



**Improving Pasture Management Program
Demonstration Application Guidance Document**

TO: NC Soil and Water Conservation Districts

RE: 2017 Improving Pasture Management Program – Demonstration Application Guidance

DATE: May 8, 2018

APPLICATION PERIOD: Wednesday May 9 to Friday June 29 at midnight

Q&A Session: TBD – in June

The NC Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation (Foundation), working in conjunction with the NC Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, NC Cooperative Extension, NC Farm Bureau Federation, NC Cattlemen’s Association, and the Better Pastures NC workgroup, is pleased to announce the Improving Pasture Management Program. The program is designed to provide resources to producers that witnessed pasture damage due to the recent drought and natural disasters; allowing for a greater number of pastures to be more resilient to future environmental challenges.

The NC Agriculture and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund awarded the Foundation a \$114,000 grant for the purchase of pasture management equipment and establishing pasture demonstrations; approximately \$30,250 is available to support 11 county-level demonstrations. Each funded project will include up to \$1,000 for demonstration establishment (based on reimbursement of receipts), \$1,000 District technical consultation fee, and a temporary fencing starter kit (for the producer) valued at \$750.

The Foundation is now accepting demonstration applications from NC Soil and Water Conservation Districts (Districts). The online application deadline is midnight Friday, June 29 and all 100 Districts are eligible to apply (excluding the ones that were already awarded a contract). This document serves as a guidance to the application process, attached are the application questions for your reference. Further questions should be directed to Michelle Lovejoy at 919-510-4599 or ncfswc@gmail.com.

Application Process

1. Obtain permission from the District Board to apply. Depending on how your District is structured, this may also require the approval of the County and other participating local agencies.
2. Seek input from a county level Technical Support Team. Consider the following organizations or communities for membership - District Board member, County Extension Agent, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service field staff, USDA Farm Service Agency staff, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Regional Agronomist or Soil Scientist, County Cattlemen Association representatives, representative of the North Carolina Horse Council, County Farm Bureau leadership, Farm Credit representative, and other local livestock advocates.
3. Complete the online application at <https://goo.gl/forms/EWZ0rNWxYc0bhp0U2>. Print a copy of your responses, a copy should also be emailed to you. Applications will be accepted until June 29 at midnight.
4. Send the following email attachments to ncfswc@gmail.com in addition to completing the online application. If any document is not received by the application deadline, the entire application will be considered ineligible. *If you run into technical issues with email or the google form please contact the Foundation ASAP (919-510-4599 office, 336-345-5335 cell).* Foundation staff will confirm receipt of the material within 24 hours.
 - a. **Board Certification Letter** – The letter is to be on District letterhead and signed by the Chairperson or another designated member. Include either evidence of the resolution passed as a board meeting or official action taken as recorded in the minutes. You do not need to provide a copy of the minutes or resolution, just the date of the meeting and language of motion. *Letters signed by staff will not be accepted.*
 - b. **Support letters from partnering organizations** (if applicable) – Include letters from other Districts if your request is to manage the project at a regional level among multiple Districts. You may also submit letters from other governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations supporting these efforts, but these are not required.
 - c. **Demonstration site map** – Use an aerial photography with a soil type overlay. Indicate boundaries of the pasture demonstration and the larger field it is a part of (if applicable). Include a north arrow

and a scale. It is acceptable to print an aerial map with the soil type overlay and hand draw in boundary of demonstration.

- d. **Demonstration site photos** – Provide no more than 5 photographs of the field. Include a closeup of the ground and a view of the surrounding area. Send the photos with a description log with the direction the photograph was shot in. You can format it all into one document or you can send each photo as a stand-alone image and the description log in a word document.

Program Requirements

1. **Identify a strong Technical Support Team** that can support the project at the local level. The Foundation recognizes that not all Districts have expertise in pasture management. Your District is encouraged to build a team that can provide the technical oversight and coordination needed. Use this project as an opportunity to strengthen relations across sister agencies and producer advocacy groups.
2. **Identify a livestock grazing producer that is interested in improving pasture management** and is comfortable sharing lessons learned with the public. The District is highly encouraged to work with a producer that will continue the outreach efforts in future years, beyond the requirements of this program.
3. **Consider the producer's ability to fence out the area to be renovated.** A temporary fencing starter kit will be provided to help achieve this objective.
4. **Identify a pasture that would be suitable for the demonstration.** A 5-acre minimum is required for the demonstration, no maximum acreage is required. Consider a field that is easily accessible to the public so that transportation is not an issue. Consider availability of parking areas for future workshops. When selecting a demonstration type, consider the whole farm forage needs, not just that field. Fields are not required to undergo a total kill and replant; other types of demonstrations will be considered. Some example techniques include the use of annuals as a bridge to perennials, overseeding / frost-seeding legumes, native warm / cool season grasses, novel endophyte fescue, alternative perennials, etc. Do not limit your ideas to just these examples.
5. **Amazing Grazing long term demonstrations in six counties** – Clay, Greene, Haywood, Pender, Rowan, and Surry. These Districts are highly encouraged to learn about these projects to avoid duplicating efforts.

6. Consider the **District's ability to host a field day/Workshop**. The District is encouraged to leverage local resources to offset additional costs associated with the workshop. Consider how the District will advertise the event to get the largest public exposure. Also consider ways to ensure attendance such as applying for professional continuing education credits.

Still need help shaping your ideas? Contact a District currently participating in the program to see how their project is shaping up! **Participating Districts** – Cabarrus with Stanly, Draven, Durham with Orange and Person, Fishing Creek, Harnett, Haywood, Polk, Swain, Wake, and Yadkin.

Anticipated Timeline

- ✓ **May 8** – Foundation releases 2nd application to Districts
- ✓ **June, TBD** – Application Information Session teleconference to address any questions from the field. Call 515-739-1015; access code 402588278.
- ✓ **June 29 midnight** - Deadline to submit applications online and submit attachments electronically to ncfswc@gmail.com
- ✓ **July 9 – July 20** – Foundation's Workgroup to recommend Districts for contracting based on the quality of the proposed demonstration and the overall geographic spread for larger programmatic impact.
- ✓ **August 1** - Foundation announces funding decision and awards contracts to Districts
- ✓ **August & September** – Foundation's project partners to provide one-on-one technical assistance to refine the demonstration plans.
- ✓ **Fall 2018 / Spring 2019** – Prep the field for planting and plant seed during the appropriate growing season.
- ✓ **Fall 2018 / Spring 2019** – Host workshop at the county level.

Application Selection

The Foundation's workgroup will consider the following factors when selecting projects to fund:

1. **How close is the specific demonstration to the next demonstration?** Partners will be looking for a wide geographic distribution.

2. **Based on the make-up of the technical support team, what is the strength of resources available to the District?** Partners will be looking for a team that can work well together and continue outreach efforts into the future.
3. **Is the demonstration type innovative and / or easily adopted by all levels of producers?** Partners will be looking for a good distribution of innovative ideas, like management techniques that are used widely elsewhere but that are not common in your county. Partners will also consider the complexity of the management practice and the ability of newer producers to adopt the technique.
4. **How does the Demonstration fit into the farm's forage balance?** Partners will be looking for evidence that the demonstration will support and enhance the existing forage system and create a more resilient pasture system.

ONLINE APPLICATION – Step by step process <https://goo.gl/forms/EWZ0rNWxYc0bhp0U2>

Application Notes - After hitting submit, you will get an on-screen confirmation that your entry was received. You will also get an email response of your answers. PLEASE NOTE this email may end up in your spam folder. You do have the ability to change your answers up until the application period closes Friday June 29 at midnight. When you receive your responses, you will see duplicative numbering, don't consider this an error.

The Foundation will reply within 24 hours to confirm receipt of attachments. If you do not get either of these emails (Google Form or Foundation) in 24 hours, please contact the Foundation ASAP at ncfswc@gmail.com, 919-510-4599 (office) or 336-345-5335 (cell). Calls on the cell phone WILL be answered after hours as well, excluding 9PM to 7AM. You will get a return call in 12 hours.

1. (BLANK – question does not show up on form, but answer of email address will show up on responses)
2. **District Name** – select from drop down menu
3. First Name of person completing form
4. Last Name of person completing form
5. Primary Work Duties of person completing form
6. City where District office is located

7. **District's Project Point of Contact** – List the First Name. This will be the Foundation's primary point of contact.
8. **District's Project Point of Contact** – List the Last Name.
9. **District's Project Point of Contact Cell Phone** - By providing this number you acknowledge you will accept calls outside of normal business hours if needed during the application review (not required if number not used for business work).
10. Ability to send staff to regional / **state level training** if necessary.
11. **Partnering Districts** - Indicate if the application is on behalf of a group of Districts that plan to manage the program at a regional level. If yes, the Foundation will not accept applications from partnering District(s). Letters of Support are required from each Partnering District.
12. **Project Lead Technical Person – List the First Name.** The lead technical person does not have to be a District employee, but should be an active member of the Technical Support Team. Verify that the assigned person has time to commit to the project and what their level of expertise is.
13. **Project Lead Technical Person – List the Last Name**
14. **Producer's Name** – Provide the name of the farm and producer that will host the demonstration.
15. **Farm Location** - Provide the physical address of the farm where the demonstration will be housed. If not available provide the nearest crossroads.
16. **Needs Statement** – Provide a brief statement as to why your District should be selected for the program. Consider things like current condition of pastures, economic dependence on livestock management, special populations that you will target for outreach, or any other relevant information.
17. **Local Technical Support Team** – List names of those serving on the team, the organization they represent, and a brief statement as to the role they will play.
18. **Focus of Pasture Management Demonstration** – Identify the management practice(s) your demonstration will highlight. Districts are encouraged to be innovative in demonstration design. Consider a practice that is underutilized in your area but that is applicable to most producers. Describe what process you used to determine that the selected field is the right field to highlight the management technique you want to focus on. Provide enough information so that application reviewers can understand what type of technique your project will focus on.

19. **Pasture Management Outreach Demand** – The District will estimate how many producers may benefit from the program in their county. Consider members of Voluntary Ag Districts, Got to Be NC producers, Century Farmers, Cattlemen Association members, North Carolina Horse Council, local Farm Bureau and Farm Credit members, and local Grange members. Justify how you determined the projected number and be prepared to provide additional information if requested. *This number should be a reasonable number and not a “pie in the sky” number. Your applicant is not ranked on how many people will attend field days but more on how well rounded is the outreach plan.*
20. **Program Promotion** – Identify how the District will promote the program and if any messaging will target special needs populations such as the underserved or a specific type of agriculture like the horse community.
21. **Long Term Maintenance Plan** – The District is expected to support the demonstration in future years so that it remains a viable educational / outreach resource. Please describe the process that the District will use in future years to keep the program viable.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Can the District apply on behalf of another organization?** No, the District can only apply if it is willing to oversee management of the demonstration.
2. **What can the demonstration establishment funds be used for?** Reimbursable expenses include chemical spray, seed, fertilizer and rental of a no-till drill if the District does not have one available. Funds cannot be used to offset the producer’s time, fees to use on-farm equipment, or equipment gas bills. Any other specific costs will be considered on a case by case basis but must be approved by the Foundation prior to the purchase.
3. **What can the District’s consultation funds be used for?** It is the discretion of the District Board as to how these funds are used; but actions must be in accordance with the Local Budget and Fiscal Control Act. The Foundation encourages the District to use the funds to offset expenses related to the workshop, such as invitation mailings.
4. **What all is included in the temporary fencing starter kit?** The kit includes temporary "tread-in" fence posts, corner posts, reels with wire (geared and ungeared), fence tester, and post driver. The Foundation will order these starter kits for all participating Districts and arrange for delivery. The starter kit is to remain with the

producer after the demonstration project is finished. If the producer does not need the equipment it is up to the District how the equipment is used in the future.

5. **I completed my application and the response provided is missing information, what should I do?** This is likely due to a firewall. Send the Foundation an email requesting a copy of your answers and we can send them to you in excel.
6. **Should we include a copy of the minutes or a copy of the resolution when we submit our certification letter?** A certification letter will be accepted without secondary information.
7. **How do I edit my responses on the online application?** You have to answer all the required questions and hit submit at the bottom of the form. A submittal verification screen will pop up with an Edit Your Responses clickable link. Click on it and save the URL in a word document on your desktop. Then you can go back later and edit your responses.
8. **When I try to fill out the application Google asks me to sign into my Google account, I don't have an account, OR my Google account is only for personal use.** The Foundation worked with Johnston District to alleviate the issue. It is recommended that you open the form in Chrome. Or if you do not have Chrome, when you open the form watch the address bar for a pop-up requesting you to give permission for an Adobe Flash Player to open. Click yes.
9. **Can the Demonstration Site be on new pastureland?** The preference is to select a field currently in production that needs to be renovated. In some cases, it may make sense to consider a site on new pasture acreage if acreage is being added to balance out the whole farm forage needs. Project partners feel that if a farm needs to add acreage, the farm's existing pastures are likely not in good condition due to overgrazing and existing acreage should work as a renovation demonstration. Project partners encourage Districts to seek existing acreage for the demonstration site or a different producer, but a site on new land will be considered.
10. **If an interested producer is not overstocked but animals are accessing surface waters for their drinking water, should they be considered?** The District is encouraged to seek a producer that is already a good conservationist, and in this case, has made an effort to limit livestock's access to surface waters through exclusionary fencing practices and alternative watering systems. In some cases, the farmer may be in the process of implementing several recommended practices in their conservation plan and have not gotten to

the point of installing alternative watering systems. For a situation where the farmer is actively implementing conservation practices, it may make sense to select their farm as the demonstration site. Keep in mind that the District will be bringing the public onto the farm, so select a farm that would be good to showcase.

- 11. My board already met and did not take action on submitting an application. The board will not have another scheduled meeting before the deadline, what does the Foundation recommend regarding the certification letter?** The Foundation requires the District submit a certification letter signed by the Chairperson demonstrating authorization to submit an application. The Foundation is not in a position to give advice on what steps the District should take obtain permission to submit the application. Each District handles approval processes differently and the Foundation relies on the District to comply with Open Meeting Laws. The Foundation recommends the District seek advice from the county attorney or Division on how to obtain permission to submit an application and be in compliance with Open Meeting Laws.
- 12. Can the Foundation offer any advice as to what kind of demonstration to install, specifically what will meet the needs of the researchers involved?** This project is not part of an official research project, so there are no set design criteria to ensure quality control measures. Districts are encouraged to be innovative in demonstration design. Consider a practice that is underutilized in your area but that can applicable to most producers. When selecting a demonstration type, consider the whole farm forage needs, not just that field. Fields are not required to undergo a total kill and replant; other types of demonstrations will be considered. Some example techniques include the use of annuals as a bridge to perennials, overseeding / frost-seeding legumes, native warm / cool season grasses, novel endophyte fescue, alternative perennials, etc. Do not limit your ideas to just these examples, project partners have not given any preference in the example list. The Foundation supports the value of locally led conservation and relies on the District to design an appropriate demonstration
- 13. Explain further what the District will be required to do regarding demonstration maintenance after the contract has ended.** A driving purpose of this program is to provide resources at the local level that increase conservation capacity. This project should be viewed as offering “seed funds” for a lasting pasture management program. Project Partners encourage each District to build a strong technical support team that can maintain and enhance the demonstration in future years. Use this program to build in-house

technical capacity and gain a better understanding of soil health improvements, calibrating no-till drills, and on-farm forage balance.

- 14. Is the program restricted to livestock as defined by USDA or can the District partner with a farmer managing horses?** The Foundation encourages Districts to partner with the horse community in counties where most of the pasture acres serve horse farms or where the horse community does not actively participate in state conservation programs. This program can be used to build relationships with the horse community, and the North Carolina Horse Council supports this program.
- 15. Please expand on what type of training may be required for the District?** Project partners are considering regional training supported by a webinar; this style of training would not require overnight stay. However, project partners may determine the need to offer one training event at a central location in the state, which may require an overnight stay for Districts that live some distance from the training location. Project partners are not considering a multi-day training event and all efforts will be made to minimize travel burdens being placed on Districts.
- 16. My County is no longer allowing employees to use Google, what do I do?** It is the Foundation's understanding that you can still fill out google surveys, the restriction applies to your District using Google tools to collect information. This has not been fact checked. If your District cannot enter any data into a Google survey, please let the Foundation know and a work around will be developed by the end of May.