CART
Conservation Assessment & Ranking Tool

All information provided in this presentation is subject to change.

March 3, 2020
STAC Meeting
Why CART?

Conservation planning can be implemented successfully using current knowledge and technology, while recognizing that the art and science of natural resource management will continue to evolve and will never be complete or finished.

-National Planning Procedures Handbook
CART Objectives

Streamline, Efficiency & Customer Service
• Streamline Reading the Land
• Efficient Conservation Planning and Ranking
• Improve Services and Time to Interact with the Producers

Program Neutral Planning informs Programs in a consistent, integrated process.

Adaptive Learning Framework

CART will be fully integrated into Planning and Program Policy. No Duplication of Work
Conservation Desktop
Conservation Planning

Principles of Conservation Planning
(1) Consider the needs and capabilities of each acre within the plan
(2) Consider the client’s facilities, machinery, and economic situation
(3) Incorporate the client’s willingness to try new practices
(4) Consider the land’s relationship to the entire farm, ranch, or watershed
(5) Ensure the conservationist’s presence out on the land

Hugh Hammond Bennet
1. Identify Problems and Opportunities

CART Supports Client and Field Information with Geospatial Concern Evaluation. Planner will select resource concerns which present opportunities, concerns, or threats.
2. Determine Objectives

CART provides planning criteria to address the resource concerns and information about ecological site protection. Planner will identify Clients objectives for resource concerns which are evaluated and measured.
3. Inventory Resources

CART uses a resource inventory which incorporates geospatial data, existing practices, field visit, and client input.
CART assists planners to analyze resource data captured in the inventory and compare against the planning criteria.
CART assists planners illustrate various alternative practices and their effect on the resource concern. Additionally, CART will identify funding sources to offset the expense of conservation practices.
6. Evaluate Alternatives

CART will allow
- Comparison of effects from different conservation practices
- Multiple program ranking pools assessments for funding
- Collection, recording, and evaluation of environmental assessment information currently captured on the CPA-52.
7. Make Decisions

CART will integrate with Conservation Desktop (CD) to turn the client’s selected alternative into a written conservation plan.

CART will also support Farm Bill program ranking for funding decisions. When the client choose to use a program, CART completes ranking using the already collected resource inventory and geospatial information to the greatest extent possible.
8. Implement the Plan

Conservation implementation is conducted primarily through CD and FOTG, but all CART data is available to CD and design tools for future integration with existing implementation requirements.
9. Evaluate the Plan

CART provides data to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in meeting the conservation objectives.

CART will maintain resource and practice data to streamline development of any future updates to a client's conservation plan.

CART inventory and assessment values and methodologies will be updated as information is available each year.
CART Program Ranking

Local flexibility
Ranking pools will evaluate client’s applications for 5 main areas

1. Plan Assessment: Existing Vulnerability
2. Plan Assessment: Planned Practice Effects
3. Pool Priorities: Resource
4. Pool Priorities: Programmatic
5. Efficiency

The locally led process can have input on each of these
Site Vulnerability

Impacts risk level to meet planning criteria

Threshold

Low Risk
(15 Points)

Ex. Flat

Medium Risk
(50 Points)

Ex. Gently rolling

High Risk
(80 Points)

Ex. Steep Hillside
Existing Condition & Practice

Existing Condition | Existing Practice
-------------------|-------------------
0 Vulnerability Ranking Points (Flat) | 20 Vulnerability Ranking Points (Steep Hillside)
20 points Ex. Medium Residue Crop | 20 Vulnerability Ranking Points
10 points Ex. Filter Strip | 50 Vulnerability Ranking Points
15 Point Threshold (Flat) | 50 Point Threshold (Gently Rolling)
50 Point Threshold | 80 Point Threshold
80 Point Threshold
Planned Practices

Existing Condition

- 0 Vulnerability Ranking Points
- 15 Point Threshold (Flat)

Existing Practice

- 20 points
- Ex. Medium Residue Crop

Planned Practices

- 10 points
- Ex. Filter Strip

- 40 Points
- Ex. Cover Crop and Minimal Tillage

- 20 Vulnerability Ranking Points
- 50 Vulnerability Ranking Points

- 50 Point Threshold (Gently Rolling)
- 80 Point Threshold (Steep Hillside)

- 50 Point Threshold (Flat)
- 80 Point Threshold

Natural Resources Conservation Service

nrcs.usda.gov/
Efficiency

Plan Benefits from Applicable Practices

Average Annual Practice Cost

• Weighted to result in meaningful score as identified by the Conservation Program
Program Priorities

- Program specific priorities
- For example: Veteran Farmers and Ranches
Resource Priorities

• Resource specific priorities
• Can be adjusted for each fund pool based on partner and local feedback
• For example: Will conservation activities be maintained or implemented to provide diverse crop rotations, diverse cover crop mixes or native plant communities (rangeland and associated agricultural land) on the majority of all land uses?
CART Streamlining
Conservation Plan

10 practices
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
All Practices are unique

RP #1
Practices 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10

RP#2
Practices 1,2,3,4,5

RP#3
Practices 6,7

RP#4
Practices 8,9,10

One contract

One contract
Questions?

USDA is an equal employer, lender and provider.