

Forest Management Plan Criteria (California)

Practice/Activity Code 106

1. Definition

A Forest Management Plan is a site specific plan developed for a client, which addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied. The Forest Management Plan will:

- a) Meet Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) quality criteria for the identified resource concern(s).
- b) Comply with federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations, and permit requirements.
- c) Meet the client's objectives.

2. Forest Management Plan Criteria

This section establishes the minimum criteria to be addressed in the development of Forest Management Plans.

A. General Criteria

1. A Forest Management Plan shall be developed by certified technical service providers (TSPs). The specific criteria required for certification is located on the TSP registry (TechReg) web site at: <http://techreg.usda.gov/>
2. An Environmental Evaluation (EE) (CPA-52 form) is to be prepared for all activity plans to demonstrate NRCS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Environmental Justice, Air Quality, and other designated environmental concerns and environmental laws.

B. Plan Background and Site Information

1. Landowner information – name, address, contact info, operation, size
2. Location and plan map of parcel
3. Existing infrastructure (access, water, buildings),
4. Past management/harvest history and past conservation practices
5. Property history and pre history context

C. Client Objectives, which may include these and others

1. Income opportunities (timber, non-timber, carbon, ecosystem services, biomass)
2. Forest stand improvement and establishment
3. Wildlife habitat/riparian areas

4. Recreation
5. Livestock

D. Resource Inventory of Existing Conditions

1. Identify resource concerns based on an inventory and land owner objectives to assess these concerns and opportunity for treatment. The inventory will typically specify the following:
 - a. Forest structure by unit/stand –
 1. Overstory – Gross stocking by species including BA, average diameter, trees per acre (TPA), diameter range, % species, approximate age, and existing pest/disease.
 2. Understory – Regeneration TPA, average diameter, diameter range, regeneration, % species, pest/disease, brush density (% canopy), brush species composition, invasive species, down woody debris, fine fuels/fuels hazard, and T&E habitat.
 - b. Soil resources –

Site class, erosion ratings and hazards (slips, creep mass movement, erosion features, road/landings, drainages, cross drains/stream crossing), and equipment limitations.
 - c. Water resources -

Riparian features, CDF stream classes, 303d status, in channel woody debris, meadows, fens, vernal pools, and wetlands
 - d. Wildlife resources –

Habitat features, rare/ declining habitat, threatened and endangered and other notable Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) species
 - e. Air resources –

Smoke management and carbon sequestration values
 - f. Human resources

Cultural resources, cultural/ religious management concerns, ethno-botanical potential, aesthetics, and community forest values

E. Desired Future Conditions

1. Identify alternative practices and systems of practices to address resource concerns and achieve resource quality criteria (defined in Section III, California eFOTG), and present to landowner for decision-making. Include alternatives and decisions on access/transportation and fuels management.

- a. Identify alternative practices and systems of practices (utilizing list of practices in Section IV, eFOTG)
- b. Evaluate effects of practices/system of practices on landowner objectives and identified resource concerns (including cultural resources and threatened and endangered species). Use the Conservation Practice Physical Effects database in Section V, eFOTG, as a guide in determining effects.
- c. Present alternatives, including a resource management system alternative that addresses all resource concerns, for landowner decision.

F. Forest Management Plan Documentation and Plan

1. Forest Management Plan maps

- a. Cover type map
- b. Property access and infrastructure map
- c. Treatment units and planned practices
- d. Soil map with Site class

Maps will include title, landowner name, boundaries, scale, north arrow, appropriate map symbols, and legend. Scale will not exceed 1:24000

2. Access / Transportation Component

The access/transportation section of the plan will describe the design, conditions, and capacities of roads, existing major skid trails, condition of permanent erosion control features and condition of culverts, stream crossings, and road surface drainage.

3. Fire and Fuels Management Component

This section of the management plan will identify fuel accumulation concerns, fire emergency access, probable ignition points, stand level fuels treatment, and feasible fuel break construction.

4. Development of Conservation Plan Utilizing Customer Service Toolkit Plug-In or MsWord Document (record of decisions)

The Forest Management Plan, or conservation plan, document will be created using either the Customer Service Toolkit Plug-In, or MsWord software. The plan document represents the record of final decisions made by the landowner with the TSP, and will include the planned practice(s), the amounts to be applied, the schedule for implementation, and the appropriate site specific specifications and/or job/practice requirement sheet for each practice. A Forest Management Plan may include, but is not limited to, the conservation practices listed below:

1. Access Control (472)

2. **Access Road** (560)
3. **Structure for Water Control** (587-includes water bar, rolling dip, culvert, rock riprap)
4. **Critical Area Planting** (342)
5. **Mulching** (484)
6. **Forest Stand Improvement** (666)
7. **Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment** (654)
8. **Forest Trails and Landings** (655)
9. **Forest Slash Treatment** (384)
10. **Firebreak** (394)
11. **Fuel Break** (383)
12. **Multi-Story Cropping** (379)
13. **Prescribed Burning** (338)
14. **Riparian Forest Buffer** (391)
15. **Silvopasture Establishment** (791)
16. **Tree/Shrub Site Preparation** (490)
17. **Tree/Shrub Establishment** (612)
18. **Tree/Shrub Pruning** (660)
19. **Alley Cropping** (311)
20. **Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment** (380)
21. **Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation** (650)

3. Deliverables for the Client – a hardcopy of the plan that includes:

- a. Cover page – name, address, phone number of client and TSP; total acres of the plan, signature blocks for the TSP, producer, and a signature block for the NRCS acceptance.
- b. A clearly written description (including maps, tables, inventory data, etc.) of items 2. A through F, listed above.
- c. Management practices included in the conservation plan will have appropriate site specific job sheets and/or practice requirements completed. Practice priorities, scheduling and potential costs for the first 5 years must be noted in the plan as well as on the NRCS practice spreadsheet. This data file will have the practice to be applied (month and year), the extent (acres or number) that will be applied and the cost of implementation.
- d. Whenever feasible, treatment intensities (*i.e. light, moderate, heavy*) as defined by cost list scenarios will be specified and justified.

- e. Vegetative/engineering/structural practices included in the conservation plan will have applicable specifications, practice requirements, and drawings attached.

4. Deliverables for NRCS Field Office:

- a. Complete Hardcopy and Electronic copy of the client's plan (MsWord/ PDF copy) and/or completion of the plan document in Customer Service Toolkit.
- b. Digital Plan Map with boundaries/fields, features, and structural practices located on a series of shape files(.shp)/or a .mxd file that can be read by NRCS GIS data base program.
- c. Digital Soils Map using the NRCS soil data mart.
- d. Completed Environmental Evaluation (EE), CPA-52 form, and appropriate worksheets.
- e. The planned conservation practices will be reviewed by the TSP for both T&E species and cultural resources at a scoping level (i.e. archaeological and T&E species data records searches, and a description of the potential habitat and historical context). The results of the review will be confidentially documented in an addendum to the plan, and conclusions noted on the EE (CPA-52 form). Digital shape files of all data records will be provided to NRCS, if available.

Appendix A

General

The following is additional background information for completion of the Forest Management Plan.

The criteria for the 106 Forest Management Plan activity were developed to implement Section 1240 (A) of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, which allows for the development of forest management plans as one of the purposes of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

In accordance with Section 1240 (A), the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program provides funding support through contracts with eligible producers to obtain services of certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) for development a Forest Management Plan (FMP).

Environmental Evaluation requirements under NEPA

1. The environmental effects from the activity plans on environmental resource concerns should be clearly documented on the EE (CPA-52 form). The following is abbreviated guidance for preparation of the EE:
 - a. Planners and TSPs should follow the EE guidance delineated in the NRCS National Environmental Compliance Handbook.
 - b. The EE describes the existing conditions for all applicable resource concerns.
 - c. The EE will assess the resources potentially impacted by the no action, proposed action and any reasonable alternatives.
 - d. Guide sheets will accompany the EE, as needed, to provide information on how to assess and deal with special environmental concerns. Proposed mitigations to actions shall be documented and supported in appendices.
 - e. The findings section of the EE is to identify whether NRCS has determined, based on the analysis of the EE: (1) that a site specific environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS) should be prepared based on the significance of potential impacts, or (2) the EE can be tiered to a state, regional, or national programmatic EA or EIS because the proposed effects have been sufficiently analyzed in a state, regional, national programmatic EA or EIS.

TSP and planners are required to complete NRCS' Level I Environmental Compliance training prior to preparing any EE CPA-52.

Forest Stewardship Plans

Through the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Stewardship Program, State forestry agencies annually receive financial and technical assistance that allows them to help landowners develop Forest Stewardship Plans (FSP) for their nonindustrial private forest land. FSP are prepared by foresters employed by State forestry agencies or by private consulting foresters under the direction of those State agencies. FSP are developed for the

landowner's entire forested ownership and/or any land that will be planted to forest vegetation.

Forest Stewardship Plans will continue to be developed for private landowners by State forestry agencies, with financial and technical assistance provided by the U.S. Forest Service through the Forest Stewardship Program. With the provisions in the new Farm Bill there is an opportunity for NRCS to provide financial assistance through EQIP that increases the planning and application of forestry-related conservation practices. NRCS will coordinate and cooperate with State forestry agencies in the delivery of forestry assistance to private landowners.

Forest Management Plan

To complement the planning assistance provided by State forestry agencies (i.e., Forest Stewardship Plans), NRCS is using a different term to describe the planning assistance that will be provided to clients through EQIP. NRCS will use the term "Forest Management Plan (FMP)". The FMP criteria described above were developed in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service to insure alignment with the national standards for a Forest Stewardship Plan. A few criteria were added to ensure compliance with NRCS requirements (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act). These criteria replace the Prescribed Forestry – 409 National Practice Standard, which will be rescinded and removed from the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NPCH) and the California eFOTG, Section IV.