



Standards Oversight Council (SOC)

Developing effective technical standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources

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NRCS 635 Vegetated Treatment Area Standard Team

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 ▲ 9:00am – 12:00pm ▲

Online Meeting

9:00 Welcome (Kate, Team)

Attendance: Kate Brunner, Steve Becker, Adam Moris, Chase Brouillette, Emily Micolichek, Justin White, Travis Buckley, Bernard Michaud, Eric Young

Absent: None

Guests: None

9:05 Notes Review (Kate & Team)

Goal: Review and approve 12/6/23 draft meeting notes.

Draft meeting notes from 12/6 meeting were emailed to the team for review. The action items were all completed, including sending the draft text to selected experts for the Initial Review. No team comments or questions raised on the notes; Kate will finalize and post online.

9:10 Initial Review Summary (Adam with Full Team)

Discuss key comments and identify responses:

The Initial Review consisted of 76 comments from 4 reviewers. Kate had initially confirmed 8 reviewers, but only 4 were able to respond. Kate will be sure to include the Initial Reviewers, including non-responders, in the outreach on the public review.

Kate emailed the Team the compiled comments and draft responses along with the agenda for today's meeting. General feedback was positive and helpful. No reviewers indicated to ditch this standard!

Team reviews the more substantive comments on-screen together, discussing and editing responses on that separate file. Some points made in the discussion are summarized below:

1. Nutrient imbalance concerns (approach being used to limit VTA sizing, use of BARNY as check, etc.)

National standard isn't realistic related to nutrient balance except for certain specific conditions. A lot of variables to consider (e.g. which storm event, how to calc loading, etc.) and still may not be possible to have balance. Rather than standard implying there will be a nutrient balance, standard could be silent or indicate goals more clearly. It's

likely that nutrient balance isn't possible in most sizing and other practices are still needed.

Adam will add more specificity to national language for more clarity and accuracy since achieving nutrient balance isn't always possible.

BARNY is a pollution assessment tool; not for design. The variables are also subjective so can have wide ranging results.

2. VTA sizing thresholds (need for length restrictions, impact on feed storage area applicability, etc.)

Intent of standard was to provide some threshold boundaries on sizing based on modelling. Team thinks sideboards are needed for both max and min.

Team looked at a lot of modelling scenarios, including quite a few real-world scenarios and saw the models were less accurate as the VTA size grew. If someone has a specific situation with larger VTA (or smaller), variances are an option.

C3 and C60 related discussion: With max 2/3 acre feedlot and feed storage areas, are we leaving out VTA possibility for most farms? It may be possible, since even medium AFO with liquid manure storage may also be unable to use this option because of this 2/3 acre restriction. Team's experience on smaller farms is that there are often other solutions in place (like bagging) and not using feed pads. Team will see if broad review comments on this.

Waiver checklist suggested - Max. area thresholds are a starting point, though potential variance needs should be discussed with NRCS on a case by case basis. If there is a specific gating or sprinkler for example, larger sizes could work but those are very specific designs. **Adam** can contact this reviewer directly to see if they have questions about how to pursue a variance. **Kate** will look it up and let Adam know who submitted that comment.

3. Settling basin/feedlot cleaning requirements (frequency, earthen lot approach, etc.)

Team agrees that O&M is key to successful VTA. Comments to the O&M section includes some specific suggestions to emphasize cleaning. They are good additions for paved situations, but not fully applicable to earthen lots, and they could also be shortened. Earthen lots are a challenge for cleaning, though some cleaning still needed. **Adam** will look at the O&M section and incorporate some of the suggested language with modifications.

Other team discussion related to Initial Review:

- Comment on "bubbler" system - Team has seen issues with this in clogging and very difficult maintenance. Not a good method.
- Inflow rate in WinSRFR – Team reviewed many hydrographs and modeling results, including those which were real-world VTAs. Variances still possible as well. No changes to text.

- Should team reduce length minimum for even smaller feedlots? Current draft has minimum of 20' by 100'. No changes to text since variances still possible.
- HUC-12 comment – there is already a consideration related to sensitive environments and another suggesting multiple VTAs. Consideration will be adjusted to add specific language about HUC-12s.

Break as needed

11:00 Companion Document Contents (Adam with Full Team)

Identify what to include in companion document vs. standard.

Team previously discussed that a companion document might include: guidelines for WinSRFR setup, runoff lookup table, and drawing details for baffle assembly or gravel spreader. As NRCS has been looking at stretching their staff scheduling and workload, they decided that work on the companion document is not imminent.

References to companion/guidance document will be removed from this standard, although a companion document may be published later as NRCS can allot the resources. WinSRFR guidance and other specifics **will** be included in training. If users have any questions on other areas they could check back with NRCS.

11:45 Next Steps (Kate & Team)

Goal: Discuss Broad Review process and identify specific areas of outreach. Review action items and next steps for project team.

Broad Review is a 21-day public review process. Depending on the time of day it's released and whether there are holidays, it is sometimes a bit longer.

Next steps to get draft text out for Broad Review:

1. **Adam** will clarify and finalize responses to comments, then send file back to Kate. **Kate** will respond to the reviewers with a copy of responses and post on team website.
2. **Adam** will complete standard edits and get text ready for public review, then send file to Kate.
 - a. **Kate** will post file with instructions on SOC website and email an announcement of the public review.
 - i. Kate's announcement will reach LCD staff, SOC ag email list, Initial Reviewers and those names discussed but that weren't selected as initial reviewers.
 - ii. Team members should forward Kate's announcement to their contacts as well—colleagues, clients, researchers, professional associations, etc. Let Kate know if you have other names or organizations to add to the outreach list.

Next meeting was scheduled for March 6; however, the draft is expected to be in the middle of the public review at that time, so the 3/6 meeting will be cancelled. The team will next meet on April 3 to go over Broad Review comments.

Action Items developed today:

1. **Adam** will clarify and finalize responses to comments, then send file back to Kate. **Kate** will respond to the reviewers with a copy of responses and post on team website.
2. **Adam** will complete standard edits and get text ready for public review, then send file to Kate.
3. **Kate** will post file with instructions on SOC website and email an announcement of the public review. **Team members** should forward Kate's announcement to their contacts.
4. **Kate** will prepare draft meeting notes from today, then reviewed by full **Team**.
5. **Kate** and **Steve** will prepare agenda for next meeting (4/3). Kate will send to the full team about 1 week in advance along with any associated materials (like the public comments).

12:00 Meeting End – Work is completed early; meeting ends at 10:45