or implementation of the practice. These publications are in addition to those referred to in the 'Criteria' section.

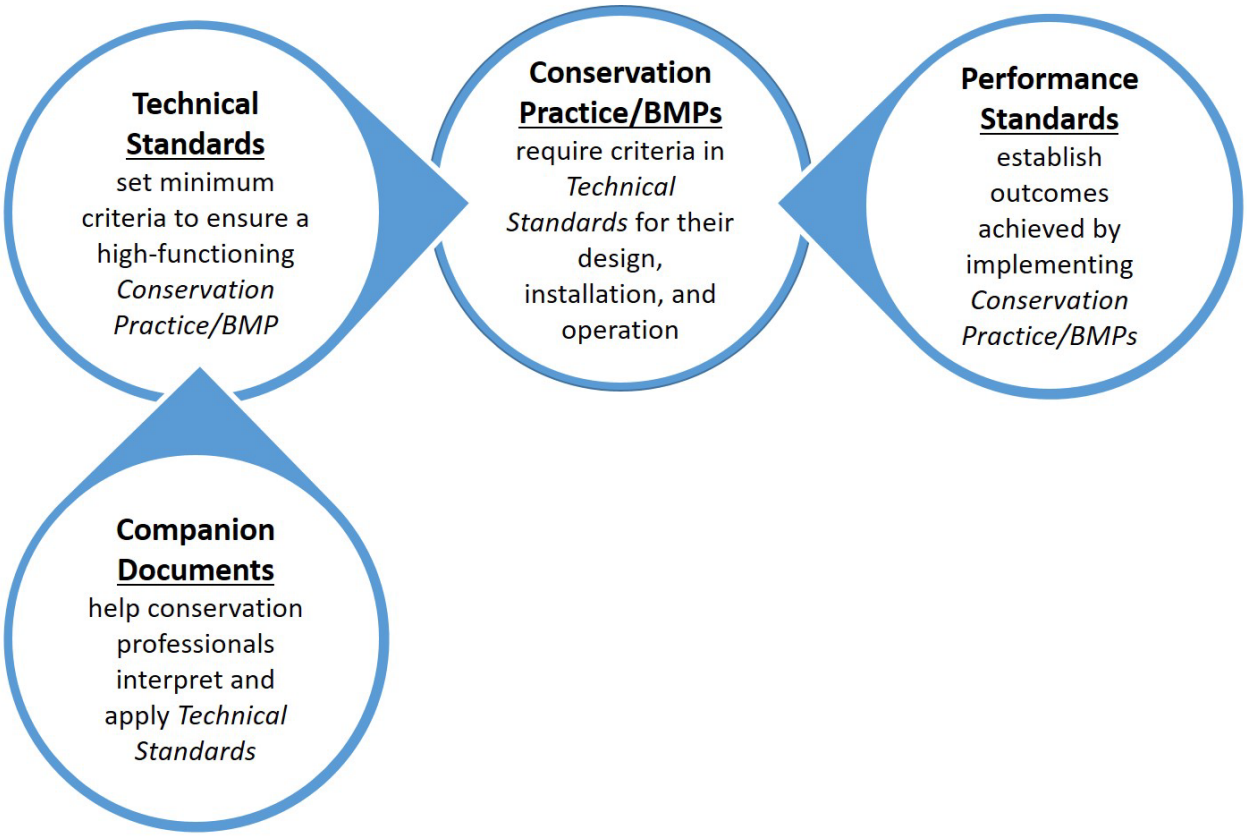
GLOSSARY

Section – Words needing to be defined in the standard are shown in italics the first time they appear in the text, and are described in this section. It may be useful to include the definitions for terms here rather than in the text in order to maintain the streamlined format of the technical standard.

Appendix F: What is *Not* a Technical Standard?

Some related terms have been mistakenly used interchangeably with the term "technical standard" in the past. These terms are described here in order to clarify their relationship to a technical standard, which is the core focus of the SOC process. Figure 2 and the following subsections explain how technical standards differ from the related concepts of a performance standard, conservation practice or *Best Management Practice* (BMP), and companion documents.

Figure 2
Relationship of Technical Standards to Other Related Terms



Performance Standards

Performance standards establish a narrative or measurable number specifying the minimum acceptable outcome for a facility or practice. Performance standards can come in the form of a state administrative rule, such as Chapter NR 151, Wisconsin Administrative Code (Runoff Management) or local ordinance, such as a Storm Water Management Ordinance. For example, a performance standard may be defined as: "Trap 80% of sediment in runoff." Typically, the level of detail is sufficiently general in order to allow the performance standards to be met through a variety of means.

Conservation Practices or Best Management Practices (BMP)

A conservation practice (e.g., soil and water protection practices outlined within Chapter ATCP 50, Wis. Adm. Code) or Best Management Practice (e.g., runoff management practices outlined within Chapter NR 151, Wisc. Adm. Code) is a structure, technique or measure applied to the landscape to address a natural resource management problem or to meet the performance standard. In the case of a BMP, this is limited to preventing or reducing *nonpoint sources* of water pollution. Other resource management problems, such as loss of soil productivity, wildlife habitat or marketable timber products are also common applications for conservation practices.

In other words, a BMP or conservation practice simply identifies the practice and its purpose. In contrast, the technical standards define the minimum criteria to design, implement, and maintain the practice to ensure that it meets the intended purpose. An example of a BMP would be a wet detention basin.

When written into the administrative rules of a particular conservation program, the BMP or conservation practice may also include a:

- General description of what it is and what resource problem it addresses;
- Reference to one or more (usually several) technical standards for proper application;
- List of the program cost-sharing criteria.

Companion Documents and Other Supporting Materials

Technical standards may require supporting materials and documents to ensure proper implementation. The complexity of a standard and other factors will determine if and what type of supporting documents are needed. Sometimes documents are needed to expand upon a well-established field of knowledge, while in other cases they may be forging ahead into relatively unknown territory. In some instances, no new support materials may be necessary.

As useful as technical standards are in providing the basic "building blocks" for practices, they are not equipped to offer the kinds of planning guidelines that many people using the technical standards may require. It is critical to bear in mind that the technical standards may be referenced in program rules or laws at a federal, state or local level, and are commonly used to ensure accountability of public cost-share grants to landowners for installing conservation practices.

In considering what might be appropriate to include in supporting materials, team members in particular need to exercise care in distinguishing guidance from what should be incorporated as part of the standard. Not including criteria in a standard can have significant legal impacts if the standard is codified and only a companion document establishes certain criteria. It is also worth noting that companion documents do not fall under the same stringent SOC review process as the technical standards; therefore, it is much easier to modify companion documents as the need arises. As standards are developed or revised, work teams should consider the different types of support materials needed to help users understand and accurately implement the standards.

Supporting materials have different functions that may aid technical standards users in planning and design, provide greater technical details to meet a standard, and serve educational purposes. Table 1 provides a list of the key functions of supporting materials and examples of documents within each category.

Table 1. Functions of Supporting Materials			
Companion Documents			**Other**
Planning Guidelines	**Design Assistance**	**Standard Specific**	**Training & Education**
• Selecting BMPs • Providing background • Reviewing field conditions • Special issues to be addressed such as resource protection or available research	• How to use the standard • Spreadsheets • Worksheets • Standard engineering drawings • Reference data	• Explanation of criteria • *Construction Specifications* • Example applications	Supplemental training & educational products for standard: • Workshops, trainings, or their course notes • Fact sheets • Work team development • Public meetings

Supporting materials known as companion documents are the main mechanisms to provide planning guidelines, design assistance, and specifics regarding standards. A technical note is a common companion document that may serve any of the above functions depending on the standard involved. On the other hand, construction and material specifications have more limited purpose of providing specific explanation regarding a technical element in a standard.

Published and maintained by Custodians, companion documents are more formally connected to standards than other supporting materials. A companion document can be as simple as a spreadsheet or as complex as a planning guidance document. A companion document can consist of a compilation of existing research intended for greater accessibility, or it can be designed to fill in the holes of pre-existing research. See Table 2 for a list of common companion documents by area of focus, the agencies responsible for their publication, and the publications in which the documents are located. In nearly every case, this Handbook refers to companion documents when supporting materials are discussed.

Table 2. Publication of Companion Documents		
Types of Practices	**Agency**	**Publications Hosting Companion Documents**
Waste Management (related engineering practices)	NRCS	Agricultural Waste Management Field Handbook[6] (NRCS – AWMFH)
Engineering Practices	NRCS	Engineering Field Handbook[7] (NRCS – EFH)
All Types	Extension	Various (independent documents)
Urban Stormwater Practices	WDNR	Technical Notes[8]

6 https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerfs.aspx?hid=21430

7 https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?id=3619

8 https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stormwater/standards/postconst_standards.html

NRCS produces several types of other companion conservation practice documents including the Practice Overview, Implementation Requirements, Statement of Work, Practice Specification (practice specific), Standard Drawings, Operation & Maintenance, Guidance Documents, and other practice support documents.

Supporting materials may include information developed for education and outreach efforts such as a PowerPoint presentations, course notes or fact sheets. In addition to NRCS, WDNR and DATCP, non-custodian agencies such as Extension may develop these support materials to implement programs.

Planning Guidelines are generally intended to provide the users of technical standards with a more in-depth degree of support than what would otherwise be appropriate in the standard itself. The planning guidelines can provide information to help the technician/field staff select the best conservation practice to suit specific needs. These kinds of documents can provide background information to specific practices, such as decision-making trains, or examples of applications in various field conditions.

Design Assistance companion documents are context specific and are of a technical nature such as spreadsheets, worksheets and standard engineering drawings. The technical standard can include conceptual drawings or references of a generalized nature for a statewide audience, but there are limitations in terms of what kinds of references are appropriate. While it would be appropriate to include a conceptual drawing to clarify specific points of text in a technical standard, it is often best to make particular kinds of materials such as standard engineering drawings available as companion documents that will not be subject to codification and can be modified more readily.

Standard-specific companion documents can be developed in order to expand upon the information that has been developed in the standard. For instance, if a table for a previously unfamiliar practice were created by the work team and included in the standard, the work team may wish to provide some sort of explanation designed to elaborate upon how and why it had been created. In this way, those expected to use the table, may better understand the underlying concepts. The explanation would likely not be necessary within the standard itself, especially once the table becomes well understood and accepted, but the explanation may need to be available for some period of time if initial questions do arise.

Training & Education: It is vital that users of technical standards have training and education opportunities although coordinating this training is considered beyond the scope of the Council. It is crucial that the technical standards are being used properly and that the people using them have access to additional assistance if needed. In their various forms, training and education materials can meet this need, and are most useful if they are made available on the web after presentations. SOC is committed to working with Custodians to ensure adequate opportunities for education and training about technical standards.

Appendix G: The SOC Decision-Making Process: The Consensus Model

The way decisions are made on technical standard teams can greatly affect the quality of the final product and the support for the decisions made thereafter. Each team should clarify the methods of decision making (described below) before beginning work on any standard in order to avoid misunderstandings.

No matter what type of decision-making process is practiced by a group, every effort should be made to:

- Identify, analyze, and clarify potentially problematic issues; and
- Reasonably consider possible solutions to issues before making a decision.

Significant effort must be made by the Team Leader and SOC Program Manager (with the assistance of a facilitator, if necessary) to resolve any major disagreements on an issue before a final decision is made.

It is strongly recommended that the SOC work teams strive to follow a consensus-based model of decision-making. If a decision cannot be made by consensus, then the Team Leader should strive for substantial agreement before settling on the majority vote.

1. **Consensus:** Every member of the group agrees before a decision is made. The Team Leader makes sure that any individual concerns are confronted and resolved through collaboration. The final decision is supported by all of the team members after the meeting.
2. **Substantial Agreement:** The Team Leader senses that almost all of the team members agree. He or she states that it appears that there is substantial agreement on a decision, clarifies what the decision is and offers a chance for any major opposition to be made known. If there is no significant disagreement, the decision is made. While every team member may not go out of their way to express support for the decision, they all agree not to work against it after the meeting.
3. **Majority Vote:** A formal vote is taken, and the majority vote carries the final decision. This option is applicable if there is irreconcilable disagreement on any issue. While risks on the level of support for decisions made by this method are inherent, team ground rules may help minimize these risks.

   Note: It is recommended that anyone voting against the majority provide a substantive basis for their vote. When the final decision is recorded, the dissenting vote(s) must also be documented in the record, along with the basis for their vote (a minority report).

Appendix H: Team Resources

This section is intended to provide guidance and resources for facilitating productive, collaborative teams. The following topics will be addressed:

- Teambuilding Guidelines;
- Individual Team Evaluation Form;
- Ideal Characteristics of Team Members; and
- Stages of Team Development.

Teambuilding Guidelines

- Develop a clear mission for the goals of the team.
- Establish group agreements or guidelines for the team. At the first team meeting, the team members develop a set of behavioral rules or a list of how the team will conduct its business. The agreements are established by consensus.

  Examples:

  - Focus on the problem, not the personality
  - Maintain or enhance self-esteem
  - Attend all meetings
  - Be on time
  - Build – don't destroy
  - All team members are equal
  - All must contribute
  - Leave 'rank' at the door
- **Team Resources**
  - *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* by Patrick Lencioni.

Individual Team Evaluation Form

Team members should have the opportunity to evaluate the team process. For teams undergoing the full team process, they can often meet for more than 18 months. It is best practice to provide them a chance to give the SOC Program Manager feedback on how the meetings are going after the first six months. The evaluation can take the form of a simple diagram on flipchart paper with a pro and con side, asking team members to suggest things that are going well or things that could be improved. A one-page, no more than five question hard copy survey could also be provided.

At the end of a team project, the SOC Program Manager should provide a full evaluation survey to obtain more complete feedback on the complete process of the team project. Team members may be provided a link to an online survey, or hard-copy surveys. Surveys will allow team members to evaluate the organization and preparedness of the Team Leader and SOC Program Manager, team composition/diversity, clarity of the SOC process and specific team goals, opportunities to provide

input, timeline, meeting facilitation, and other factors relevant to the SOC process. The SOC Program Manager will summarize the responses, share them with the Council representatives, and adjust the team process as needed.

Ideal Characteristics of Team Members	
Positive Attitude	• Reduces conflict • Differences in background/opinion are helpful • Purpose to help/satisfy others
Open Mind	• Start with problem orientation rather than solution orientation • Value all other opinions
Commitment	• To the mission • To the other team members • To 'customers'
Open Communication	• Listening • Speaking • Use questions more than statements
Cooperation	• Not competition • Minimize status/power differences • Build self-esteem of others
Contribution	• Help meet three sets of needs in each meeting: - 'I' needs – individual needs - 'We' needs – group / team needs - 'It' needs - task needs • Use 80-20 feedback: 80% positive feedback

At Team Meetings: Every team member is responsible for:

- Conducting research, literature reviews and enquiries with qualified peers to ensure that the information in the technical standards is sound and up-to-date;
- Completing tasks related to the drafting of technical standard and companion document language;
- Encouraging the team;
- Initiating and encouraging ideas;
- Giving information and opinions;
- Helping to resolve conflicts; and

- Summarizing group ideas.

Stages of Team Development	Team Leader Actions
1. Forming • Unclear Mission / Goals • 'Tell us what to do' attitude • Very dependent on leader • Overly concerned about roles and acceptance	**Strong Leadership to help in:** • Setting agenda • Facilitating • Helping team members get acquainted
2. Storming • Bid for power • Leadership challenged or weakened • Complaining • Disagreement over procedures/priorities • Polarizations	**Leader shares functions of responsibility with other team members**
3. Norming • Share information • Solve problems • Develop group cohesion • Cooperative	**Leader functions more as team member**
4. Performing • Goals / procedures / task clear • Energy focused on accomplishing task • Active / interdependent • High level of trust / openness and enthusiasm • Collaboration • All team members considered equal	**Leader functions as a team member**

Appendix I: Technical Standards Team Expenses

Each technical standard team is authorized to request and receive funds from the SOC budget, without SOC approval, to pay for activities such as meeting expenses, research, and testing, that directly support development of the technical standard they are charged with creating or revising, if all of the following conditions are met:

- Meeting expenses are limited to room rental, conference call and webinar costs, travel for SOC Program Manager and team members who express genuine financial hardship that would otherwise exclude them from participation, meeting supplies, food and beverages as appropriate, and other direct meeting costs;
- The team decides by consensus that research or testing expenditures are reasonable and will directly support development of the technical standard;
- The team documents how the research or testing activities will support development of the technical standard;
- The SOC Program Manager approves the request for research and testing funds, confirming that the expenditure supports development of the technical standard and that the work team reached a consensus, as described above;
- For research or testing expenditures in excess of $500, a formal request for funds is provided to and approved by Council Representatives; and
- The WI Land+Water Executive Director (who serves as SOC Treasurer) confirms that adequate funds are available in the SOC budget or fund balance to support the request.

Appendix J: Technical Standards Assessment Process

SOC asks technical standard users to identify technical standards that need revisions through a biennial survey, the Technical Standards Assessment (TSA). The two-year SOC Work Plan and future work teams are based on priorities identified by this survey, agency requirements, and available resources. The survey is currently conducted in odd-numbered years.

Past activities in implementing the survey:

- An online, web-based tool is used to streamline the questions and compile the results. Survey questions may include the following:
    1. Which affiliation best reflects your work environment?
    2. On which type of conservation practices do you work?
    3. Have you previously participated in the Standards Oversight Council process for technical standard development or revision?
    4. The following standards are scheduled to be revised in the next two years. Based on your knowledge, rank how important you think it is to create or revise each standard in this time frame. In the comments section, provide input on the potential revisions for the work teams to consider, if any. If your work does not include use of a listed standard, please check "N/A."
    5. Are there technical standards not on the above list that need creation or revision? If so, please write which standards or topics and a brief explanation of your recommendations.
    6. How do you prefer to obtain training on new or updated criteria for technical standards?
        a. Summary document describing the major or moderate changes
        b. Webinar to review changes
        c. A regional in-person session with field time as appropriate
        d. Webinar, including verification of participation
        e. A session at a conference
        f. A statewide in-person session with field time as appropriate
    7. If you would like to see trainings on a particular standard, list the standard in the box below. If possible, include recommendations for training content and setting. As a helpful reminder, standards that have been recently revised via SOC's Modified or Full Processes are listed below. *[insert list of standards]*
    8. SOC's Guiding Principles are as follows: 1) QUALITY - Focus on the latest science to ensure standards effectively protect the environment and general public. 2) UNIFORMITY - Secure broad participation and consensus in decision-making to promote standards' use statewide. 3) ACCOUNTABILITY - Maintain an open and fair development process including public review and continuous program evaluation.

More information on SOC's mission is on our website at https://socwisconsin.org/. Consider this information when answering the questions below.

a. How important is this to your work?

i. SOC ensures quality standards by revising them approximately every 5 years to reflect the latest field experience, research, and technology.

ii. SOC develops statewide technical standards to be applied uniformly across Wisconsin.

iii. SOC seeks input from you and your colleagues to participate in this process to maintain fairness and accountability.

b. Has SOC successfully achieved this?

i. SOC ensures quality standards by revising them approximately every 5 years to reflect the latest field experience, research, and technology.

ii. SOC develops statewide technical standards to be applied uniformly across Wisconsin.

iii. SOC seeks input from you and your colleagues to participate in this process to maintain fairness and accountability.

9. What is the greatest benefit provided to you by the Standards Oversight Council?

10. What other comments for SOC or the Custodian agencies (NRCS, WDNR, DATCP) regarding SOC's process for technical standard revisions and development can you offer?

11. Would you like to subscribe to SOC's listserv to receive updates on technical standards associated with agricultural and rural land use (NRCS and DATCP) and/or stormwater management related to urban and transportation issues (WDNR)? These listservs provide notifications of standard revision team solicitation, draft standards available for comment, and newly revised or published standards. If you prefer not to leave your name here, you may sign up for SOC email lists at https://socwisconsin.org/.

- The survey will list the technical standards that the agencies were planning on revising (See Question 4 above). Space will also be provided for respondents to include additional standards that should be developed or revised. This requires receiving Custodian input first, before finalizing the survey.
- Once the survey is finalized, post it to the SOC website and send it out through both SOC agricultural and urban standard listservs. Also publish announcements to WI Land+Water's County Conservation staff and newsletter listservs, DATCP engineering newsletter, and other appropriate venues. Encourage the Council Representatives and other recipients to forward the survey to their colleagues and staff.
- Follow up with email reminders emphasizing importance and use of the responses.
- The SOC Program Manager will compile and organize the responses to share with the Council as input in developing the upcoming SOC Work Plan.
- Share the compiled results on the SOC website.