

What Will It Cost?

It will cost you nothing to get your conservation plan. Some conservation practices, such as changing your crop rotation, stripcropping, and contour farming may only require a change in the way you manage your cropland. Other conservation practices, such as grassed waterways and manure storage structures, may require additional investment. Part of the cost of these practices may be paid through federal, state, or local cost-sharing programs. For other practices, such as nutrient management, you may need to invest in different spreading equipment. In some cases, you may be able to adapt your existing equipment for application.

Identify Cost Share Opportunities

A conservation plan can help you decide which state or federal cost share assistance programs would be suitable for your operation. Your plan is often the basis for a specific conservation program contract. Check with your local NRCS Office to see what programs may be available.

You Can Change Your Plan

After you make your decisions and the plan is complete, you will receive your copy. Another confidential copy will remain on file at your NRCS office. Changes in markets, weather, or technology may cause you to reconsider some of the choices you made. If something happens to force you to change your decisions, or when you use new cropland, you need to revise your plan. Contact your local NRCS Office to discuss any changes you propose. If you participate in USDA programs or the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program, it is very important you keep your plan up-to-date.

Conservation Planning Makes A Difference

For example, if your field had a 5% slope and a slope length of 170 feet with Merrimac sandy loam soil, a tolerable (sustainable) soil loss would be 3 tons/acre/year. But, you assess the field and calculate that 8 tons per acre per year are being lost. A few adjustments in your practices can improve your operation by significantly reducing soil loss and increasing efficiency.



Before:

- Corn silage-hay rotation
- Moldboard plow
- Up and down hill

Erosion = 8 tons/acre/year



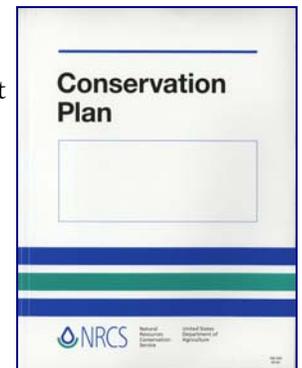
After:

- Corn silage-hay rotation
- Chisel plow
- Contour farming
- Grassed waterway

Erosion = 2 tons/acre/year

What is a Conservation Plan?

A conservation plan is a written record of your management decisions and the conservation practices you plan to use and maintain on your farm. Carrying out your plan will achieve the goals of



protecting the environment on and off your farm. After soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources on your property are inventoried and evaluated, the NRCS soil conservationist will review several alternatives for you to consider. The alternatives you decide to use are recorded in the conservation plan, which becomes your tool for better management of your natural resources.

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A Conservation Plan Includes:

- an aerial photo or diagram of your fields
- a list of your management decisions
- the location of and schedule for applying new conservation practices
- a soil map and soil descriptions
- designation of Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and wetlands
- information sheets, as needed, explaining how to carry out your specific management decisions
- a plan for operation and maintenance of practices, if needed

Following Your Conservation Plans Has Many Benefits, Including:

- protecting your soil and your farm's productivity
- maintaining and/or improving the quality of the water in your area
- improving your soil's fertility and moisture content
- attracting desirable wildlife by creating nesting sites and winter cover
- protecting the productive value of your land for future generations
- complying with environmental regulatory requirements
- being eligible for USDA farm programs
- saving you money
- reducing complaints from suburban neighbors

Getting Your Conservation Plan – Where Do You Start?

Contact your local USDA Service Center – listed online at: www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/contact

You make the decisions. The soil conservationist can show you many good alternatives and make some economic comparisons, but you decide what you want to do, when, and how.

What Will You Need To Do?

You will need to know your crop sequence – what crops you plan to grow in each field. You will also need to provide information on how your land is farmed, what kind of equipment you use, existing conservation practices, and your crop and livestock plans for the future.

How is the Plan Developed?

With the soil conservationist, you will analyze your farm, field by field. You will learn the soil types, the slope and slope lengths of each field. The Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE₂) will be used to find out how much soil is eroding on each field and how to reduce the erosion. RUSLE₂ estimates the amount of soil erosion caused by water. Five factors are used to figure soil loss:



Notice that only the last two factors (cropping and management, and erosion control practices) are in your complete control. These are things you can change to reduce soil erosion.

You Make the Decisions

With your help, the conservationist will inventory the resource conditions existing on your farm. They will help you interpret the information about your land, its soil, and production capability. You can discuss resource concerns and solutions field by field. Then you will decide what changes you can make to protect and improve your land. The soil conservationist will help you by offering a variety of choices, based on the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide for your county. Next, you will set up a reasonable schedule for applying any needed

conservation practices. It may be several years before all your practices are implemented or installed. In addition to controlling soil erosion, you can get assistance on other resource concerns such as pasture and woodland improvement, managing animal waste, wildlife habitat, irrigation water management, and stream bank protection.



Record of Cooperator Decisions

Field	Date	Narrative Record
		Cropland
1,2	2005	Conservation Crop Rotation (328) - CCHHHHH
1,2	2005	Contour Farming (330) - 2% Relative Row Grade
1,2	2005	Cover Crop (340) - Seed No Later Than 9/30 Each Year
1,2,3	2006	Nutrient Management (590)
1,2,3	2006	Waste Utilization (633)
1,2,3	2005	Residue Management, Mulch Till (329B)
1,2,3	2005	Pest Management (595)
		Farmstead
4	2005	Waste Storage Facility (313)
5	2006	Heavy Use Area Protection (561)

Here's An Example of How Your Conservation Plan Might Be Developed

You are a dairy farmer. You raise corn silage and hay. You moldboard plow and disk in the spring. You want to continue growing your own feed. There are several fields on your farm. After working the RUSLE₂ equation, you realize that excessive soil erosion occurs on a field. This field can serve as an example to show how the conservation planning process works.

Some options to reduce erosion – you could:

- farm on the contour instead of up and down hill, chisel plow instead of moldboard plow, and install a grassed waterway, which will stop the gully in the lower part of the field
- use no-till planting and install a grassed waterway
- change from silage corn to a haylage system
- add a close-grown crop (such as winter rye) to your corn silage management, chisel plow on the contour, and install a grassed waterway.