



District Supervisor Training Program and Policy

Supervisor Training Committee Recommendations
October 2018

Introduction

In June 2018, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Session Law 2018-113, amending Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor training requirements to read as rewritten:

"§ 139-7.2. Training of elective and appointive district supervisors.

- (a) *All district supervisors, whether elected or appointed, shall complete a minimum of six clock hours of training per term of service.*
- (b) *The training shall include soil, water, and natural resources conservation and the duties and responsibilities of district supervisors.*
- (c) *The training may be provided by the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, or other qualified sources as approved by the Soil and Water Conservation Commission."*

To implement this Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor (Supervisor) training requirement, Commission Chair John Langdon appointed a special committee to develop the education program's structure and guidelines. The Supervisor Training Committee (Committee) members are Commission member and Special Committee Chair John Langdon, Association Past Presidents Ben Knox and Chris Hogan, Association President Dietrich Kilpatrick, Association Executive Director Bryan Evans, and Division Director Vernon Cox, Deputy Director David Williams and Eastern Region Coordinator Kristina Fischer.

Training Objective

The Committee's objective is to design a Supervisor Training Program (STP) that results in knowledgeable and skilled Supervisors and enhances the overall capacity of the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (districts) to deliver their programs and services.

Pilot Program

In July 2016, the North Carolina General Assembly passed Session Law 2016-113 stating:

REQUIRE TRAINING FOR APPOINTED AND ELECTED SOIL AND WATER DISTRICT SUPERVISORS

SECTION 5.(a) *G.S. 139-4(d) reads as rewritten:*

"(d) In addition to the duties and powers hereinafter conferred upon the Soil and Water Conservation Commission, it shall have the following duties and powers:

(13) To establish a training program required for all district supervisors."

SECTION 5.(b) *Article 1 of Chapter 139 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:*

"§ 139-7.2. Training of elective and appointive district supervisors.

- (a) *All district supervisors, whether elected or appointed, shall complete a minimum of six clock hours of training annually.*
- (b) *The training shall include soil, water, and natural resources conservation and the duties and responsibilities of district supervisors.*

(c) *The training may be provided by the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, or other qualified sources as approved by the Soil and Water Conservation Commission."*

In November 2017, the Commission adopted District Supervisor Training Program and Education Approval Guidelines (guidelines). A group of eight Pilot Districts were selected to test the STP Guidelines beginning in January 2018. The Pilot Districts included:

- Association Area 1 – Henderson
- Association Area 2 – Caldwell
- Association Area 3 – Chatham
- Association Area 4 – Johnston
- Association Area 5 – Beaufort
- Association Area 6 – New Hanover
- Association Area 7 – Columbus
- Association Area 8 – Rowan

For the Pilot Program beginning in January 2018, course sponsors (including the Association, Division staff, district staff, and self-reporting Supervisors) submitted requests for supervisor training credit (STC) approval through an *Online Credit Approval Process* link available through the Division website. The Online Credit Approval Process has collected relevant details related to each training course or activity, so that proper STCs are awarded to Supervisors. Division staff has reviewed requests for STCs through authority granted by the Commission and has notified the sponsors of STCs that are awarded. For most events, sponsors have been required to submit typed participation rosters, following the completion of the course, so that appropriate STCs are entered in a database that is used to track STC hours for each Supervisor.

With the legislation change in June 2018, the required number of STCs are reduced from six per year, to six per term. This change has prompted the Commission to revise the STP Guidelines. The following sections outline details for a statewide program and Commission policy related to program implementation.

Statewide Program Delivery

The Commission will provide oversight for the program and approve education guidelines and criteria governing course eligibility and approved credit hours. The Commission may reserve or delegate its authority to approve specific training courses and related credit hours to the Division. The Commission will retain authority to consider appeals for decisions to deny or limit credit for courses or events.

The Division will administer and market the program. The approved training courses, credit hours and STCs will be entered into a database managed by the Division. All approved training courses will be maintained in the Supervisor training database and marketed through the district listserv and Division website. The Division Director will report bi-monthly to the Commission regarding the progress of the program, Supervisor compliance with training requirements, and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the program.

All Supervisors, whether elected or appointed, are required to secure a minimum of six STCs per term. The period for this requirement is based on a standard term of office and will run from the first Monday in December in even years, until the first Monday in December four years later.

Supervisors who are appointed by the Commission mid-term, to fill vacancies of unexpired terms, will be expected to achieve six STCs during the remaining portion of their term unless the UNC School of Government's Basic Training for Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors is not offered in their region during this time-period.

Delivery Methods for Supervisor Training

The Commission recognizes that the duties and responsibilities of Supervisors are broad, and natural resource conservation concerns vary from district to district. Various delivery methods for Supervisor training may be considered when they meet the objective of the training program. Potential delivery methods for Supervisor training are listed below. More specific details related to approved STCs for each activity or course is included in Appendix A.

1. District board meeting approved topics
2. District sponsored classroom training and / or field days, as approved
3. UNC School of Government training
4. Association sponsored training and meetings, as approved (e.g. Annual State Meeting, Area Spring and Fall Meetings)
5. Commission sponsored field tours, as approved

Topics Approved for Supervisor Training Credit

In general, educational topics dealing with the overall operations of soil and water conservation districts will qualify for STCs. Educational topics directly relating to almost any aspect of Supervisor duties or responsibilities will be considered for approval. Appendix A provides guidance regarding training activities that may be awarded STC hours.

Course sponsors must keep NC General Statute 139-7.2 training topics in mind when awarding requests for approval:

1. *Soil, water, and natural resources conservation*
2. *Duties and responsibilities of district supervisors*

Tracking of Supervisor Training Credits

The approved training courses, credit hours and STCs obtained annually by Supervisors will be entered into a database managed by the Division.

Credit will be assigned as 1 STC being equal to 1 hour of actual class or field instruction that deals with content relevant to the categories being requested for credit. The Commission retains the authority to limit the number and / or frequency of hours that can be assigned for courses, events or training types. There is a 15-minute minimum and STCs are approved in quarter hour increments.

For implementation of a statewide training program beginning in December 2018, the Division will serve as course sponsor for all training activities, working in conjunction with districts, the Association, NRCS, and others as appropriate, to obtain training activity agendas and participation rosters.

Appendix A includes details related to approved STCs for each activity or course as delegated by the Commission.

Agenda Detail Requirement

The Division evaluates the title and agenda of each presentation to determine the STCs to be awarded for the course or activity. If too little information is provided for a determination, the Division may ask for additional information before any STCs are approved. If a detailed agenda (i.e. including presenter name, affiliation and title, presentation time, topics covered) is provided, the evaluation process will be streamlined and the course will receive the correct STCs.

Mandatory Topics

While most training events will be non-mandatory, the Commission may determine that certain training is mandatory for all Supervisors and will adopt a schedule for obtaining mandatory training.

Mandatory training courses include the following:

- *UNC School of Government's Basic Training for Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisors* – the course provides introduction and exploration of the legal and statutory requirements of districts and Supervisors, including District Law (NC General Statute 139), Public Records Law (NC General Statute 132), Open Meetings Law (NC General Statute 143, Article 33 C), and more. The course is required as an introduction for all Supervisors, and encouraged at least once every two terms;
 - Newly appointed Supervisors are required to obtain the training at the next scheduled offering in their region, generally within the first year of appointment.
 - Newly elected Supervisors are required to obtain the training at the next scheduled offering in their region, generally within the first year of election.
 - Appointed Supervisors serving prior to December 2020 are required to provide documentation that they have attended the training previously to qualify for reappointment.
 - Elected Supervisors serving prior to December 2020 shall be encouraged, but not required to complete the training before the expiration of their current term. Upon re-election in 2020 or beyond, these Supervisors will be required to attend the training within their first year of election, or to provide documentation that they have attended the training previously.

Please see the phased implementation schedule attached as Appendix B for a summary of implementation details for each supervisor type (e.g. elected or appointed) and term.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors are responsible to verify the STC hours awarded for their training activities. A report of STCs achieved by each Supervisor will be posted to the Division website on a quarterly basis.

In addition, Supervisors will be responsible to report to the Division when only partial participation credit should be awarded for a training activity or event (i.e. depart from the Association's Annual Meeting on Monday afternoon, vs. participation through the close of the agenda on Tuesday afternoon). The Division will award complete STCs to participants based on registration lists or sign-in sheets, as appropriate. Those Supervisors who should receive a reduced number of STC hours will be responsible to report early departure times or other lack of participation to the Division.

Repercussions for Failure

Supervisors that neglect to meet training requirements will be expected to provide a written explanation to the Commission. The Commission will provide consideration for hardship; including but not limited to illness, financial, or familial obligations, when supervisors do not meet training requirements (i.e. mandatory or term).

When Supervisors are unable to provide the Commission an explanation deemed a hardship, the Commission will consider this “misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance” and may invoke their ability to remove that Supervisor from office for “neglect of duty”. This authority is provided to the Commission in NC General Statute 139-7. Prior to removal from office the Commission will provide the Supervisor a written notice of their intent to remove the individual. This notice will include a timeline for any response from the Supervisor and instructions for the supervisor to request a hearing before the Commission.

For neglect to participate in mandatory UNC School of Government training, letters will be requested in advance of the March Commission meeting, each year. Any necessary removal from office will be in effect for the remainder of the term.

For neglect to meet six STCs per term training, letters will be requested in advance of the January Commission meeting, odd years. Any necessary removal from office will be in effect for the remainder of the term.

Timeline

- Pilot training program for Supervisors in eight local soil and water conservation districts (one per Association Area) has run from January 2018 through December 2018.
- The Commission made adjustments to these program Guidelines during the pilot phase due to change in law approved by the legislature in June 2018.
- Tentative adoption for a statewide Supervisor Training Program will begin with STCs tracked beginning December 2018. Supervisors that will serve 2018-2022 terms will begin the training requirement in December 2018. STCs that are accumulated during the 2018-2022 term, but prior to final adoption of the program rules will be honored.
- Supervisors that are serving 2016-2020 terms will begin the training requirement in December 2020 if re-elected or re-appointed.
- The Commission will begin steps for rule-making to enforce Supervisor Training Program requirements following the November 2018 Commission meeting.

APPENDIX A - DELEGATION OF APPROVAL AUTHORITY FOR SUPERVISOR TRAINING CREDITS

The NC Soil & Water Conservation Commission (Commission) delegates authority to the Division of Soil & Water Conservation (Division) to approve and award district supervisor training credits (STCs) according to the criteria outlined below.

The Commission retains authority to consider appeals for decisions to deny or limit approved STCs, as requested by local soil and water conservation district supervisors.

To be approved for STCs, the course or event shall include content related to one of two training topics, as listed in NC General Statute 139-7.2:

1. *Soil, water, and natural resources conservation*
2. *Duties and responsibilities of district supervisors*

Learning about the responsibilities of the district board is considered training; executing the responsibilities of the district board is not considered training. Learning about opportunities in which the district may engage, or how the district may operate to take advantage of opportunities is considered training; district engagement is not considered training. District supervisors and course sponsors must keep these training topics and considerations in mind as STCs are awarded.

The following guidelines should also be kept in mind when submitting requests for approval:

- Credits should only be awarded for topic training time during a course or event participation
- Routine district business does not qualify for credit
- Association business does not qualify for credit
- Awards and recognition programs do not qualify for credit
- Breaks and meals during a program agenda do not qualify for credit; however, if an informational speaker with topic relevance is included during these agenda times, credit may be granted for speaker comments or training activity

STCs shall be approved and awarded as follows:

Training events below qualify for **1 STC hour awarded per hour of contact (100% credit)**:

1. District board meeting approved topics
 - a. Presentations as approved (e.g. invited outside speaker, planned training topic presentation or field visit hosted by staff professional – district / county employee, state employee, federal employee, presentation available on the Division website in the “District Board Training Library”)
 - **NOTE:** routine district business does not qualify for credit
 - **SPONSOR:** recorded by NCD&CS Division Regional Coordinator on behalf of the district board
2. District sponsored classroom training and / or field days as approved
 - a. Organized presentations and field tours intended for district outreach (e.g. cover crop workshop, BMP tour for potential program participants or elected officials)

- b. Technical field training delivered by staff professional (e.g. site visit and review of innovative district BMP)
 - NOTE: breaks and meals during a program agenda do not qualify for credit
 - SPONSOR: recorded by NCDA&CS Division Regional Coordinator on behalf of the district board
- 3. Classroom instruction as approved
 - a. School of Government Training – Basic Training for SWCD Supervisors
 - NOTE: breaks and meals during a program agenda do not qualify for credit
 - SPONSOR: recorded by the Division based on attendance roster provided by the Association
- 4. Association meetings
 - a. Annual State Meeting (STCs are approved individually for training activities offered during the event)
 - 1) Commission meeting (based on activity sign-in sheet)
 - 2) General sessions (based on registration list)
 - 3) Concurrent sessions (based on activity sign-in sheet)
 - 4) Educational presentations during standing committee meetings (based on activity sign-in sheet)
 - 5) Milton Heath Lecture (based on registration list)
 - 6) Legislative Luncheon (only when there is an informational speaker as part of the agenda time – based on registration list)
 - 7) NC CDEA Luncheon (only when there is an informational speaker as part of the agenda time – based on registration list)
 - 8) Education Dinner (only when there is an informational speaker as part of the agenda time – based on registration list)
 - NOTE: Association business does not qualify for credit
 - NOTE: awards and recognition programs do not qualify for credit
 - SPONSOR: recorded by the Division, as appropriate, based on registration list or sign-in sheet provided by the Association
 - b. Area Spring and Fall Meetings
 - 1) Presentations as approved (e.g. invited outside speaker, planned training topic presentation or field visit hosted by staff professional – district / county employee, state employee, federal employee)
 - 2) District spotlight
 - 3) Partnership reports
 - NOTE: Association business does not qualify for credit
 - NOTE: awards and recognition programs do not qualify for credit
 - SPONSOR: recorded by the Division based on sign-in sheet provided by the Association
- 5. Commission sponsored field tours
 - a. Organized presentations and field tours intended for training and field experience
 - SPONSOR: recorded by the Division based on sign-in sheet

APPENDIX B - Phased implementation schedule for Supervisor Training Program (STP)

Term	Supervisor type	Implementation begins	UNC School of Government requirement	6 STC per term requirement	Note
2014-2018	Pilot SWCD	January 2018			If re-elected or re-appointed in 2018, ability to carry-forward up to 5 STCs to 2018-2022 if over 6 STCs tracked in 2018.
	Mid-term appointment: elected or appointed		Within first year of appointment.		Previous Commission policy.
2016-2020	Pilot SWCD	December 2020			No carry-forward of Pilot STCs; tracking begins December 2020.
	Mid-term appointment: elected or appointed		Within first year of appointment per Commission policy.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
	Regularly elected	December 2020 - if re-elected	Encouraged before end of term.		
	Regularly appointed	December 2020 - if re-appointed	Required before end of term to be considered for re-appointment.		Previous Commission policy.
2018-2022	Mid-term appointment: elected or appointed		Within first year of appointment per Commission policy.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
	Re-elected	December 2018	Encouraged before end of term.	2018-2022	
	Re-appointed	December 2018	Required to begin term.	2018-2022	Previous Commission policy.
	Newly elected	December 2018	2019	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	
	Newly appointed	December 2018	2019	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
2020-2024	Mid-term appointment: elected or appointed		Within first year of appointment per Commission policy.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
	Re-elected	December 2020	Within first year of election.	2020-2024	Previous UNC SOG attendance will be honored.
	Re-appointed	December 2020	Required to begin term.	2020-2024	Previous UNC SOG attendance will be honored.
	Newly elected	December 2020	Within first year of election.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	
	Newly appointed	December 2020	Within first year of appointment.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
Succeeding terms	Mid-term appointment: elected or appointed		Within first year of appointment per Commission policy.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
	Newly appointed to full term		First regional offering.	Likely covered by participation in UNC SOG.	Previous Commission policy.
	All re-appointed		Required to begin term. Previous attendance will be honored; encourage participation once every two terms.	term window	When attending UNC SOG, credit will be given to meet both the UNC SOG requirement, and for corresponding STCs for the term.
	All elected		Required within first year of service. Previous attendance will be honored; encourage participation once every two terms.	term window	When attending UNC SOG, credit will be given to meet both the UNC SOG requirement, and for corresponding STCs for the term.