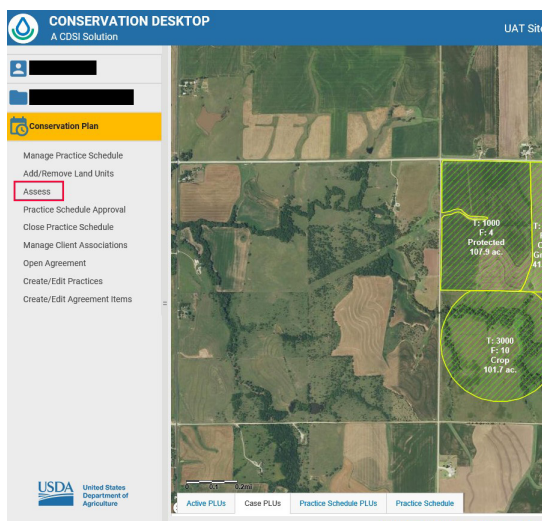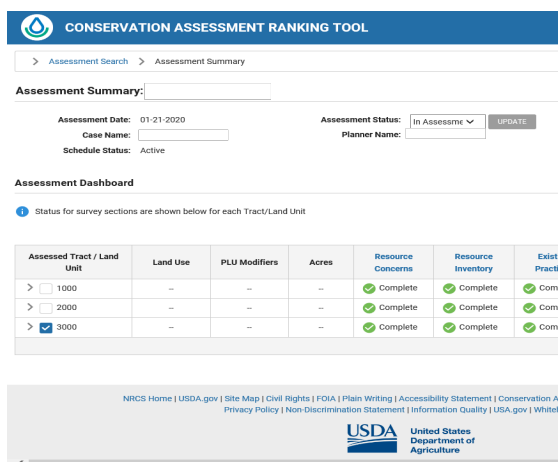# Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool

Overview

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) incorporates a program-neutral assessment with an integrated and efficient ranking tool to facilitate conservation delivery. Planners start in Conservation Desktop (CD) and select a client's practice schedule with at least one or more digitize planned land units (PLUs) to assess in CART. Within CART, the planners select resource concerns for assessment and will answer a series of resource inventory questions based on the land use, land use modifiers, and resource concerns selected, as well as note any existing conservation practices, to capture the existing conditions on the land unit. CART pulls geospatial data behind the scenes to support the field office staff's determination of the site vulnerability and existing conditions, as well as answer some of the resource inventory questions in CART. Planners then select conservation practices in CART to create an alternative plan to address resource concerns on the client's land. The assessment can then be moved forward to ranking where the planned conservation practices can be considered for funding from applicable ranking pools.

The Assess button in Conservation Desktop takes planners to CART

CART Objectives

- Streamline inventorying the land and assessing a client's operation

- Provide efficient conservation planning and ranking

- Reduce data duplication

- Increase time efficiency for both planners and producers

- Improve services to customers by increasing a planner's face to face time with clients

- Support program neutral planning that informs NRCS Programs in a consistent, integrated process

- Provide an adaptive learning framework

CART provides the following functionality for each office level at NRCS:

Field Level:

- Use geospatial data to support conservation planning with the client

- Assist a planner's ability to assess site vulnerability, existing conditions, and identify potential resource concerns on the site

- Evaluate planned conservation practice alternatives

- Allow the assessment of the 47 resource concerns, or a subset of them consistent with the progressive planning process

- Allow a planner to override a CART Assessment if they disagree with the CART results based on other assessment methods

- Document the outcomes of an assessment

- Store historical assessment information to support future planning efforts

- Determine all eligible ranking pools that support the implementation of the planned practices

- Automatically transmit assessment points into ranking pool points

- Rank the conservation practice(s) in an assessment

- Use geospatial data for ranking

- In the future, support completion of an Environmental Evaluation by automatically providing the assessment results and leveraging geospatial data to help asses special environmental concerns

State and National Level:

- Focus Farm Bill funding to the Agency's resource concern priorities

- Support local workgroups, state technical committees, and partners on prioritizing resource concerns for funding consideration

- Create national financial assistance ranking templates

- Create state financial assistance ranking pools based off the national financial assistance ranking templates

- Allow flexibility on the number of ranking pools needed to manage program funding

- Gain efficiencies by reducing the number of state ranking pools needed to manage program funding

- Capture information to prioritize program funding decisions

- Report outcomes of NRCS investments in conservation

- Produce aggregate data sets that can be used to improve future versions of the tool

Above: Resource Concerns are selected for assessment in CART

Below: Based on the Resource Concerns selected, the planner is prompted to answer existing condition questions for the site in the CART Resource Inventory

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