**Conservation Plan Development**

**Your Conservation Plan**

Through the planning process, you develop a written record of the management decisions and the conservation practices that are currently in use or planned for that operation; this is your Conservation Plan.

When you are ready to start developing a Conservation Plan, a Certified Conservation Planner can meet with you to discuss your long and short term goals and objectives while collecting information about your cropping system, livestock, nutrient and pest management, and existing conservation practices. This is also the time the planner will walk your farm to evaluate the existing resource base and begin developing alternatives that are compatible with your agricultural operation and will address the identified resource problems. The planner will also help you consider the effects a planned practice may have on a neighboring farm or parcel of land and help you identify what regulatory requirements apply to your operation.

**A Conservation Plan Includes:**

* Producer/landowner determined objectives and goals;
* An aerial photo or diagram of your fields;
* A soil map and soil descriptions;
* Resource inventory evaluation, which can include forage or crop production potential, livestock carrying capacity, soil loss estimates;
* A list and descriptions of your treatment decisions;
* The location and schedule for applying conservation practices;
* Plan of operation and maintenance of conservation practices and systems; and
* Specific items to meet regulatory or conservation program requirements.

**How a Conservation Plan Helps:**

**By working with a Certified Conservation Planner, you can develop a Conservation Plan to help you:**

* develop alternatives and identify strategies for implementing on-farm solutions,
* prepare for agricultural or market certifications,
* address regulatory requirements, and
* prepare for conservation program opportunities.

**The Decisions Are Up To You**

* You make the decisions. The Certified Conservation Planner will develop several good alternatives, but you ultimately decide what, when, and where. It’s your plan!
* Decisions are needed on both the uses of the land and its treatment. When you make a decision on land use (cropland vs. pasture or forest), you will need to consider how to treat each field to get the desired results. These treatments are known as conservation practices. Several practices may be used in combination to solve resource problems, and collectively are called a resource management system.
* The Certified Conservation Planner can help you understand how the conservation practices fit together in a resource management system, and what maintenance is necessary for continued effectiveness of the practice or system in the future.
* The planner will record your decisions and will help in scheduling and applying planned conservation practices.
* **The plan can be a guide for you for several years, and can be modified as your goals and objectives change.**

**Getting Started with the Planning Process:**

**The planning process generally begins in one of two ways:**

1. You may contact NRCS, the local Conservation District, or other public or private consulting service or organization to seek assistance; or
2. The local Conservation District, NRCS, or consulting service personnel may contact you to offer assistance.

At the outset of the conservation planning process, you begin by identifying overall conservation and production goals for the operation. A key part of the process includes evaluating existing conditions, including land cover, land uses, field operations, and natural resource concerns.

If you would like to pursue the conservation planning process, begin by contacting your local NRCS, Conservation District, or other state, federal and private entities for information about voluntary conservation assistance.

**Click on the following links for additional information about:**

* [Local NRCS offices](http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?service=page/CountyMap&state=PA&stateName=Pennsylvania&stateCode=42)
* [Pennsylvania Conservation Districts](http://pacd.org/) 
* [Other Pennsylvania Conservation Partnership members](https://prod.nrcs.usda.gov/contentcx/NRCS142P2_018169)
* [Public or Private Consulting Services and other Organization](http://techreg.usda.gov/)

[Learn how to put your Conservation Plan in Action](https://prod.nrcs.usda.gov/content/nrcs142p2_018085)

[Return to Conservation Planning Overview Page](https://prod.nrcs.usda.gov/content/nrcs142p2_018089)

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