

Glossary

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| Adaptive Management | The process of using monitoring, evaluation, and experimentation to provide information to adjust resource management decisions as needed. Adaptive management is closely linked to planning step nine and is essential for continuous improvement of the resource base. |
| Alley Cropping | The planting of rows of trees and/or shrubs (single or multiple) at wide spacing, creating alleyways within which agricultural crops or horticultural crops are produced. The trees may include valuable hardwood veneer or lumber species, nut or other specialty crop trees/shrubs, or desirable softwood species for wood fiber production. |
| Alternative System | A conservation system that is presented to a client during the planning process as one of multiple alternatives to address resource problems/opportunities. When a client decides which of the offered alternative systems will be implemented, the selected alternative becomes the planned system. |
| Alternatives | A set of one or more options provided to the client to solve resource problems or address opportunities and achieve proper management of the resources. |
| Application | Installing planned conservation practices, management measures, and management systems on the land. |
| Basal Area | The cross sectional area of the stem or stems of a plant or of all the plants in a stand. It is usually expressed in square feet per acre. Herbaceous and small woody plants are measured at or near the ground level; large woody plants are measured at breast or other designated height. Basal area is one way to determine stand density. |
| Benchmark condition | The present condition or situation that is used as a point of reference to measure change in resource conditions resulting from conservation treatment. In addition to the benchmark condition, other points of reference are sometimes used for discussion and comparison purposes, especially in an area wide conservation planning situation, i.e., forecasting the resource conditions expected at some point in the future by maintaining current levels of resource management and treatment. |
| Canopy Closure | A measure of continuous cover of branches and foliage formed collectively by adjacent tree crowns. It is measured using the percentage of the ground covered by a vertical projection of the outermost perimeter of the natural spread of the foliage of plants. Used to map and stratify stands of vegetation and as a measure of protection of a site or stream. |
| Case File | The record of resource information, decisions, and technical assistance for a specific client. A case file is established and maintained in the NRCS field office for each client where NRCS is |

providing continuing technical assistance on a planning unit. The case file will be maintained electronically. Information not amenable to electronic format will be maintained in hard copy under the client's name.

Case Studies

Documents that record the effects of conservation along with the motivations that led to the adoption of the practices and systems (if representative of a farming or ranching community, they can become part of the FOTG, Section V, Part B). There are three types of case studies: 1) A comparison of the "before and after treatment" conditions on a single site, 2) A comparison of two separate but comparable resources and land use situations (sites) on different farms or even on the same farm (i.e., one site with and one without treatment), and 3) A simple recording of farmer experiences with treatment on a single site regardless of the earlier conditions.

Client

An individual, group or unit of government that is the recipient of NRCS technical assistance. Examples of clients include persons, groups, Tribes, corporations, organizations, conservation districts, and units of government.

Conservation Effects Process

A process that supports the NRCS planning process. It uses worksheets, client case studies, and other technologies to document and estimate effects of benchmark systems and resource management systems, evaluate impacts, and gauge advantages and disadvantages to help the end user make informed conservation decisions.

Conservation Forestry

Conservation planning and application on forest land and the integration of forest technology on other land uses.

Conservation Management Unit (CMU)

A field, group of fields, or other land units of the same land use and having similar treatment needs and planned management. CMU is a grouping by the planner to simplify planning activities and facilitate development of resource management systems. A CMU has definite boundaries, such as fence, drainage, vegetation, topography, soil lines, or land use.

Conservation Plan

A record of the client's decisions and supporting information, for treatment of a unit of land or water as a result of the planning process, that meets FOTG quality criteria for each natural resource (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) and takes into account economic and social considerations. The plan describes the schedule of operations and activities needed to solve identified natural resource problems, and take advantage of opportunities, at a resource management system level. The needs of the client, the resources, and federal, state, and local requirements will be met.

Conservation Planning

The activity of NRCS and others in helping a client use the planning process, which is intended to result in a conservation plan or an areawide conservation plan.

Conservation Practice

A specific treatment, such as a structural or vegetative measure, or management technique, commonly used to meet specific needs in

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| | <p>planning and implementing conservation, for which standards and specifications have been developed. Conservation practices are contained in the FOTG, Section IV, which is based on the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP).</p> |
| Conservation Practices Physical Effects (CPPE) matrix | <p>The matrix in the FOTG, Section V, that gives the physical effects of many conservation practices on soil, water, air, plants, and animals.</p> |
| Conservation System | <p>A combination of conservation practices and resource management for the treatment of soil, water, air, plant, and/or animal resource concerns.</p> |
| Conservation Treatment | <p>Any and all conservation practices, management measures, and works of improvement that have the purpose of solving or reducing the severity of natural resource use problems or taking advantage of resource opportunities.</p> |
| Cultural Resources | <p>Evidence of activities and accomplishments of people including remnants of past cultures and some unique resources associated with present day cultures. The most common are sites, buildings, structures, landscapes, and objects that have scientific, historical, or archaeological value.</p> |
| Customer Service Toolkit | <p>The Customer Service Toolkit (CST) is a software package for use in the conservation planning process to facilitate the development, presentation, and dissemination of information by Service Center field staff working in the field or in the office.</p> |
| Decision maker | <p>An individual, group, unit of government, or other entity that has the authority by ownership, position, office, delegation, or otherwise to decide on a course of action.</p> |
| Desired Future Condition | <p>Desired future condition is a quantitative or qualitative expression of an ecological, economic, or social condition one is attempting to achieve. It is the goal to compare with the predicted outcomes of alternative implementation options. A desired future condition should include at least one indicator and a target value for each indicator in order to quantify or qualify the condition.</p> |
| Desired Plant Community | <p>The plant community wanted by the client as an outcome of conservation planning to achieve specific objectives. Typically, plant establishment or management is used to progress from the existing plant community to the desired plant community.</p> |
| DBH or Diameter at Breast Height | <p>Tree d.b.h. is outside bark diameter at breast height. Breast height is defined as 4.5 feet (1.37m) above the forest floor on the uphill side of the tree. For the purposes of determining breast height, the forest floor includes the duff layer that may be present, but does not include unincorporated woody debris that may rise above the ground line.</p> |
| Ecological Site Description | <p>A written description of various group-level interpretations for soil components that behave similarly and, where necessary, include component-level interpretations for individual soil components.</p> |

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| Effects | The anticipated or experienced results of applying one or more conservation treatments on a planning unit in a particular resource setting. They include both on-site and off-site results of applied conservation treatments. They are measures of a level of outcome and may be expressed in ecological, economic, or social terms. |
| Environmental evaluation | A concurrent part of the planning process in which the potential long-term and short-term impacts of an action on people, their physical or social surroundings, and nature are evaluated and alternative actions explored. |
| Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG or eFOTG) | The official NRCS guidelines, criteria, and standards for planning and applying conservation treatments (General Manual 450, Part 401) http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/ |
| Follow-Up | The act of maintaining contact with the client to provide timely assistance in implementing decisions, keeping current with new technology, encouraging continued implementation, updating objectives and decisions in a conservation plan, and determining the conservation effects experienced. |
| Future Without Treatment or Future Projected Condition | The ecological, economic, or social condition(s) that is expected to exist in the future if no change is made in the current use, management, or treatment regarding one or more resources. This is sometimes referred to as the “no action” projection. |
| Guidance Documents or guide sheets | Documents contained in the FOTG, Section III. They are examples of RMS options to treat the most commonly identified resource problems/opportunities for each locally applicable major land use. |
| High-grading | A harvesting technique that removes only the biggest and most valuable trees from a stand and provides high returns at the expense of future growth potential. Poor quality, shade-loving trees tend to dominate in these continually high-graded sites. |
| Impacts | The difference between the anticipated effects of alternative treatment in comparison to existing or benchmark condition effects. Differences may be expressed by narrative, quantitative, visual, or other means. Impacts are used as a basis for making informed conservation decisions. |
| Implementation | The act of installing planned conservation treatment and management measures that are documented in plans and case files. |
| Indicator | The description or measurement of a resource concern that, when observed periodically, indicates or demonstrates trends. Directly linked to indicators are target values which identify a specific quantitative or qualitative estimate for the desired state of the resource concern. |
| Land Use | A term used by NRCS to identify the client’s intended use of the land. The two designations of land use are the official NRCS designation and the client land use designation agreed-to by the client and planner. |

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| National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) | The 1970 Act that requires federal agencies to consider the effects on the environment of proposed federal actions. This Act established the requirement for conducting environmental evaluations and for the preparation of environmental assessments and environmental impact statements. |
| Objectives (client) | Objectives are quantitative or qualitative statements of desired future conditions as determined by the client. |
| Off-Site | Locations outside the area on which conservation treatment is being considered. Also refers to areas outside the planning unit that should be considered for potential impacts. |
| On-Site | Locations within the area on which conservation treatment is being considered. |
| Planned System | The conservation system selected for implementation and described in the plan document. |
| Planner | A person, qualified by training and experience, who effectively assists the client in completing the planning process. |
| Planning Unit | A planning unit is generally the entire operating unit, but can be a group, or groups, of fields with similar land use and management (see Conservation Management Unit) in which the decision has been made to initiate the planning process. A field is normally the smallest increment for planning resource management systems or practices. However, in rare instances a subfield (a field within a field - for example, the drainage area into a waterway and the outlet area below the waterway) may be appropriate. The planning unit must be large enough to encompass the area that influences, and the area that is directly impacted by, the resource management system or practice being planned. |
| Plan Revision | Action needed as a result of significant changes in one or more of the conservation systems defined in the conservation plan. This may be caused by changes in land use, changes in technology, changes in the set of practices included in the system, a change in the land units treated by the system, etc. The product is a revised plan. |
| Plant Community | Assemblage of plants currently existing at a specified site. Typically, a plant community will have a relative consistent composition and production which differentiates it from other plant communities. Some plant communities will be found intricately mixed with other plant communities at the same site. |
| Practice | Same as Conservation practice. |
| Practice Narrative | A brief non-technical description of the planned practice. |
| Progressive Planning | The planning process is progressive when a client is ready, willing and able to make and implement some, but not all of the decisions necessary to achieve an RMS level of management. The rate of progress in moving to an RMS level will depend on the client's desires |

and constraints.

Quality Criteria

A quantitative or qualitative statement of a treatment level required to achieve an RMS for identified resource considerations for a particular land area. It is established in accordance with local, state, and federal programs and regulations in consideration of ecological, economic, and social effects.

Record of Cooperator Decisions

A part of the conservation plan and case file documents that contains the decisions for the CMU(s).

Resource Analysis Tools

Acceptable tools for conducting resource analysis. Many of these are described in detail in discipline handbooks, such as the National Forestry Handbook, National Range Handbook, and the Water Quality Indicators Guide: Surface Waters, NRCS-TP-161. Includes computer programs and models to assist the planner in assembling data and predicting resource conditions. These tools can be used to assemble and analyze resource information gathered during the inventory process.

Resource Concern/Consideration

Elements of the natural resources that may be sensitive to change by natural forces or human activity. These elements directly impact the conservation planning process. A comprehensive list of resource elements is found on the Conservation Practice Physical Effects matrices in the FOTG.

Resource Management System (RMS)

A combination of conservation practices and resource management, for the treatment of all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants, and animals, that meets or exceeds the quality criteria in the FOTG for resource sustainability.

Resource Problem

The condition related to one or more resources that does not meet the minimum acceptable condition levels as established by resource quality criteria shown in the FOTG, Section III.

Riparian Forest Buffer

Created or maintained area of trees, shrubs and grass adjacent to water bodies.

Risk Management

Risk management is the process of identifying potential risks from various courses of action or non-action, gathering pertinent information relative to the risk, and then taking appropriate action to eliminate or minimize the risk as much as possible.

Shade Intolerant

Trees and shrubs that cannot thrive in the shade of larger trees and shrubs.

Shade tolerant

Trees and shrubs that thrive in the shade of larger trees and shrubs.

Silvopasture System

A system that combines trees with forage and livestock production. The trees are managed for high-value saw logs and at the same time provide shade and shelter for livestock and forage, reducing stress and sometimes increasing forage production. In plantations of conifers or hardwoods for timber or Christmas trees, managed grazing provides added products and income. Some nut and fruit orchards may also be

grazed.

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| Site Index | A relative measure of forest site quality based on the height (in feet) of the dominant trees at a specific age (usually 25 or 50 years, depending on rotation length). Site index information helps estimate future returns and land productivity for timber and wildlife. |
| Site-Specific Practice Effect | The expected effect that a particular conservation practice has on defined resource problems/opportunities in a site-specific situation. This data represents the planner's refinement of more general effects shown in the CPPE Matrix in the FOTG, Section V. |
| Soil Map Unit | A collection of areas defined and named the same in terms of soil components or miscellaneous areas, or both. |
| Stand Composition | A description of the species types, distribution and representation of stand age and stand size classes within a stand. |
| Stand Density | A description of the number of trees, basal area, or volume per acre in a forest stand compared with a desired level for balanced health and growth. Most often used in comparative expressions, such as well-stocked, poorly stocked, or overstocked. |
| System | See Conservation System. |
| System Narrative | A description of the existing, proposed, or planned conservation practices and management measures associated with specific land units for a client and business. The description defines how well the system meets quality criteria, if at all. Alternative, planned, and completed systems should meet quality criteria specified in the FOTG. Benchmark systems may not meet FOTG specifications; deficiencies can be noted in the description and system evaluation records. |
| Target Value | Identifies a specific value [qualitative and/or quantitative] to be used in conjunction with an indicator. |
| Technical Assistance | Help provided by NRCS, and employees of other entities or agencies under the technical supervision of NRCS, to clients to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to natural resource use. |
| Values | Ideals, customs, attitudes, and beliefs used to judge the impacts of conservation treatments as favorable or unfavorable. Includes individual client values as well as collective values of groups and society as a whole. |
| Windbreak/Shelterbelt | Plantings of single or multiple rows of trees or shrubs that are established for environmental purposes. |
| Zig-zag Transect | A simple and rapid forest land inventory system that is used to determine average tree diameter, range of tree diameters, stocking rates (trees per acre), stand composition, and stand condition (health). |