

PIA Conservation Planning Training Review #1

Four essential questions that every NRCS/Partner conservation planner *must* understand:

- Q1) What is a Resource Management System (RMS) Plan? See **A1** below.
- Q2) What's the difference between an RMS plan and a progressive plan? See **A2** below.
- Q3) What's the difference between a whole farm plan and a planning unit plan? See **A3** below.
- Q4) Which Resource Concerns do I inventory and evaluate during Steps 3 & 4 of the planning process? See **A4** below.

Revised policy came out in '13 & '14. Section A. below did not change, but Section B., 1, 2, & 3 were revised to address and clarify these questions.

General Manual, Title 180 – Conservation Planning and Application, Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy

409.1 Conservation Planning Overview

A. Conservation plans are the basis for all assistance NRCS provides to clients and the basic tool for clients to manage their natural resources. The greatest value comes by having the client engaged in every step of the planning process. Through participation, the client develops an understanding of the natural resource issues, interactions, and treatments necessary for resource sustainability.

B. The objective in conservation planning is to help each client attain sustainable use and sound management of soil, water, air, plant, animal, energy, and human resources. The purpose is to prevent the degradation of resources and to ensure their sustained use and productivity, while considering the client's economic and social needs.

(1) Conservation planning is conducted with the client, working progressively towards a resource management system (RMS) level of management. An RMS is a combination of conservation practices and resource management activities for the treatment of all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants, animals, energy, and humans that meets or exceeds the planning criteria in the FOTG.

(2) The conservation planning process is progressive when a client addresses only a limited number of resource concerns—or even a single resource concern alone—but does not achieve an RMS level of treatment. The rate of progress in moving to an RMS level will depend on the client's desires and constraints.

(3) A conservation plan is developed for one or more planning land units and documents the land manager's selected alternative.

A2) Progressive planning “addresses only a limited number of resource concerns,” but the key here is the “will depend” phrase.

A1) An RMS plan is a holistic plan, but the key here is the “all identified” phrase.

A3) A whole farm plan vs. planning unit plan is entirely “the land manager's selected alternative”, i.e., his/her choice.

For policy and NPPH, see: <https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

A4) This is the most important question. As conservation planners, is it our job to inventory and analyze *all* SWAPA+HE resource concerns? **YES! Absolutely.** After initially identifying problems & opportunities and ascertaining our client's objectives (Step 1 & 2 of the planning process), we are to use PIA Conservation Planning Technical Note #1 ([PIA Conservation Planning Technical Notes](#)) in the field to inventory and evaluate (Steps 3 & 4 of the planning process) *all* the resource concerns. **Why?** Because 1) a full resource concern presentation allows our client to decide whether they want a whole farm plan or just a plan on a portion of their land, per A3 above; 2) our client then decides, depending on their “desires and constraints,” between an RMS plan or a progressive plan, per A1 and A2 above, based on our presentation of “*all identified*” resource concerns on their land; 3) this too is the only way we can adequately conduct the required Environmental Evaluation and document all resource PIA concerns on the NRCS-CPA-52 form; and finally 4) as planners we are working *for* the taxpayer “to prevent the degradation of resources [on private lands] and to ensure their sustained use and productivity, while considering the client's economic and social needs,” as it says in B. above. Obtain client objectives, I&E *all* RCs, determine whole plan vs. a planning unit plan, determine RMS plan vs. progressive plan, complete CPA-52.