

**Virginia Supplement to the General Manual**  
**Title 180 – Conservation Planning and Application**  
**Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy**

Candidates must have an understanding of the basic fundamentals as outline in GM-180, Part VA409.9(B), meet the minimum knowledge, skills, and ability proficiency requirements as outlined in GM-180, Part VA409.9(C) and successfully complete the following trainings.

**E. The minimum training qualifications for certified conservation planner in Virginia is completion of the following:**

- 1. Conservation Planning – all modules**
  - i. Part 1 – AgLearn online (modules 1-5)**
  - ii. Part 2 – Classroom/field (modules 6-8, Virginia Conservation Planning “Boot Camp”)**
  - iii. Part 3 – Field review of RMS plan (module 9)**
- 2. Environmental Compliance for Conservation Assistance (EC Level 1) – AgLearn online**
- 3. Cultural Resources Training Series– all modules**
  - i. Part 1 – AgLearn online (modules 1-6)**
  - ii. Part 2 – Classroom/field (modules 7-8)**
- 4. Introduction to the Field Office Tech Guide – AgLearn online**
- 5. Introduction to Water Quality – AgLearn online**
- 6. Basic RUSLE 2 Certification – Take home exercise**
- 7. Nutrient Management Track 1, Part 1 (AgLearn online) or VA DCR Nutrient Management Plan Writing School (three-day session) or current certification by VA DCR Nutrient Management Planning.**
- 8. Pest Management Track 2, Part 1 – AgLearn online**
- 9. Prescribed Burn Awareness Course (one day workshop) or certification by the Virginia Department of Forestry as a Prescribed Burn Manager.**  
(See Exhibit 2, Description of Training Requirements for Virginia Planner Certification, for details on the required AgLearn courses)

**F. Field Review**

Candidates must complete at least one field reviewed Resource Management System (RMS) plan for a conservation management unit (CMU) on either crop or pasture land based on the land use most commonly planned in the work area. The RMS level plan reviewed must have all the supporting RMS planning documentation in the NRCS-CPA-52 but does not have to be the chosen alternative by the client. The planner will be accompanied to the field by the ASTC-FO designee to meet with the decision maker. Designees can be an ARC, a State Specialist, or a certified planner who does not have direct supervisory responsibility of the planner being reviewed. This final step in the planning certification process will determine the planner’s ability to demonstrate competency in the planning process and plan development.

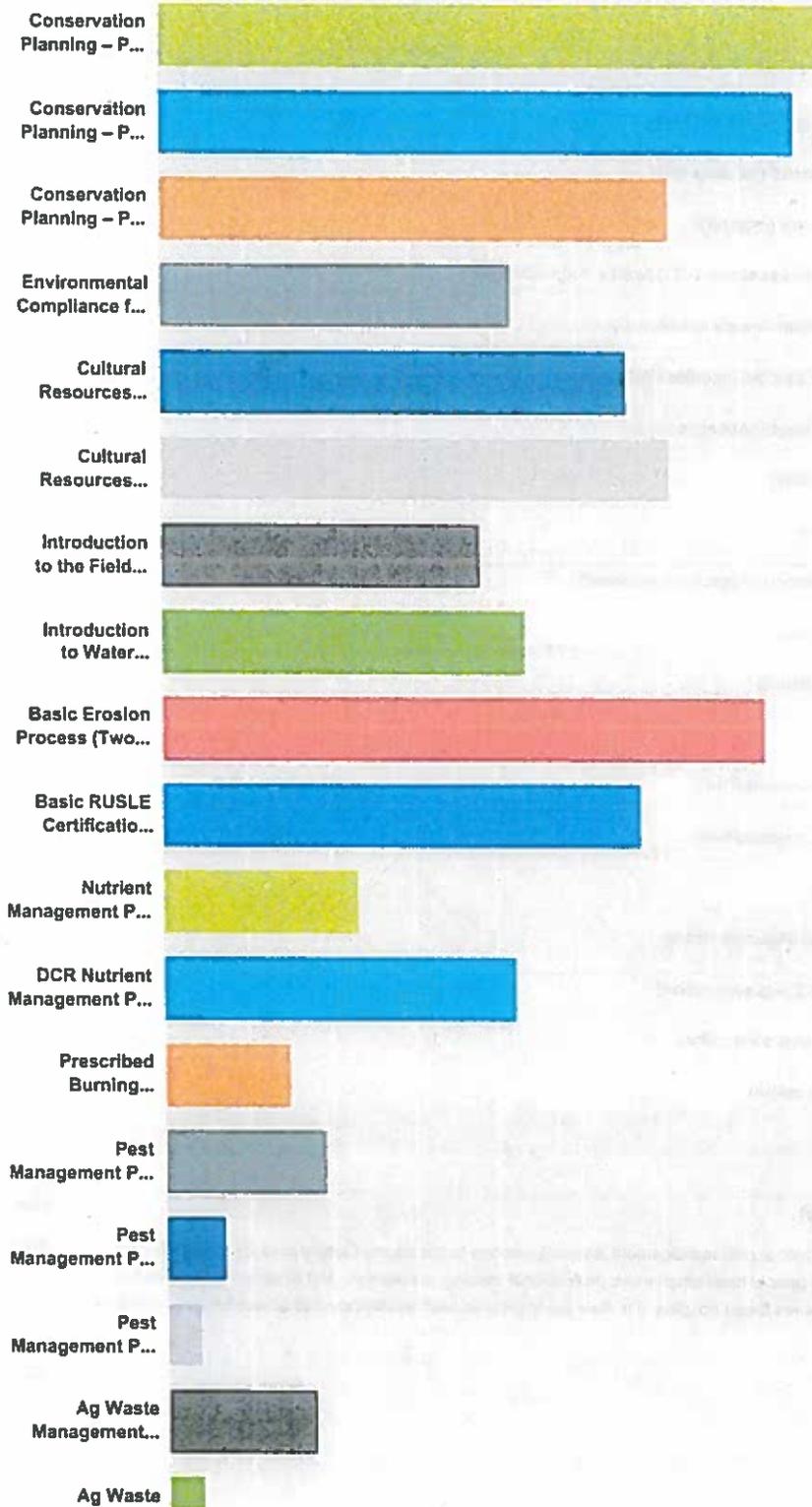
- 1. The ASTC-FO designee will evaluate the planner’s involvement with the decision-maker (landowner or land operator) in the planning process and whether all resource concerns associated with the land uses are adequately addressed in the conservation plan.**
- 2. During the review the candidate will be expected to demonstrate competency in the planning process and plan development and documentation in accordance the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH) and the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.**



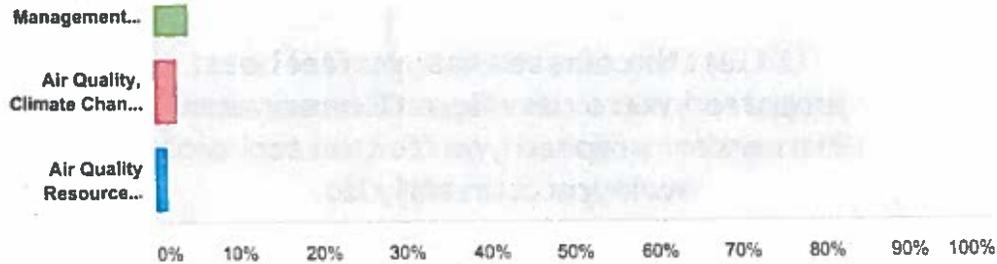
Conservation Planner Certification

**Q8 List the classes that you feel best prepared you to develop a Conservation Plan and/or prepared you for the technical work you currently do.**

Answered: 73 Skipped: 2



## Conservation Planner Certification



Answer Choices	Responses	
Conservation Planning – Part 1 AgLearn (online modules 1-5)	80.82%	59
Conservation Planning – Part 2 Field Exercise (modules 6-8)	76.71%	56
Conservation Planning – Part 3 Field Review (module 9)	61.64%	45
Environmental Compliance for Conservation Assistance (EC level 1 – AgLearn online)	42.47%	31
Cultural Resources Training – Part 1 (AgLearn online modules 1-6)	56.16%	41
Cultural Resources Training Part 2 (Field Exercise, modules 7-8)	61.64%	45
Introduction to the Field Office Technical Guide (AgLearn online)	38.36%	28
Introduction to Water Quality (AgLearn online)	43.84%	32
Basic Erosion Process (Two day workshop)	72.60%	53
Basic RUSLE Certification (Two day workshop or approved equivalent)	57.53%	42
Nutrient Management Part 1 (AgLearn online)	23.29%	17
DCR Nutrient Management Plan Writing School	42.47%	31
Prescribed Burning Awareness	15.07%	11
Pest Management Part 1 (AgLearn online modules 1-6)	19.18%	14
Pest Management Part 2 (Field Exercise, modules 6-8)	6.85%	5
Pest Management Part 3 (Field Review)	4.11%	3
Ag Waste Management Systems – Primer (AgLearn online)	17.81%	13
Ag Waste Management Systems – Level 2 (AgLearn online)	4.11%	3
Air Quality, Climate Change and Energy (AgLearn online)	2.74%	2
Air Quality Resource Concerns (AgLearn online)	1.37%	1
<b>Total Respondents: 73</b>		

#	Comments (please specify)	Date
1	I refer all landowners w/nutrient or pest management issues/questions to the county Cooperative Extension Service agent for assistance. These people have much more professional training, knowledge, and experience in these two specialized subject matter areas than I do, plus, it is their job to provide such assistance and advice on an as-needed basis.	7/27/2015 11:34 AM
2	And working on Toolkit.	7/27/2015 10:14 AM

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### Q10 What other training courses and/or skill development do you feel would be helpful in accomplishing conservation planning within your District?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 28

#	Responses	Date
1	Anything dealing with livestock health and nutrition.	7/27/2015 5:15 PM
2	Since we are still co-located with NRCS and use their system, Toolkit training would be helpful.	7/27/2015 1:12 PM
3	Toolkit Training	7/27/2015 10:14 AM
4	I feel that there is adequate training opportunities in the current format to chose from for our specific needs.	7/27/2015 10:11 AM
5	Training for practices involving field crops including water ways, critical areas, etc.	7/24/2015 9:54 AM
6	n/a	7/24/2015 9:02 AM
7	Periodic refresher courses in things like surveying, engineering, and computer skills related to the work we do in the field and in the office would be helpful.	7/23/2015 10:24 AM
8	ICE and ACE	7/23/2015 8:42 AM
9	Animal Health Training Introduction to Conservation Engineering	7/21/2015 3:23 PM
10	More courses specifically geared towards Soil Science.	7/21/2015 3:19 PM
11	More on erosion calcs In the field trainings are great - JEDs, association trainings always good.	7/21/2015 2:44 PM
12	I feel this is going to vary greatly based on the previous experience of the employee. Because I had worked with clients my whole career, and had a strong Natural Resources and Ag background, I primarily just needed to learn how to use the computer programs, design tools and understand the program policies. I wish I could do more conservation planning, but that is not why people call us. It's the cost share. The people that taught me the most were my own experienced co-workers, who are top notch.	7/21/2015 2:17 PM
13	Training on local agriculture and production practices used.	7/21/2015 1:56 PM
14	Practical application of BMPs Prescribed Grazing	7/16/2015 12:06 PM
15	Prescribed grazing	7/16/2015 11:57 AM
16	Getting familiar with a "conservation planing program" and sticking to it-the updates that Toolkit undergo are exhausting to keep up with. Also, I think a crop identification course would benefit an employee such as myself (Conservation Specialist) especially since DCR wants a "Plant date spot check" it will be very difficult for me to make sure a specific crop is planted in a specific place-around a specific date-and will certify that it will be cleared to be paid on assuming it reaches winter growth and serves its purpose laid out in the DCR specs. Distinguishing particularly between a rye and non rye (\$ difference) at such an early stage is extremely difficult-especially when you have to cover thousands upon thousands of acres.	7/16/2015 11:21 AM
17	Some sort of wetlands course that helps delineate boundries. Also would be useful to require pesticide certification as it is a common tool in land management	7/16/2015 7:30 AM
18	I believe that classroom and field exercises are the best way to learn. AgLearn online training is not related to real life job duties. Many of the test questions are worded in a way that makes them difficult to understand, and are not related to my job.	7/14/2015 4:07 PM
19	Basic courses from the start of employment that include basic water quality, basic erosion, basic farm practices. The Ag Learn classes online include a tremendous amount of information, that is too overwhelming to learn by reading online. The tests are very nit picky considering the amount of information they are covering. I try to be very a diligent and particular when learning new material but the way the Aglearn is laid out you are just trying to pass the test not really learning and comprehending the material.	7/14/2015 3:15 PM
20	Erosion and Sediment Control is a good training to understand the local and state standards from their point of view. Conservation Selling Skills and Effective Presentation and Instruction would be good for the newer employees.	7/10/2015 1:05 PM

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21	Training Course for Excel worksheets used for planning purposes. Ie: culvert sizing, mannings, c-graz worksheets... for everyone to be on the same page. Training: Spring developments/gravity systems/solar powered systems no power access; Process/design for WP4B; and Excel spreadsheet training (see above).	7/10/2015 10:02 AM
22	more hands on field training	7/10/2015 9:30 AM
23	Any training that will afford me a higher level of Engineering Job Approval Authority.	7/9/2015 8:29 PM
24	more engineering based trainings, soils classes, pasture weed id	7/9/2015 4:31 PM
25	More trainings on the environmental side of things, stream ecology, the bay estuarine ecology, wetland hydrology. We need to be able to explain why we do what we.	7/9/2015 2:54 PM
26	The DCR NMP crop production school is useful. The ICE training is for engineering but is useful for conservation planning as well. Classes specific to types of agriculture such as beef or dairy production would also be helpful, especially to employees with no agricultural background.	7/8/2015 11:41 AM
27	Basic introduction to different types of farming for new employees that have no agriculture back ground.	7/8/2015 8:39 AM
28	ARC GIS And GPS surveying	7/7/2015 4:06 PM
29	NA	7/7/2015 1:55 PM
30	I'm good	7/7/2015 11:23 AM
31	More GIS and ArcGIS type training would be helpful, for both in the office and in the field.	7/7/2015 11:06 AM
32	I think some basic crop science and basic soil science courses would be great. Most of the classes focused around the bureaucratic side of what we could or could not do instead of identifying potential issues or how to address them. More core agronomy training and how that relates to conservation would be great.	7/7/2015 7:17 AM
33	FIELD DAYS! Provide great information where producers are actively involved making staff more aware of what the actual problems are in the field.	7/6/2015 3:30 PM
34	I think there's currently enough training courses available to develop the skills to become a good conservation planner. The main issue that arises is how often that they are offered or the location that they are offered at.	7/6/2015 2:57 PM
35	I.C.E. training with NRCS. As far as actually designing conservation projects and making sure they are installed correctly this training is priceless. I use the knowledge from this training on a daily basis.	7/6/2015 8:59 AM
36	Honestly, I don't know. I've been writing conservation plans for over 8 years for a variety of farms. Included in every one of our conservation plans are specific best management practices recommended for that property. Though we are always improving our plans, I feel comfortable writing plans that are informative and comprehensive, as well as meeting the Chesapeake Bay Act Conservation Plan.	7/2/2015 4:09 PM
37	I think allowing for more specialization for whatever area of the state a planner operates in would be helpful. Provide perhaps a smaller baseline set of classes and certifications, but then require a minimum number of "electives" that would fit the production and land uses seen in various areas of the state. For example our area should have some required trainings for conservation related to horse, sheep, goat, and beef cattle operations, where as we have don't have any confinement poultry or swine production so nutrient management or manure storage facility trainings might not be as useful. Also perhaps include some trainings related to the suburban environment as an option...some basic stormwater BMP trainings or managing conservation concerns in suburban environments.	7/2/2015 2:49 PM
38	ICE - Engineering Course State IPM course	7/2/2015 11:16 AM
39	It would have been helpful to have a comprehensive training offered by DCR to thoroughly examine each VACS practice and how it should (and should not) be utilized. While we discuss changes to practices at the VACS training every year, it takes a while to understand each practice and much is left to the technician's interpretation.	7/2/2015 9:49 AM
40	Aquatic ecology Basic Beef operations Basic Dairy operations Basic small grain operations design options for watering systems/ grazing plan development	7/1/2015 4:23 PM
41	Introduction to Conservation Engineering Auto CAD Training	7/1/2015 4:06 PM
42	Experience over Time, 5 years plus	7/1/2015 3:25 PM
43	ICE- Intro to Conservation Engineering	7/1/2015 12:25 PM
44	At least basic agronomy, animal science. VCE has a lot of wonderful trainings. I just completed the Master Cattlemen program, which greatly enhanced my knowledge of the beef cattle industry. If you don't understand crops and livestock, I don't see how you can understand the dynamics behind a conservation plan.	7/1/2015 11:33 AM
45	NRCS/VFGC Grazing school - Planner must have working knowledge of forage management before planning for livestock operations	7/1/2015 11:09 AM

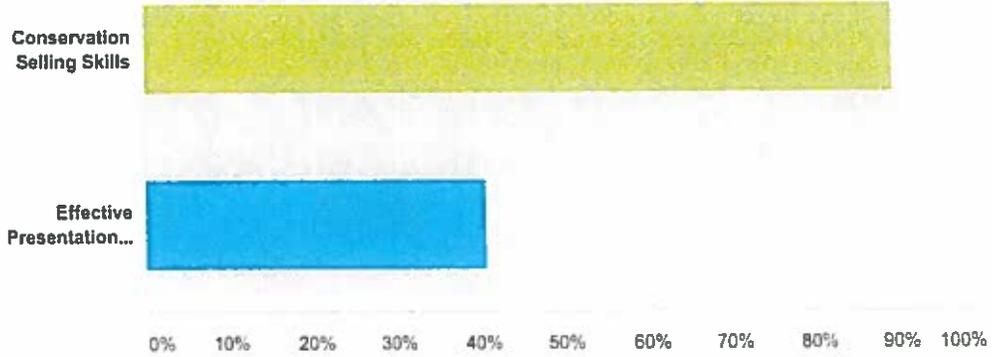
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46	Training on how to develop conservation plans and cpa-52's.	7/1/2015 10:51 AM
47	More training in the field rather than online	7/1/2015 10:20 AM

# Conservation Planner Certification

## Q11 Have you taken either of the DCR optional classes? (check if yes)

Answered: 37 Skipped: 38



Answer Choices	Responses	
Conservation Selling Skills	89.19%	33
Effective Presentation and Instruction	40.54%	15
<b>Total Respondents: 37</b>		