

To: Dr. Cindy Nahrwold, UALR, RHET 4322/5322
Cc: Diana Sheridan, NRCS
From: Michelle Keithley *mk*, Andrea Valentine *AV*, Julia Smith *JS*
Subject: Advanced Technical Editing Project
Date: March 7, 2025

Michelle Keithley, Andrea Valentine, and Julia Smith will conduct a technical editing review of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Management Office's Program Manual, Section 503 - Watershed Project Plan Modifications. This memo outlines a structured editing plan, addressing the document's purpose, readers, uses, strengths, and areas for improvement, editing objectives, goals, management plan and tentative milestones.

Document's Purpose, Readers, and Uses

The NRCS, a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners, farmers, and local governments for conservation planning and resource management. The Watershed Management Office, part of NRCS, oversees programs focused on watershed protection, flood prevention, and water resource conservation.

The NRCS National Water Management Center developed a policy manual for the Watershed Program, outlining procedures for planning and implementing projects under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act and the Flood Control Act of 1944. Section 503 outlines the process for modifying previously approved watershed project plans and consists of two parts; Subpart A, Preparation of Revised and Supplemental Plans, and Subpart B, Review and Approval of Plan Modifications.

The National Watershed Program Manual Section 503 serves two key functions by outlining the conditions that require a project plan modifications or supplemental project plan and explaining the review and approval process for project plan modifications.

The primary audience for the document is NRCS staff. Secondary audiences include state and local government agencies, conservationists, engineers, policymakers, academic researchers, environmental advocacy groups, and the public seeking information about conservation efforts.

Document's Current Strengths and Areas to Improve

The document has several strengths, including comprehensive technical content backed by research and field data, ensuring that the information provided is accurate. It adheres to NRCS regulatory and scientific standards reinforcing its credibility and compliance with established guidelines.

There are areas that could be improved. The language throughout the document is dense and highly technical, which may make it difficult for non-expert readers to understand. Inconsistencies in the organization of information can also make it challenging for readers to locate key details efficiently. Additionally, variations in visual design and formatting across sections create inconsistencies in layout, typography, and structure, making navigation more difficult and affecting overall readability.

Editing Objectives and Goals

Our primary goal for editing Section 503 of the NRCS manual is to balance technical precision with readability for a diverse audience. We will focus on enhancing clarity and

readability by simplifying complex language while maintaining technical accuracy, improving document organization for logical flow and accessibility, ensuring consistency in style and formatting with standardized headings and references, and optimizing visual design to improve accessibility, enhance visual structure and standardize formatting.

To achieve these objectives, we will evaluate the document based on key criteria. Content will be assessed for completeness and appropriateness. Organization will be reviewed for order and clear structural cues. Visual design and navigation will be evaluated for the effectiveness of formatting in paragraphs, lists, tables, and links. Style will be reviewed for tone, sentence structure, word accuracy, cultural bias, and appropriate grammar, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. Finally, accessibility will be reviewed to confirm the document accommodates readers with visual or physical impairments.

Management Plan

Michelle Keithley will communicate weekly with NRCS via email or phone and provide work updates through Google Docs. The editing team will meet weekly on Tuesdays via Zoom to discuss progress. Additionally, the team will consult Dr. Nahrwold as needed throughout the project.

Michelle Keithley will lead content and style editing, ensuring clarity and consistency. Julia Smith will focus on visual design, navigation, and accessibility, enhancing readability and usability. Andrea Valentine will refine the document's organization, improving structure and flow.

Edited documents will be submitted to Diana Sheridan (NRCS) for review, revisions, and feedback to ensure alignment with NRCS needs. After incorporating feedback, the final document will be delivered.

Schedule and Milestones

Regular check-ins with the client will be conducted to ensure the project aligns with NRCS requirements and expectations. Below are tentative deadlines:

Date	Key Milestones
02/01 - 02/07	Initial meeting with Diana to discuss documents needs
03/08 - 03/14	Preliminary review and editing plan submission
03/11 - 04/08	First round of edits completed and send for client feedback
04/15 - 04/17	Client review meeting and incorporation of changes
04/17 - 04/21	Final proofing and quality check
04/25	Final Document handoff to NRCS

Deliverables

Upon project completion, NRCS will receive fully edited and formatted documents along with a summary report detailing key changes and recommendations.

Please review this proposal at your earliest convenience and reach out to Michelle Keithley, Julia Smith, and Andrea Valentine with any questions or concerns. We appreciate your feedback and support as we move forward and remain committed to achieving excellence through technical editing. These materials will achieve greater clarity, consistency, and usability, ultimately improving their impact on conservation efforts.