



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CONSERVATION PLANNING

GREAT CONSERVATION STARTS WITH A PLAN.

EVERY PROPERTY HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE RESOURCE PROBLEMS OR CONCERNS. CREATING A CONSERVATION PLAN IDENTIFIES OPTIONS TO IMPROVE YOUR PROPERTY.

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION PLAN?

A conservation plan is a written record of resource concerns and conservation practices and systems you plan to implement and maintain on your property. This voluntary and confidential plan is your blueprint for the future of your land.



HOW CAN A CONSERVATION PLAN HELP ME?

Combining your farming or ranching skills with the science-based knowledge, skills and tools of a conservation planner can help you more effectively care for the natural resources on your land.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

There is no charge for NRCS assistance to help you develop a conservation plan.

WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

- Landowner-determined objectives and goals.
- Aerial photographs or diagrams and a conservation plan map for your property.
- Resource information, such as soil characteristics and descriptions, forage or crop potential, optimal stocking rates for livestock.
- Treatment decisions or grazing system plans for livestock.
- Location and schedule for conservation applications.
- Information sheets explaining how to carry out your specific management decisions
- Plan of operation and maintenance of conservation practices and systems.

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INVESTMENTS YOU MAKE

Some conservation practices, such as changing your crop rotation, may only require a change in the way you operate your farm. Other conservation practices, such as nutrient management and micro-irrigation may require additional investment. Having a conservation plan will help you qualify for other USDA financial assistance programs to cost-share some of these investments.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- You will protect your soil and your farm's productivity
- You will improve your soil's fertility and manage soil moisture
- You may attract desirable wildlife by creating nesting sites and winter cover
- You will identify immediate or potential resource problems that could lower your production.
- You can more readily comply with environmental regulations.
- You may be eligible for various USDA financial assistance programs to help you implement the actions identified in your plan
- You will be able to adapt to your changing operational goals.
- You will establish a reasonable schedule and timeline to apply chosen conservation practices.
- You can save time, labor and energy.
- You will make your farm or ranch a better place to live for you and your family.

UPDATING YOUR PLAN

After you have made your decisions and the conservation plan is complete, you will receive your copy. Another confidential copy will remain on file at your NRCS office. Changes in markets, weather or technology may cause you to reconsider some of the choices made in your plan. If something happens that would force you to change your decisions, you need to revise your plan. Contact your local NRCS office to discuss any changes you propose.

GET STARTED...

It's up to you, as the private landowner, to decide on the best ways to improve productivity, sustainability, and profitability of your property. For many people, conservation planning serves as a fundamental starting point for maintaining and improving natural resources on their land.

The professionals at your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office provide free assistance to help you develop or refine your conservation strategy. We'll help you develop a conservation plan that meets the unique needs of your land and your life.

Contact an NRCS office for more information and to schedule an in-person or phone appointment with your conservationist.

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