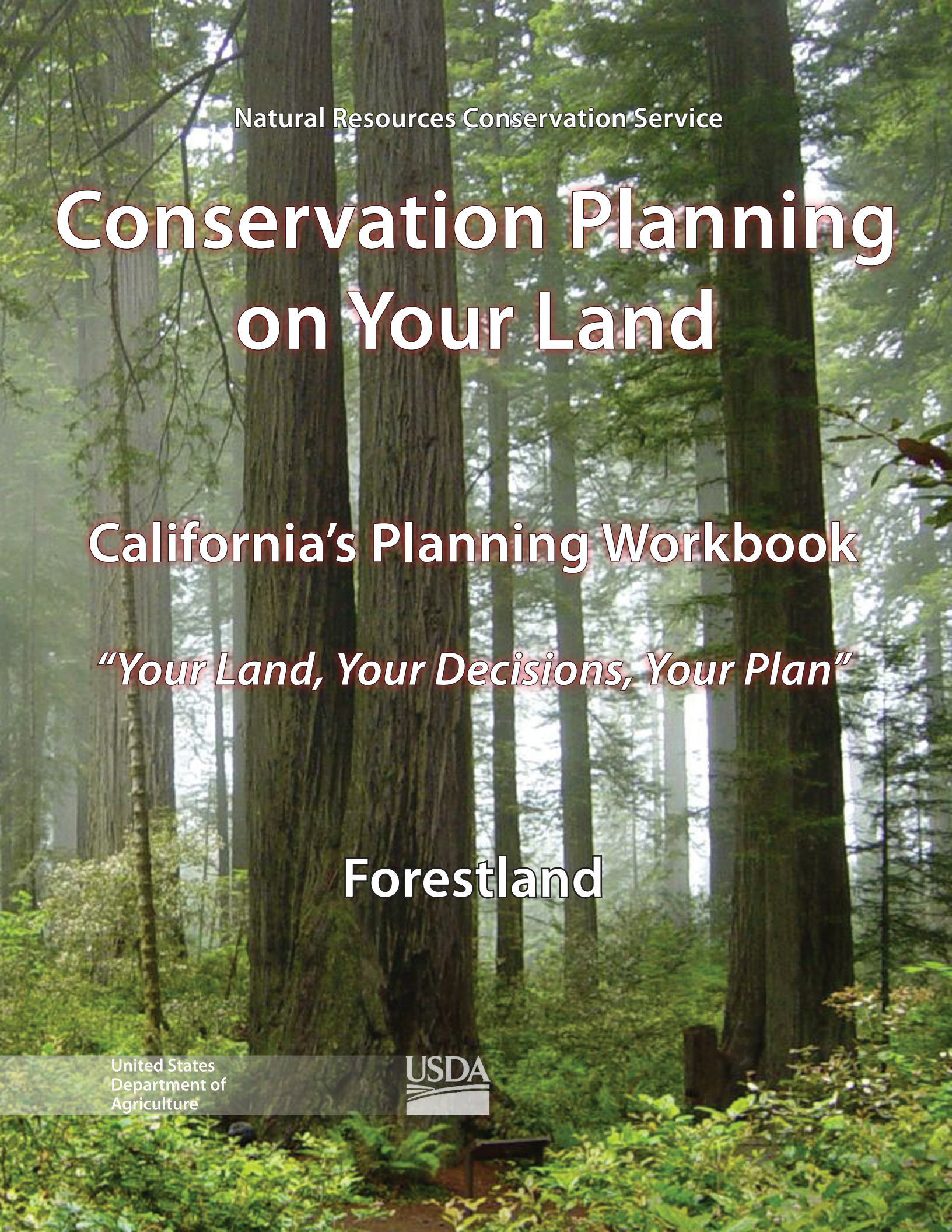

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Planning on Your Land

California's Planning Workbook

"Your Land, Your Decisions, Your Plan"

Forestland

United States
Department of
Agriculture

USDA

Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA

2014 Farm Bill Conservation Programs

Assisting California Forest and Woodland Owners

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that emphasizes voluntary, science-based assistance to help private forest landowners. The NRCS promotes and informs private forest landowners about forestry practices that can improve growth, reduce risk, and improve forest health. Many of these practices can be cost-shared through Farm Bill programs.

CONSERVATION PLANNING

The NRCS works with forest and woodland owners to develop a conservation plan customized to meet the owner's objectives for their land. The conservation plan will address resource concerns and propose improvements that can be voluntarily implemented on the landscape. Conservation planning provides direction to forest and woodland owners to achieve goals and improve natural resources. Landowners with a conservation plan may receive priority for Farm Bill funding.

HEALTHY FORESTS

Forest health is a very broad term. Many forests are both healthy and productive. However, a number of different concerns have been identified as major forestry problems in the west. These include fire and fuels, invasion of non-native and native pests, loss of biodiversity, air pollution, water quality and quantity, and degraded riparian forests.

Many forest stands have too many trees per acre (overstocked) or contain a disproportionate amount of shrubs in the understory. This competition for light, nutrients, and water leaves forests extremely susceptible to disease and insect damage, increases the risk of catastrophic fire, reduces productivity, and provides poor quality wildlife habitat as well as limited recreational opportunities. Other forests, for a number of reasons, have too few trees.

FUEL HAZARD REDUCTION

Forests and woodlands make up about 42 percent of California and half of that portion is in private ownership. Many of these acres are overstocked and at risk of wildfire damage. California and many of our neighboring states have experienced abnormally dry conditions. These adverse conditions have fueled severe wildfires that are challenging our natural resources.

Fire, a natural phenomenon, is a key to maintaining natural processes of most California ecosystems. Previously the majority of fires were of low intensity at a fairly short return interval that prevented the accumulation of large amounts of fuel. Under natural conditions, the more destructive wildfires of today were an exception and not the rule.

Destructive fires contribute to accelerated erosion/sedimentation, health hazards from smoke, property damage, lack of suitable habitat for wildlife, reduction of water quality/quantity, increased risk of flooding, and reduced recreational opportunities.

Present and past management activities have impacted a number of plant and animal species. Proper management of habitat provides shelter, cover, food, and transportation corridors for wild animals that inhabit an area during a portion of their life cycle.

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Conservation Planning on Your Land

This workbook will help you bring together the information you need to complete a conservation plan. The questions are designed to gather information about your land, objectives, and management. ***Although the information will be reviewed by a conservation planner, it is confidential and belongs to you. It will NOT be released to other agencies, groups or individuals.***

Forestland

Please take some time to answer the following questions as best you can. NRCS will assist you with any questions that you do not know. Feel free to use additional sheets, as desired, to answer questions.

If possible, please provide a map of your property.
Are there any easements on the property (brief explanation)?

_____

_____

_____

Are your property boundaries well defined? Yes ☐ No ☐

Current and historical land use(s). - ie: timber production, livestock, agriculture, recreation, mining, wildlife:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Total property acres: _____ Forestland acres: _____

Are there home sites on the property? Yes ☐ No ☐

What tree species grow on your land?

_____

_____

_____

Which tree species are dominant?

_____

Are there areas of your forest that you believe are overstocked (too many trees)? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are there areas of your forest that you believe are understocked (too few trees)? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are there areas on your property where brush species are dominant? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are there areas on your property that have: steep slopes ☐ moderate slopes ☐ shallow slopes/flat ☐

Describe the water resources on your property (e.g. rivers, creeks, ponds)

_____

_____

_____

Briefly describe any pest issues you are aware of on the property (indicators: yellowing foilage, dead trees, fading/dieback, insect activity, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are there stream crossings on your property? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are they: Fords ☐ Culverts ☐ Bridges ☐

Briefly describe any erosion issues you are aware of on the property (e.g. roads, skid trails, gullies).

_____

_____

_____

Do you have a current management/conservation plan? (ie: NTMP, THP, CFIP, Tree Farm, other):

_____

Date of last timber harvest, if known:

_____

Is there a Community Wildfire Protection Plan in the area? Yes ☐ No ☐

In the area of your property, are there any multi-landowner projects in progress? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please describe:

_____

Has your property been burned by a wildfire in the last 5 years? Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, acres burned:

_____

Is your property adjacent to public land? Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, describe:

_____

Do you actively participate in forest management work? ie. fuel load reduction Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you worked with a Registered Professional Forester (RPF)? Yes ☐ No ☐

What timeframe do you foresee completing your initial forest management goals?
1-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ longer? ☐

Do you have livestock that graze/browse in your forest land? Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes, what animals?

_____

Are there wildlife on/near your property that you are managing or would like to improve management for?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Please be aware that forest management work is sometimes limited to certain times of the year by weather and wildlife concerns. Also, permits may be required for certain work.

Goals and Opportunities

All conservation plans developed with NRCS are voluntary and begin with the unique goals of the landowner. What are some of your short-term and long-term goals for your land? (brief explanation)

Examples: timber production, aesthetics, family legacy, natural resources, livestock, wildlife habitat improvement, invasive species control, tree planting/restocking, wildfire safety/fuel load reduction, mining, home site development.

_____

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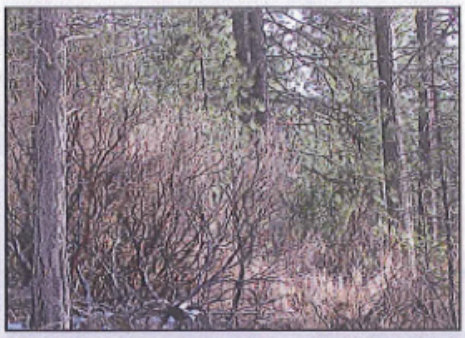

Without effective management, opportunistic understory plants compete with trees for water, nutrients and light.

ASSISTANCE

NRCS conservationists can assist forest landowners with management decisions as well as providing technical and financial assistance to improve forest health and reduce the impacts of catastrophic wildfires.

In more than 75 years of assisting forest and woodland landowners, NRCS has assembled a body of technical standards to help producers address a large number of natural resource concerns. Forest conservation activities, such as those found in the right sidebar on this sheet, exemplify the type of practices for which NRCS provides technical and financial assistance.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that promotes production and environmental stewardship as compatible goals. EQIP shares conservation costs with landowners to implement conservation practices on the landscape. This program has been used throughout California to help fund the type of forest conservation activities found on the right sidebar of this fact sheet. In addition, the Conservation Stewardship Program, a separate conservation program, can help forest landowners obtain even higher levels of environmental enhancements.

HOW TO APPLY

Persons interested in participating in Farm Bill programs should contact their local NRCS field office. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year. Eligible projects will be evaluated, prioritized and selected for funding as budget allocations permit. Submitting an application does not obligate the landowner or the NRCS to the enrollment of property or any future expenditure of funds.

For more information on NRCS Farm Bill conservation programs, visit:
www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/

Typical NRCS Conservation Forestry Activities

SITE PREPARATION
Treating areas to improve the site conditions for the successful establishment of trees.

TREE PLANTING
Establishing trees by planting seedlings or cuttings, direct seeding, or natural regeneration.

FOREST STAND IMPROVEMENT
Treating areas made to improve the composi-tion, structure, condition, health, and growth of even- or uneven-aged stands. Smaller trees in an immature stand may be removed to provide adequate growing space, accelerate diameter growth, and improve the form of the remaining trees.

CONTROLLING COMPETING VEGETATION
Reducing the numbers of shrubs in the understory to an acceptable level to reduce the competition between trees and shrubs. As the competition increases, soil moisture decreases, plants slow in growth, become weakened, and can prematurely die.

FUEL BREAK
Creating an area where the vegetation and debris have been reduced and/or modified to control or reduce the risk of the spread of fire.

SEDIMENT REDUCTION FROM ROADS AND TRAILS
Treating legacy erosion problems with long term erosion control features to reduce soil loss and sediment into creeks.

SLASH DISPOSAL
Treating woody plant residues created during forestry activities to reduce hazardous fuels, the risk of harmful insects and disease while maintaining air quality, improving access to forage for grazing and browsing animals, and improving soil organic matter.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
Providing and managing upland habitats and connectivity within the landscape for wildlife through treatment of the habitat. This enables movement, or provides shelter, cover, and food to sustain wild animals that inhabit the area during a portion of their life cycle.

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Notes:

To access the other Conservation Planning on Your Land fillable workbooks, click here

United States Department of Agriculture

For more information, contact your local NRCS office or visit the web at:
http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov

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