



Easement Site Inspections

RIM Handbook

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A. GENERAL

The primary reason for performing inspections of easement lands is to ensure that the landowner is fulfilling easement terms. The site inspection also affords the SWCD and the landowner an opportunity to discuss progress of conservation practice installation and establishment. The reviewer can identify needed maintenance requirements with the landowner for specific practice areas as identified on the conservation plan map. The reviewer can also determine if changes to the conservation plan are needed.

A.1 Site Inspection Timeline

Easement site inspections are required for the five consecutive years beginning the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, inspections will be performed every three years.

A.2 Timeline Example

2014 Easement recorded (anytime during calendar year)

<u>First 5 years</u>	<u>Begin 3 Year Rotation</u>
2015 - first site inspection	2020 - no inspection
2016 - second site inspection	2021 - no inspection
2017 - third site inspection	2022 - inspection required
2018 - fourth site inspection	2023 - no inspection
2019 - fifth site inspection	2024 - no inspection
	2025 - inspection required

A.3 Notification of Easements Scheduled for Inspection

The BWSR will annually notify SWCDs of those easements which are due for inspection that year. Lists will be sent in late winter or early spring. We recognize that some problem or sensitive sites may require more frequent inspections than the proposed schedule. These sites may include those with structures that require close monitoring such as wetland restoration sites or those with recent noncompliance or violation problems. If you have reason to monitor these sites more frequently, use the Site Inspection Form to aid in associated reporting, as appropriate.

B. COMPLETING THE SITE INSPECTION FORM

B.1 Procedure

Site inspections must be completed on the [Conservation Easement Site Inspection Form](#). Inspections should be performed sometime during May through August, with May and June being the optimum time. This allows time to take corrective actions if any are needed (e.g. control noxious weeds before they go to seed). SWCD signed and dated site inspection lists are due in the BWSR central office by the date given in the inspection list cover memo, usually the end of September. On easements with potential violations or problems, also send along a copy of the completed site inspection form ASAP to BWSR. A copy of the inspection form must also be sent to the landowner.

When doing site inspections, it is highly advised to meet with the landowner. This can be especially important on those easements where maintenance of conservation practices is clearly needed, or in cases where conservation

plans need to be updated. Meeting with the landowner or operator facilitates needed conservation practice maintenance discussions, or decisions to amend plans.

B.2 Inspection Guidelines

Use the following information as a guide when performing site inspections and completing the site inspection form.

- Assess each practice area individually and select the appropriate rating for each practice on the site inspection form
- Only primary conservation practices should appear on the site inspection form.
- Any practice marked as “N/E” (not established yet) or “Poor” requires a comment from the SWCD (use the space at the bottom of the form or attach additional sheets as necessary). A condition marked as “Poor” could potentially be in noncompliance with easement terms and conditions and could lead to a violation. Therefore, thoroughly document your findings. Photos and GPS points of potential violations are a good way to thoroughly document your observations.
- Make sure the easement boundary is accurately and adequately staked, and remember to check the boundary for any encroachment
- Answer the questions on the back of the form as best you can to help remind the landowner of the easement terms and conditions.
- Remember to sign the inspection and include the date you inspected the site.

B.3 Possible Violations

If a possible violation is discovered while performing the site inspection, refer to the [Non-compliance/Violations Procedures subsection](#) of the Implementation Stage section of the handbook for specific instructions on how to proceed.