

NRCS Conservation Planning Process

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MUTUAL AGREEMENT
Between the
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
and the
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
and the
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

For Their Cooperation in the
Conservation of Natural Resources

THIS AGREEMENT is between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the Soil and Water Conservation District.

The authority of USDA to enter into this agreement is the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, 16.590; the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, Public law No. 103-354; and Secretary's Memorandum No. 1010-1, dated October 20, 1994. The Commonwealth of Virginia authority is defined in Virginia Code 10.1; the District authority is defined in Virginia Code 10.1, Sections 506-558.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The parties have the common objective of assisting people in their efforts to utilize and manage natural resources in accordance with their capabilities and needs for protection and improvement. Each party is independent, has its respective responsibilities, yet recognizes the need to coordinate as a federal, state and local partnership for the successful delivery of conservation programs related to our soil, water, air, plant, animal, and human resources. Therefore, the parties will cooperate to implement their respective long-range natural resources conservation programs considering available resources, statutory authorities, and regulations. The parties will develop appropriate agreements to further define this relationship.

IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT:

Broad based conservation programs delivered through the cooperation of the USDA, the Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Commonwealth of Virginia are vital to the protection of the natural resources, economic stability and well-being of our Nation.

The parties reaffirm the relationship between the USDA, the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Secretary will continue, within the terms of various statutes administered by USDA, to carry out broad conservation programs of assistance encompassing technical, research, educational, and financial assistance to land owners and users through the Soil and Water Conservation District and the Commonwealth of Virginia.



What is a conservation plan?

- ◎ It is voluntary, site specific, comprehensive, and action-oriented...
- ◎ It is based on natural resource information and is a record of decisions made by the client...
- ◎ Which describes a system of practices and activities needed to solve identified natural resource problems and take advantage of opportunities.



What a conservation plan is not...

- ◎ It is not just for inventories to document practices for reporting purposes.
- ◎ It is not to only meet program requirements to qualify for financial assistance or the installation of a single practice.



Conservation Planning Process

- ◎ The conservation planning process used by NRCS is based on the premise that clients will make and implement sound decisions if they understand their resources, their natural resource problems and opportunities, and the effects of their decisions.
- ◎ So the success of conservation planning and implementation depends on the voluntary participation of the client.



Conservation Plans

- ◎ The conservation plan is a written record of the clients management decisions and the conservation practices and systems the client plans to use and maintain on their farm.



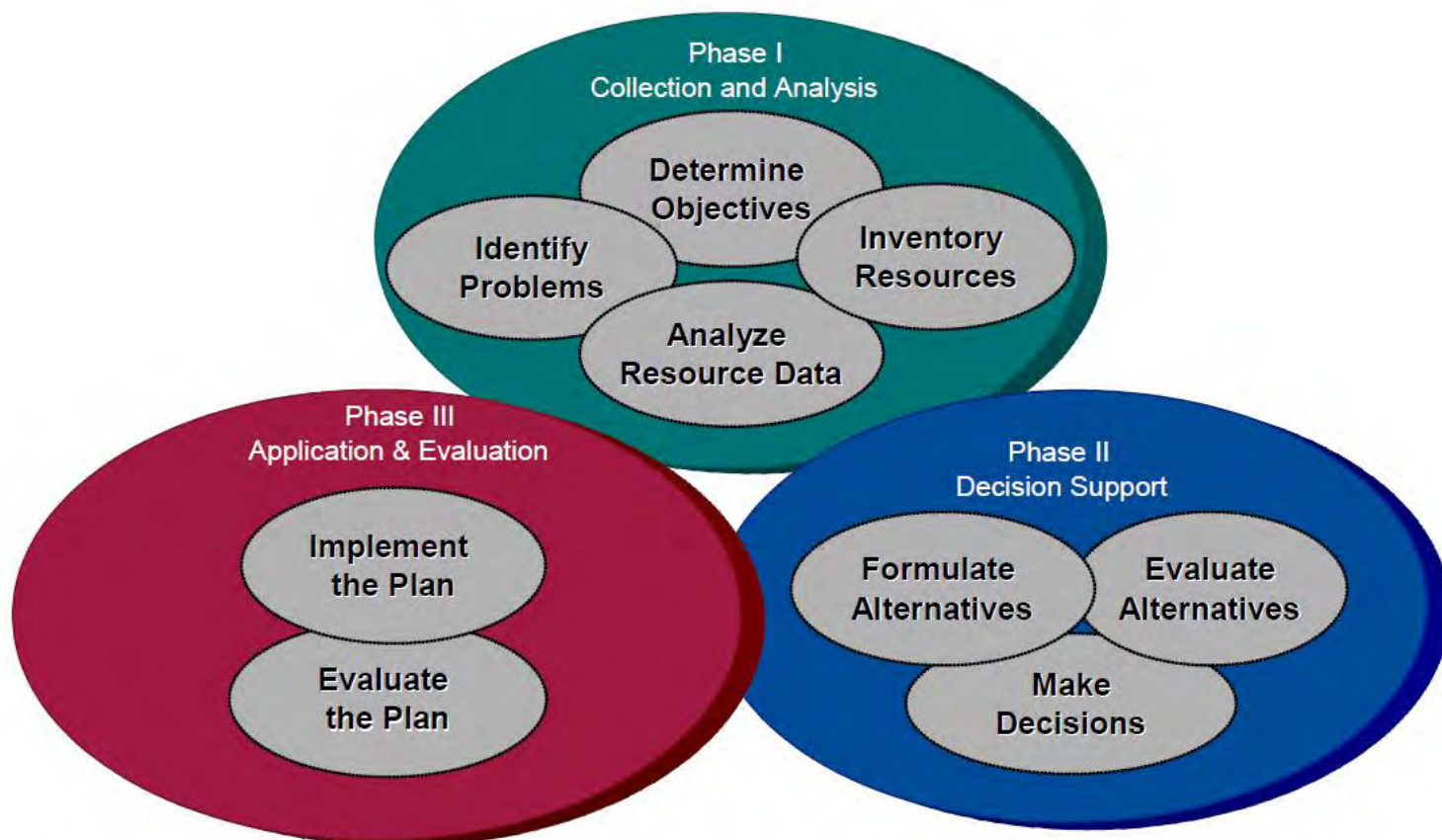
Conservation Planning is Complex and Dynamic

- ◎ A fundamental truth:
 - To do conservation planning right, real conservation planning, it is complicated, interactive, and a time-consuming process.
 - Automating our assessment tools, developing new planning software, streamlining program rules, having the eFOTG and digital ortho-imagery (and the list goes on)....will NOT change that fact.



So how do we get there?

NRCS Planning Process



NRCS Technical Criteria

- ◎ National Planning Procedures Handbook
- ◎ Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)
 - I. General Resource References
 - II. Natural Resource Information
 - III. Conservation Management Systems
 - IV. Practice Standards and Specifications
 - V. Conservation Effects



Planning Criteria

RESOURCE CONCERNS	LAND USE	SCREENING	ASSESSMENT TOOLS	PLANNING CRITERIA/ ASSESSMENT LEVEL	PRIMARY PRACTICES (Not an all inclusive list)
At a minimum, planners need to screen for and assess the required resource concern for the land use shaded in green and those flagged as a client objective					
When screening criteria are relied on to rule out the presence of a resource concern, it must be included in the benchmark condition on the CPA-52					
SOIL EROSION - Sheet, Rill & Wind Detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash, irrigation runoff or wind that degrades soil quality. Sheet, rill and wind erosion fact	Crop	Permanent ground cover > 90% and slope < 10%	Current approved water and/or wind erosion assessment tools (RUSLE2, WEPS, etc.).	Erosion rate ≤ T	Conservation Cover
	Associated Ag Land		Wind erosion concern limited to VA Coastal Plain counties.	Erosion rate ≤ T	Conservation Crop Rotation Contour Buffer Strips Contour Farming Cover Crop Critical Area Planting Field Borders Forage & Biomass Planting Mulching Residue & Tillage Management, No-Till Residue & Tillage Management, Reduced-Till Stripcropping Terrace Tree/Shrub Establishment Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
	Pasture	Permanent ground cover > 90% and slope < 10%	Current approved water and/or wind erosion assessment tools (RUSLE2, WEPS, etc.).	Erosion rate ≤ T	Forage & Biomass Planting Prescribed Grazing
			Wind erosion concern limited to VA Coastal Plain counties.	Erosion rate ≤ T	Tree/Shrub Establishment Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
	Farmsteads	Permanent ground cover > 90% and slope < 10%	Current approved water and/or wind erosion assessment tools (RUSLE2, WEPS, etc.).	Erosion rate ≤ T	Critical Area Planting Mulching
		Wind erosion concern limited to VA Coastal Plain counties.	Erosion rate ≤ T	Tree/Shrub Establishment Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	
Forest	Soil surface organic residue cover > 80%	Visual Inspection		Site is stable without visible signs of erosion	Tree/Shrub Establishment



Conservation Practice Standards and Specifications



COVER CROP

(Ac.)

CODE 340

DEFINITION

Crops including grasses, legumes, and forbs for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes.

PURPOSE

- Reduce erosion from wind and water.
- Increase soil organic matter content.
- Capture and recycle or redistribute nutrients in the soil profile.
- Promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use.
- Increase biodiversity.
- Suppress weeds.
- Manage soil moisture.
- Minimize and reduce soil compaction.

Ensure that plants designated as noxious weeds in Virginia shall not be used as cover crops.

Ensure that cover crop residue is not burned.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Erosion from Wind and Water

Select and manage cover crops to ensure adequate protection of the soil during critical erosion periods.

Current erosion prediction technology shall be used to determine the amount of cover crop biomass and/or residue needed to achieve site-specific erosion reduction objectives.

Additional Criteria to Increase Soil Organic Matter Content

Select and manage cover crops to produce and return to the soil large quantities of above- and below-ground organic material.

To maximize *total* soil organic matter (total soil C), select and manage cover crops to produce

Environmental Evaluation



U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service		NRCSP-68A 4021A		A. Client Name:		
ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION WORKSHEET				B. Conservation Plan ID # (as applicable):		
D. Client's Objective(s) (purpose):				C. Identification # (farm, tract, field #, etc. as required):		
E. Need for Action:	H. Alternatives					
	No Action	<input type="checkbox"/> # FRMS	Alternative 1	<input type="checkbox"/> # FRMS	Alternative 2	<input type="checkbox"/> # FRMS
Resource Concerns						
In Section "F" below, analyze, record, and address concerns identified through the Resources Inventory process. (See FOTG Section III - Resource Planning Criteria for guidance).						
F. Resource Concerns and Existing/Benchmark Conditions Analyze and record the existing/benchmark conditions for each identified concern	I. Effects of Alternatives					
	No Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2			
Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	<input type="checkbox"/> # does NOT meet PC	Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	<input type="checkbox"/> # does NOT meet PC	Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	<input type="checkbox"/> # does NOT meet PC	
SOIL: EROSION						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
SOIL: SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
WATER: EXCESS/INSUFFICIENT WATER						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
WATER: WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	

Conservation Plan



ANYWHERE SERVICE CENTER
100 USDA DR.
ANYWHERE, VA 10000-0000
(278) 555-5555

OSCAR HICKS
DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST

Conservation Plan

JOHN DOE
1000 NOWHERE DRIVE
ANYWHERE, VA 10000

Objective: To improve water quality and quantities and the quality of feed and forages on this tract. Fence cattle from stream improving herd health and cross fencing for better distribution. Mr. Doe has an 80 milking head dairy with 60 heifers and dry cows spread over several tracts.

This tract is a component of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) that has been developed for your Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) (Tracts: 3671, 7101, 6131 and 8964). The plan will be considered to be implemented when all tracts receiving nutrients meet the CNMP required elements within the conservation plan. These elements include: the proper handling of manure/wastewater and their respective storage structures or treatment facility for the AFO, a phosphorus based nutrient management plan for all land where manure will be applied, a land treatment plan designed to address soil erosion and water quality concerns on the land where manure, agricultural wastes or organic by-products are applied and the maintenance of written records by the producer which documents the implementation of the plan.

Tract 7101

Cropland

Conservation Crop Rotation (328)

Grow crops in a planned rotation for biodiversity and to provide adequate amounts of organic material for erosion reduction, nutrient balance and sustained soil organic matter. This rotation consists of corn for silage followed by a small grain cover crop being grown for a maximum of 3 years and grass being grown for 3 or more years. This rotation will be respliced in the following years. The date on the chart shown below is the date that the rotation is to begin.

Tract	Field	Planned Amount	Month	Year	Applied Amount	Date
7101	3	14.6 ac	6	2012		
7101	8	8.6 ac	8	2012		
Total		23.2 ac				

Cover Crop (340)

Close-growing grasses, legumes, or small grain will be grown for seasonal protection, soil improvement and nutrient management. Small grain will be planted following corn.

Tract	Field	Planned Amount	Month	Year	Applied Amount	Date
7101	3	14.6 ac	10	2012		
7101	8	8.6 ac	10	2012		
Total		23.2 ac				

A Conservation Plan Includes:

- ⦿ Producer/landowner determined objectives and goals;
- ⦿ An aerial photo and diagram of your farm;
- ⦿ A soil map and soil descriptions of your property;
- ⦿ Resource inventory data, forage crop potentials, livestock carry capacity, etc.;
- ⦿ A list of treatment decisions;
- ⦿ A location and schedule for applying conservation practices you want to install on your land; and
- ⦿ A plan of operation and maintenance of your conservation system.



Benefits of a Conservation Plan

- ⦿ Save money as your land becomes more productive;
- ⦿ Increase sustainability by protecting natural resources that support your business;
- ⦿ Increase the value of your property;
- ⦿ Conserve soil and water resources;
- ⦿ Prevent off-site impacts and comply with environmental regulations;
- ⦿ Create habitat for wildlife;
- ⦿ Reduce time and labor;
- ⦿ Promote health and safety for your family;
- ⦿ Make your land more attractive and promote good stewardship; and
- ⦿ Help you become eligible for USDA program including crop insurance.





NRCS Protection

- Technical References
- Practice Standards
- Design Guides
- Job Sheets
- Standard Drawings
- O&M Agreements
- Planner Certification
- Resource Evaluation Tools
- USFWS T&E Agreement
- VDHR CR Agreement
- Engineering
- JAA
- Soil Scientists
- Soil Information
- Wetland Specialists
- GIS Specialist
- Agronomy
- Biology
- Forestry
- Economics





March 9, 2016

TO: All Conservation Partnership Employees

FROM: USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Conservation District Employees Association
National Association of State Conservation Agencies
National Association of Resource and Development Councils

SUBJECT: National Conservation Planning Partnership

In 2015, the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP) was created by the five national conservation partners as a result of the renewed recognition of the critical role that conservation planning plays in advancing voluntary conservation efforts on private lands.

The NCPP Leadership Team is comprised of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA), the National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA), and the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils (NARC&DC).

The NCPP Team has four overarching objectives:

- Reinvigorate conservation planning
- Improve the National Conservation Partnership's capacity to deliver conservation planning assistance
- Ensure the delivery of technically sound science-based assistance
- Build a workforce of strong conservation planners

Historical Perspectives

- ◎ “We cannot depend on windshield surveys and office planning to carry out a job of the complexity and magnitude of safeguarding our farmland and controlling floods.”

Hugh Hammond Bennett

- ◎ “There is no virtue in planning merely for the sake of planning. Unless plans can be translated into action, planning becomes only a profitless mental exercise.”

Hugh Hammond Bennett



Where is NRCS headed - Planning for the Future



United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service



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mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
fax: (202) 690-7442; or
email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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