



## Design and Implementation Activity

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### Transition to Organic Design

#### DIA 140

#### Definition

Design and Implementation Activity plan supporting transition to organic production that includes a combination of structural and management practices for an agricultural operation transitioning to become certified organic by USDA.

This Design and Implementation Activity (DIA) is developed for a participant to address one or more resource concerns on farms transitioning to certified organic production where related conservation activities and/or practices will be planned and implemented. The plan describes how to implement long-term goals through practices that direct farm development to provide for intended future uses.

#### REQUIREMENTS

##### General Requirements

A Design and Implementation Activity (DIA) assists a participant with implementing their conservation plan by providing site-specific instructions, requirements, plans, or specifications for putting conservation practices and enhancements on the land.

A DIA may involve providing assistance for a single conservation practice or a combination of structural, vegetative, or land management conservation practices, enhancements, and management activities.

Prior to initiation of the DIA, the Technical Service Provider (TSP) will schedule a conference with the participant and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office staff to ensure an understanding of the participant objectives (including practices to be covered by the DIA), required deliverables, and characteristics of the DIA tasks. The meeting between all parties may take place in person or electronically.

The participant and conservation planner have determined which practices a TSP will provide DIA assistance for. The TSP must have certification in NRCS Registry for each practice they will provide assistance for through this DIA. If not certified for a practice(s), a TSP can use a subcontractor who is a certified TSP for the practice(s). If there are no available certified TSPs, then that practice shall be removed from the scope of the participant's DIA.

DIA assistance is based on the participant's conservation plan and applicable conservation practice standards and related technical guidance provided in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). Each NRCS State Office publishes appropriate technical guidance and reference information in the state's version of the FOTG. DIA assistance must conform with the conservation practice standards included in FOTG, Section 4 for the state where the practice(s) are to be implemented. A TSP may use conservation practice supporting documents found in the applicable state's FOTG, Section 4 to facilitate delivery of appropriate information to the participant.

Examples of conservation practice supporting documents include statements of work (SOW), implementation requirements (IR), practice specifications (PS), standard drawings (SD), General

Specifications (GS), Construction Specifications (CS), Material Specifications (MS), and design support tools. The FOTG homepage hyperlink is: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>.

## Technical Requirements

### General Risk Assessment

Field evaluation and verification of soil conditions as noted in Web Soil Survey to identify sensitive areas, vulnerable soils (shallow to bedrock/karst; depth to groundwater); surface inlets, concentrated flow paths, surface water, tile outlets and wells.

### Erosion Risk Assessment

Planners must use current NRCS nationally approved erosion-prediction technology to assess the risk of erosion and transporting nutrients/pesticides from the field causing off-site degradation due to wind, water, and irrigation induced erosion.

### Additional Assessments

Assessments of additional resource concerns should be completed using the current applicable assessment tools e.g., Cropland In Field Soil Health Assessment Guide, Nutrient Risk Assessments, Windows Pesticide Screening Tool etc.

## DELIVERABLES

The TSP must provide documentation showing all the tasks indicated in the **Technical Requirements** section and the following sections to fulfill this DIA's requirements:

### Cover Page

The cover page must include the following:

- 1) DIA name and number.
- 2) Participant information: Name, farm bill program name, contract number (TSP obtains contract number from participant), land identification (e.g., state, county, farm, and tract number).
- 3) Farm identification:
  - a) Farm name, owner name, street address, and county/state.
  - b) Primary phone number of the participant.
  - c) List of all practice and/or scenario designs included in this plan.
- 4) TSP name, TSP number, TSP expiration date, mailing address, phone number, email address.
- 5) A statement by the TSP that services meet the DIA requirements, such as:

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

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

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

- 6) Participant's acceptance statement indicating:

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

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

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

NRCS administrative review completion by:

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

## Notes and Correspondence

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

## Implementation Maps

- 1) Maps for a DIA may be incorporated from a CPA-138 or equivalent plan, but must include these features:
  - 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.
- 2) Plan base 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, that 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) Acreage of each PLU.
  - c) Location of planned and applied conservation practices.
  - d) If the planning area includes nonprivate lands, such as Federal or Tribal lands, include a land status map displaying land ownership categories (Private, State Trust, BLM, Tribal, and Territorial, etc.).
- 3) Resource maps of the PLU
- a) Soils maps, and other resource maps as applicable.
  - b) An existing wetland delineation map, if any.

### **Design or Implementation Details**

- 1) Develop site-specific written instructions for implementing each planned conservation practice or activity included in the participant's DIA. Those instructions must:
  - a) Include, as a minimum, all items listed in each CPS "Plans and Specifications" section and the applicable Practice Specification (PS).
  - b) Include all items listed in the "Operations and Maintenance" section.
- 2) Statement of Work documents in a state's FOTG Section 4, include a Design section that lists deliverables needed for the participant's successful implementation.
- 3) Implementation Requirement documents in a state's FOTG Section 4 may be used to prepare and deliver site-specific conservation practice instructions, but are not required to be used.

### **Supporting Documentation**

Provide results of design tools, resource assessments, or other analyses that are required to meet the Criteria in the state's CPS and PS.

- 1) In-depth resource inventory, assessment, and analysis are used to formulate management alternatives. Use inventory plot data summarized with assessment information incorporated from a CPA 138 or equivalent plan, supplemented as necessary with site-level assessment information. Document findings on resource concerns, existing benchmark conditions, and special environmental concerns and provide descriptions and data summaries along with management recommendations in the Template.
- 2) If conditions warrant, provide a more detailed description than appears in a CPA 138 (or equivalent management plan). Describe benchmark (existing) conditions, past conditions, and any resource concerns or limitations associated with:
  - a) Protected species and cultural resources
  - b) Adjacent ownerships that present opportunities or limitations to management options
  - c) Recreation uses by the landowner
  - d) Access condition of roads, trails, landings, and stream crossings
  - e) Soil and site descriptions, including relevant soil interpretations, slope, topography, and aspect
  - f) Streams, wetlands, ponds, and lakes
  - g) Past management, harvesting, natural disturbances, and/or other land use history that has affected condition and/or growth potential
  - h) Grazing practices

- i) Potential for carbon sequestration
- j) Fish and wildlife species and habitat elements
- k) Risk of insect and disease infestation
- l) Noxious and invasive plant species
- m) Agroforestry opportunities
- n) Prescribed burning opportunities
- o) Wildfire risk (surface and crown fires)
- p) Other important features as determined by the TSP
- q) As applicable, describe how the following activities and environmental protections will be applied: permits needed, Best Management Practices for water quality, and monitoring/maintenance.
- r) Develop prescriptions for each practice identified in the preferred alternative and scheduled within a five-year timeframe. Include acres to be treated, and other information needed to select the appropriate payment scenario. Complete relevant portions of the State's Implementation Requirements.

### **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 DIA deliverables, prior to asking for its acceptance.
- 2) Upload electronic copies of all the Deliverables on NRCS Registry.

### **References**

Regional IPM Centers. A national umbrella site for the regional IPM centers

<http://www.ipmcenters.org/index.cfm/ipm-in-the-us/federal-ipm-coordinating-committee/>

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, National Organic Program, National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Cultural Resources Handbook

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

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Field Office Technical Guide

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

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/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=36483.wba>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National TSP Resources

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

USDA Organic Regulations

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic>

USDA Plants Database

[USDA Plants Database](#)