

## **GUIDELINES FOR NON-ELECTRONIC DISTRICT CORRESPONDENCE**

### **Preparing Non-electronic Correspondence**

- **Be complete:** Your letter should include everything pertinent to the question or problem. A good guide is to read the letter and consider what questions the addressee might have. Then have someone else read the letter to check for clarity.
- **Be clear:** Use the familiar word instead of the fifty-cent word. If technical words or phrases cannot be avoided, use them, but define them.
- **Use a conversational, friendly tone,** just as you would in person. Use "We" and "You" and other personal references. Use "We" instead of "I" whenever possible.
- **Make the sentences and paragraphs short** - but don't overdo it to the point that your letter sounds choppy. It's good to have "white space" on the page because this helps the reader remain interested in reading what you have to say.
- **Favor the active over the passive voice:** "We received your letter" is better than "Your letter was received." Better Still - "Thank you for the letter" They know you got the letter, and you will have made them feel appreciated, too.
- **Check with the author of letters before changes are made.** Usually your job will be to make the letter grammatically correct. But, if you don't think the content of the letter is clear it probably isn't and should be reviewed by the writer.
- **Stay away from agency terms and names.** But if you are going to use acronyms, such as NRCS, ODNR, SWCD give the complete title in words first with the initials in brackets immediately after the words. As it is used later in a document then the initials can be used.
- **Use the necessary tools.** You will want to accumulate your own file of reference aids, including a good dictionary and a reliable manual on grammar. Whenever you are in doubt, check!

### **The following instructions apply specifically to SWCD correspondence:**

- **District- paid postage stamps must be used.** District mail may not carry the "postage and fees paid" penalty indicated which is restricted to federal mail. That is until such a time as the federal agency is permitted to use general postage.
- **One officer or an employee of the district must sign correspondence** on behalf of the SWCD board of supervisors. A sample letter shown later in the chapter contains the general format suggested for district letters.

### **Sample of Signature Lines on District Letters**

It is best for a supervisor to sign the District's letters. However, if a supervisor is not available, the Board could give the District Program Administrator or Administrative Assistant the authority to sign on their behalf. With the Board's approval you could sign the appropriate Board member's signature without having to put your initial beside their name. You could sign your own name, example:

*Terry Fields, Buckeye District Coordinator*  
*On behalf of Buckeye District Board of Supervisors*

But remember, it is much better for a supervisor's signature to be on the Board's correspondence.