



Technical Training and Certification Program

Job Approval Authority (JAA) Framework and Process

Purpose: Job Approval Authority (JAA) is a component of a Technical Quality Assurance (TQA) system developed and administered by the NRCS to enable more people within the conservation partnership of NRCS, SWCDs and BWSR to provide reliable conservation technical assistance and sign-off for federal conservation programs. Other components of an effective TQA system include conservation practice standards, accepted design methods and tools, training, peer review during the development of projects, as well as spot checks of project files and completed practices. BWSR has adopted the NRCS JAA system and Professional Engineer (P.E.) licensure as part of its Technical Quality Assurance system for state programs administered by BWSR.

Technical Basis: JAA is based on *training, experience, and demonstrated competence* for specific job classes and stages of conservation practices, including investigation/planning, design, and construction/application.

Process Steps:

1. The office and organization of an employee seeking JAA define Priority Resource Concerns and associated priority conservation practice(s) in the employee's work area for which the employee needs JAA.
2. The employee and their supervisor identify priority training needs in the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP) for the priority conservation practice(s).
3. Employee seeks and acquires online, classroom, and on-the-job training, including assisting others who have applicable Engineering JAA (EJAA) or Ecological Sciences JAA (ESJAA) for the priority conservation practice(s).
4. After acquiring adequate experience to demonstrate technical assistance competence for a priority conservation practice, the employee and their supervisor, with the help from training mentor(s), as appropriate, assemble documentation of applicable training, experience, and demonstrated competence for the practice and request JAA for the employee. The supervisor's involvement must include employee organization consent for the employee to pursue JAA. JAA requests for employees in field offices are coordinated with the NRCS District Conservationist. A request for EJAA is made to the applicable NRCS Area Engineer, based on the office location of the requesting employee. A request for ESJAA is made to the applicable NRCS Area Resource Conservationist, based on the office location of the requesting employee. JAA requests that constitute the practice of professional engineering (noted by an asterisk on the EJAA tables) are forwarded to the State Conservation Engineer. A practice of professional engineering will not be delegated to any non-NRCS employee who is not a licensed engineer in the state of Minnesota. NRCS may grant JAA delegation authority to other NRCS technical specialists.

5. Based on review of the JAA request with supporting documentation, and consultation with the employee, the employee's supervisor and mentor(s), as applicable, the NRCS Area Engineer, Area Resource Conservationist, State Conservation Engineer, State Resource Conservationist, or other NRCS Technical Specialist, if applicable, determines the level of JAA to assign to the requesting employee.
6. The employee's supervisor concurs with the JAA assignment, as appropriate.
7. Employee reviews the applicable JAA ethics statement and agrees to ethics requirements.
8. The assigned JAA is recorded in the applicable JAA database(s).
9. The employee's JAA is reviewed by NRCS on a maximum 3-year cycle and validated or modified (potentially including removal), based on the employee's current qualifications.

JAA Process

