



What You Should Know About the Conservation Engineering Practitioner Certification Program

<https://datcp.wi.gov>

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Conservation Engineering Practitioner Certification enables Land Conservation Department technicians and other public employees to design, review and approve conservation engineering practices. Operating under certification, county and state employees may perform engineering work without being registered as engineers in the state.

The certification program is administered by the DATCP field engineering staff in accordance with state administrative rule (ATCP 50.46), and is designed to complement the engineering support services they provide. Wisconsin state statutes provide for quality assurance by requiring that certified practitioners or professional engineers approve conservation engineering practices for funding under DATCP's Soil and Water Resource Management program and DNR's Nonpoint Pollution Abatement program.

WHY WAS THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM DEVELOPED?

In 1991, Senate Bill 281 directed DATCP to establish, by rule, a certification program for agricultural engineering practices. This bill was developed by a special committee on nonpoint source pollution that based its recommendations for certification on the following goals:

1. Extend the exemption for engineering licensure that had been available for SCS staff (now NRCS) through the Job Approval Authority (JAA) to County Land Conservation Department employees;
2. Promote statewide uniformity of engineering service and oversight;
3. Provide a mechanism of quality assurance for state funded conservation practices; and
4. Ensure continuity of the previously mentioned goals in the event of SCS (now NRCS) withdrawal.

DOES CERTIFICATION PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM LAWSUITS?

Certification or licensure as a professional engineer cannot prevent the occurrence of a lawsuit being brought against you or your employer. However, working within your personal capabilities, your assigned job duties, and your certified level of competence as recognized by law, greatly enhances your defense in the unfortunate event of a lawsuit.



Before and after — installation of a streambank protection project along the Wisconsin River.

HOW WILL MY CERTIFICATION LEVELS BE ESTABLISHED?

Your DATCP field engineer will establish your certification rating for various conservation engineering practices based on your demonstrated knowledge, training, experience and record of appropriately seeking assistance. Ratings are in five levels of complexity for planning, design, and construction oversight of practices. In making these determinations the DATCP field engineer may rely on interviews, quality assurance reviews, installation inspections, design documents, and references provided by others.

If you now have a JAA rating your initial certification will be based on a translation of your JAA. Subsequent updates of your certification may be requested at any time by contacting your DATCP field engineer. Certification ratings will be reviewed at least once every three years. Modifications to your certification may result in raising, lowering, or reaffirming ratings for one or more practices. If you disagree with a determination made on your certification you should appeal to the assigning field engineer in writing within 10 working days.

WHAT MUST I DO TO MAINTAIN MY CERTIFICATION?

You must obtain 30 hours of Professional Development Hours (PDHs) every three years to retain your certification. While you are responsible for determining whether a particular course or activity increases your knowledge, skills and competence to perform activities covered by a certification, you should focus on trainings that are formally recognized or approved with PDHs or equivalent Continuing Education Units (CEUs). You must maintain a record of your PDHs, and may be asked to produce this record as part of your three-year review, or if you request an increase in your level of certification/delegation. The form for tracking your hours is available on DATCP and NRCS websites (see box below).

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CERTIFICATION AND JAA?

In recognition of their parallel roles, and in an effort to pool agency resources and avoid duplication, the JAA was redesigned concurrently with the development of the Certification program in order to create a seamless process that would enable recipients to meet the requirements of state and federal programs. Concurring signatures by DATCP and NRCS assigning engineers is all that is necessary to receive the dual rating of Certification and JAA. This collaboration does not restrict either agency from delivery of JAA or Certification independently, if that should become necessary.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT CERTIFICATION?

We encourage you to read the applicable laws pertaining to certification: DATCP's administrative rule ATCP 50.46 details the workings of the Certification program; and Chapter 443.14 Wis. Stats., creates the exemption for certified county and state employees from being licensed as engineers.

For more information, including the [Conservation Engineering Certification Form](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ConservationEngineering.aspx), visit the DATCP engineering website, https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ConservationEngineering.aspx, or the Wisconsin NRCS website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wi/technical/engineering/>.