



United States Department of Agriculture



Strategic Plan Update FY2016-2018



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

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Mission, Vision & Conservation Processes

Mission

The agency's mission statement is *Helping People Help the Land*.

Vision

Productive working lands in harmony with a healthy environment.

Conservation Processes

Resource Inventory and Assessment



Technical Assistance and Technology Transfer



Conservation Implementation



Produce Lands, Healthy Environment



Message from the Chief

As I travel across the nation I see firsthand how our work is making an impact on the land and in the communities we serve. Through conservation, we're helping to promote economic growth and prosperity in rural America. We're fostering a conservation ethic, preserving cultural traditions and protecting livelihoods. We're ensuring the sustainability of our food and water supply for generations to come.

With ever increasing pressure on natural resources, America's farmers and ranchers will be challenged to maintain and boost agricultural productivity while conserving natural resources for the future. To do our part, NRCS will focus on four key priorities as a foundation for this work.

1. Deliver excellent and innovative service.

Our hallmark for over 80 years has been our ability to deliver high-quality technical advice and conservation solutions for America's farmers, ranchers, and communities. NRCS will build upon these successes using both proven and innovative approaches for achieving the best conservation results for our customers and taxpayers.

2. Strengthen and modernize conservation delivery.

NRCS customers are diverse and their agricultural systems and conservation needs are becoming more complex. NRCS will ensure it has the information technology, business operations, and skilled workforce to offer excellent service and timely, relevant, and cost-effective conservation solutions for our customers.

3. Enhance and expand NRCS's scientific and technical capabilities.

Our conservation science, technical standards, and decision support tools inform and drive on-the-ground solutions. NRCS will improve and expand on its scientific and technical capabilities—including the development, acquisition, dissemination, and use of tools and knowledge—to remain a leader in delivering conservation assistance for farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners.

4. Broaden our reach to customers and partners.

NRCS has significant experience working with farming, ranching, and private forestry operations to increase conservation adoption. We also have great opportunities to increase conservation access and implementation by identifying new customers, reaching out to new partners, and building local capacity to plan and deliver conservation solutions.

I'm confident we will continue to meet our mission and deliver results for agriculture, for the environment and for the American people we serve.



Jason Weller
Chief, Natural Resource Conservation Service



Strategic Goal 1

Deliver High-Quality Science and Technology for Voluntary Private Lands Conservation

Performance Outcomes

Conservation tools and technologies are accessible, relevant, and effective.
Customers gain tangible value through implementation of conservation plans and systems.

Objective 1.1

Enhance conservation planning with science-based tools and information.

Strategic Initiatives

- Deliver high-quality technical support and information for conservation decision making.
- Improve training, development, and delivery of technical expertise.
- Develop and use science-based tools for conservation planning.
- Develop and refresh technical standards to address new and emerging resource concerns.
- Facilitate and support innovative private-sector opportunities to encourage conservation adoption.

Performance Measures

Technical standards created or revised to ensure inclusion of latest science and technology.

2016: 34 / 2017: 34 / 2018: 34

Applicable Programs

- Conservation Technical Assistance Program (Above State)*
- Soil Survey*
- Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting*
- Plant Materials Program*



Strategic Goal 2

Promote Productive Working Lands and Healthy Waters

Performance Outcomes

Sustained, productive, working farms and ranches that optimize natural resource benefits.

Enhanced and sustained quality and quantity of water resources.

Objective 2.1

Improve soil health.

Objective 2.2

Enhance and improve water quality and water quantity.

Objective 2.3

Provide habitat for diverse and important fish and wildlife species.

Objective 2.4

Improve local air quality and increase carbon sequestration.

Strategic Initiatives

Help agricultural producers address and avoid the need for environmental regulations.

Address national and regional conservation needs and conditions.

Build resilience in agricultural operations.

Performance Measures

Cropland with conservation to improve soil quality (millions of acres)

CTA, 2016: 5.9 / 2017: 5.9 / 2018: 5.9

EQIP, 2016: 3 / 2017: 3 / 2018: 3

Non-federal land with conservation to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality (millions of acres)

EQIP, 2016: 1.1 / 2017: 1.1 / 2018: 1.1

Land with conservation to improve water quality (millions of acres)

CTA, 2016: 17.9 / 2017: 17.9 / 2018: 17.9

EQIP, 2016: 12 / 2017: 12 / 2018: 12

Grazing and forest land with conservation to protect and improve the resource base (millions of acres)

CTA, 2016: 13 / 2017: 13 / 2018: 13

EQIP, 2016: 13.9 / 2017: 13.9 / 2018: 13.9

Applicable Programs

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance



Strategic Goal 3

Protect and Enhance Productive Agricultural Landscapes

Performance Outcomes

High-quality, productive lands retained in agricultural uses.

Conserved and functioning landscapes.

Objective 3.1

Keep productive agricultural lands in the farming, ranching, and forest landscape.

Objective 3.2

Protect and manage wetland resources to create landscape scale benefits.

Strategic Initiatives

Enroll easements that help sustain agriculture lands and rural communities.

Performance Measures

Land protected by conservation easements

*ACEP, 2016: 110,000 acres / 2017, 130,000 acres / 2018: 65,000 acres**

Applicable Programs

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

**Authorized funding declined by 50 percent.*



Strategic Goal 4

Support Healthy Watersheds and Diverse Land Use Communities

Performance Outcomes

Economically viable and environmentally healthy rural communities.

Conservation of landscapes.

Objective 4.1

Protect communities and people through rehabilitated watershed structures.

Objective 4.2

Manage landscape-scale natural resource concerns to create enduring solutions

Strategic Initiatives

Restore and sustain benefits to communities and individuals delivered by priority watershed infrastructure.

Cooperate with local sponsors to implement watershed plans to protect, conserve, and restore land and water resources, and achieve community objectives .

Performance Measures

Number of watershed rehab supplemental plans authorized

2016: 37 / 2017: 23 / 2018: 20

Number of dam rehabilitations to be completed

2016: 15 / 2017: 12 / 2018: 13

Land with conservation to improve water quality (millions of acres)

Conservation Technical Assistance, 2016: 17.9, 2017: 17.9; 2018: 17.9

Environmental Quality Incentives Program, 2016: 12, 2017: 12, 2018: 12

Applicable Programs

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (PL-566)



Performance Outcomes

Management Initiative 1

Increase Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency

More effective operations that add value to conservation delivery
Greater efficiencies in the delivery of programs and services to customers

Objective 1.1

Strategic Initiatives

Strengthen and modernize the delivery of products and services.

Improve the delivery of services within mission support services: human resources, budget and financial, management, and procurement and property.

Ensure information technology infrastructures and applications are current, efficient, and support agency business needs

Identify and address critical gaps in employee knowledge, skills and abilities.

Create a climate of accountability and compliance through enhanced internal controls and monitoring.

Improve environmental and cultural resources compliance procedures.

Strengthen conservation planning to improve implementation.

Provide accurate and reliable agency data and analysis of agency programs and services.

Performance Measures

Contract implementation ratio

2016: 88 percent / 2017: 89 percent / 2018: 90 percent

Conservation quality ratio

2016: 86 percent / 2017: 87 percent / 2018: 88 percent

Objective 1.2

Strategic Initiatives

Advance budgeting and financial management capabilities.

Improve financial management and budgeting processes through sound principles, standards, and processes.

Invest in human resources and information technology systems to strengthen and streamline financial management performance.

Strengthen teams, tools, and processes to improve the agency's performance and resolve audit findings.

Performance Measures

Contract implementation ratio

2016: 88 percent / 2017: 89 percent / 2018: 90 percent

Conservation quality ratio

2016: 86 percent / 2017: 87 percent / 2018: 88 percent



Management Initiative 2

Create a Climate of Inclusion and Foster Diversity So Private Lands Conservation Will Thrive

Performance Outcomes

Improved EEO performance.

Positive American Customer Satisfaction Index score.

Diverse and engaged employees.

Objective 2.1

Strategic Initiatives

Expand opportunities to deliver conservation products and services to new and underserved customers.

Identify and address barriers that limit program participation.

Ensure that customers are treated in accordance with USDA's civil rights policy and applicable legal requirements.

Develop outreach strategies to reach traditionally underserved stakeholders and partners.

Promote programmatic efforts, such as Strike Force, to address conservation needs in economically distressed areas.

Develop and implement a strategic comprehensive communication plan.

Ensure civil rights are protected and responsibilities and duties comply with Title VI in program delivery.

Performance Measures

Percent regulatory complain findings on civil rights reviews
2016: 80 percent / 2017: 90 percent / 2018: 92 percent

Percent parity in program application and approval rates
2016: 93 percent / 2017: 94 percent / 2018: 96 percent

Objective 2.2

Strategic Initiatives

Employ, develop, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce.

Develop and deploy agency recruitment and employee development strategies.

Target focused recruitment efforts toward underrepresented populations including women, minorities, people with disabilities, and veterans.

Ensure civil rights are protected and employees comply with Title VII.

Ensure that employees are treated in accordance with USDA's civil rights poli-

Performance Measures

Contract implementation ratio
2016: 88 percent / 2017: 89 percent / 2018: 90 percent

Conservation quality ratio
2016: 86 percent / 2017: 87 percent / 2018: 88 percent





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