



To Whom It May Concern:

The NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification was created in collaboration with Texas Corn Producers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Together, we have a vision to create a world with clean and abundant water, healthy soils and resilient landscapes, all while feeding a growing population with healthy, nutritious food. Our goals are to build a strong organizational support system, work with advocates to further the interest of the industry and promote thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.

The creation of this certification is a response to our obligation to and interest in cultivating a diverse, well-trained workforce. There are few careers as noble as one in agricultural conservation and sustainability, since we are all alive because of soil, water, plants, air and animals. The industry certification tests over these principles, allowing certification candidates to prove proficiency. Earning the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation and Sustainability in Agriculture Certification prepares individuals to pursue a variety of education and career opportunities within the conservation and sustainability industry and is transferable to the many agriculture fields.

The certification provides value to earners who are wanting to prepare for their future careers or simply become more responsible consumers. The certification is also a valuable credential for working professionals who are looking to strengthen their position in their career fields. Possession of the credential signals to a variety of stakeholders, such as employers, that the certification earner has gone above and beyond to master concepts.

We take seriously our responsibility to help build an emerging workforce that is interested in raising awareness about the importance of conserving and managing natural resources. We are dedicated to developing future industry leaders and are confident the certification does just that.

Sincerely,

David Gibson
Executive Director

www.TexasCorn.org

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August 15, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to give my support to the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation and Sustainability in Agriculture Certification. I worked for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas as the state public affairs director and supervised the NRCS staff who developed this certification with the Texas Corn Producers. NRCS fully supports this certification and has demonstrated that through the funding and staff time committed to it.

For more than 80 years, NRCS has helped people make investments in their agricultural operations and local communities to keep working lands working, boost rural economies, increase the competitiveness of American agriculture, and improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and habitat. With more than 10,000 employees, NRCS works in every county in the United States. Recruiting and retaining qualified staff members continues to be a priority.

This certification will help build a pool of qualified individuals in the agricultural conservation and natural resources fields. NRCS needs individuals with varied backgrounds as their work differs depending on the part of the country they work in. Having another educational venue that feeds trained and skilled employees into the pipeline would aid NRCS as well as the many conservation partners NRCS works with.

NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation and Sustainability in Agriculture Certification will have excellent value by better preparing individuals at a variety of career levels.

Sincerely,



Lori Valadez
Former NRCS State Public Affairs Director, Texas

Kathleen Kuester
PO Box 1403
Salida, CO 81201
719-221-6593

August 3, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing as a seventh generation descendant of a Colorado Ranching family. I am employed as the Chief Deputy County Clerk in Chaffee County Colorado. I am also a member of the Common Ground Board which disperses sales tax revenue to purchase agricultural Conservation Easements, and issues grants to local agricultural producers which helps them retain their lands and remain in business. I have observed the loss of much productive agricultural land in the State of Colorado, and the loss of water rights to large municipalities.

I am writing in support of NRCS Certification being offered by the Colorado State Career and Technical Education Department. Making sure that education specific to resource protection is available to the upcoming generation of students is extremely important. Employment opportunities in fields addressing the revitalization of land, water, and wildlife will be increasing exponentially. I also believe that this certification would benefit producers. Being up to date on resource management can provide another key to keeping agricultural businesses viable. I believe that the NRCS has created a Certification Program that addresses these needs perfectly. I urge you to make this extremely valuable and timely content available to Colorado students.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Kuester



October 2, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I recently learned of the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification. I am impressed and excited with the variety and depth of relevant industry content and skills included. I am writing this letter in support of the certification and truly hope to see it implemented soon across educational institutions.

The USDA Agricultural Research Service is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's scientific in-house research agency. Our job is to find solutions to agricultural problems that impact Americans and Ohioans every day from field to table. At large, the USDA ARS team employs over 2,000 scientists and over 6,000 additional employees of all levels and backgrounds. In Ohio, our teams are currently involved with research and programs directly related to soil drainage, precision application technology research, water quality and availability, watershed management, ecology, and crop production.

I am strongly in support of bringing the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification to traditional and nontraditional educational outlets in Ohio. Both the environmental and agriculture industries house thousands of diverse jobs, often interconnected with each other. The introduction to these career opportunities and implementation of continuing education is essential.

The content embedded into this program builds a strong foundation to understand the many interconnected areas in our industry. This is done through the inclusion of soil science, water quality & conservation, horticulture, air quality, and animal sciences.

We know the creation of this certification was intentional and a direct response to NRCS interest in cultivating a diverse and well-trained workforce across the country. Earning this certification prepares individuals to pursue a variety of educational and career opportunities within the conservation and sustainability industry and is transferable to the many fields within agriculture.

I know that our team at USDA Agricultural Research Service plays a part in building, strengthening and developing our workforce. That is one reason I am excited to see this certification implemented in Ohio. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kevin King, Research Leader
USDA-ARS
Soil Drainage Research Unit

Midwest Area
Soil Drainage Research Unit
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October 4, 2023

Hello:

My name is Todd Davis. I am the Director of Ohio FFA Camp Muskingum. We are a 230-acre camp located 10 miles south of Carrollton, Ohio, on the shores of Leesville Lake. Camp Muskingum has a rich history of offering outdoor experiences to learners of all ages since 1942. We offer leadership, environmental and agricultural programming for individuals year-round, as well as providing a space for rental groups and value-added programming.

Please consider my letter of support for the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification.

Part of what allows Camp Muskingum to operate in the way we do are our talented team members. Each year, we hire teams of seasonal Outdoor Educators for the Spring, Summer, and Fall seasons. Individuals who seek out this seasonal employment with us often have an interest or a background in the Agriculture or Environmental Science fields – this is helpful, but it is not necessary.

I reviewed the material included in this certification and was impressed with the information covered. A certification like this would provide our seasonal staff with a foundation to build upon, or an opportunity for continuous education if they already have educational or work experience in these areas.

Each seasonal Outdoor Educator on our team has the ability to choose what content they teach to campers as it relates to the fields of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. Completing this new certification to offer further training in the following areas would be valuable to our team: soil science, soil conservation and health, water cycles, water conservation, native and invasive plants, conservation and management, animal food webs, habitats, and ecosystems.

In addition to our team at Camp Muskingum, I see value in making the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification accessible to learners in other educational settings – both formal and informal. Our industry needs experiences like this offered to individuals so they can spark an interest and become aware of career opportunities in both Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

Thank you for your consideration.

Todd Davis

Director, Ohio FFA Camp Muskingum



“Teaching, Serving, Growing Since 1942”



12 W Wenger Road, Suite 2
Englewood, OH 45322

October 18, 2023

Hello, and thank you for considering my letter of support.

My name is Jess Martin. For the last five years I have worked with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Soil Scientist. Soil is not just a growing medium – it is a living and life-giving natural resource home to billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation for thriving ecosystems.

I recently learned of the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification. I read through the material that individuals would learn and was excited to see that soil science, water science, and plant science made up a large portion of the coursework. Our industry is incredibly interconnected and a certification like this would provide individuals with a foundation to build upon, or an opportunity for continuous improvement and training if already working in the field.

The scope of my work includes working alongside 17 Southwest Ohio counties to provide them with quality Technical Soil Services. My responsibilities include scientific work in the investigation of soils, their management, and their adaptation for alternative uses. Some of the skills I use include sampling soils, mapping & classifying soils, and identifying soil moisture & erosion. I work with Lidar and satellite imagery to assist in mapping soils and identifying land-use patterns. I collect, track and analyze data on wetlands subject to wetland conservation provisions to delineate their size and boundary for program participants.

I know NRCS emphasizes cultivating a diverse, well-trained workforce. There are many educational avenues and work experience that lead individuals to pursue a career in this industry. Experiences like the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification are crucial to expose learners to our industry and the ability to grow and specialize within it. There are many rewarding career opportunities in the field of soil science. This certification would provide exposure to them.

In my professional circle, I collaborate with and work alongside other Soil Scientists, Field Engineers, Geologists, Data Specialists, and other environmental science team members.

To re-emphasize, I am writing this letter in support of this certification. I truly hope to see it implemented soon in formal and informal educational institutions. Thank you for the opportunity to share the value of my industry and enhance educational opportunities for those in it.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jessica Martin".

Jess Martin
Resource Soil Scientist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Preble Soil & Water Conservation District

Conserving our Natural Resources

2789 US Rt. 35 E
West Alexandria, OH 45381
(937) 456-5159
www.prebleswcd.org

November 20, 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

I trust this letter finds you well. I am writing to extend my support for the approval of the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification. In my dual capacity as District Administrator and Technician at the Preble Soil and Water Conservation District, I have witnessed the profound impact that comprehensive certifications can have on our workforce, both at the entry level and in the realm of continuing education.

This certification, designed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, offers a robust curriculum covering crucial aspects of soil science, water science, and plant science. Its significance extends beyond initial skill acquisition, providing a foundation for professionals to build upon. As someone actively involved in conservation fieldwork, engineering, drainage, forestry, and pond construction, I understand the intricate demands of our work. Certifications like these not only enhance the capabilities of entry-level professionals but also offer a structured pathway for those seeking ongoing education and specialization.

The long-term strength of our workforce lies in its hands-on knowledge and adaptability. The NRCS certification aligns with our commitment to cultivating a skilled and versatile workforce.

By approving this certification, we open doors for individuals to explore and contribute to the dynamic field of conservation and sustainability. It is my sincere belief that such initiatives will not only empower the next generation of professionals but also strengthen the existing workforce with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the evolving challenges in our field.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this request. Thank you for your dedication to advancing education and professional development within our field.

Sincerely,

BJ Price
District Administrator
Preble Soil and Water Conservation District



Ohio Department of Natural Resources

MIKE DEWINE, GOVERNOR

MARY MERTZ, DIRECTOR

Jeremy R. Scherf, CF

Division of Forestry
9900 Brick Church Road
Cambridge, OH 43725
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Jeremy.Scherf@dnr.ohio.gov
forestry.ohiodnr.gov

November 13, 2023

Hello. My name is Jeremy Scherf. I am reaching out as a representative of the Division of Forestry at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. I am writing to express my full support for the approval of the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification for learners in our state.

In my capacity as a State Service Forester, I am very much aware of the evolving needs and challenges within our industry. I work alongside a team of other State Service Foresters – all with educational and relevant work experience in the content areas represented. The certification aligns well with the comprehensive approach we value in managing private woodlands.

We have a severe shortage of candidates to hire. There aren't enough people choosing forestry and the other natural resources field to pursue a degree. Providing these opportunities for our young people is imperative to show them these wonderful career opportunities and providing a potential workforce for the future.

In an industry that is continually evolving, opportunities for industry certifications are invaluable. I would like to highlight the certification's versatility – making it an important tool for both entry-level learning (1) and also continuous improvement within our field (2).

1. This certification serves as a comprehensive introduction, offering a structured pathway to acquiring foundational knowledge across the diverse domains included. The clarity and depth of the curriculum make it an ideal resource for individuals embarking on a career in forestry providing them with a solid knowledge base that will set the stage for their professional growth.
2. Equally significant is the certification's role in fostering continuous improvement among seasoned professionals. While forestry is pretty steadfast in its principles, some areas are rapidly evolving like carbon storage and climate change, staying current with the latest research and best practices is so important. The NRCS certification facilitates ongoing education and skill development, encouraging our State Service Foresters and teams to remain at the forefront of advancements in conservation and sustainability.

The dual benefit of serving both entry-level learning and supporting continuous improvement positions this certification as a valuable asset for the holistic development of professionals at all stages of their careers within the Division of Forestry.

Respectfully, I encourage thoughtful consideration of the approval of the NRCS Fundamentals of Conservation & Sustainability in Agriculture Certification.

More Trees, Healthy Forests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy R. Scherf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jeremy R. Scherf
Service Forester, Serving Guernsey County
Central Ohio Service Forestry Coordinator
Ohio Forest Tax Law Program Coordinator