



## Conservation Planning Activity

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### Grazing Management Plan

#### CPA 110

#### Definition

A site specific conservation plan that contains planned grazing related conservation treatment activities for one or more resource concerns.

#### Applicable Land Uses

Range and Pasture land. Also applicable to the following land uses if they are grazed: Crop, Forest, Associated Ag. Land, Other Rural Land.

#### REQUIREMENTS

##### General Requirements

This Conservation Planning Activity (CPA) involves a Technical Service Provider (TSP), hired by a Farm Bill Program participant, providing a conservation plan to address the management of the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals with the intent to achieve specific ecological, economic and management objectives.

This activity will meet the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) planning criteria for one or more of the plant, animal, water, air, and soil resource concerns. The overall conservation grazing plan must accomplish one or more purposes as described in the criteria and considerations for each conservation practice, as described in the Conservation planning process as outlined in the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH), steps 1-7. A summary of those seven steps is provided in [Appendix A, Conservation Planning Activity, General Requirements](#), at the end of this document. Do not overlook the General Requirements – they are important for this CPA's development.

State-specific conservation practice standards, specifications, and related technical guidance are provided in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Sections 2 and 4. The FOTG home page hyperlink is: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>

##### Technical Requirements

- 1) The TSP arranges a pre-work meeting between participant, TSP and NRCS field office in order to establish collaboration and address any questions among the parties.
- 2) The TSP maintains a written and date-ordered record of discussions with the participant that are related to this planning activity.
- 3) TSP conducts an on-site inventory of participant's planning area to observe the current land uses and land management systems in the operation.
- 4) TSP uses NRCS approved technology tools and protocols to assess resource concerns.

- 5) TSP develops a minimum of one conservation system alternative for at least one land use by land management system included in the operation (land units can be combined under one alternative system) that meet the producer's objectives and priorities.
- 6) TSP presents the alternatives developed to their participant to explain to them and obtain the participant's decision about what conservation practices to use, the practice location(s), and the schedule to guide sequential installation of conservation practices.
- 7) TSP produces conservation plan products (plan schedule, maps, and other useful supporting material) based on decisions reached in the previous item.

## DELIVERABLES

The TSP prepares all the following items to fulfill this CPA's requirements:

### Cover Page

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

- 1) CPA 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) TSP name, TSP number, TSP expiration date, mailing address, phone number, email address.
- 4) A statement by the TSP that services meet the CPA requirements, such as:

*I certify the work completed and delivered for this CPA:*

- *Complies with all applicable Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws and regulations.*
- *Meets the General and Technical Requirements for this CPA*
- *The planned practices are based on NRCS conservation practice standards in the state Filed Office Technical Guide where this CPA is provided.*
- *Is consistent with and meets the conservation goals and objectives for which the program contract was entered into by the participant.*
- *Incorporate alternatives that are both cost effective and appropriate to address the resource issue(s) and participant's objective(s).*

TSP Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 5) Participant's acceptance statement indicating:

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

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 6) A designated space for an NRCS reviewer to certify the agency's acceptance of the completed CPA.

*NRCS administrative review completion by:*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes and Correspondence

- 1) Provide notes, in date-order that:
  - a) Document the participant's objectives.
  - b) Document each interaction with the participant, results of that interaction, and the date of the interaction.
  - c) Document each site visit, its participants, the activity completed in the field, and results of each site visit.
  - d) Provide initials of the note-maker, if more than one person provides the assistance.
- 2) Provide copies of correspondence between the TSP and the participant relating to decision-making and completion of this CPA. For example, description of alternatives presented for evaluation and decision-making.

## Maps

Maps for this CPA must include, but are not limited to:

- 1) General location map of the planning area showing access roads to the location.
- 2) CPA map (this may consist of several maps to account for the entire planning area). This map will specifically include:
  - a) Boundary lines for the Planning Land Units (PLUs) with labels (name, number, or both). A PLU is a unique geographic area, defined by a polygon, which has common land use and is owned, operated, or managed by the same participant or participants. The PLU is the minimum unit for planning.
  - b) Land-use designation and any applicable land-use modifiers such as irrigation for each PLU, as appropriate. The NRCS-recognized land uses and land use modifiers are listed in the National Planning Procedures Handbook, Definitions section. Here is a link to the National Planning Procedures Handbook: <https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=44407>
  - c) Acreage for each PLU.
  - d) Location of sensitive resources and setbacks, if applicable.
  - e) Soil map units identified by field and interpretations or soil properties as defined by the state including drainage class and hydrologic group, ecological site and or plant community description that includes potential forage production; and soil health properties and interpretations.
  - f) Locations of planned and applied conservation practices.
  - g) If the planning area includes nonprivate lands, such as Federal or Tribal lands, a land status map must be included to display land ownership categories (Private, State Trust, BLM, Tribal, and Territorial, etc.).
- 3) Soil maps and other natural resource maps used to support the planning activity.
- 4) All maps developed for the CPA will include:
  - a) Map title.
  - b) Participant's name.
  - c) Assisted By [TSP 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.

## Conservation Plan

A record of the participant's decision, which includes:

- 1) A table, titled "Practice Schedule" indicating all of the following:
  - a) Tract Number to have practice(s) installed.
  - b) PLU (Field) number to have practice(s) installed.
  - c) Practice Code and Practice Name (Codes and Names are used for conservation practices, conservation activities, enhancements, and bundles) to be implemented,
  - d) Estimated Amount of each practice to be implemented, and the practice's measurement units.
  - e) Dates (month and year) the conservation activities are intended to be installed, or were previously installed.
- 2) The Practice Schedule is used in conjunction with a conservation plan map to document the participant's decision and vision for conservation implementation (see table 1).

Table 1. Practice Schedule

Tract Number	PLU (Field) #	Practice Code	Practice Name	Planned Amt	Practice Units	Planned Date
1000	3	382	Fence	10,560	Feet	February 2020
1000	3	382	Fence	5,280	Feet	March 2023
1000	3	528	Prescribed Grazing	24	Acre	April 2023

- 3) Brief description of the planned conservation practices to explain their use in the context of this plan (practice narratives).
- 4) Information supporting the participant's understanding of the planned conservation practices such as applicable "Conservation Practice Overview" sheets from the FOTG, or other prepared material.

## Resource Inventory and Assessment Documentation

Results from NRCS-approved resource assessment technology tools, that are appropriate for the resource conservation needs and participant objectives, to compare the benchmark condition with the planned alternative condition, including as applicable:

- 1) Any additional assessments, maps, and sketches resulting from the planning process used in preparation and arriving at the alternative selected in Part 4 under Technical Requirements.
- 2) Any photographs or documentation used to support the determination documented.
- 3) Document the effects of each Alternative on other resources concerns.

- 4) Considerations to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects on those unique resources and other soil, water, air, plants, animals (including livestock, fish, and wildlife), energy, or human concerns, as well as on special environmental considerations.
- 5) An evaluation of the alternative's effects on the participant's land use, capital, labor, management, risk, profitability, and public health and safety.

### **Deliver Completed Work**

The TSP must:

- 1) Prepare and provide their participant two sets of the items listed in Deliverables.
  - a) One set is for the participant to keep.
  - b) The other set is for sharing with the local NRCS Office.
  - c) The TSP may transmit a set of the Deliverables to the local NRCS Office, if their participant has authorized it. It is recommended to provide NRCS field office an opportunity to review the CPA deliverables, prior to asking for its acceptance.
- 2) Upload electronic copies of all the following items on NRCS Registry.

### **References**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Cultural Resources Handbook.

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

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Determining Indicators of Pasture Health (DIPH).

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=45118>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Field Office Technical Guide.

<https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (IIRH).

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/landuse/rangepasture/range/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Environmental Compliance Handbook.

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=39467>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Planning Procedures Handbook.

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=44407>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Range and Pasture Handbook.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/landuse/rangepasture/?cid=stelprdb1043084>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Range and Pasture Manual.

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=46773.wba>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria.

<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=45675>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National TSP Resources.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?cid=nrcseprd1417414>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National TSP Website.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Pasture Condition Score (PCS).

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/landuse/rangepasture/pasture/?cid=stelprdb1045215>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Jornada Experimental Range and New Mexico State University (NMSU). EDIT Database.

<https://edit.jornada.nmsu.edu/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Web Soil Survey (WSS).

<https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm>

## Appendix A - Conservation Planning Activity, General Requirements

### Grazing Management Plan

#### CPA 110

##### Overview

The Technical Service Provider (TSP) hired by a participant to complete this Conservation Planning Activity (CPA) is expected to complete conservation planning steps 1 through portions of 7 of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) 9 step conservation planning process, as outlined in the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH). Those steps are described below. The NPPH may be consulted for more detailed descriptions of the steps. NPPH is located at the following link: <https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=44407>.

##### Identify Problems and Opportunities (Step 1)

Visit with the participant to identify and document existing, potential, and perceived natural resource problems, opportunities, and concerns in the planning area. The identified problems and opportunities as well as the participant objectives guide the remainder of the planning process and are the basis for the purpose and need for action that are documented in NRCS Environmental Evaluation. This will include items such as soils, ecological sites, “alternative states from an ecological site description”, or forage suitability groups, where applicable, and discuss opportunities to maintain and/or enhance resource conditions for grazing lands.

##### Determine Objectives (Step 2)

Determine the participant’s planning objectives by developing an understanding with the participant of the desired future condition for the planning area, as compared to the existing conditions. This is the purpose for the participant to take action. It includes the desired resource uses, resource problem reductions, onsite and offsite ecological protection, and production concerns. As resources are inventoried, their interactions are analyzed, and alternatives formulated, objectives may need to be reviewed and modified.

Participant objectives may include one or more of the following:

- 1) Improve forage yield, quality, diversity, and persistence,
- 2) Meet livestock nutritional needs,
- 3) Maximize browse, forage and roughage yields,
- 4) Maintain or improve the forage-animal balance,
- 5) Improve production cost efficiency,
- 6) Maintain or Improve wildlife habitat,
- 7) Maintain or Improve riparian areas and water quality,
- 8) Prevent or reduce erosion,
- 9) Improve soil health,
- 10) Control or manage invasive plants,
- 11) Develop a managed livestock rotation strategy.

##### Inventory Resources (Step 3)

The resource inventory documents benchmark (current) conditions of natural resources in the

CPA planning area. The inventory documentation requirements and resource concerns to be evaluated specifically for each CPA are provided in the CPA's **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS** section. Use NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Sections 1 and 2, plus Web Soil Survey (WSS) and other helpful resources to support the inventory. In addition, each CPA requires the following inventory documentation as applicable:

- 1) General description of the enterprise/operation,
- 2) Document any previously installed or implemented conservation practice(s) and indicate whether the existing practice(s) is currently accomplishing the conservation practice purpose indicated in the NRCS conservation practice standard in the state's FOTG, Section 4,
- 3) Equipment, technology and management activities currently being used by the landowner,
- 4) Soils, climate, topography,
- 5) Environmentally sensitive areas in and around the planing area- for example riparian areas, cultural resources and historic properties, habitat for rare or protected species, and wetlands,
- 6) Highly erodible land or wetland compliance determinations associated to the planning land unit,
- 7) Pertinent Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws, regulations and policy, and
- 8) Identification of existing conditions through a resource inventory:
  - a) Consult ecological site descriptions (ESDs) as reference condition, where available.
  - b) Assess vegetative species diversity and condition by land use, ecological site and/or plant community forage potential production by using Pasture Condition Score (PSC) or Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health (IIRH) or Determining Indicators of Pasture Health (DIPH) for each alternative developed.
  - c) Determine animal inventory and acres available for grazing.
  - d) Document grazing history/grazing records (if available).
  - e) Assess current animal demand to available forage and feed.
- 9) After the prior steps, identity if/what you have learned about other relevant soil, water, air, plant and animal resource concerns.
- 10) Provide a landscape setting description explaining how surrounding management affects the property as well as how the landowner's actions impact their neighbors. Consider aesthetic quality, privacy, wildlife movement and habitat, noxious weeds, urban encroachment, wildland fire interface, if applicable.

#### **Analyze Resource Data (Step 4)**

Run applicable assessment tools and compare the current (benchmark) conditions with the desired future conditions to identify resource concerns that need to be addressed. Analyses and documentation requirements are provided in the **DELIVERABLES** section.

Analyses documentation will include at a minimum:

- 1) Benchmark conditions,
- 2) Results of assessment tools (as applicable), and
- 3) The need for conservation actions, in terms of a desired future condition,
- 4) NRCS resource concerns identified.

#### **Formulate Alternatives (Step 5)**



Develop a minimum of two alternatives. The first is a **no-action alternative** in which current management activities are assumed to continue. The second is an **action alternative** identifying a conservation practice or a system of conservation practices and management activities to address the identified resource concern(s). Additional action alternatives may be developed to identify different ways of achieving participant objectives. Alternatives may include an appropriate mix of structural conservation practices, such as fences, watering facilities, etc. and non-structural such as brush management, herbaceous weed treatment, prescribed burning, managed grazing, etc. Each action alternative must meet the participant's objectives and comply with Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws, regulations, and policies.

### **Evaluate Alternatives (Step 6)**

Evaluate the alternatives and describe the environmental and socio-economic effects associated with each alternative. Review with NRCS and the participant the analysis of the resource inventory and the evaluation of alternatives. This information will provide the participant with information needed to select their preferred alternative.

When evaluating the no-action alternative, provide information to the participant about what will occur if current management activities continue, and no new practices are implemented.

When evaluating conservation practice effects, the short and long-term effect on natural resources and the applicability and effect on special environmental concerns identified in Step-3 (Resource Inventory) must be documented. Include recommendations that will avoid or mitigate any adverse effects on soil, water, air, plants, animals (including livestock, fish, and wildlife), energy, or socio-economic concerns, as well as on special environmental concerns.

Prepare the following documentation, at a minimum:

- 1) Documentation of alternatives discussed and site level resource inventory and assessment data, and analysis used to formulate management alternatives.
- 2) Considerations to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects on those unique resources and other soil, water, air, plants, animals (including livestock, fish, and wildlife), energy, or human concerns, as well as on special environmental considerations, and
- 3) An evaluation of the alternative's effects on the participant's land use, capital, labor, management, risk, profitability, and public health and safety.

### **Make Decisions (Step 7)**

Document the participant's preferred alternative as a decision via a Conservation Plan Map and Practice Schedule.