



United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Federal Building, 2 Madbury Road, Durham, NH 03824-2043 (603) 868-7581 Fax: (603) 868-5301

www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov

Getting Conservation Assistance for Your Farm

This fact sheet was developed to help you better understand the services and process of working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. We want you to be informed consumers of our services and make use of our partnership with your county Conservation District. We hope this guidance will help get you ready to give your County Conservation District a call. We look forward to assisting you.

Who we are



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was established in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service in response to the Dust Bowl. In 1937, the first county Conservation District was formed to link federal agency resources with the local farmers. Since then, nearly 3000 Conservation Districts have been organized, including the ten county Conservation Districts in New Hampshire. Although we were originally established to help farmers prevent erosion, we also help farmers and landowners solve a variety of natural resources problems for the benefit of all Americans.



This partnership between NRCS (federal) and the Conservation District (local) is designed so that there is local input – what we call “locally-led conservation”. The Districts facilitate cooperation and prioritize spending on areas where it is most needed locally. NRCS provides technical assistance and guidance for addressing specific natural resource concerns. NRCS assistance sometimes includes federal cost-sharing on projects and practices that are eligible for programs through the USDA.

What We Can Help With

The first step for you as the farmer is to think about your farming operation. There are many issues with a farm business just as with any business, but farming is a profession that is often intimately connected with the land. So, start by thinking about your land and its natural resources. What are your natural resource needs, areas where you need more information, or have a feeling there may be problem? Some examples are:

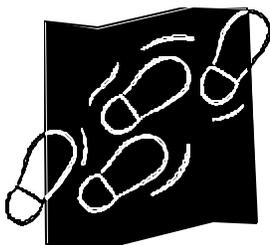
- Do my pastures seem healthy?
- Do I have a good water supply?
- Is the water as clean when it leaves my property as when it arrived?
- Do I have too much manure around?
- I don't know how much fertilizer to use
- Are my animals digging up streambanks or wet spots?
- What can I do to improve wetlands or wildlife habitat on my land that might also help my operation?
- Do I have gullies or areas that are eroding?
- Is there evidence of soil erosion or water runoff from my field?
- How can I control pests without too many pesticides?
- Is there dirty water running off my barnyard area?
- How can I start composting?
- Do I have good access to my woodlot?
- My neighbors have complained about odors

- Is a pond near my property starting to look green and scummy?
- Am I doing some things on my farm that I know are good for the natural resources?
- Could I be wasting water?
- My farm is next to a lake, river, stream

These are just some of the natural resource questions that could come up when you are thinking about your farming operation. Since it is our business to help people deal with their natural resources and promote stewardship, these are the main types of issues that could be addressed by us.

Also, it is critical all the decision-makers in your farming operation participate in this process. Good communication at this point among the business partners cannot be underrated!

Contacting Our Office



When you are ready to get started working on your natural resource concerns or finding natural resource opportunities, the next step is to contact your County Conservation District office. The District will be able to guide you with information about current resources available to you, including training, various forms of funding, and the NRCS or other contacts for your county. Contact numbers for each county are located on the back of this fact sheet, or you can visit www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov and click on *Contact Us* at the top to find your local office.

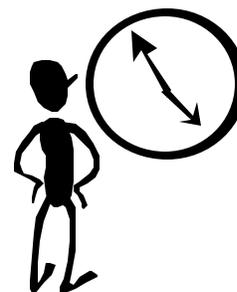
The Next Step

One of the most common questions for farmers when they find out about NRCS is “How can I access federal money for my farming operation?” We have what we call *cost-sharing programs* (we pay a certain percentage, and the farmer pays a percentage, which can include labor and “in kind” services) for addressing certain natural resource concerns on farms. We are funded through Congressional appropriations to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for conservation activities, so available funding and eligibility depends on strict Federal regulations and policies.

During your initial contact with the Conservation District and probably with an NRCS Conservationist, you will get a better idea of whether we have funds and if you are eligible. Our staff will also be able to guide you with regards to program requirements, the application process, payment process, and the contracts required.

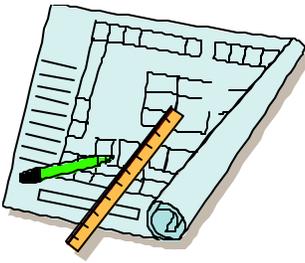
How Long will it Take

Please keep in mind that the Conservationist may need to visit the farm before answering all your questions. Also, the availability of Conservationists for field visits is limited during certain times of the year due to the workload for existing contracts or deadlines for programs. Work with your local Conservation District and NRCS Conservationist to get accurate expectations of turnaround times or a waiting list for assistance, and don't hesitate to call them back if you haven't heard from them in awhile.



There are also certain times of year that we are waiting to find out if we have money for programs. This is an ideal time to work with a Conservationist on a conservation plan for your farm and sign up for a program should money become available.

The Conservation Plan



The central part of our assistance is actually through helping people develop and implement a *conservation plan* for their farms. A conservation plan is based on the natural resources on your farm such as soils, water, forestry, slopes and topography, and wildlife. The conservation plan helps you keep a record of decisions on how to wisely manage your land and address natural resource problems. The conservation plan will ideally balance natural resource issues with your economic and social needs.

You will need to have a conservation plan for your farm if you are going to receive cost-sharing assistance, but we would like it if all farmers had conservation plans, even if they aren't immediately seeking federal funds for a project. The plan makes it easier for you and your conservationist to work together and choose a cost-sharing program for a project when it is right for you.

Contracts

Another issue to consider when seeking funding for your farming operation is that NRCS requires that you sign a contract with the Federal Government to ensure that the conservation work will be done. Depending on the program requirements, our portion of the payments will be made to you based on work completed, and within the length of the contract (which could be up to 10 years). Maintenance by the farmer is also required to ensure that the conservation practice functions properly as it was designed. Discuss contract requirements and payment in detail with your Conservationist so that you are comfortable with the arrangement before you sign.



Other Guidance



Some conservation work requires that an NRCS engineer visit your property and do a survey to design the project. This design work that often needs to be done is critical to making a conservation practice that works and continues to work long after installation. The complexity of the project will often determine how long it takes to complete and get payments started.

Conservation work done on your land will need to be periodically inspected and the Conservationist will verify that the contract is being carried out.

There is no guarantee of funding for your project. Projects are ranked according to the severity of the natural resource problems, natural resource benefits, or other program limitations that may make other projects in the state rank higher than yours. Funding for your eligible project or practice is very likely if you do not give up and stay signed up for cost-share assistance.

Remember – the more informed you are about the natural resources such as soils, water quality, wildlife habitat, nonpoint source pollution, nutrients, erosion, etc., the better prepared you will be to use a conservation plan for your land and your farm business, and to apply for funding assistance.

Contact your local NRCS/Conservation District office for more information.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (RC&D) and
Belknap County Conservation District
719 Main Street, Room 203
Laconia, NH 03246-2772
Phone: 527-5880

Rockingham County Conservation District
110 North Road
Brentwood, NH 03833-6614
Phone: 679-2790

Natural Resources Conservation Service and
Carroll County Conservation District
73 Main Street (P.O. Box 533)
Conway, NH 03818-0533
Phone: 447-2771

Strafford County Conservation District
259 County Farm Road, Unit #3
Dover, NH 03820-6015
Phone: 749-3037

Natural Resources Conservation Service and
Cheshire County Conservation District
11 Industrial Park Drive
Walpole, NH 03608-9744
Phone: 756-2988

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Telly's Plaza
243 Calef Highway
Epping, NH 03042
Phone: 679-1587

Natural Resources Conservation Service and
Coos County Conservation District
4 Mayberry Lane
Lancaster, NH 03584-9612
Phone: 788-4651

Sullivan County Conservation District
24 Main Street
Newport, NH 03773-1500
Phone: 863-4297

Natural Resources Conservation Service and
Grafton County Conservation District
250 Swiftwater Road, Room 6
Woodsville, NH 03785-0229
Phone: 747-2001

North Country RC&D Area Council
719 North Main Street, Room 220
Laconia, NH 03246-2772
Phone: 527-2093

Natural Resources Conservation Service and
Hillsborough County Conservation District
Chappell Professional Center
#468, Route 13, South
Milford, NH 03055-3442
Phone: 673-2409
HCCD website is: www.hillsboroughccd.org

Southern NH RC&D Area Council
The Concord Center
10 Ferry Street, Rm. 422, Box 4
Concord, NH 03301-5081
Phone 223-0083

Natural Resources Conservation Service and
Merrimack County Conservation District
The Concord Center
10 Ferry Street, Box 312
Concord, NH 03301-5081
Phone: 223-6023
MCCD Website is: www.merrimackccd.org

Natural Resources Conservation Service
State Office
Federal Building, 2 Madbury Road
Durham, NH 03824-1499
Phone: 868-7581

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