



RD AN No. 4737 (1940-G)  
September 19, 2013

**TO:** Rural Development State Directors

**ATTN:** Administrative Program Director,  
State Environmental Coordinators, and  
Assistant State Environmental Coordinators

**FROM:** Rich Davis /s/ *Rich Davis*  
Acting Administrator  
Rural Housing Service

Lilian Salerno /s/ *Lilian Salerno*  
Administrator  
Rural Business-Cooperative Service

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Administrator  
Rural Utilities Service

**SUBJECT:** Role of the State Environmental Coordinator (SEC)

**PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:**

The purpose of this Administrative Notice (AN) is to specify the requirements from Rural Development (RD) instructions regarding appointment of the State Environmental Coordinator (SEC) and the Assistant State Environmental Coordinator (ASEC). This AN also describes the roles and responsibilities of the SEC and ASEC.

**COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN:**

This AN replaces RD AN No. 4618 (1940-G) dated January 9, 2012, which expired January 31, 2013. There have been no substantive changes to this AN since the last AN on this subject. Where appropriate, the text has been edited and re-organized for clarity, accuracy, and to better meet plain language goals.

**EXPIRATION DATE:**  
September 30, 2014

**FILING INSTRUCTION:**  
Preceding RD Instruction 1940-G

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## **IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **SEC Appointment:**

RD Instructions require each State Director to appoint only one individual to serve as the SEC for their jurisdiction. It is recommended that SECs report directly to the State Director on all environmental matters. The SEC position may be full-time or a collateral duty, but requires at least 25 percent of the appointee's time, usually more, and is considered a major duty. Workload demands will dictate the amount of staff time needed; in some States a full-time SEC may be necessary.

Both RD 7 CFR Part 1940 subpart G (1940-G) and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) 7 CFR Part 1794 (1794), Staff Instruction (SI) 1794-1 incorporate the various SEC roles and responsibilities in Agency environmental compliance activities. The SEC fulfills the critical role of liaison for all environmental compliance issues between RD at the State Office level and with numerous other Federal, State, and local natural resource and regulatory agencies. The SEC is responsible for providing technical assistance and guidance to all RD staff, applicants, technical service providers, and consultants within their state(s). The detailed list of the SEC's responsibilities found in Section 1940.307(b), and those included in the text of SI 1794-1, are the basis for a recommended written delegation of responsibility. Attachments 1 and 2 include recommended elements and formats for SEC position descriptions and performance work plans.

### **ASEC Appointment:**

In addition to the required appointment of a SEC, it is strongly recommended that an additional duty assignment be made for one ASEC. This appointment will provide a trained backup to act for the SEC when the SEC is unavailable. This also provides for staff succession planning.

ASEC responsibilities are also to be delegated in writing, with an example shown in Attachment 3. The ASEC, with oversight from the SEC, can provide guidance on environmental issues, assist the SEC in providing environmental training to field office staff, and serve as the delegated Acting SEC during SEC absences. This ensures continuity of operations and will help when the environmental workload is exceptionally high. ASEC responsibilities are to be assigned as a collateral duty, are not to be grade controlling, and typically constitute less than 25 percent of the employee's time.

### **The appointment of a SEC and ASEC requires State Directors to:**

- recruit or select individuals who have applicable technical/scientific educational or professional qualifications;
- amend the appointee's position description;
- provide the appointees with necessary training;
- evaluate (or assure that evaluation is completed of) the appointee's performance of environmental duties; and

- notify the National Office, Rural Housing Service, Program Support Staff (PSS) and RUS, Engineering and Environmental Staff (EES) of all appointments.

To assist in the management of the SEC and ASEC positions, guidance documents are attached and listed below. If you have any questions or comments, please contact either Frank Mancino in PSS at (202) 720-1827 (frank.mancino@wdc.usda.gov) or Mark Plank in EES at (202) 720-1649 (mark.plank@wdc.usda.gov).

**Attachments:**

For the SEC:

- Attachment 1: Recommended Amendment to Position Description
- Attachment 2: Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans

For the ASEC:

- Attachment 3: Recommended Amendment to Position Description
- Attachment 4: Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans

For SECs and ASECs:

- Attachment 5: Recommended Training Program For Environmental Coordinators
- Attachment 6: Form Letter for Notifying PSS/EES of New SEC and ASEC Appointments

**State Environmental Coordinator (SEC)**  
**Recommended Amendment to Position Description**

As the SEC, the incumbent works under the authority of the State Director and has the following responsibilities in accordance with 1940-G, section 1940.307(b) and RUS Staff Instruction (SI) 1794-1:

1. Acts as advisor to the State Director, and provides technical assistance as needed to State and field office staff on environmental matters and coordinates the requirements of the Agency's regulations, environmental policies and procedures.
2. Reviews those Agency actions that are not categorically excluded under 1940-G and which require the approval and/or clearance of the State Office and all actions under 1794. Recommends to the approving official either project approval, disapproval, or modification and acceptability of environmental review documents after analyzing and considering the following:
  - a. Anticipated adverse environmental impacts;
  - b. Anticipated benefits; and
  - c. Action's consistency with the requirements of 1940-G or 1794.

Authorizes the type and content of public notices, and determines the need for any unique review or notice requirements.

3. Represents the State Director at conferences and meetings dealing with any environmental or historic preservation matters affecting the State Office.
4. Maintains communication on State Office environmental matters with interested public groups and local, State, and other Federal agencies and the National Office. Coordinates with co-funding agencies to reduce duplication of effort in environmental reviews.
5. Solicits as necessary expert advice and assistance of other professional staff members within the State or National Offices in order to properly implement the Agency's environmental policies and procedures.
6. Through review and oversight, assures that adverse environmental impacts are appropriately mitigated and reviews implementation as needed.
7. Assists in resolving post-approval environmental matters and determines if additional review or public noticing is required.

8. Maintains the administrative record for environmental reviews of State Office actions.
9. Provides direction and training to State and field office staff, applicants, and consultants on environmental policies and procedures to meet relevant laws and Agency/Departmental regulations and guidance.
10. Monitors the State Office's compliance with the RD regulations, environmental policies and procedures and advises the State Director of the results of the monitoring process.

**State Environmental Coordinator (SEC)**  
**Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans**

**Performance Element**

For all SEC appointees, full-time or a lesser percentage of the appointee's time, SEC responsibilities will be incorporated into and evaluated on the Performance Work Plan. Evaluation may be through the use of a generic performance element (e.g., Program Management) or through the creation of a unique element in Block 14 of Form AD-435. Use of the unique element is preferred. The unique element will be titled "State Environmental Coordinator."

The following language will be used to describe the standards of performance for the SEC duties under a unique element. The same language will be used as further clarification for a generic element that covers the SEC duties.

**Suggested Standards:**

- Work completed to meet critical deadlines.
- Environmental issues, problems, and concerns are adequately identified and resolved. Assures that adequate alternatives and mitigation measures are developed when impacts to resources are identified. Work products are understandable, clearly presented, and can typically be accepted by the State Director without modification. On rare occasions, there may be minor technical issues.
- Analyzes training needs and develops and provides environmental training for the State and field office staff and applicants/consultants. Training materials are typically completed in time for distribution and use at training sessions, meet the training objectives, and are typically accurate with few technical errors.
- Advises and represents State Director on environmental matters at meetings of State Office nature and solicits expert advice from local, State, and other Federal agencies concerning recommended courses of action in sufficient time for policy decisions and implementation. Serves as the point of contact for the National Office on environmental issues, and brings important concerns or issues to the National Office's attention as appropriate. Assures that reviews required by the Agency's environmental regulations are complete and correct, and sufficient to support Agency decision-making. Provides technical assistance in a timely manner as needed to State and field office staffs. Maintains sufficient administrative records.

**Assistant State Environmental Coordinator (ASEC)**  
**Recommended Amendment to Position Description**

As the ASEC, the incumbent works under the general guidance of the SEC on environmental review issues and has the responsibilities listed below. When the SEC is absent, the incumbent will be delegated full authority as Acting SEC, provided they have the necessary training.

1. Aids the SEC in addressing and resolving environmental matters and assists in coordinating the requirements of RD regulations, environmental policies and procedures at the State Office level.
2. Assists the SEC in all other aspects of that position, as listed in Attachment 1. When delegated authority as Acting SEC, recommends to the approving official either approval, disapproval, or modification or acceptability of environmental review documents after analyzing the potential impacts and benefits of proposed actions and the adequacy and regulatory sufficiency of review documentation.

**Assistant State Environmental Coordinator (ASEC)**  
**Incorporating Environmental Duties in Performance Work Plans**

**Performance Element**

If the ASEC duties require less than 25 percent of the appointee's time, the ASEC responsibilities will be evaluated on the Performance Work Plan through the use of a generic performance element (e.g., Execution of Duties). If the ASEC duties require 25 percent or more of the appointee's time, the ASEC responsibilities will be evaluated through a generic performance element, but creation of a unique element in Block 14 of Form AD-435 is preferred. The unique element will be titled "Assistant State Environmental Coordinator."

The following language will be used to describe the standards of performance for the ASEC duties under a unique element. The same language will be used as further clarification for a generic element that covers the ASEC duties.

**Suggested Standards:**

- Work completed to meet critical deadlines.
- Most environmental issues, problems, and concerns are adequately identified and resolved. Assures that alternatives and mitigation measures are developed when impacts to resources were identified. Work products are understandable, clearly presented, and can be accepted by the State Director without modification. On rare occasions, there are minor technical issues.
- Assists the SEC in analyzing needs and providing training for the State and field office staffs. Training materials are completed in time for distribution and use at training sessions, meet the training objectives, and are accurate with few technical errors.
- Assists the SEC in providing advice to the State Director on environmental matters at meetings of State Office nature and in soliciting expert advice from State, local, and other Federal agencies concerning recommended courses of action in sufficient time for policy decisions and implementation. When delegated SEC authority, serves as the point of contact for the National Office on environmental issues, and brings important concerns or issues to National Office attention as appropriate. Assures that reviews required by RD environmental regulations are complete and correct, and sufficient to support Agency decision-making. Provides technical assistance in a timely manner as needed to State and field office staffs. Maintains sufficient administrative records.



**Recommended Training Program for Environmental Coordinators**

Some individuals serving as SEC or ASEC do so as a collateral duty, and often do not have specialized training for these responsibilities. To better enable appointees to understand RD environmental compliance responsibilities and resolve complex environmental issues, it is critical that adequate training programs be initiated for these personnel before or immediately upon appointment. The costs of such training will be borne by the State Office. In some instances, training is available free of charge from Federal agencies, and on-line courses are becoming increasingly available. The National Office PSS and EES staffs can recommend vendors and agencies.

Training recommended for:

State Environmental Coordinator (SEC)	All Items
Assistant State Environmental Coordinator (ASEC)	Items 1-6E.

1. Review the following regulations and guidance documents:
  - A. 7 CFR Part 1940 subpart, "Environmental Program."
  - B. 7 CFR Part 1794, "RUS Environmental Policies and Procedures", Bulletin 1794A-602, and Staff Instruction 1794-1.
  - C. RD Instruction 426.2, "National Flood Insurance."
  - D. RD Instruction 1901-F, "Procedures for the Protection of Historical and Archaeological Properties."
  - E. RD Instruction 1970-I, "Intergovernmental Review."
  - F. Related National and State ANs and/or PNs.
  - G. State Natural Resource Management Guide and State Supplement to RUS Bulletin 1794A-602.
2. Review the following environmental compliance CD-based training courses or AgLearn modules as available (in the following order):
  - A. National Environmental Policy Act
  - B. Considering Project Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

- C. Historic Preservation Issues
  - D. Coastal Use Issues
  - E. Land Use Issues
  - F. Water Issues
  - H. Environmental Justice
  - I. Lender Liability
  - J. Transaction Screen Process
3. Review recently completed environmental review documents prepared under 1940-G and 1794 to become familiar with the format and content: Categorical Exclusion (CE), Class I Environmental Assessment (EA), and Class II EA (1940-G); Environmental Report for Categorical Exclusion and EA (1794).
  4. Complete an EA to become familiar with the process.
  5. Meet with Program Directors and/or Loan Specialists to become familiar with the interrelationship between the environmental review process and loan processing.
  6. As workload and funding permit, complete the following courses (in approximate order of priority):
    - A. "New SEC Orientation Training" by National Office Staff (PSS/EES).
    - B. Introduction to NEPA (private vendor).
    - C. "Introduction to Section 106 Review" offered by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).
    - D. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training on floodplains, FEMA maps, and flood insurance (FEMA, online).
    - E. Cross-training with a SEC in another State.
    - F. "Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Practices For Commercial Real Estate: Transaction Screen & Phase I Site Assessment" American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) course on how the ASTM Environmental Site Assessment Standard Practices for the Phase I Site Assessment and the Transaction Screen Process (E1527-00 and E1528-00) were developed, how to use the standards, and how the standards affect business practices.

- G. Basic Wetland Delineation Course and the Federal Wetland/Waters Regulatory Policy Course (private vendors).
- H. Advanced seminar on “Preparing Agreement Documents Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (ACHP).”
- I. Outside classes on laws relating to hazardous substances.
- J. Advanced classes in NEPA law and document preparation by outside vendors.
- K. Any available course work relating to environmental laws or regulations as it applies to RD programs including, but not limited to, the following. Also review agency websites to become familiar with online tools such as Web Soil Survey (NRCS); EJ Geographic Assessment Tool (USEPA); Online ESA S. 7 compliance tools (USFWS Field Offices):
  - 1. Clean Water Act
  - 2. Farmland Protection Policy Act
  - 3. Endangered Species Act
  - 4. National Historic Preservation Act
  - 5. Clean Air Act
  - 6. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
  - 7. Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

**Fax to PSS at (202) 690-4335  
and to EES at (202) 690-0649**

TO: Director  
Program Support Staff  
Rural Housing Service

Director  
Engineering and Environmental Staff  
Rural Utilities Service

SUBJECT: Appointment of a State Environmental Coordinator or  
Assistant State Environmental Coordinator

Please be advised that the following individual has been selected to assume the  
environmental responsibilities as shown:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Selected to serve as (*check one*): SEC \_\_\_\_\_ or ASEC \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Series and Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual's training, work experience, or education that is relevant to the appointment:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Proposed training program and schedule for the appointee: (*refer to Attachment 5 for  
recommended training*):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_