
Preface

The National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP) establishes Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) national standards for conservation practices commonly used to improve natural resources with respect to soil, water, air, plants, and animals plus humans (SWAPA+H). Each NRCS State office localizes the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) to its geographic area and establishes quality requirements for applying conservation practices within its area of responsibility. These revised local standards are to be equal to or more rigorous than the national standard. Conservation practice standards are in section IV of the FOTG.

NRCS is the lead USDA agency for providing conservation technical assistance and planning on privately owned lands. Various Federal, State, and local laws passed during the last several years have increased cooperation between NRCS and its partners that are concerned with conservation and protection of natural resources. Other government and private organizations use NRCS FOTG material to assist or supplement their conservation efforts. In addition, Internet access brings NRCS practice standards to a larger audience.

Conservation practice standards in the NHCP evolved in accordance with advancement in farming and ranching techniques used throughout the world and with changes in technology as documented by research, conservation field trials, and accumulated experience. Practice standards need to be reviewed and maintained continuously to stay current with rapid changes in technology and to ensure that they address multiple resources. Reviews ensure that standards:

- Provide timely incorporation of new technologies,
- Address multiple resource concerns,
- Are consistent in format and content,
- Enhance interagency cooperation with regard to development of standards, and
- Account for the varied conservation activities expected of NRCS in the future.

The guidelines outlined in this handbook for developing practice standards will result in both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary contributions during the standards development process.

As outlined in the 450 GM Part 401.01, all employees are responsible for assuring that conservation practice standards include up-to-date information and technology. National policy and the practice standards are developed for the protection of the landowner, conservation contractors, Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) employees, and NRCS employees. When a practice is installed according to criteria specified in the practice standard and the plans and specifications:

- The landowner receives a conservation product that solves the apparent resource problem,
- The contractor understands his/her responsibility in providing a quality job on the ground and is not required to warranty a product beyond the requirements of the standard, and
- The NRCS is protected by being assured that its employees are working within the scope of their employment.

This National Handbook of Conservation Practices houses the current national conservation practice standards. The NHCP also provides guidance and direction on maintaining conservation practice standards, offers several ways for obtaining the standards, and encourages involvement in the process of developing new or revising current standards. NHCP exhibits 1 through 8 in this handbook provide additional information and guidance to the policies and procedures outlined in 450 GM Part 401 Subpart B.

Although this handbook is prepared primarily for use by NRCS personnel, it is available for anyone having an interest in, or a responsibility for, natural resource conservation activities.

NHCP Exhibit 1 Documentation Files

A file will be maintained on each national conservation practice standard by the discipline leader listed in the contents of the National Handbook of Conservation Practices. The file will contain each of the following sections, if appropriate:

Brief history of the development of the conservation practice standard—A history of the standard provides answers to questions raised by the public and NRCS partners concerning the rationale and/or technology used in the National Conservation Practice Standards.

Rationale behind each requirement in the criteria section of the standard—A short narrative statement that justifies the selection of a particular value or decisive factor is included for each criterion. It gives additional information helpful to users of the practice standard by providing a log of past decisions or changes to the criteria as well as any clarifications concerning the technology.

Documentation needed for the items listed in the consideration section of the standard—This document provides rationale for including each consideration and justifies the item as a consideration, rather than as criteria.

Summary of the changes, if any, from each previous revision of the standard—All meaningful comments received during the review process are listed, and the disposition of the comments is documented (why the comments were or were not incorporated into the conservation practice standard).

Technical sources and appropriate literature used in addition to those cited in the standard—Sources listed will document or clarify the rationale or criteria used in the standard.

The documentation file is created and maintained under the responsibility of the national discipline leader for each of the conservation practice standards. The file will be maintained at National Headquarters or the location of the national discipline leader.

The intent of the file is to describe what is in the standard, how the technology came into the standard, and rationale for each criterion and consideration. It will provide a history of the standard's development.

States are encouraged to maintain documentation files on standards where the State criteria are more stringent than the national criteria.

NHCP Exhibit 2 Interim Conservation Practice Standards

Process for developing, reviewing, and approving

Interim standards are prepared by the States to address natural resource concerns for which there is no existing standard, or to use new technology where existing standards cannot be revised to include this new technology. An interim standard can also be used to field test new technologies.

It is intended that an interim standard will lead to national standards or that the tested technology will be incorporated into an existing conservation practice standard. Interim Conservation Practice Standards are issued for a period not to exceed 3 years. This policy allows adequate time to review and evaluate a new technology or procedure. Extensions to this time limit should only be made when data are insufficient to make a final technical evaluation. The need for the extension is documented within the evaluation report.

The following method is to be used to develop interim standards (see 450 GM 401.17):

Step 1—The State discipline specialist is responsible for developing interim standards based on requests from the State university, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), a landowner, an industry representative, employees at the field office, or other such sources. The format used for National Conservation Practice Standards shall be used for State interim standards.

Step 2—The State discipline specialist submits a copy of the proposed interim conservation practice standard to the Chair of the National Conservation Practice Standards Subcommittee (NCPSS) and requests a practice code number. National level review consists of referring this interim standard to the appropriate national discipline leader who will assure that the request cannot be addressed through an existing practice standard. If possible, any new technology should be inserted into an existing national standard through the variance process. If the request cannot be addressed through an existing practice standard, a national practice code number is assigned to the interim standard.

Step 3—Once the practice code number is received, the State Conservationist will approve the interim standard with concurrence from the State Technical Guide Committee.

Step 4—The State discipline specialist conducts an annual evaluation of the interim practice standard. If the interim standard is in use for the 3-year period, an evaluation report is completed with specific disposition recommendations. The report is provided to the National Technical Guide Committee through the Chair of the NCPSS. If the interim standard is recommended as a national conservation practice standard, the State interim standard may be used until the national standard is issued. If there is no evaluation report or the interim technology is found unacceptable or unneeded as a national standard, the interim standard is removed from the FOTG.

All interim standards are posted to the web site to allow States to view what new technology is being used throughout the country. The annual review reports are included with each State interim standard to provide information to others on the progress of evaluating this new technology.

The interim standards web site is arranged into folders that house each interim practice code. The State interim standards using that practice code are posted in the folder. The annual review report for each State standard is also posted in that folder.

NHCP Exhibit 3 Practice Standard

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

NAME, (UNITS)

Established nationally and not to be altered or supplemented by States.

Code (code #)

Established nationally and not to be altered or supplemented by States.

DEFINITION:

Established nationally and not to be altered or supplemented by States.

PURPOSE (S):

The primary conservation reasons for which the practice is applied are listed here. Secondary purposes or incidental benefits are not appropriate in this section.

Each purpose must be supported by appropriate criteria in the **CRITERIA** section. Purposes can be added or deleted by use of approved variances.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES:

The land uses and/or site conditions that affect suitability or function of the practice are described.

CRITERIA:

Criteria must be presented for each **PURPOSE** indicated above. As a minimum, a **General Criteria** statement that is applicable to all purposes is used. Additional criteria for some or all of the purposes may be needed if there are design elements that apply only to that purpose. This section shall include important design elements about which decisions must be made, including any necessary minimum and maximum limits.

Design tools and procedures are not to be included, but can be referenced. Copies of such references are to be maintained at a designated filing location. These references are generally listed in the **REFERENCES** section.

Long lists, such as seeding information, should be referenced. Other conservation practice standards

may be referenced in the criteria section if they have design procedures or technologies that are applicable.

CONSIDERATIONS: [optional]

Additional details that could enhance application for both primary and secondary conservation benefits should be brought to the planner's attention, which will enhance the overall system. An example would be delaying operations until after the spring hatch for wildlife benefits.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS:

This section states that plans and specifications are to be prepared for specific field sites, based on the standard. Plans and specifications include construction plans, drawings, job sheets, or other similar documents. These documents are to specify the requirements for installing the practice, such as the kind, amount, or quality of materials to be used, or timing or sequence of installation activities.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE:

Include required management actions and corrective actions that contribute to the longevity and functioning of the practice. Operation encompasses normal management actions, such as mowing for weed control, periodic opening and closing of water supply gates, and other similar actions. Maintenance involves corrective actions, such as needed repairs due to normal wear and tear, replacement of components of the practice at periodic intervals during the life of the practice, and other similar activities.

REFERENCES:

This section should list the technical references. This reference list shall be as short as possible.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**NRCS, State Abbr.
Month Year**

NHCP Exhibit 4 Practice Specification

CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATION NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE DIVERSION

1. Scope

The work shall consist of constructing a channel across the slope with a supporting ridge on the lower side as shown on the drawings or as staked in the field. The work shall also include establishment of adapted vegetation for the safe disposal of runoff.

2. Foundation preparation

The foundation for the earthfill shall be stripped to remove vegetation and other unsuitable materials. All brush, trees, stumps, and fencerow material shall be removed and disposed of properly.

3. Disposal

All earth removed and not needed in construction shall be spread or disposed of in such a way that it will not interfere with the functioning of the diversion. Care must be taken in spreading waste material so that neither ridges nor holes are formed along the sides of the diversion. All portions of the diversion shall be finished and smoothed in a professional manner such that applied vegetative cover can be properly maintained.

4. Fill

Fill material shall be free of roots, large stones, and other objectionable material. The moisture content of fill material shall be such that bonding and compaction are attained to prevent uneven settlement that would cause damage to the completed diversion.

Fill material shall be placed in uncompacted layers of 9 inches or less. Each layer shall be compacted by at least one passage of the construction equipment's wheel or track tread.

When specified, the topsoil shall be removed, stockpiled, and replaced on the diversion after construction.

The top of the constructed diversion ridge shall be not lower at any point than the design elevation plus 10 percent overfill for settlement.

5. Pollution control

Construction operations shall be carried out so that erosion and sediment control is addressed and air and water pollution is minimized. This may include such items as silt fence, hay bale barrier, temporary vegetation, and mulching.

6. Vegetation

Vegetation shall be established as specified in the vegetative plan.

NHCP Exhibit 5 Federal Register Letter

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Notice of Proposed Change to Section 4 of the [name of State] State Technical Guide

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Department of Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice of availability of proposed changes in the [name of State] NRCS State Technical Guide for review and comment.

SUMMARY: It has been determined by the NRCS State Conservationist for [name of State] that changes must be made in the NRCS State Technical Guide specifically in practice standard [number and name of practice standard, such as, #329B, Residue Management, mulch till] to account for improved technology. This practice can be used in systems that [insert purpose of systems, such as, "treat highly erodible land"]. [Insert other information if needed.]

DATES: Comments will be received for a 30-day period commencing with this date of publication.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: [insert name], State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, [insert mailing address of office]; [insert telephone number]; [insert fax number].

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 343 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 states that revisions made after enactment of the law to NRCS State technical guides used to carry out highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the law shall be made available for public review and comment. For the next 30 days the NRCS will receive comments relative to the proposed changes. Following that period a determination will be made by the NRCS regarding disposition of those comments and a final determination of change will be made to the subject standard(s).

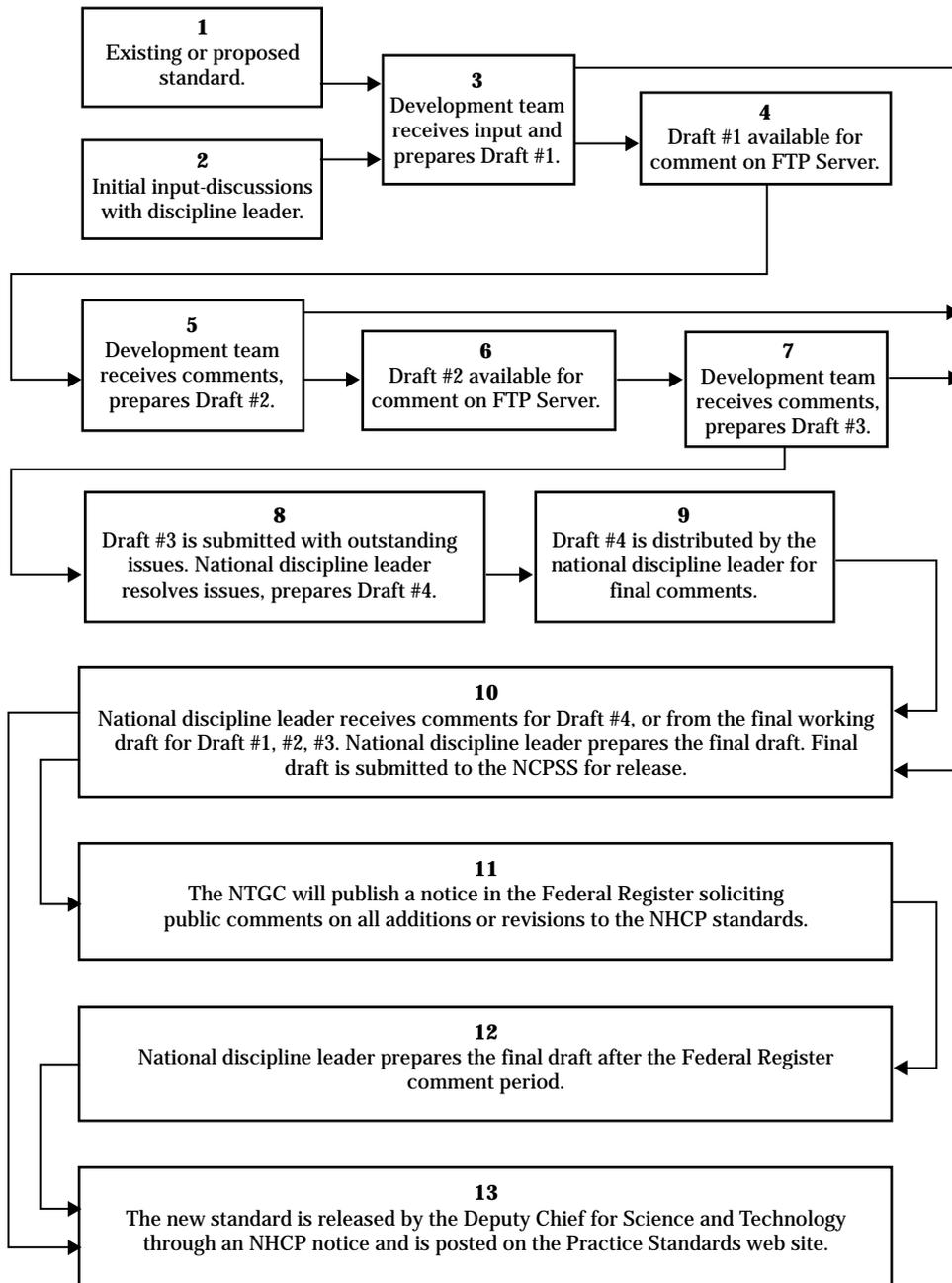
Dated:

[Insert name]
State Conservationist

NHCP Exhibit 6 Developing and Revising NRCS National Conservation Practice Standards

- Steps 1 & 2** Development is initiated by listing the standard on the FTP server. Initial input is invited from within NRCS from the States, Institutes, Centers, and Cooperating Scientists. The discipline leader and the Interdisciplinary Development Team confer and solicit input from others.
- Step 3** The Interdisciplinary Development Team receives input information and prepares draft 1. If draft 1 is a minor revision to an existing standard, it may be submitted to the national discipline leader for release. Otherwise, draft 1 is posted to the FTP server for review and comment.
- Step 4** Draft 1 is posted to the FTP server on the 15th day of the month that it is available for review. It remains on the server until the end of the following month. All NRCS employees can access the posted standard and post their comments directly to the FTP server; however, States are encouraged to consolidate their comments through the appropriate State discipline leader. All of the comments are available for review.
- Step 5** The Interdisciplinary Development Team downloads the comments from the FTP server and prepares draft 2. If the Interdisciplinary Development Team and the national discipline leader consider draft 2 an acceptable standard, the standard is forwarded to the national discipline leader for release. If significant revisions were made to draft 1 and it is believed that another review and comment period is needed, draft 2 is posted to the FTP.
- Step 6** Draft 2 is posted to the FTP server on the 15th day of the month that it is available for review. It remains on the server, available for comment, until the end of the following month.
- Step 7** The Interdisciplinary Development Team downloads the comments from the FTP server and prepares draft 3. Draft 3 is the last draft prepared by the Interdisciplinary Development Team. If draft 3 is considered a final product, it is submitted to the national discipline leader for final development. If outstanding comments and issues are not resolved, draft 3 is submitted to the national discipline leader as a working draft with a description of the outstanding issues.
- Step 8** For practice standards submitted to National Headquarters (NHQ) with unresolved issues, the national discipline leader resolves the outstanding issues with other discipline leaders and prepares draft 4.
- Step 9** Draft 4 is distributed among the other discipline leaders at NHQ for final comment.
- Step 10** The national discipline leader receives the final working draft for draft 1, 2, or 3, or completes draft 4. The final draft is submitted to the National Conservation Practice Standard Subcommittee (NCPSS) for release.
- Step 11** The final draft goes through the Federal Register notification process to solicit comment from our partners and customers.
- Step 12** If there are comments that warrant change to the standard, the national discipline leader prepares the final National Conservation Practice Standard. The standard is submitted to the Deputy Chief for Science and Technology for release.
- Step 13** The completed standard is released and sent to all States by issuing an NHCP Notice. The notice and practice standard are posted on the Internet.

Process for Developing and Revising NRCS National Conservation Practice Standards



NHCP Exhibit 7 Development Team Procedure

Step 1 Selection and responsibilities of conservation practice standard team leader

A conservation practice standard team leader is recruited by the National Conservation Practice Standards Subcommittee (NCPSS) member for the region that volunteered to develop, review or revise an individual standard. A team leader may also be a volunteer from an Institute, Center or from National Headquarters that is developing a new standard or revising an existing one. Team leaders for each practice should form a working group. The working group should be interdisciplinary and from a broad geographic area to ensure that the standard is compatible across disciplines and truly national in scope. Team leaders should contact the national discipline leader for that standard and their NCPSS regional representative for guidance. Discipline leaders for each practice are given in the index to the National Handbook of Conservation Practices. Normally, the current national standard is the starting point to revise the standard. Team leaders should provide team members with a copy of the current national standard. Then the team should develop a timeline for the development of the draft standard (steps 4, 5 and 6 give an indication of how long the review process might take).

Step 2 Formatting National conservation practice standards

The purpose of updating conservation practice standards is to incorporate new technology that has become i0va i

Step 5 Review first draft comments

At the end of the review period, the team leader can download the comments from the FTP server, distribute them to the team and begin work on the next draft, if needed. If problems are encountered during uploading or downloading files to the server, contact the [PSRC](#). Reviewers need to include their name, telephone number and email address along with their comments. This allows the development team to contact them directly, if needed, to clarify any comments.

Step 6 Repeat process if needed

The process repeats itself until the development team feels they have a final product. The National Practice Standards Subcommittee feels that three draft and review cycles should provide sufficient opportunity for everyone to have input. In some situations, one or two reviews produce a final product, and in others, more than three cycles may be required. Indications that this process is nearly complete is when very few comments are received on a draft or when only minor or editorial changes are suggested in the comments received.

Step 7 Final draft

At this point, the final draft is sent to the PSRC. The coordinator forwards it to the national discipline leader and the chair of the National Practice Standards Subcommittee. They do a final review and post the appropriate notice in the Federal Register.

Contact information for the PSRC:

Practice Standards Review Coordinator
USDA-NRCS
P.O. Box 6567
Fort Worth, TX 76115
Telephone: 817-509-3363
Fax: 817-509-3469
Voicemail: 9043-3363
<mailto:psrc@ftw.nrcs.usda.gov>

NHCP Exhibit 8 Glossary

The following words, terms, or phrases are used within the National Handbook of Conservation Practices. They best represent the technical information presented in the standards. All significant words, terms, or phrases that may have a meaning more specialized or more restrictive than the common dictionary meaning are defined here for clarification for the user of the standards and to best represent their intended use within the NRCS standards.

Absorption	The physical integration of a liquid into the pore spaces of a solid, such as water being absorbed into a sponge.
Aeration	A process causing intimate contact between air and a liquid by one or more of the following methods: (a) spraying the liquid in the air, (b) bubbling air through the liquid, and (c) agitating the liquid to promote absorption of oxygen through the air liquid interface.
Aeration, soil	The exchange of air in soil with air from the atmosphere. The air in a well-aerated soil is similar to that in the atmosphere; the air in a poorly aerated soil is considerably higher in carbon dioxide and lower in oxygen.
Aerobic	Having or occurring in the presence of free oxygen.
Agricultural waste management system	A combination of conservation practices to collect, transport, store or treat, and apply animal waste, and the management that, when applied, will protect the resource base.
Agricultural wastes	Wastes normally associated with the production and processing of food and fiber on farms, feedlots, ranches, ranges, and forests, which may include animal manure, crop residue, and dead animals; also, agricultural chemicals, fertilizers, and pesticides that may find their way into surface and subsurface water.
Alluvium	Sediment deposited by streams and rivers.
Ammonia volatilization	The loss of ammonium to the atmosphere.
Ammonium	An ion (NH_4^+) derived from ammonia (NH_3).
Anaerobic	The absence of molecular oxygen, or growing in the absence of oxygen.
Anaerobic digester	A heated, airtight apparatus that facilitates anaerobic digestion.
Anaerobic digestion	Conversion of organic matter in the absence of oxygen under controlled conditions to such gases as methane and carbon dioxide.
Anaerobic lagoon	A structure to treat animal waste by predominantly anaerobic biological action using anaerobic or facultative organisms, in the absence of air, for the purpose of reducing the organic matter in wastes.
Artesian well	A well deriving its water from a confined aquifer in which the water level stands above the ground surface; synonymous with flowing well.

Available forage	That portion of the forage production that is accessible for use by a specified kind or class of grazing animal. It is the consumable forage stated in digestible dry matter per land unit area that can be removed by grazing livestock without damage to the forage plants.										
Available nitrogen	Form of nitrogen that is immediately available for plant growth (NO_3^-) or (NH_4^+).										
Available nutrient	A nutrient molecule that can be absorbed and assimilated by growing plants.										
Available phosphorus	Forms of phosphorus that can be immediately used for plant growth.										
Available water capacity (available moisture capacity)	<p>The capacity of soil to hold water available for use by most plants. It is commonly defined as the difference between the amount of soil water at field capacity and the amount at wilting point. It is commonly expressed as inches of water per inch of soil. The capacity, in inches, in a 60-inch profile or to a limiting layer is expressed as inches.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Very low</td> <td>0 to 3 inches</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>3 to 6 inches</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate</td> <td>6 to 9 inches</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>9 to 12 inches</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very high</td> <td>> 12 inches</td> </tr> </table>	Very low	0 to 3 inches	Low	3 to 6 inches	Moderate	6 to 9 inches	High	9 to 12 inches	Very high	> 12 inches
Very low	0 to 3 inches										
Low	3 to 6 inches										
Moderate	6 to 9 inches										
High	9 to 12 inches										
Very high	> 12 inches										
Baseflow	Water that, having infiltrated the soil surface, percolates to the ground water table and moves laterally to reappear as surface runoff.										
Bedrock	The solid rock that underlies the soil and other unconsolidated material or that is exposed at the surface.										
Bench mark	A surveyor's mark made on a permanent landmark that has known position and altitude.										
Benchmark	(1) A permanent reference point. (2) In range inventory, it is used as a point where changes in vegetation through time are measured. (3) In soils, it is used to designate a major soil series that is representative of similar soils. (4) In economics, data that are used as a base for comparative purposes with similar data.										
Best Management Practice(s) (BMP)	A practice or combination of practices found to be the most effective, practicable (including economic and institutional considerations) means of preventing or reducing the amount of pollution generated by nonpoint sources to a level compatible with water quality goals.										
Biological wastewater treatment	Forms of wastewater treatment in which bacterial or biochemical action is intensified to stabilize or oxidize the unstable organic matter present. Oxidation ditches, aerated lagoons, anaerobic lagoons and anaerobic digesters are examples.										
Biomass	The total amount of living material, plants and animals, above and below ground in a particular area.										

Boulders	Rock fragments larger than 2 feet (60 cm) in diameter.
Broadcast seeding	Process of scattering seed on the surface of the soil prior to natural or artificial means of covering the seed with soil.
Cabling	The use of a large cable pulled between two large tractors (usually crawler tractors) to pull down or uproot brush.
Carbonate	Sediment formed by the organic or inorganic precipitation from aqueous solution of carbonates of calcium, magnesium, or iron.
Certified seed	Seed produced from foundation or registered seed that is available for consumer use. It carries a tag signifying it is high quality seed.
Chiseling	Breaking or loosening the soil, without inversion, with a chisel cultivator or chisel plow. A practice used for cropland, grassland, or pasture renovation.
Clay (engineering)	Fine-grained soil or the fine-grained portion of soil that exhibits plasticity (putty-like properties) within a range of water contents and that exhibits considerable strength when air-dry.
Clay (size)	The mineral soil particles less than 0.002 millimeter in diameter.
Clay (texture class)	As a soil textural class, soil material that is 40 percent or more clay, less than 45 percent sand, and less than 40 percent silt.
Coarse-grained soil (textured class)	In the USDA Soil Classification System, these are considered coarse-textured soils consisting of the sands and loamy sands texture classes.
Coarse-grained soil (engineering)	The minus 3-inch (75-mm) fraction of soil having a gradation such that more than 50 percent by dry weight is retained on the No. 200 (75-mm) sieve.
Coliform bacteria	A group of bacteria predominantly inhabiting the intestines of man or animal, but also found in soil. It includes all aerobic and facultative anaerobic, gram-negative, non-spore-forming bacilli that ferment lactose with production of gas. This group of "total" coliforms includes <i>Escherichia coli</i> which is considered the typical coliform of fecal origin.
Community (plant)	An assemblage of plants occurring together at any point in time, while denoting no particular ecological status. A unit of vegetation.
Composting	A process of aerobic biological decomposition characterized by elevated temperatures that, when complete, results in a material that is relatively inert, safe, and makes an excellent soil conditioner.
Cone of depression	A depression in the ground water table or potentiometric surface that has the shape of an inverted cone and develops around a well from which water is being withdrawn. It defines the area of influence of a well.

Confined aquifer	A formation in which the ground water is isolated from the atmosphere at the point of discharge by impermeable geologic formations. Confined ground water is generally subject to pressure greater than atmospheric.
Conservation cropping sequence	An adapted sequence of crops designed to provide adequate organic residue for maintenance or improvement of soil tilth and for other conservation purposes.
Conservation plan	A record of the client's decisions and supporting information, for treatment of a unit of land or water as a result of the planning process, that meets FOTG quality criteria for each natural resource (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) and takes into account economic and social considerations. The plan describes the schedule of operations and activities needed to solve identified natural resource problems and take advantage of opportunities at a resource management system level. The needs of the client, the resources, and Federal, State, and local requirements will be met.
Conservation practice	A specific structural, managerial, or cultural treatment of natural resources commonly used to meet a specific need in planning and carrying out soil and water conservation programs.
Contamination	The degradation of water quality as a result of natural processes and/or the activities of people. No specific limits are established because the degree of permissible contamination depends upon the intended end use or uses of the water.
Conventional tillage	Those primary and secondary tillage operations that are considered standard for the specific location and crop.
Cost effectiveness analysis	An analysis to determine the additional benefit value produced from an additional cost. A practice may be more "cost effective" if it costs less, generates a greater benefit for the same cost, or uses resources better than another.
Cover crop	A close-growing crop whose main purpose is to protect and improve the soil and use excess nutrients or soil moisture during the absence of the regular crop or in the nonvegetated areas of orchards and vineyards.
Critical area	An area to be treated with special consideration because of inherent site factors, size, location, condition, values, or significant potential conflicts among uses.
Crop residue	The portion of a crop remaining after harvest of seed or other primary plant parts. It may be managed for grazing and/or ground cover and to replenish soil organic matter levels.
Crop rotation	A planned sequence of crops.
Cropland	Land used primarily for the production of cultivated crops.
Deciduous (plant)	A plant whose parts, particularly leaves, are shed at regular intervals or at a given stage of development.

Decisionmaker	An individual, group, unit of government, or other entity that has the authority by ownership, position, office, delegation, or otherwise to decide on a course of action.
Deep percolation	The downward movement of water through the soil and below the root zone.
Denitrification	The chemical or biological reduction of nitrate or nitrite to gaseous nitrogen, either as molecular nitrogen (N ₂) or as an oxide of nitrogen (N ₂ O).
Detention pond	A water impoundment made by constructing a dam or an embankment or by excavating a pit or dugout, usually to provide temporary storage of runoff.
Direct runoff	Both surface flow and the interflow component of subsurface flow.
Dissolved oxygen (DO)	The molecular oxygen dissolved in water, wastewater, or other liquid; generally expressed in milligrams per liter, parts per million, or percent of saturation.
Diversity	A measure of the number of species and their relative abundance in a community.
Dormant	(1) A living plant that is not actively growing aerial shoots. (2) A pesticide application made on crop plants that are not actively growing.
Dormant seeding	Planting seed during fall when seeds will not germinate until next spring.
Drill seeding	Planting seed directly into the soil with a drill in rows, usually 6 to 24 inches apart.
Drip line	The area under the outermost branches of a tree or shrub.
Drouth (drought)	(1) A prolonged chronic shortage of water. (2) A period with below normal precipitation during which the soil water content is reduced to such an extent that plants suffer from lack of water; frequently associated with excessively high temperatures and winds during spring, summer, and fall in many parts of the world.
Ecological site	A distinctive kind of land with specific physical characteristics that differs from other kinds of land in its ability to produce a distinctive kind and amount of vegetation.
Effluent	The liquid discharge of a waste treatment process.
Erosion	The wearing away of the land surface by water, wind, ice, or other geologic agents and by such processes as gravitational creep.
Erosion (accelerated)	Erosion occurring more rapidly than geologic erosion, mainly as a result of the activities of man or other animals or of a catastrophe in nature, for example, fire, that exposes the surface.

Eutrophication	A natural or artificial process of nutrient enrichment whereby a waterbody becomes abundant in plant nutrients and low in oxygen content.
Evapotranspiration	The loss of water from an area by evaporation from the soil or snow cover and transpiration by plants.
Exotic	An organism or species that is not native to the region in which it is found.
Fault	A fracture or a zone of fractures along which there has been displacement of the sides relative to one another parallel to the fracture.
Fertilizer value	An estimate of the value of commercial fertilizer elements (N, P, K) that can be replaced by manure or organic waste material. Usually expressed as dollars per ton of manure or quantity of nutrients per ton of manure.
Field moisture capacity	The moisture content of a soil, expressed as a percentage of the oven-dry weight, after the gravitational or free water has drained.
Fine-textured soil	Sandy clay, silty clay, and clay.
Flooding	The temporary covering of the soil surface by water that flows over it from any source, such as a stream, irrigation canal, tidal action, or runoff from adjacent or surrounding slopes.
Flushing system	A system that collects and transports or moves waste material with the use of water, such as in washing of pens and flushing confinement livestock facilities.
Fluvial	Pertaining to or produced by the action of a stream or river.
Forage	All browse and herbage that is available and acceptable to grazing animals or that may be harvested for feeding purposes. Act of consuming forage. Syn. graze.
Ford	A constructed or natural stream crossing for equipment, humans, or animals at a point where water is shallow, footing is firm, and banks are low or inclined for easy approach and exit. The bottom of the channel and approaches are either naturally or artificially paved to facilitate ease of crossing and to reduce muddying of the water.
Geographic information system (GIS)	A spatial type of information management system that provides for entry, storage, manipulation, retrieval, and display of spatially oriented data.
Global positioning system (GPS)	A computer based receiver system that uses satellite transmissions to determine precise latitude and longitude readings at any location in a field. This system is used to map crop yield, soil fertility, weed infestations, soil type, and other yield influencing differences. It then forms the basis for variable rate applications of fertilizer and pesticides. Application equipment is guided by a georeferenced program to deliver different application rates as it traverses back and forth across a field.

Grassed infiltration area	An area with vegetative cover where runoff water infiltrates into the soil.
Green manure	Any crop or plant grown and not harvested that is used to improve the soil's organic matter content and structure. It may or may not be incorporated into the soil by tillage.
Ground water	Subsurface water that is in the zone of saturation. The top surface of the ground water is the water table. Source of water for wells, seepage, and springs.
Ground water table	The surface between the zone of saturation and the zone of aeration. The surface of an unconfined aquifer.
Guide	A detailed summary of information or series of options that does not recommend a specific course of actions.
Head	Energy contained in a water mass; expressed in elevation (feet) or pressure (pounds per square feet).
Head loss	That part of head energy that is lost because of friction as water flows.
Herbaceous	Vegetative growth with little or no woody component. Nonwoody vegetation, such as graminoids and forbs.
Herbicide	A chemical used to kill or inhibit the growth of plants.
Horizon, soil	A layer of soil, approximately parallel to the surface, having distinct characteristics produced during soil-forming processes.
Hydraulic conductivity	The rate of flow of water in gallons per day through a cross section of one square foot under a unit hydraulic gradient, at the prevailing temperature (gpd/ft ²). In the SI system, the units are m ³ /d/m ² or m/d.
Hydraulic gradient	The rate of change in total head per unit of distance of flow in a given direction.
Hydrologic condition	Description of the moisture present in a soil by amount, location, and configuration.
Hydrologic soil groups	Classification system used by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to group soils according to their runoff-producing characteristics. The chief consideration is the inherent capacity of soil bare of vegetation to permit infiltration. The slope and the kind of plant cover are not considered, but are separate factors in predicting runoff. Soils are assigned to four groups. In group A are soils having a high infiltration rate when thoroughly wet and having a low runoff potential. They are mainly deep, well drained, and sandy or gravelly. In group D, at the other extreme, are soils having a very slow infiltration rate and thus a high runoff potential. They have a claypan or clay layer at or near the surface, have a permanent high water table, or are shallow over nearly impervious bedrock or other material.

Indicator species	(1) Species that indicate the presence of certain environmental conditions, range condition, previous treatment, or soil type. (2) One or more plant species selected to indicate a certain level of grazing use.
Infiltration	The downward entry of water into the immediate surface of soil or other material.
Infiltration rate	The rate at which water penetrates the surface of the soil at any given instant, usually expressed in inches per hour. The rate can be limited by the infiltration capacity of the soil or the rate at which water is applied at the surface.
Karst topography	A type of topography that is formed in limestone, gypsum, and other similar types of rock by dissolution and is characterized by sinkholes, caves, and rapid underground water movement.
Lagoon	A shallow impoundment made by excavation or earthfill for the purpose of waste treatment.
Land application	Application of manure, commercial fertilizer, sewage sludge, municipal wastewater, and industrial wastes to land for use of the nutrients and organic matter for their fertilizer and soil conditioning values.
Landscape	The environment, both natural and built, that surrounds us.
Landscape quality	A composite of those landscape conditions and perceived values that provide diverse and pleasant surroundings for human use and appreciation. Recognized components of landscape quality include visual resource, landscape use, viewscape, and visibility.
Leaching	(1) The removal of soluble constituents, such as nitrates or chlorides, from soils or other material by the movement of water. (2) The removal of salts and alkali from soils by irrigation combined with drainage. (3) The removal of a liquid through a non-watertight artificial structure, conduit, or porous material by downward or lateral drainage, or both, into the surrounding permeable soil.
Limestone	A sedimentary rock consisting chiefly of calcium carbonate.
Limiting nutrient	Nutrient that restricts plant growth.
Liquid manure	A mixture of water and manure that behaves more like a liquid than a solid, generally less than 5 percent solids.
Livestock waste	A term sometimes applied to manure that may also contain bedding, spilled feed, water, or soil. It also includes wastes not particularly associated with manure, such as milking center or washing wastes, and milk, hair, feathers, or other debris.
Manure	The fecal and urinary excretions of livestock and poultry.

Mechanical solids separation	Process of separating suspended solids from a liquid-carrying medium by trapping the particles on a mechanical screen or sieve or by centrifugation.
Microclimate	Climate as experienced at the scale of a particular site. Includes such elements as solar orientation, wind direction, temperature, and precipitation.
Monitoring	Systematic collection of data on a routine basis and the analysis of these data for an understanding of the changes that may occur in the sampled environment.
Mulch	Any substance that is spread on the soil surface to decrease the effects of raindrop impact, runoff, and other adverse conditions and to retard evaporation.
Municipal waste	Solid and liquid fractions of wastes produced by a municipality. Municipal wastes may be treated or untreated and may be either used or disposed of appropriately.
Native species	A species that is a part of the original fauna or flora of the area in question.
Nitrogen	A chemical element commonly used in fertilizer as a nutrient, which is also a component of animal waste. As one of the major nutrients required for plant growth, nitrogen can promote algae blooms that cause waterbody eutrophication if it runs off or leaches out of the surface soil. Nitrogen is immediately usable for plant growth in available forms (NO_3^-) or (NH_4^+).
Nitrogen cycle	The succession of biochemical reactions that nitrogen undergoes as it is converted to organic or available nitrogen from the elemental form. Organic nitrogen in waste is oxidized by bacteria into ammonia (NH_3). If oxygen is present, ammonia is bacterially oxidized first into nitrite (NO_2^-) and then into nitrate (NO_3^-). If oxygen is not present, nitrite and nitrate are bacterially reduced to nitrogen gas, completing the cycle.
Nonpoint source (NPS)	Entry of a pollutant into a waterbody in a diffuse manner so there is no definite point of entry.
No-till	A planting procedure that requires no tillage except that done by a coultter or disk opener in the immediate area of the crop row.
Noxious weed	An unwanted plant specified by Federal or State laws as being especially undesirable, troublesome, and difficult to control. It grows and spreads in places where it interferes with the growth and production of the desired crop.
Nutrients	Elements required for plant or animal growth including the macronutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium), which are the major nutrients required, and micronutrients, which include a number of other elements that are essential but needed in lesser amounts.
Organic matter	The organic fraction of the soil exclusive of undecayed plant and animal residue.

Overgrazing	Grazing that exceeds the recovery capacity of the individual species or the plant community.														
Pasture	(1) Grazing lands comprised of introduced or domesticated native forage species that are used primarily for the production of livestock. They receive periodic renovation and/or cultural treatments, such as tillage, fertilization, mowing, and weed control, and may be irrigated. They are not in rotation with crops. (2) A grazing area enclosed and separated from other areas by fencing or other barriers. The management unit for grazing lands. (3) Forage plants used as food for grazing animals. (4) Any area devoted to the production of forage (native or introduced) and harvested by grazing.														
Percolation	The downward movement of water through soil.														
Percolation rate	The rate of movement of water under hydrostatic pressure down through the interstices of rock, soil, or filtering media except movement through large openings, such as caves.														
Permanent wilting point	The moisture content of soil, on an oven-dry basis, at which a plant (specifically a sunflower) wilts so much that it does not recover when placed in a humid, dark chamber.														
Permeability	The quality of the soil that enables water to move downward through the profile. Permeability is measured as the number of inches per hour that water moves downward through the saturated soil. Terms describing permeability are: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td>Very slow</td> <td>less than 0.06 inches/hr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Slow</td> <td>0.06 to 0.2 inches/hr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderately slow</td> <td>0.2 to 0.6 inches/hr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate</td> <td>0.6 to 2.0 inches/hr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderately rapid</td> <td>2.0 to 6.0 inches/hr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rapid</td> <td>6.0 to 20 inches/hr</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Very rapid</td> <td>more than 20 inches/hr</td> </tr> </table>	Very slow	less than 0.06 inches/hr	Slow	0.06 to 0.2 inches/hr	Moderately slow	0.2 to 0.6 inches/hr	Moderate	0.6 to 2.0 inches/hr	Moderately rapid	2.0 to 6.0 inches/hr	Rapid	6.0 to 20 inches/hr	Very rapid	more than 20 inches/hr
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Pesticide	Any chemical agent, such as herbicide, fungicide, or insecticide, used for control of specific organisms.														
pH	The negative logarithm of the hydrogen ion activity. The pH scale ranges from zero to 14. Values below 7 are considered acidic and those above, alkaline.														
Phosphate	Phosphate ions exist in water as H_2PO_4^- or HPO_4^{2-} . Otherwise phosphate is an ester or salt of phosphoric acid, such as calcium phosphate rock.														
Phosphorus	One of the primary nutrients required for the growth of plants. Phosphorus is often the limiting nutrient for the growth of aquatic plants and algae.														
Point source	The release of a contaminant or pollutant, often in concentrated form, from a conveyance system, such as a pipe, into a waterbody.														

Pollution/polluted	The presence in a body of water (or soil or air) of a substance (contaminant) in such quantities that it impairs the body's usefulness or renders it offensive to the senses of sight, taste, or smell. In general, a public health hazard may be created, but in some instances only economic or aesthetics are involved, such as when foul odors pollute the air.
Pond	A water impoundment made by constructing a dam or an embankment or by excavating a pit or dugout, usually to supply drinking water for livestock and/or wildlife.
Ponding	Standing water on soil in closed depressions. Unless the soil is artificially drained, water can be removed only by percolation or evapotranspiration.
Porous dam	A runoff control structure that reduces the rate of runoff so that solids settle out in the settling terrace or basin. The structure may be constructed of rock, expanded metal, or timber arranged with narrow slots.
Potassium	One of the primary nutrients required for the growth of plants.
Profile, soil	A vertical section of the soil extending through all its horizons and into the parent material.
Pumping test	A test that is conducted to determine aquifer or well characteristics.
Rangeland	Land on which the historic climax plant community is predominantly grasses, grasslike plants, forbs, or shrubs. Includes lands revegetated naturally or artificially when routine management of that vegetation is accomplished mainly through manipulation of grazing. Rangeland includes natural grasslands, savannas, shrublands, most deserts, tundra, alpine communities, coastal marshes, and wet meadows.
Reclamation	Restoration of a site or resource to a desired condition to achieve management or stated goals.
Reduced tillage	A management practice whereby the use of secondary tillage operations is significantly reduced.
Resource base	The combination of soil, air, water, plants, and animals that makes up the natural environment.
Resource Management System (RMS)	A combination of conservation practices and resource management for the treatment of all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants, and animals that meets or exceeds the quality criteria in the FOTG for resource sustainability.
Response unit (GLA)	A relatively homogeneous area within a management unit in GLA. Response units are defined by soils, range sites, range condition, slope classes, distance to water, barriers, brush densities, past practices resulting in different plant communities, and/or suitability groups.
Ridge planting	The practice of growing a row crop on the ridges between the furrows.

Riparian	Area, zone, and/or habitat that is adjacent to streams, lakes, or other natural free water and has a predominant influence on associated vegetation or biotic communities.
Root zone	The part of the soil that can be penetrated by plant roots.
Ruminant	Even-toed, hoofed mammals, such as cow, goat, or sheep, having a 4-chamber stomach and chewing a cud consisting of regurgitated, partly digested food; i.e., ruminantia.
Runoff	The part of precipitation or irrigation water that appears in surface streams or waterbodies; expressed as volume (acre-inches) or rate of flow (gallons per minute, cubic feet per second).
Salt	A compound made up of the positive ion of a base and the negative ion of an acid.
Salvage value	The value remaining in a piece of equipment or other asset at the end of its intended useful life.
Sampling	Collection of a small part of an entity and drawing conclusions about the whole. In water quality considerations, sampling consists of collecting a representative part of a waterbody for testing from which conclusions can be drawn about the waterbody as a whole.
Sediment delivery	Sediment arriving at a specific location.
Sediment yield	Quantity of sediment leaving a specified land area.
Seed inoculation	Treatment of legume seed with rhizobium bacteria before planting to enhance subsequent nitrogen fixation.
Seep	Wet areas, normally not flowing, often created when the elevation of the lateral flow of underground water intersects ground level, as on a hillslope. Occasionally seeps occur from water arising from an underground source.
Sewage sludge	Settled sewage solids combined with varying amounts of water and dissolved materials that are removed from sewage by screening, sedimentation, chemical precipitation, or bacterial digestion.
Sheet erosion	Soil erosion occurring from a thin, relatively uniform layer of soil particles on the soil surface. Also called inter-rill erosion.
Similarity index	A similarity index is the percentage of a specific vegetation state plant community that is presently on the site.
Site design	A careful search among physical elements to plan for human and animal occupation and utilization of a site so that comfort, profitability, and use-

Slope	The inclination of the land surface from the horizontal. Percentage of slope is the vertical distance divided by horizontal distance, then multiplied by 100. Thus, a slope of 20 percent is a drop of 20 feet in 100 feet of horizontal distance.
Sodicity	The degree to which a soil is affected by exchangeable sodium; expressed as a sodium adsorption ratio (SAR) of a saturation extract.
Soil	A natural, three-dimensional body at the Earth's surface. It is capable of supporting plants and has properties resulting from the integrated effect of climate and living matter acting on earthy parent material, as conditioned by relief over time.
Soil amendment	Any material, such as lime, gypsum, sawdust, or synthetic conditioner, that is worked into the soil to make it more amenable to plant growth. Amendments may contain important fertilizer elements, but the term commonly refers to added materials other than fertilizer.
Soil and water conservation practices	The manipulation of such variables as crops, rotation, tillage, animals, management, and structures to reduce the loss of soil and to conserve water.
Soil organic matter	The organic fraction of the soil that includes plant and animal residue at various stages of decomposition, exclusive of undecayed plant and animal residue. Often used synonymously with humus.
Soil reaction	Numerical expression in pH units of the relative acidity or alkalinity of a soil. The range in soil pH is 0 to 14.0. A pH of 7.0 is neutral.
Soil test	A chemical and physical analysis of a soil used to estimate its nutrient supplying power. It must use chemical extraction techniques appropriate for the elements being extracted and the soil being examined. For the results to be interpreted properly, the test procedures must also be calibrated against nutrient rate experiments in the field and in the greenhouse.
Solid manure storage	A storage unit in which accumulations of bedded manure or solid manure is stacked before subsequent handling and field spreading. The liquid parts, including urine and precipitation, may or may not be drained from the unit.
Spatial	The occupied space relationship between a soil or soil map unit and the landscape or geomorphic surface on which the soil or map unit is located.
Specification	An explicit set of requirements to be satisfied by a material, product, system, or service, such as construction. It also identifies the methods for determining whether each of the requirements is satisfied.
Standard	A statement of acceptable quality or technical excellence in terms of both form and function (performance), usually expressed in terms of limits; i.e., minimum or maximum.

State Technical Committee	A technical advisory committee in each State to assist in the technical considerations and to develop the technical guidelines necessary to implement the conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. The committee is composed of representatives from Federal agencies, private interest members, State departments and agencies, and other outside groups.
State Technical Guide Committee (STGC)	A committee of principal NRCS staff responsible for the approval and distribution of State-developed, State or field office supplemented FOTG materials. Also responsible for quality assurance activities to ensure the completeness and currency of FOTG materials.
Stock pond	A water impoundment made by constructing a dam or by excavating a dugout, or both, to provide water for livestock and/or wildlife.
Stream classification	The identification of specific channel categories, types, or characteristics so that consistent descriptions and assessments of the conditions and potential for the stream can be developed.
Structural controls	Measures that require capital investment, construction activities, and have certain economic risks.
Subsoil	Technically, the B horizon; roughly, the part of the solum below plow depth.
Subsurface runoff	Water that infiltrates the soil and then moves laterally below the surface; includes baseflow and interflow.
Succession	The progressive replacement of plant communities on an ecological site that leads to the climax plant community.
Suitability	(1) The adaptability of an area to a specific use. (2) The adaptability of a particular plant or animal species to a given area.
Surface layer	The soil ordinarily moved in tillage, or its equivalent in uncultivated soil, ranging in depth from about 4 to 10 inches (10 to 25 centimeters). Frequently designated as the plow layer or the A horizon. Some water quality models refer to surface layer as the first few centimeters of soil.
Suspended solids	(1) Solids that are in water, wastewater, or other liquids and are largely removable by filtering or centrifuging. (2) The quantity of material filtered from wastewater in a laboratory test, as prescribed in APHA Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater or similar reference.
Texture, soil	The relative proportions of sand, silt, and clay particles in a mass of soil.
Tilth, soil	The physical condition of the soil as related to tillage, seedbed preparation, seedling emergence, and root penetration.
Total solids	The total amount of solids in a waste, in both solution and suspension.

Toxicity	Degree of harmful effects an element or compound may have on a living organism, plant, or animal. Excessive amount of toxic substances, such as sodium or sulfur, that severely hinders establishment of vegetation or severely restricts plant growth.
Understory	Plants growing beneath the canopy of other plants. Usually refers to grasses, forbs, and low shrubs under a tree or shrub canopy.
Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE)	An empirical equation estimating the amount of soil loss. Used for the evaluation of a resource management system for water erosion control. The revised equation is called RUSLE.
Vadose zone	The zone containing water under less pressure than that of the atmosphere, including soil water, intermediate vadose water, and capillary water. This zone is limited above by the land surface and below by the surface of the zone of saturation, that is, the water table.
Vector	A bearer or carrier, such as an organism (often an insect), that carries and transmits disease-causing micro-organisms.
Vegetative practices	Practices that are directly concerned with the use and growth of plants. These include such practices as prescribed grazing and livestock exclusion.
View	A scene observed from a given vantage point; can be preserved, neutralized, modified, or accentuated.
Viewshed	All the land and landscape elements that make up or affect a view from a given location or point; delineated by the horizon/silhouette line, enclosure by built or natural elements.
Vista	A confined view, generally toward a terminal or dominant element or feature; may be natural or structural; may be created in its entirety and is therefore subject to close control.
Volatile solids	Readily vaporizable solids. Those solids that are combustible at 600 degrees Celsius.
Volatilization	The loss of gaseous components, such as ammonium nitrogen, from animal manure.
Warm-season plant	A plant that makes most or all its growth during the spring, summer, or fall and is usually dormant in winter. (2) A plant that usually exhibits the C-4 photosynthetic pathway.
Waste management system	See Agricultural waste management system.
Waste storage pond	An impoundment made by excavation or earthfill for temporary storage of animal or other agricultural waste.

Waste treatment lagoon	An impoundment made by excavation or earthfill for biological treatment of animal or other agricultural wastes. Lagoons can be aerobic, anaerobic, or facultative, depending on their loading and design.
Water budget	An irrigation tool that keeps track on a daily basis of the amount of plant-available water in the soil over a 12-month period. It sums soil water depletion by evapotranspiration using one of the climatonic estimators and deducts water inputs from precipitation or irrigation. This yields the amount of irrigation water that needs to be applied to bring the soil back to field capacity within the root zone of the crop being irrigated. Water applications in excess of field capacity are assumed lost to percolation or run-off.
Water management system	A planned system in which the available water supply is effectively used by managing and controlling the moisture environment of crops to promote the desired crop response, to minimize soil erosion and loss of plant nutrients, to control undesirable water loss, and to protect water quality.
Water quality	The excellence of water in relation to its intended use or uses.
Water table	The surface between the vadose zone and the ground water; that surface of a body of unconfined ground water at which the pressure is equal to that of the atmosphere.
Watershed	(1) A total area of land above a given point on a waterway that contributes runoff water to the flow at that point. (2) A major subdivision of a drainage basin.
Wetlands	Areas characterized by soils that are usually saturated or ponded; i.e., hydric soils that have the hydrology to support mostly water-loving plants (hydrophytic plants).
Yield	(1) The quantity of a product in a given space and/or time. (2) The harvested portion of a product.
Zoning (rural)	A means by which governmental authority is used to promote a specific use of land under certain circumstances. This power traditionally resides in the State, and the power to regulate land uses by zoning is usually delegated to minor units of government, such as towns, municipalities, and counties, through an enabling act that specifies powers granted and the conditions under which these are to be exercised.