

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
339 Busch's Frontage Road, Suite 301
Annapolis, MD 21401

Phone: 410-757-0861
FAX: 410-757-0687
www.md.nrcs.usda.gov

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NATIONAL PLANNING PROCEDURES HANDBOOK (NPPH)
180-VI
AMENDMENT MD1 (Part 600.5, Exhibits)

Purpose. To distribute resource inventory worksheets (MD-RES-001) and an environmental evaluation checklist (MD-CPA-052) for use in Maryland.

Effective Date. Upon receipt.

Explanation. This amendment to the NPPH contains resource inventory worksheets and an environmental checklist designed to reflect resources and concerns that are important in Maryland. Follow the attached instructions for use of the worksheets and checklist.

Filing

Instructions. File this amendment notice (green sheet) in the front of the NPPH.

Go to Part 600.5, Exhibits:

- File the MD-RES-001 instructions and worksheets in front of Exhibit 1, page 600.5-1.
- File the MD-CPA-052 instructions and checklist in front of Exhibit 3, page 600.5-7.

If you have any questions concerning the resource inventory worksheets, please contact Patricia Engler at 410-489-7987. If you have questions concerning the environmental evaluation checklist, you may call Anne Lynn at 443-482-2908.

DAVID P. DOSS
State Conservationist

Attachments

DIST: NPPH

MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Background

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to evaluate the potential effects of their activities and programs on the quality of the human environment. The "human environment" includes natural resources (such as soil, water, air, plants, and animals), plus cultural resources and social and economic considerations. Although NEPA is concerned about all types of effects (both positive and negative), it is especially intended to help decisionmakers identify significant adverse impacts and avoid, minimize, or mitigate them.

During conservation planning, NRCS uses an environmental evaluation process to assess potential beneficial and adverse impacts of conservation practices, systems, or other activities that a client wants to implement. The amount of documentation that is required is based on the type, size, and complexity of the proposed project. It is not intended that many hours be spent documenting projects that have overall beneficial effects with little or no adverse effects.

Instructions

The Maryland Environmental Evaluation (EE) Checklist, MD-CPA-052, provides a basic framework for documenting effects on resources and concerns that are important in Maryland. Use the EE Checklist to briefly describe the proposed conservation practices, systems, or other activities that may be implemented. Then summarize any resource concerns that you identified during the planning process, and document the effects of proposed actions on the various natural resources, cultural resources, and social and economic concerns.

For on-farm conservation planning, complete at least one EE Checklist for each new conservation plan (or plan revision) containing practices or activities that involve clearing, earthmoving, grading, shaping, filling, etc. Land-disturbing activities have the highest potential for significant adverse effects, especially during the construction phase. Generally, plans that contain engineering practices will require completion of an EE Checklist. Evaluate the effects of each plan as a whole, while keeping in mind the effects of individual practices or systems. If desired, you may use more than one EE Checklist per plan if the plan contains many different land uses, conservation practices, or conservation systems. For example, you could use one EE Checklist to document the effects of a pasture management system, and another EE Checklist to document the effects of a cropland management system on the same farm.

You may also use the EE Checklist to document the effects of a plan that includes only vegetative or management practices, such as conservation crop rotation, contour farming, filter strips, nutrient management, and riparian buffers. These are practices that don't involve land disturbance below an already disturbed plow zone, and are usually less likely to have adverse environmental effects. Caution: Be aware that significant changes in vegetative cover (such as from pastured wetland to wooded wetland) can adversely affect some protected resources (e.g., bog turtles). You must complete an EE Checklist if you know that protected resources are present on a property and could be affected by proposed practices, systems, or other activities.

1. Part A, Resource Concerns.

- a. Summarize whether any natural resource concerns were identified during the planning process. Check (✓) the appropriate boxes.
- b. Note whether the planned treatment or activity meets the Quality Criteria for natural resources, again by checking the appropriate boxes. Quality Criteria are described in Section III-A of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).
- c. Use the "Comments" lines to add further explanation, if needed. If the planned treatment or activity will not meet the minimum Quality Criteria, briefly explain why in the space provided.

2. Part B, Protected Resources.

- a. Evaluate the effects of the proposed conservation practices, systems, or activities on significant natural and cultural resources. These are resources that occur within the work zone or are close enough to be affected by the proposed project.
- b. Check (✓) the available sources of information that were used, whether the resource is present or absent, and the probable effects of the proposed practices, systems, or activities on each resource. If you know that mitigation will be needed (for example, wetland mitigation) and the client has agreed to implement it, then evaluate the project's overall effect with mitigation included.
- c. You do not need to use every source of information that is listed in the EE Checklist. Some sources may be more useful than others, depending on the type of project you are working on and the quality of available data. Select the data sources that are best suited for your project.
- d. If a resource never occurs in an area (for example, if the county you are working in has no tidal waters and therefore cannot have a Maryland Critical Area or Coastal Zone Management Area), then just check the "Absent" box for that resource and go the next resource. There is no need to check any information sources for that item.
- e. As appropriate, indicate whether the proposed practices, systems, or activities are likely to need permits or approvals from regulatory agencies. Attach additional documentation as needed.
- f. Additional instructions for Item 1 (Waters of the State/United States): If regulated waters are present, check the water "use" category as listed by MDE (e.g., Use I, II, III, or IV).
- g. Additional instructions for Items 6 (Coastal Zone Management Area) and 8 (Prime Farmland): For on-farm conservation planning, you can skip evaluating these items if the proposed project consists only of implementing Best Management Practices. The use of Best Management Practices is consistent with state and federal policies for protecting these resources, and the effects on the Coastal Zone and Prime Farmland should always be beneficial.

3. Part C, Other Environmental Considerations.

Are you aware of other important environmental factors, safety issues, or legal constraints that could affect or be affected by the proposed practices, systems, or activities? If so, check (✓) "Yes" and briefly explain.

4. Part D, Public Interest and Social Concerns.

Are you aware of any social, economic, or other special concerns that relate to the proposed practices, systems, or activities? Will minority or low-income communities be adversely affected? (This is a federal "Environmental Justice" concern.) If you answer "Yes" to either of these questions, briefly explain.

5. Part E, Alternatives.

Sometimes a proposed conservation practice, system, or activity will have significant adverse effects on natural and cultural resources, and/or on social, economic, or other special concerns. Based on your answers in Parts A–D of the EE Checklist, will alternatives to the proposed practices, systems, or activities have to be considered in order to avoid or minimize significant adverse effects? If so, check (✓) "Yes" and briefly explain the other alternatives (including the "no project" option) and their effects. Attach additional sheets if you need more space.

6. Part F, Conclusion.

- a. Check (✓) the appropriate box to summarize the results of the environmental evaluation. If the proposed conservation practice, system, or activity will have no significant adverse effects on the environment, or if any significant adverse effects will be mitigated as part of the project, then check the "No adverse effects" box.
- b. If the project will have significant adverse effects that cannot or will not be mitigated, sufficiently minimized, or avoided, then check the "Adverse effects" box. Contact the Maryland NRCS State Biologist for guidance concerning additional environmental compliance and documentation requirements.
- c. Sign and date the environmental evaluation in the spaces provided.
- d. File the EE Checklist in the case file to provide supporting documentation for the conservation plan, and for future reference when working with the client.

B. PROTECTED RESOURCES (Continued)	Resource is:		Effect is:			Permits or approvals needed?	
	Present	Absent	Beneficial	Adverse	None	Yes	No
<p>8. PRIME FARMLAND <i>Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Identified by soil survey map units that meet these requirements. Federal projects should not cause unnecessary and irreversible conversion of prime farmland to nonagricultural uses.</i></p> <p>Information source(s) used: <input type="checkbox"/> NRCS Maryland Field Office Technical Guide - Cropland interpretations <input type="checkbox"/> Soil maps <input type="checkbox"/> Field investigations <input type="checkbox"/> Other sources (describe):</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<p>9. ARCHEOLOGICAL/ HISTORICAL SITE <i>A significant resource that is listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places.</i></p> <p>Information source(s) used: <input type="checkbox"/> NRCS Maryland Field Office Technical Guide - Cultural Resources Information, National Register County Lists <input type="checkbox"/> Landowner/landuser information <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation with Maryland Historical Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Field inspection for surface artifacts (describe field conditions):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other sources (describe):</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<p>C. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS Are you aware of other important factors that could affect (or be affected) by the proposed practices, systems, or activities? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i> Consider the presence of dump sites, hazardous materials, public or private pipelines, transmission lines, access roads, easements, or other legal restrictions. If "Yes," please explain.</p>							
<p>D. PUBLIC INTEREST AND SOCIAL CONCERNS Are you aware of any social, economic, or other special concerns that relate to the proposed practices, systems, or activities? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i> Will there be any adverse effects on minority or low-income communities? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i> If you answer "Yes" to either of these questions, please explain.</p>							
<p>E. ALTERNATIVES Will alternatives to the proposed practices, systems, or activities have to be considered in order to avoid or minimize significant adverse effects on natural and cultural resources, and/or on social, economic, or other special concerns? <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i> If "Yes," briefly explain here, or attach a separate page describing other alternatives (including "no project") and the effects of each alternative.</p>							
<p>F. CONCLUSION Check <u>one</u> of the following boxes to summarize the results of this environmental evaluation:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No Adverse Effects: The proposed conservation practices, systems, or activities have been planned in accordance with NRCS policy, including compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations. There will be no significant adverse effects on the quality of the environment (or significant adverse effects, if any, will be mitigated). To the best of my knowledge, no further environmental analysis is needed. The client has been informed that he/she is responsible for obtaining any needed permits or approvals from federal, state, or local government agencies before any work is performed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Adverse Effects: The proposed conservation practices, systems, or activities will have significant adverse effects that cannot be mitigated, sufficiently minimized, or avoided. Additional documentation for environmental compliance, such as preparation of an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement may be required. Contact the Maryland NRCS State Biologist for additional guidance.</p>							
Signature of Designated Conservationist			Title			Date	

RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING

FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEETS

Instructions

- 1. Select the appropriate worksheet for each land use type in the planning area.**
 - a. At a minimum, use one worksheet per land use, which may include one or more fields.
 - b. In some cases, you may need to use more than one worksheet per land use if fields are large or conditions vary significantly from one field to another.
 - c. Fields that are managed primarily as permanent hayland should be evaluated on a separate worksheet from fields managed primarily for pasture.
 - d. For hayland that is in a regular rotation with cropland, evaluate it with cropland by using the "Cropland" worksheet.

- 2. Assess the existing condition of resources in the planning area.**
 - a. Inventory each land use in the planning area. Identify any concerns or problems affecting the use, management, and sustainability of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.
 - b. Briefly note your observations on the appropriate worksheet. Each worksheet contains a list of planning concerns that are often associated with that land use. You may also identify additional concerns or problems—if so, make notes of them on the blank lines or in the margins of the worksheet.
 - c. Also note whether there are any cultural resources or social and economic concerns that you may need to consider during the planning process.
 - d. Use a copy of an aerial photo or plan map to mark field numbers and boundaries, slope lengths and percentages (for soil loss calculations), and the location of existing practices, buildings, specific problem areas (e.g., gullies), etc.

- 3. When you have completed the planning process, file the field evaluation worksheets in the case file to provide supporting documentation for the conservation plan, and for future reference when working with the client.**

**RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

Cropland
 (Includes Rotational Hayland)

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Cropland Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT (LIST FIELD NUMBER(S)):</u>
<u>General</u>	
Crop rotation	
<u>Soil</u>	
Sheet and rill erosion	
Ephemeral erosion	
Gully erosion	
Off-site damage from sediment	
On-site damage from sediment	
Soil condition	
Other	
<u>Nutrients</u>	
Soil test	
Nutrient management plan	
Manure applications	
Manure testing	
<u>Pests</u>	
Weed infestations	
Pest Infestations	
Scouting	
Record keeping	
<u>Other Features</u>	
Sinkholes	
Drainage patterns	
Wet areas	
Cultural resources	

**RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

Pasture

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Pasture Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:
Number & Type of Animals:	

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT (LIST FIELD NUMBER(S)):</u>
<u>Soil</u>	
Erosion (sheet & rill; gully)	
Off-site damage from sediment	
On-site damage from sediment	
Predominant soil drainage class	
Streambank erosion	
<u>Nutrients</u>	
Soil test/Fertilizer management	
Livestock manure distribution	
<u>Pasture Management</u>	
Grazed acres	
Animal units & paddock size	
Livestock water distribution	
Season of grazing	
Duration/frequency of grazing	
Plant species composition	
Legume overseeding	
Fencing	
<u>Pests</u>	
Weed infestations	
Scouting	
Record keeping	
<u>Other Features</u>	
Sinkholes	
Drainage patterns	
Wet areas	
Trailing problems	

RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET

Permanent Hayland

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Permanent Hayland Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT (LIST FIELD NUMBER(S)):</u>
General	
Predominant plant species	
Soil	
Sheet and rill erosion	
Ephemeral erosion	
Gully erosion	
Off-site damage from sediment	
On-site damage from sediment	
Soil condition	
Other	
Nutrients	
Soil test	
Nutrient management plan	
Manure applications	
Manure testing	
Pests	
Weed infestations	
Pest infestations	
Scouting	
Record keeping	
Other Features	
Sinkholes	
Drainage patterns	
Wet areas	

**RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

Farmstead

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Farmstead Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT</u>
Erosion	
Feedlot area	
Livestock travel lanes	
Waste storage	
Odors	
On-site composting	
Run-off	
Distance to receiving waters	
Septic system	
Sinkholes	
Wellhead protection concerns	
Other	

**RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

Woodland

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Woodland Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT (LIST FIELD NUMBER(S)):</u>
<u>Soil</u>	
Gully erosion	
Sheet and rill erosion	
Off-site damage from sediment	
On-site damage from sediment	
Streambank erosion	
Livestock access	
Nutrient loading	
<u>Stand Composition</u>	
Species composition	
Age class	
Invasive species	
<u>Management</u>	
Forest management plan	
Harvest considerations	
Pest infestations	
<u>Wildlife</u>	
Plant species diversity	
Structural diversity	
Dead snags/den trees	
Extent of disturbance	
Frequency of disturbance	
Wet areas	

**RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

Natural Areas

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Natural Area Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT (LIST FIELD NUMBER(S)):</u>
Soil	
Gully erosion	
Off-site damage from sediment	
On-site damage from sediment	
Streambank erosion	
Livestock access	
Nutrient loading	
Plant Community	
Species composition	
Invasive species	
Noxious weeds	
Pest infestations	
Wildlife	
Plant species diversity	
Structural diversity	
Extent of disturbance	
Frequency of disturbance	
Wet areas	
Management	
Habitat management plan	

**RESOURCE INVENTORY FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING
 FIELD EVALUATION WORKSHEET**

Riparian Areas

Client Name:	Address:
Farm No./Tract No.:	Total Riparian Acres:
Evaluator:	Date:

<u>PLANNING CONCERN</u>	<u>ASSESSMENT (LIST FIELD NUMBER(S)):</u>
<u>Soil</u>	
Gully erosion	
Off-site damage from sediment	
On-site damage from sediment	
Channel stability	
Streambank erosion	
Livestock access	
Nutrient loading	
<u>Plant Community</u>	
Species composition	
Invasive species	
Noxious weeds	
Pest infestations	
Buffer width	
<u>Wildlife</u>	
Plant species diversity	
Structural diversity	
Extent of disturbance	
Frequency of disturbance	