

Conservation Planning

The first step to managing natural resources on the landscape



What is a Conservation Plan

A conservation plan is a written record of the management decisions you plan to use and maintain on your farm. With advice from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), you select the best combination of conservation practices to meet both natural resource needs and individual land management goals.

The conservation plan combines your land management skills with NRCS science-based technology to help ensure:

- Clean water
- Clean air
- Quality soil
- Abundant wildlife
- Healthy environment
- Energy conservation

NRCS conservation planning assistance is provided free of charge.

“Before any work is done, each farm or ranch is carefully analyzed, both as a piece of land and as a business enterprise.” Hugh Hammond Bennett, first chief of the Soil Conservation Service

What is included in a Conservation Plan

Your decisions are recorded in a conservation plan, which becomes a road map for better natural resources management.



Your road map includes:

- Your determined goals and conservation decisions
- Aerial photograph of the land
- Soils map, soil descriptions, and other resource inventory data, such as forage or crop production potential
- Location and schedule for applying conservation practices and systems
- Maintenance information for installed conservation measures
- Detailed information on how to carry out your specific management decisions

Conservation planning is complex and dynamic. Successful conservation planning requires not only a high level of knowledge on the part of the planner, but also the use of professional judgment. Planning by its nature is both progressive and adaptive over time.

Benefits of a Conservation Plan

A conservation plan ensures that the land’s unique natural resources are managed in the best possible way, while maintaining sustainability and productivity.

Additional Benefits:

- May help you comply with environmental regulations
- Adapt to changing farm operational goals
- Establish an implementation schedule that fits your timetable and resources
- During the planning process, learn of USDA programs that could help you meet your land management goals

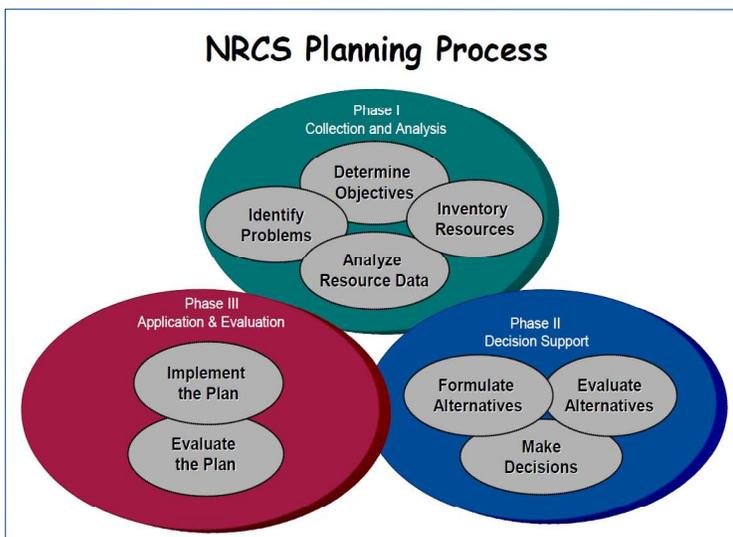
Conservation Road Map

NRCS uses a nine step planning process to provide assistance to customers to develop a conservation plan.

1. Identify Problems and Opportunities Initial opportunities and problems are first identified while working with the customer.
2. Determine Objectives The customer identifies their objectives, while the planner guides the process so that it includes the customer's needs and values, the resource uses, and on-site and off-site ecological protection.
3. Inventory Resources Natural resource, economic, and social information for the planning area is collected to further define problems and opportunities, develop alternatives, and evaluate the plan.
4. Analyze Resource Data The planner studies the resource data and defines existing conditions for all the identified natural resources, including limitations and potentials for the desired use.
5. Formulate Alternatives Alternatives are formulated that achieve the customer's objectives, solve identified concerns, and take advantage of opportunities to improve or protect resource conditions.



6. Evaluate Alternatives Alternatives are evaluated to determine their effectiveness in addressing the customer's problems, opportunities, and objectives.
7. Make Decisions The customer selects their preferred alternatives and works with the planner on practice implementation.
8. Implement the Plan The customer implements the selected alternatives. The planner provides the land manager with detailed practice implementation information.
9. Evaluate the Plan The planner evaluates the effectiveness of the plan in solving the resource concerns and works with the customer to make adjustments as needed.



For More Information

To learn more about conservation planning or to request assistance from an NRCS Certified Conservation Planner, contact the NRCS office in your local USDA Service Center or visit www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov.

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