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NRCS Strategic Plan – Venture Goals

Section Overview: NRCS has had a relatively minor role in addressing clean air, an adequate energy supply, and working farm and ranch lands in the past, but the need for information and analytical tools to evaluate strategies to address these issues is growing. We anticipate that activities directed to these issues will increase significantly over the next few years.

Activity: Read the Venture Goals Section in the NRCS Strategic Plan

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/strategicplan/StratPlan_read.pdf

Summary: After completing this section, you should have an awareness and understanding of NRCS Venture Goals.

1) Clean Air

The impacts of agriculture on air quality are small-scale and local in nature, but may be significant in certain locales. Agriculture makes a small contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, but has the potential to benefit emissions by other sources and by sequestering carbon.

Agricultural emissions associated with wind erosion, prescribed burns, animal confinement, and chemical drift may affect air quality. As development presses into rural agricultural areas, public concerns with odors and emissions from farms will continue to increase.

Take a few moments to answer these questions:

1. What actions are being taken in your state to address this goal?

2. What conservation practices positively impact air quality?

3. Has your state incorporated air quality considerations into its technical standards?

2) An Adequate Energy Supply

Agriculture's long-term energy strategy will include efforts to reduce demand through energy conservation and to develop alternative or renewable energy supplies and technologies. Agriculture has significant potential to contribute to the Nation's energy supply through production of energy from renewable sources and bio-fuels. Development of conservation systems for the sustainable production of energy crops is a priority.

To help you consider energy in your conservation efforts, please answer the following:

1. Has your field office used the online Energy tools on my.nrcs.usda.gov with any clients?

2. Have any of your producers conducted whole farm energy audits? Have those producers adopted any of the cost effective changes? What are the most common changes adopted by farmers?

3. Has your state incorporated energy considerations into its technical standards?

4. Does your state have an NRCS Energy champion? If so, interview that person to find out what they consider to be opportunities for energy conservation and creation in your state.

3) Working Farm and Ranch Lands

Conversion of cropland, grazing land, and forest land to other uses can fragment landscapes and diminish their values for agriculture and forest uses, water management, wildlife habitat, and aesthetic purposes. As predominantly agricultural watersheds shift toward mixed urban and suburban landscapes, land values escalate and agricultural viability declines.

1. What are the NRCS outcome objectives by 2010 in relation to working farm and ranch lands?

2. What performance measures support this objective?

3. Using the 2007 Ag Census Data what is the change of acres of agricultural land base from 2002 to 2007 in the counties your serve. What are the farm number trends? What is the population trend? Are there landscape fragmentation concerns in your county or the counties your serve?

4. Interview your FRPP program manager to find out how FRPP funds are used in your state and who the primary partners are.

5. What are the primary programs in your county that support this performance measure and objective?

6. What other actions could be addressed in your field office business plan that would support this objective?

References and Resources

Some additional links to publications/resources related to NRCS Venture Goals are:

http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/PDF/carbonsequestration.pdf

Air Quality, Climate Change and Energy [Ag Learn - NEDC 000253]

Description: Air quality, climate change and energy are three issues that increasingly are being addressed by the NRCS. Air quality already is a functional part of the NRCS conservation portfolio (the first 'A' in SWAPA+H). Climate change and energy are now becoming significant considerations in conservation planning. This course will provide a broad overview of these three topics, and how they are related to each other and SWAPA+H components. Students will learn how agricultural activities can contribute to air emissions, sequester carbon, manage greenhouse gas emissions, and better conserve energy. The course also will provide examples of addressing these issues via NRCS planning and programs.

Upon completion of the training, participants will be able to:

- Define air quality, climate change, and energy as they relate to the NRCS mission and explain how they are interrelated
- Explain the importance of these issues for land managers and NRCS itself
- Recognize how soil, water, air, plants, animals and human activity all affect, and are affected by, energy and climate change
- Identify examples of how air quality, climate change, and energy concepts apply to agricultural conservation
- List and locate additional resources that can be used to expand knowledge of these topics

Section Completed

_____ **Date**_____

District Conservationist Initials

_____ **Date**_____

Supervisor Initials