

National Planning Procedures Handbook

NC Supplement, Part 600

600.3 Plan Format and Content

Content, Organization, and Filing of Conservation Plans and Associated Folders

Conservation planning is a *technical* activity. The conservation plan is a science-based product that results from a clearly-defined conservation planning activity. The conservation plan file documents the results from the nine steps of planning as defined in the National Planning Procedures Handbook.

Developing and administering a financial assistance (FA) program contract is an *administrative* activity, in which funds are provided to a client as a (1) cost-share, (2) incentive, or (3) stewardship payment to assist in the implementation or maintenance of one or more specific practices contained in the conservation plan. An FA contract is used to expedite Step 8 (Implement the Plan) in the conservation planning process.

The conservation plan may support an FA contract or agreement between NRCS (or another government agency) and the client. When the conservation plan supports an FA contract, the planner should understand that the plan justifies the expenditure of public funds by documenting: (1) the resource concern(s) that exist on the land, (2) the practice(s) required to address the concern, (3) the specifications required to implement the practice(s), and (4) the operation and maintenance requirements for the practice(s) applied.

It is important that planners understand the separate and distinct functions between the conservation plan (a technical product) and the FA contract or agreement (an administrative product). Accordingly, all the technical products associated with the conservation plan shall be contained in the conservation plan folder. This includes all of the items listed in Figure 1, and includes practice designs, job sheets, and as-built plans for cost-share programs. The only exceptions to this requirement are as follows:

1. Practice designs and installation data required for North Carolina animal waste laws and/or regulations (.0200) may (at the field office's discretion) be kept in a separate folder, which is referenced in the conservation plan. This separate file may include the waste utilization plan, and lagoon designs or other practices that support the waste utilization plan.
2. Practice designs developed in support of a state or federal cost-share program may be filed temporarily in a separate cost-share program folder. After the practice has been installed and certified as meeting specifications, the design and installation documentation should be moved to the conservation plan folder. At the time the FA contract terminates, any remaining technical documentation (practice designs, job sheets, check out notes, etc.) associated with the contract shall be moved to the conservation plan folder.

Required Minimum Content for the Conservation Plan and Case File. Figure 1 identifies the required content for conservation plans in North Carolina.

Figure 1. CONSERVATION PLAN FOLDER CONTENT

(R=Required, O=Optional)

ITEM	Client Copy	Case File
Conservation Plan Map including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Title: “Conservation Plan Map” ▪ “Prepared with assistance from (agency)” ▪ SWCD name, county, and state ▪ Map scale ▪ Farm/tract numbers, GPS points, etc. ▪ Date prepared ▪ North arrow ▪ Property and field boundaries ▪ Land use and acres for each land unit ▪ Appropriate map symbols and legend (Toolkit, National Map Symbol Handbook, NC-CPA-1) 	R	R
Conservation Plan Map Legend (may be included as an inset on Plan Map)	R	R
Plan Soil Map (with title block)	R	R
Plan Soils Map Legend, and Appropriate Soils Interpretations/Information	R	R
Resources Inventory & Documentation of Compliance with NEPA, NHCP, and Other Federal/State/Local Requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NC-CPA 52 ▪ NC-CPA-17 (if applicable) 	O	R
Forms/Worksheets to Assess Resources/Evaluate Alternatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RUSLE Worksheets ▪ Wildlife Habitat Suitability Index ▪ Forestland Appraisal Worksheets ▪ Etc. 	O	R
Client Decisions/Narratives	R	R
List of Additional Practices Needed To Achieve RMS (for Progressive Plans only)	R	R
Client Objectives and Assistance Notes		R
CNMP Signature Page (front & back) and Checklist (if applicable)	R	R
Designs and Specifications for Planned Practices, including Operation and Maintenance Requirements, Job Sheets	R	R
Documentation of Applied Practices	O	R
SWCD Cooperator Agreement and Other Supporting Documentation	O	O

The conservation plan shall not contain unnecessary information (e.g. copies of practice standards) or duplication (extra copies of maps or job sheets).

All items included in the conservation plan shall be completed per instructions. Job Sheets shall have the client’s name and other applicable information included, as well as site specific implementation guidance and operation and maintenance information.

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). A CNMP is a conservation plan that specifically addresses the water quality criteria associated with an animal feeding operation (AFO). There are no additional format or filing requirements for a CNMP beyond those required for any other conservation plan. The minimum contents of a CNMP are listed as an appendix in the National Planning Procedures Handbook.

Required Minimum Content for the Financial Assistance Contract File. The Conservation Programs Manual (Part 512.43) specifies the contents of the contract file for USDA cost-share contracts. Items listed in Part 512.43 of a technical nature that are part of the conservation plan case file do **not** have to be duplicated in the contract folder.

Local, state, or other federal financial assistance programs may have their own filing requirements.

At the field office's discretion, both the conservation plan case file and the Farm Bill cost-share program contract documents may be maintained in the same file folder.

Due to differences between federal and state restrictions on the release of private information, it is generally not recommended that NCACSP contract documents (e.g. ACSP forms) or contract documents for other state programs be filed in the conservation plan case file.

Document Format. Most of the items in the conservation plan and the FA contract folders are generated electronically by Customer Service Toolkit, Protracts, or other software; or are otherwise available electronically (job sheets).

Because most of the items in the Plans and FA contract folders either require signature(s), have site specific information included, or need to be accessible in the field, it is expected that a complete set of the documents as identified in Figure 1 and in CPM 512.43 will be maintained in paper (hardcopy) form in the appropriate folders.

600.3 Organization of Conservation Plan Folders

All conservation plans shall be filed in either Two-Part, Three-Part, or Six-Part folders, and organized according to Figure 2, or according to an established layout for the office as approved by the ASTC-Field Operations.

The preferred file format for conservation plan case files is the six-part folder.

For field offices that prefer to organize their files according to an alternate format, the information indicated in Figure 3 shall be provided to the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for their review and approval.

Figure 2a. Six-Part Folder Organization

<p>PART 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Plan Map w/ Title Block 2. Soils Map w/ Title Block 3. Soils Map Legend and Soils Reports 4. Other Maps (e.g. Topographic Map, Utility Maps, etc.) 	<p>PART 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Plan Map Legend (unless included on Plan Map) 2. Decisions/Narratives 3. Other Alternatives for RMS Plan 4. SWCD Cooperative Agreement <p><i>NOTE:</i> 1) Item 4 is optional.</p>
<p>PART 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NC-CPA-52 2. NEPA/NHCP Documentation 3. Resource Inventory Sheets (e.g. WHSI, Forest Inventory, RUSLE Worksheets, Other Inventories) 	<p>PART 4</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CNMP Signature Page/Checklist (if applicable) 2. Practice Designs / Specifications (e.g. Practice Job Sheets, Nutrient & Pest Mgt Plans, Grazing Plans, etc.) <p><i>NOTE:</i> 1) Larger designs/specifications may be placed in a separate envelope. 2) Any designs not included should be referenced to another file.</p>
<p>PART 5</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cost-Share Contracts (Farm Bill, NCACSP) 2. Contract Support Documents, Payment Certifications, Status Reviews 3. HELC/WC Compliance Plans & Documentation <p><i>NOTE:</i> 1) Items 1 & 2 may be filed in a separate folder and referenced in Part 5.</p>	<p>PART 6</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Assistance Notes 2. General Correspondence 3. Envelope with Archived Materials/Documents

Figure 2b. Two-Part Folder Organization

<p>PART 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Plan Map w/ Title Block 2. Soils Map w/ Title Block 3. Soils Map Legend and Soils Reports 4. Other Maps (e.g. Topographic Map, Utility Maps, etc.) 5. NC-CPA-52 6. NEPA/NHCP Documentation 7. Resource Inventory Sheets (e.g. WHSI, Forest Inventory, RUSLE Worksheets, Other Inventories) 	<p>PART 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Assistance Notes 2. Conservation Plan Map Legend (unless included on Plan Map) 3. Decisions/Narratives 4. SWCD Cooperative Agreement /3 5. CNMP Signature Page /Checklist , if applicable. 6. Practice Designs / Specifications (e.g. Practice Job Sheets, Nutrient & Pest Mgt Plans, Grazing Plans, etc.) /1 7. Envelope with Cost-Share Contract, Contract Support Documents, Payment Certifications, Status Reviews /2 8. Envelope with HELC/WC Compliance Plans & Documentation
<p><i>NOTE:</i> /1 Larger designs may also be placed in a separate envelope. /2 May be filed in a separate folder and referenced in Part 2. /3 This item is optional.</p>	

Figure 2c. Three-Part Folder Organization

<p>PART 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Plan Map w/ Title Block 2. Soils Map w/ Title Block 3. Soils Map Legend and Soils Reports 4. Other Maps (e.g. Topographic Map, Utility Maps, etc.) 5. NC-CPA-52 6. NEPA/NHCP Documentation 7. Resource Inventory Sheets (e.g. WHSI, Forest Inventory, RUSLE Worksheets, Other Inventories) 	<p>PART 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Plan Map Legend (unless included on Plan Map) 2. Decisions/Narratives 3. SWCD Cooperative Agreement /3
<p>PART 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservation Assistance Notes 2. CNMP Signature Page/Checklist (if applicable) 3. Practice Designs / Specifications (e.g. Practice Job Sheets, Nutrient & Pest Mgt Plans, Grazing Plans, etc.) /1 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Envelope with Cost-Share Contract, Contract Support Documents, Payment Certifications, Status Reviews /2 2. Envelope with HELC/WC Compliance Plans & Documentation
<p><i>NOTE:</i> /1 Larger designs may be placed in a separate envelope. /2 May be filed in a separate folder referenced in the Conservation Assistance notes. /3 This item is optional.</p>	

Figure 3. Conservation Plan Organization Waiver Request

Field Office: _____

Conservation plans prepared in the field office will be organized as follows:

PART 1	PART 2
PART 3	PART 4
PART 5	PART 6

District Conservationist (signature)

Date

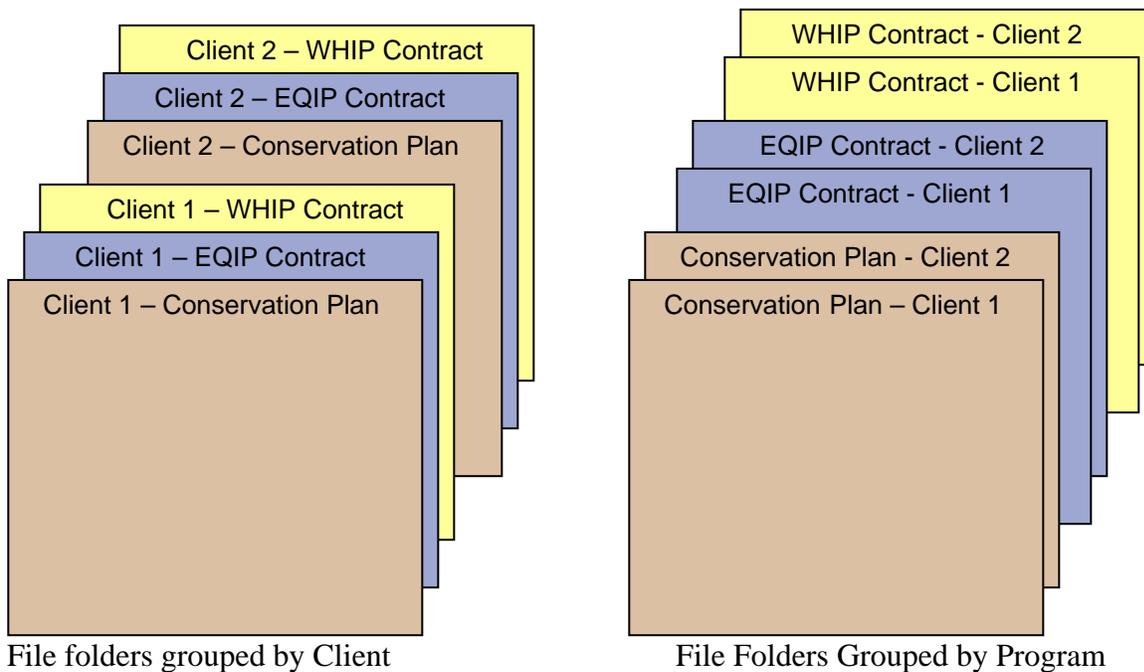
ASTC-FO or designee (signature)

Date

600.3 Office Filing Systems for Conservation Plans and FA Contracts

The Conservation Planning Manual indicates that contract files should be filed with the conservation plan case file; however, field offices in North Carolina shall have the option to group file folders by program, by client, or other systems that provide for efficiency in file usage. Regardless of the filing system used, consistency within the field office is required. See the examples in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Conceptual View of Filing System



Due to differences between federal and state restrictions on the release of private information, it is generally recommended that NCACSP contract folders or contract folders for other state programs be filed in a separate filing system.