

161A.61 Discretionary inspection by commissioners — actions upon certain findings.

1. In addition to the authority granted by section 161A.47, the commissioners of a soil and water conservation district may inspect or cause to be inspected any land within the district on which they have reasonable grounds to believe that soil erosion is occurring in excess of the limits established by the district's soil erosion control regulations. If the commissioners find from an inspection conducted under authority of either section 161A.47 or this section that soil erosion is occurring on that land in excess of the applicable soil loss limits established by the district's soil erosion control regulations, they shall send notice of that finding to the landowner or landowners of record, and to the occupant of the land if known to the commissioners. The notice shall describe the land affected and shall state as nearly as possible the extent to which soil erosion from that land exceeds the applicable soil loss limits.

a. If the commissioners find that the excessive erosion described in the notice is not causing sediment damage to property owned or occupied by any person other than the owner or occupant of the land on which the excessive soil erosion is occurring, and that the rate of the excessive erosion is less than twice the applicable soil loss limit, the notice required by this subsection shall include or be accompanied by information regarding financial or other assistance which the commissioners are able to make available to the owner or occupant of the land to aid in achieving compliance with the applicable soil loss limits.

b. If the commissioners find that the excessive soil erosion described in the notice is not causing sediment damage to property owned or occupied by any person other than the owner or occupant of the land on which it is occurring, but that the erosion is occurring at a rate equal to or greater than twice the applicable soil loss limit, the notice shall so state, shall include or be accompanied by the information required by paragraph "a" of this subsection, and shall be delivered by personal service or by restricted certified mail to each of the persons to whom the notice is directed. A notice given under this paragraph shall also include or be accompanied by information explaining the provisions of subsection 2.

2. The commissioners of the soil and water conservation district in which that farm unit is located may petition the district court for an appropriate order with respect to that farm unit if its owner or occupant has been sent a notice by the commissioners under subsection 1, paragraph "b", for three or more consecutive years. The commissioners' petition shall seek a court order which states a time not more than six months after the date of the order when the owner or occupant must commence, and a time when the owner or occupant must complete the steps necessary to comply with the order. The time allowed to complete the establishment of a temporary soil and water conservation practice employed to comply or advance toward compliance with the court's order shall be not more than one year after the date of that order, and the time allowed to complete the establishment of a permanent soil and water conservation practice employed to comply with the court's order shall be not more than five years after the date of that order. Section 161A.48 applies to a court order issued under this subsection. The steps required of the farm unit owner or operator by the court order are those which are necessary to do one of the following:

a. Bring the farm unit which is the subject of the order into compliance with its farm unit soil conservation plan, if such a plan had been agreed upon prior to the time the commissioners petitioned for the order.

b. Bring the farm unit which is the subject of the order into compliance with a plan developed for that farm unit by the commissioners, in accordance with guidelines established by the division of soil conservation, and presented to the court as a part of the commissioners' petition, if a farm unit soil conservation plan has not previously been agreed upon for that farm unit. A plan presented to the court by the commissioners under this paragraph shall specify as many alternative approved soil and water conservation practices as feasible, among which the owner or occupant of the farm unit may choose in taking the steps necessary to comply with the court's order.

c. Bring the farm unit which is the subject of the order into compliance with a soil conservation plan developed by the owner or occupant of that farm unit as an alternative to the proposed soil conservation plan developed by the commissioners, if the owner or occupant so petitions the court and the court finds that the owner or occupant's plan will bring the farm unit into conformity with the applicable soil loss limits of the district.

3. The commissioners may also cause an inspection of land within the district on which they have reasonable grounds to believe that a permanent soil and water conservation practice established with public cost-sharing funds is not being properly maintained or is being altered in violation of section 161A.7, subsection 3. If the commissioners find that the practices are not being maintained or have been altered in violation of section 161A.7, subsection 3, the commissioners shall issue an administrative order to the landowner who made the unauthorized removal, alteration or modification to maintain, repair, or reconstruct the permanent soil and water conservation practices. The requirement for maintenance and repair is for the length of life as defined in section 161A.7, subsection 3. Public cost-sharing funds are not available for the work under this order. If the landowner fails to comply with the administrative order, the commissioners may petition the district court for an order compelling compliance with the order. Upon receiving satisfactory proof, the court shall issue an order directing compliance with the administrative order and may modify the administrative order. The provisions of section 161A.50 relating to notice, appeals, and contempt of court shall apply to proceedings under this subsection.

[C81, §467A.61; 82 Acts, ch 1220, §2]

87 Acts, ch 23, §37, 38

C93, §161A.61

2009 Acts, ch 41, §61; 2012 Acts, ch 1095, §13

Referred to in §161A.7

[T] Subsection 2, unnumbered paragraph 1 amended