



Assessing the Need for Resource Planning

USDA • Natural Resources Conservation Service • July 1999

What is it?

Assessing the need for resource planning involves working with stakeholders to determine whether a resource management plan is the appropriate way to address their concerns.

When do we do it?

Generally, requests for resource planning are made by stakeholders in a watershed, community, or other planning area to the SWCD, NRCS or other Conservation Partners. Determining whether resource planning is warranted is the first activity NRCS and other partners will undertake with the stakeholders.

How do we do it?

Resource planning is an area-wide planning process. Resource planning is not needed if the resource problems are only site-specific and remedied by conservation practices applied to the site. For example, gully erosion on a farm field or eroding banks of a livestock pond call for conservation treatment undertaken by the individual landowner. In contrast, area-wide resource planning is usually needed to resolve problems like flooding, stream sedimentation or water quality degradation occurring throughout a watershed or other planning area. Concerns such as these may be best addressed with the resource planning process when:

- Multiple stakeholders are affected by the problems but they lack consensus about what should be done.
- The problems are interrelated and complex.
- Solutions can only be implemented over a long period of time with the collaboration of many parties and public assistance.

When one or more stakeholders identify resource concerns for which they want assistance, consider the following points:

Determine if other stakeholders are experiencing similar resource problems. If further investigation identifies, for example, multiple streambank erosion sites or sediment problems from many construction sites, the resource concerns may be best addressed on an area-wide basis.

Solicit open discussion with other stakeholders within the area to measure their interest in a resource planning process. Resource planning is a locally-led process that requires strong stakeholder interest. A single citizen concerned about the problem is not sufficient for an effective areawide planning effort.

Review any past and current planning projects. In some cases past planning efforts are still applicable. Old resource plans may simply need to be updated, or new implementation strategies devised.

The Next Step

After it's determined that resource planning is desired by the community and is appropriate, identify stakeholders to serve on the Planning Committee. See factsheet on "Identifying Stakeholders for the Planning Committee."