



December 13, 2016

Tetra Tech, Inc.
10306 Eaton Place, Suite 340
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Jon Harcum:

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) has a national workforce of soil conservationists, engineers, and conservation technicians that have technical expertise to deliver a wide array of engineering and agronomic practices. Conservation practices have the potential, upon failure, to affect public health and safety, cause loss of life, significant property damage, or have negative implications on the environment. For this reason, NRCS has policies in place for establishing and maintaining technical excellence in the field.

Policies to ensure technical excellence is maintained by its field employees includes continuing education training for its planners, technicians, and engineers; annual quality assurance spot-checks of practices; and job approval authority for practices applied. The foundation to these trainings are its handbooks and technical guides. Most readily used in the field is the Field Office Technical Guide, the primary scientific guide used by NRCS employees for the conservation of soil, water, air, and related plant and animal resources. Field Office Technical Guides (FOTG) are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. This guide is divided into five sections, with Section IV of the FOTG detailing conservation practices used in the state and with detail standards and specifications of how and where the conservation practice should be applied. All field collectors for the remote sensing pilot are familiar with the references and function of the Field Office Technical Guide. It is the scientific reference upon which NRCS trainings, oversight, and quality assurance are based.

All field employees past and present, including the field collectors for this project, have trained employees, supervised employees with this knowledge, or have been certified in the past to deliver conservation practices using the NRCS FOTG. Joseph Kraft, State Soil Scientist, supervised these field collectors and is part of the cadre to train all PA NRCS and PA Certified Conservation Planners on FOTG criteria, standards and specifications.

Sincerely,

Denise Coleman
State Conservationist

