



Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity

Indigenous Stewardship Methods Evaluation

CEMA 222

Definition

An evaluation of land uses, capabilities, and limitations with respect to Indigenous Stewardship Methods (ISM) that informs the conservation planning process.

Background

- 1) This CEMA is to assist agricultural producers gather knowledge about ISM suitable for land they manage.
- 2) ISM is information provided by an Indian Tribe, Tribal member, Native Hawaiian, or other Indigenous person uniquely reflective of their knowledge, experience, understanding, or observation relating to natural and cultural resources, practices, or actions. A variety of terms and definitions are used by knowledge holders, Indigenous people, Tribal organizations, and government bodies to refer to this body of knowledge or related concepts, including “Indigenous Knowledge,” “Traditional Ecological Knowledge,” and “Traditional Knowledge.”
- 3) ISM are owned by Tribes and Indigenous people.
- 4) ISM often constitutes sensitive information that may not be for public disclosure. Indian Tribes may have cultural or legal prohibitions or processes associated with the research of, documentation, or sharing of sensitive information.
- 5) Knowledge gathered from this CEMA will:
 - a) assist a participant develop a new conservation plan,
 - b) revise an existing conservation plan,
 - c) use conservation practices and activities to sustain biological, physical, cultural and spiritual systems; and
 - d) assist the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with completing its National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 106 compliance responsibilities including the identification, evaluation, assessment of Historic Properties.
- 6) The NRCS acknowledges its responsibility to ensure that information shared with the agency is maintained in compliance with the NHPA, including withholding from release any sensitive information about historic and cultural resources in accordance with the Act’s Section 304.

Applicable Land Uses

All NRCS-recognized land uses.

REQUIREMENTS

Qualified Individual Requirements

The NRCS strongly encourages participants to know the following Qualified Individual (QI) Requirements to ensure the person they hire is a good match for their needs and objectives.

The NRCS acknowledges the right of Tribal and Indigenous governing bodies to determine who may gather and provide ISM to complete this activity.

A QI for the Indigenous Stewardship Methods Evaluation (CEMA 222) must be designated by a Tribal or Indigenous governing body.

The NRCS and Farm Bill program participants will request a QI provide written confirmation of their designation by a Tribal or Indigenous governing body in order to ensure a participant receives service from QIs who have approval to provide this service. A letter, certificate, or written method is necessary for participants and NRCS to verify a QI has the trust and approval of a Tribe's or Indigenous culture's designation to provide the service described in this CEMA.

General Requirements

- 1) This CEMA includes the performance of work and documentation of the tasks, results, interpretations, and other activities described herein by a QI.
- 2) Prior to initiation of the CEMA, the QI must arrange a pre-work conference to ensure all parties understand the participant's objectives, required deliverables, and characteristics of the CEMA tasks.
 - a) The parties in the pre-work conference must include the participant, the QI, and the NRCS field office staff. The parties should agree whether they will join in-person or join via phone, web-meeting, etc.
 - b) If the participant will employ a TSP to implement a Conservation Planning Activity (CPA) or Design and Implementation Activity (DIA) that will be supported by results of this CEMA, it is recommended to invite them to the pre-work conference too.
- 3) A Qualified Individual may use any of the reference information, resource concerns, conservation practice standards and related documents served in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide for the state where this CEMA is performed. The FOTG home page hyperlink is: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>

Technical Requirements

- 1) Complete on-site visit(s). The QI must obtain permission to be on the land, prior to each site visit. Purposes of on-site visit(s) are to:
 - a) Meet the participant, refine the QI's understanding of the participant's short and long-term objectives for using ISM to achieve goals such as, but not limited to:
 - i) Increasing capacity for Indigenous Peoples to develop sustainable food systems.
 - ii) Maintaining, increasing, or restoring culturally significant plant species, or natural communities.
 - iii) Managing land to support fish and wildlife resources, or provide habitats for hunting, gathering and fishing.
 - iv) Protecting access to and use of sacred sites and cultural resources important to

Indigenous Peoples

- v) Supporting traditional cultural practices.
 - vi) Sustaining culturally significant gathering areas.
- b) Evaluate the land to become familiar with its:
- i) Current and historical use(s) and management.
 - ii) Soil resources.
 - iii) Water resources.
 - iv) Air resources.
 - v) Plant resources.
 - vi) Wild and domestic animal resources.
 - vii) Landscape features and viewsheds.
 - viii) Cultural and historic resources; and sacred sites.
 - ix) Disruptions to tribal traditional management and/or ecological processes that traditional practices rely upon or benefit from.
 - x) Infrastructure.
 - xi) Natural resource concerns and opportunities related to the participant's objectives.
 - xii) Other characteristics or features of the land, relevant to the participant's objectives, or to Indigenous people.
- 3) Document the dates and results of site visit(s) with recordings, written notes, and photographs, or sketches, or maps for sharing with the participant and a conservation planner, if appropriate.
- 4) Document measurements and data collected, or test results prepared during completion of this CEMA.
- 5) Gather knowledge about the land from designated representatives and other publicly available sources determined by the Tribe to be accurate sources of information, in order to identify:
- a) Indigenous land use and management activities, including agriculture, that are culturally appropriate for the land.
 - b) Locations that have cultural and/or spiritual significance beyond what is identified in records, including culturally significant and historic properties where they overlap with the purposes of this CEMA.
 - c) Historic conditions of the landscape and natural resources to provide reference conditions that can inform the land users' conservation goals and objectives, when possible.
 - d) Sites within the land that are well suited, or most capable of supporting indigenous agricultural and cultural practices.
 - e) Other ISM about the land that can be useful for the participant to receive.
- 7) Coordinate with the Tribal Historic Preservation Office, or Tribal Cultural Specialist for the purpose of identifying data for this CEMA and gathering data for NHPA, Section 106. Fees charged by a THPO for identification efforts are the program participant's responsibility.
- 8) Document results from gathering ISM with recordings, written notes, photographs, sketches, maps. Provide appropriate attribution to the knowledge providers.

- 9) Prepare written conclusions based upon the information gathered. To ensure accuracy, all the conclusions should be reviewed by the appropriate Tribal or Indigenous group prior to being shared. The Conclusions should contrast current conditions with the participant's desired future conditions; and describe how Indigenous Knowledge and methods may be increasingly applied to the land.
- 10) Provide sufficiently detailed written information for the participant and NRCS, or a Technical Service Provider chosen by the participant to subsequently incorporate the ISM knowledge in a conservation plan; or subsequently use NRCS conservation practices to sustain biological, physical, cultural and spiritual systems.

DELIVERABLES

The QI must provide documentation showing all the tasks indicated in the **General Requirements** section, the **Technical Requirements** section, and the following sections:

Cover Page

Cover page reporting the technical services provided by the QI. Cover page(s) must include the following:

- 1) CEMA name and number.
- 2) Participant information: Name, farm bill program name, contract number (QI obtains contract number from participant), land identification (e.g. state, county, farm, and tract number).
- 3) QI name, address, phone number, email, name of the Tribe or Indigenous group that approved your qualifications.
- 4) Attaching a copy of documentation for how the QI requirements for this CEMA are met.
- 5) A statement by the QI that services provided meet NRCS requirements, such as:

I certify the work completed and delivered for this CEMA:

- *Complies with all applicable Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws and regulations.*
- *Meets the general requirements, technical requirements and deliverables for this CEMA.*
- *Is consistent with and meets the conservation objectives for which the program contract was entered into by the participant.*
- *Addresses the participant's conservation objectives for this CEMA.*

QI Signature _____ *Date:* _____

- 6) A Participant's acceptance statement, such as:

I accept the completed CEMA deliverables as thorough and satisfying my objectives.

Participant Signature _____ *Date:* _____

- 7) A space for an NRCS reviewer to certify the agency's acceptance of the completed CEMA and, such as:

NRCS administrative review completion by:

Signature _____ *Title* _____ *Date* _____

- 8) Signatures and dates on the Cover Page may be electronic, or handwritten.

Maps

- 1) All maps developed for this CEMA must include:
 - a) Map title.
 - b) Participant's name.
 - c) Assisted By [QI planner's name].
 - d) Name of applicable conservation district, county, and State.
 - e) Date prepared.
 - f) Map scale.
 - g) Information needed to locate the planning area, such as geographic coordinates, public land survey coordinates, etc.
 - h) North arrow.
 - i) Appropriate map symbols and a map symbol legend on the map, or as an attachment.

Deliver Completed Work

The QI must prepare and provide the participant two sets all of the items listed in the **General Requirements**, the **Technical Requirements** and the **Deliverables** sections of this document.

- 1) One set is for the participant to keep.
- 2) The other set is for the local NRCS Office.
- 3) The QI may transmit a set of the completed work to the local NRCS Office, if their client has authorized it.

It is recommended to provide the NRCS field office an opportunity to review the CEMA deliverables, prior to asking for their acceptance.

References

NRCS General Manual Title 410, Part 405 - American Indians and Alaska Natives.

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/RollupViewer.aspx?hid=17072>

NRCS General Manual Title 180, Part 404 – Memorandum of Understanding Between USDI (BIA) and USDA (NRCS and FSA)

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=18905>

NRCS General Manual Title 420, part 401 - Cultural Resources (Archeological Historic Properties)

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=42622>

NRCS Handbook, Title 190, Part 601 - National Cultural Resources Procedures Handbook

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=42752>

National Park Service description of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tek/description.htm>

Memorandum from White House Office of Science and Technology and Council on Environmental Quality on Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Federal Decision Making (Nov. 15, 2021)

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/111521-OSTP-CEQ-ITEK-Memo.pdf>

NRCS, Indigenous Stewardship Methods and NRCS Conservation Practices Guidebook (July 2010)
<https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/va/IndigenousStewardship.pdf>

Traditional Knowledge and the Section 106 Process: Information for Federal Agencies and Other Participants
<https://www.achp.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/TraditionalKnowledgePaper5-3-21.pdf>

Frequently Asked Questions on Protecting Sensitive Information About Historic Properties Under Section 304 of the NHPA
<https://www.achp.gov/digital-library-section-106-landing/frequently-asked-questions-protecting-sensitive-information#:~:text=1..traditional%20religious%20site%20by%20practitioners>