

# Information about Environmental Management Agricultural Operation Strategy of Plan Development (AOSPD) Certificate

(For Consultants Preparing Strategies and Plans Dealing with Agricultural Source Materials)

## Infosheet

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The information contained in this document is derived from the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 (NMA) and Ontario Regulation 267/03 (O. Reg. 267/03). Every effort has been made to make it as accurate as possible, but is not authoritative. Please refer to the e-Laws website or the official volumes printed by Publications Ontario for the authoritative text of the act.

This infosheet provides information on new and renewal certificate requirements.

### Overview of Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate

An Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development (AOSPD) Certificate is required if you are preparing a Nutrient Management Strategy (NMS) or Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) for an agricultural operation that you don't own, operate or work for. Your certificate number is required on all NMS/Ps you prepare.

The skills and knowledge that are required for the AOSPD Certificate can be found in The Agricultural Operation Strategy/Plan Development Certificate Core Competencies guide, available online.

Certificates are valid for five years.

### Certification Requirements

#### 1. Take the Courses

There are three required courses for the AOSPD Certificate, all of which are offered in both English and French:

- Introduction to Nutrient Management
- Regulation and Protocols (the exam must be written within two years of taking this course)

- How to Prepare a Nutrient Management Strategy and Plan (using NMAN)

You must have taken an up-to-date course to have it applied to your certification requirements. Call University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus at 1-855-648-1444 to make sure past courses you have taken qualify.

#### *Course Schedule*

To find out the course schedule, visit the Nutrient Management Training Course Schedule.

To register for any of the courses in this suite call Ridgetown Campus at 1-855-648-1444 or go online to [www.nutrientmanagement.ca](http://www.nutrientmanagement.ca)

#### *Introduction to Nutrient Management*

This two-day course outlines the basic agronomic principles underlying the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 and O. Reg. 267/03. It is highly recommended that you attend this course before taking the Regulation and Protocols Course.

#### *Regulation and Protocols*

This two-day course is designed for farmers and agricultural source materials (ASM) consultants. The course provides an overview of the Nutrient Management Act, including key definitions and requirements of the Act, Regulation and Protocols. The course also reviews the basics of preparing a NMS/P, implementing a NMS/P and compliance under the NMA.

There are two ways to take this course:

### **Option 1 - Regulation and Protocols Course - Classroom version**

This two-day classroom course is offered at sites across Ontario on a set schedule.

### **Option 2 - Regulation and Protocols Course - Online version**

This version of the course offers the learner an opportunity to study from home at their own pace and convenience using their own computer and an Internet connection.

#### *How to Prepare a NMS/P using NMAN*

In this two-day, hands-on computer course, instructors guide you through the steps of developing an NMS and NMP using NMAN software specifically designed for this purpose.

For more information regarding the courses, visit the Nutrient Management Training Course Overview.

#### *2. Complete Practicum*

After you have taken your required courses, you must complete a practicum. For this practicum, you will use NMAN software and submit two NMS/Ps to OMAFRA's Environmental Management Branch (EMB) for review and comment. The NMS/Ps will be based on fictitious scenarios which are provided to you by calling 1-866-242-4460. These scenarios are available in both English and French.

You will have four opportunities to achieve a passing grade of 80% on your practicum. After four unsuccessful attempts writing this practicum, you must wait five years before you can start the process over again.

#### *3. Pass an Exam*

An applicant must have written and achieved a passing grade (75 per cent or greater) within the last year (365 days) before applying for the certificate. This exam covers materials taught in the courses as well as the skills and knowledge outlined in the Agricultural Operation Strategy/Plan Development Certificate Core Competencies. The competencies are used as the basis for testing in the exam. Opportunities to write the exam take place at scheduled sessions throughout the province.

You will have three opportunities to complete the exam successfully. If you fail the second time you write the exam, you must wait three months before you write again, to allow time for you to improve your knowledge of the subject matter. After three unsuccessful attempts writing the exam, you must wait five years before you can start the process over again.

For more complete details related to the exam and schedule, visit the Nutrient Management Exam Schedule and Information page.

#### *Accommodations*

We will work to provide reasonable accommodations to candidates having physical, learning or linguistic barriers that may affect their ability to write the exam. Please contact the Ridgetown Campus at 1-855-648-1444.

#### *4. Complete NMS/P for a Real Agricultural Operation*

Candidates must complete and submit one NMS and one NMP for a real farm operation (any size) to EMB for review. There may be a site visit conducted to confirm that the information in the NMS/P is accurate. The NMS/P must be completed using the most recent version of NMAN or the Nutrient Management Strategy/Plan Preparation workbook.

### **Applying for the Certificate**

After you fulfill the requirements, mail a completed application to the address indicated on the form.

- Application for Agricultural Operation Strategy/Plan Development Certificate

#### *Certificate Conditions*

Under section 108 of the Regulation, the Director may issue a certificate or licence subject to any conditions that he/she considers appropriate. This may include conditions that are consented to by the applicant, imposed by a Director or ordered by the Tribunal.

## *Refusal to Issue a Certificate or Licence*

Under s. 109(1), the Director may refuse to issue a certificate or licence if:

- the applicant is in contravention of the Act or this Regulation, or is in breach of a condition of another certificate or licence issued under Part X;
- the applicant is not competent to carry on the activity that would be authorized by the certificate or licence; or
- the past conduct of the applicant affords reasonable grounds for belief that the activity that would be authorized by the certificate or licence will not be carried on with honesty and integrity.

## **Certificate Renewals**

Certificates are valid for five years from the date of issue. Applicants who have not had their certificate suspended or cancelled can apply for a renewal. It is your responsibility to know the expiry date of your certificate. It is suggested that you begin the renewal process six months before your certificate expires.

Applicants who would like to renew their certificate must have written and passed an exam (75 per cent or greater) within the last year (365 days) before applying for the certificate. Once the exam is passed, applicants can submit an application for renewal. It is highly recommended that you take the required courses again before writing the exam. Remember you have 3 opportunities to pass an exam.

For information on the exam and schedule, call Ridgetown Campus at 1-855-648-1444 or visit the Nutrient Management Exam Schedule and Information page.

For a copy of the renewal application form, visit the Application for Agricultural Operation Strategy or Plan Development Certificate page.

## **Additional Expectations**

### *Stay Current in Your Field*

Certificate holders are expected to keep up to date with the nutrient management legislation and actively pursue additional learning opportunities to remain competent in the field of nutrient management. This may include update sessions offered by OMAFRA.

### *Performance Guidelines*

A set of performance guidelines has been developed by OMAFRA that goes beyond the regulatory requirements, skills and knowledge listed in the core competencies. These guidelines are intended to provide consistent guiding principles for AOSPD Certificate holders that reflect best management practices for the industry. They outline practices followed by certificate holders providing good professional services to their clients. AOSPD Certificate holders are encouraged to follow these guidelines in their daily practice.

## **Other Considerations**

A pre-approval site visit may be conducted for the first NMS/P submitted by the AOSPD Certificate holder.

Although not required, it is recommended that individuals who hold an AOSPD Certificate:

- Carry errors and omissions insurance, and
- Participate in a Professionalism and Ethics Course (offered through organizations such as the Ontario Institute of Agrologists).