~~PROHIBITION OF~~ POST-APPROVAL~~S FOR OF~~ COST SHARE CONTRACTS

To maintain the integrity of cost share programs it is important that all involved parties have a common understanding of policy and eligibility criteria. District and NRCS employees at the field office are primarily responsible for the technical phase of this program.

Work on best management practices (BMPs) shall not be started before the district receives division approval. Certification that a practice is needed after the practice has been installed ~~could be fraud~~is prohibited.

District and NRCS employees are prohibited from assisting ~~operators~~ cooperators in signing a commission cost share program ~~plan of operations~~contract for BMPs that have been started prior to receiving the necessary approvals.

For Agriculture Cost Share Program contracts only, cooperators may choose to begin work on best management practice(s) once approved by the district prior to receiving final approval from the Division of Soil and Water Conservation if the following conditions are met:

~~i.~~a. The total amount of the contract does not exceed ~~thirty~~fifty-five hundred dollars ($~~3~~5,500).~~; and~~

~~ii.~~b. The best management practices described in the ~~conservation plan of operations~~cost share contract summary ~~(CPO)~~ are solely vegetative in nature. ~~Please refer to the BMP matrix of required conservation effects to determine if practices is eligible for vegetative exception; and~~

c. The cooperator(s) is not a district supervisor or Soil and Water Conservation Commission member.

~~iii.~~d. Cooperators are limited to one contract with this exception per year.

If districts find that work has begun before division approval is received, the cooperator should stop work immediately and ask the district board to consider requesting an exception to this policy from the commission. The district has the authority to deny the cooperator's request or to refer the request to the commission for consideration of approval. If the request is referred, a district supervisor is required to appear before the commission to request the exception. To fulfill this requirement, a supervisor must participate in either the Commission work session or business meeting virtually or in-person. If the district supervisor presents at the work session, attendance is not required during the Business Meeting unless the Commission has outstanding questions or requests additional clarification following the work session presentation.