# Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition Plan Criteria
# Practice/Activity Code (138) (No.)

## 1. Definition

A "Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" is a conservation activity plan documenting decisions by producers/growers who agree to implement a system of conservation practices which assist the producer to transition from conventional farming or ranching systems to an organic production system. The Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition" will:

a. At a minimum address and achieve the planning criteria for the NRCS resource concerns for soil erosion, water quality, and plant condition. Other resource concerns can also be addressed based on the land user objectives.

b. Develop the linkage between the resource concerns addressed to the National Organic Program requirements for organic farming. This will assist the grower to develop their Organic System Plan (OSP) as defined in the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) Standards (www.ams.usda.gov/nop).

c. Comply with federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations and permit requirements.

d. Document the producer's objectives and decisions for practice implementation during the transition period.

**Note:** The plan can help support a producer's efforts to become a certified operation. However, this plan is not a replacement for an Organic System Plan (OSP) as required by the National Organic Program.

## 2. The following are "planning considerations" for the planner to consider during the conservation plan development process for organic operations or those operations transitioning to organic:

- Identification of natural resource concerns to be addressed
- Producers objectives and goals related to organic production
- Fertility, Soil Quality and Erosion Control (NOP Part §205.203 and §205.205)
- Cover crops and cover crop management, hedgerows, and/or artificial structures for beneficial insects, pollinators, bats, and raptors or other diversified plantings in annual and perennial crops;
- Consideration of wildlife-friendly cover crops;
- List of planned nutrient applications (incorporated, foliar, soil inoculants, compost);
- Results (as appropriate) for: soil tests, tissue tests, microbiological tests, crop quality testing;
- Method and frequency of fertility management monitoring;
- Methods of erosion control and documentation:

- Erosion prediction printouts for before and after the planned system using approved erosion prediction tools such as RUSLE2 and/or WEPS when applicable.
- Crop rotation (NOP Part §205.205)
    a. Practices to maintain or improve soil organic matter content;
    b. Practices to manage deficient or excess nutrients and support nutrient cycling;
    b. Provide for pest management in annual and perennial crops;
    c. Address erosion control.
- Pest Management (NOP Part §§205.206)
    a. Substances used for controlling insects or disease;
    b. Biological controls (including encouraging and managing bats and raptors);
    c. Pest control materials and reason for use;
    d. Synthetic pesticides used in or around facilities where organic products are stored;
    e. Beneficial predators and parasites;
    f. Pollinator habitat and pollinator protection.
- Locations of sensitive resource areas to include:
    a. Rivers, streams, drains, surface waters, coastal waters, wetlands, wells, groundwater, drains, grassed waterways and buffers;
    b. Sensitive plant species and/or essential fish and wildlife (including invertebrates) habitat (on and off-site), and food plots;
    c. Drinking water sources.
- Livestock (NOP Part §205.236 to §205.239)
    a. Livestock, poultry, breeds, gender, numbers, hatch or purchase dates;
    b. Crops grown for organic livestock feed;
    a. Livestock Feed - access to pasture for all ruminants;
    b. Drinking Water Source;
    c. For operations producing both Organic and Non-organic livestock, the separation between organic and non-organic livestock;
    d. Manure Management - Storage and application techniques, application rates, number of acres manure applied to, and when applied.
- Biodiversity - conservation plants, habitat for birds, pollinators, bats, beneficial insects, natural areas restored or protected, and wildlife friendly farm practices

**3. Transition to Organic Farming Plan Criteria**

This section establishes the <u>minimum criteria</u> to be addressed in the development of Transition to Organic System Plan developed by a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP).

**A. A completed the "CAP_138_Cropland_Template.dotx" template provided for the Cropland Acres and/or the "CAP_138_Grazing_Template.dotx" provided for the grazing acres. The templates include the following required items**:

Background and Site Information Element

- Name of owner/operator;
- Farm location and mailing address of the grower;
- Soils Map and soil map units descriptions using the Web Soil Survey http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm as a minimum printout the Soil Report > AOI Inventory> Map Unit Descriptions
- Digital Conservation plan map with:
    1. Streams, surface waters, surface drainage, and wetlands on or adjacent to site
    2. Property lines
    3. Required setbacks
    4. Field boundaries, name/number, acres, and land use
    5. Map scale
    6. Structural practices located on Map
    7. Legend
    8. Grower Name, County, State
- Total acres of the plan
- Producer's Objectives and Goals
- Resource evaluations for soil erosion, soil quality, water quality, plant condition, and other local concerns identified and identified with the applicable NOP requirement for each identified resource concern. *(See Attached - NRCS Resource Concern NOP Reference Tables for Cropland and Grazing)*
- Planned conservation practices to address soil erosion, soil quality, water quality, plant condition, and other local resource or human concerns; and schedule of practice application.
- Document in general terms the source of plant nutrients to be used, their rates, methods of application, and timings of application. This documentation is not considered a full nutrient management plan. If a full nutrient management plan is needed then a qualified nutrient management specialist should develop the nutrient management plan;

**B. Document the planned conservation practices to address the identified resource concerns. For each planned practice (1) identify the field(s) or location within a field a practice is to be applied, (2) the amount of the practice to be applied, and (3) the scheduled year to apply the practice. For the following practices develop the appropriate specifications to implement the conservation practices in the appropriate Jobsheet or Implementation Requirements** *(Implementation Requirements documents are new for 2013 and replace the term Jobsheets used in previous years)* **document found in Section IV of the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide for the respective state.**

| Code | Practice Name |
|---|---|
| 314 | Brush Management |
| 328 | Conservation Crop Rotation |
| 340 | Cover Crop |
| 511 | Forage Harvest Management |
| 528 | Prescribed Grazing |
| 512 | Forage and Biomass Planting |
| 550 | Range Planting |
| 345 | Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till |
| 346 | Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till |
| 329 | Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed |
| 585 | Stripcropping |

**C. References**

- USDA National Organic Program (NOP - www.ams.usda.gov/nop)
- California Certified Organic Farmers (http://www.ccof.org/)
- USDA NRCS Field Office Technical Guide http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//efotg_locator.aspx , Select State, Select Section 4 Conservation Practices
- ATTRA Organic Documentation Forms, Organic Crop and Livestock Workbooks (http://www.attra.org/)

**4. Deliverables for the Client – a hardcopy of the plan that includes:**

- Complete Hardcopy of the client's plan *("CAP_138_Cropland_Template Sept 2012.dotx" template provided for the Cropland Acres and/or the "CAP_138_Grazing_Template Sept 2012.dotx" provided for the grazing acres)* with appropriate practice specifications (Jobsheets or Implementation Requirements) for the planned practices listed above.
- Soils Map and soil map units descriptions using the Web Soil Survey http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm as a minimum printout the Soil Report > AOI Inventory> Map Unit Descriptions

- Resource assessment results (wind and water erosion, soil quality, water quality, plant condition, water quantity, and others identified resource concerns that may be needed) – complete in the template or add printouts from assessment tool (RUSLE2 or WEPS)
- For all practices not listed above (not requiring a Jobsheet or implementation requirements) document when the practice will be applied, the amount/extent, and field number in the respective "Plan Template". For structural or point/type practice locate the planned location on the conservation plan map.
- Digital Conservation plan map with;
  a. Streams, surface waters, surface drainage, and wetlands on or adjacent to site
  b. Property lines
  c. Field Boundaries, name/number, acres, and land use
  d. Map scale
  e. Structural practices located on map
  f. Legend
  g. Grower Name, County, State

**5. Deliverables for NRCS Field Office:**

- Complete Hardcopy and electronic copy of the client's plan and supporting documents.
- Soils Map and soil map units descriptions using the Web Soil Survey http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm as a minimum printout the Soil Report > AOI Inventory> Map Unit Descriptions
- Resource assessment results (wind and water erosion, soil quality, water quality, plant condition, water quantity, and others identified resource concerns that may be needed) – complete in the template or add printouts from assessment tool (RUSLE2 or WEPS)
- Digital Conservation plan map with;
  a. Streams, surface waters, surface drainage, and wetlands on or adjacent to site
  b. Property lines
  c. Field Boundaries, name/number, acres, and land use
  d. Map scale
  e. Structural Practices Located on Map
  f. Legend
  g. Grower Name, County, State

evaluate each of the **3 primary resource** concerns associated with this CAP and list those fields that DO NOT meet the minimum treatment level. Not all resource concerns listed apply or occur on all farms. For those resource concerns that do not apply indicate using a "NA" in the comments. Conservation practices that the producer makes a decision to apply shall be listed in the **Schedule of Planned Conservation Practices table.** All assessment and measurement data should be provided. Other resource concerns can be addressed in the plan if the producer is interested in addressing them.

| RESOURCE CONCERN ASSESSMENT FOR CROPLAND | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **NRCS Resource Concern** | **Description of Concern** | **NOP Regulation Practice Standard(s)** | **Minimum Treatment Level** | **Measurement & Assessment Tool** |
| **SOIL EROSION - Sheet, rill** | Detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash, irrigation runoff or wind that degrades soil quality | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.205 Crop rotation practice standard | Soil loss per RUSLE2 is ≤ T + 1 ton | Attach RUSLE2 Printout for each field |
| **SOIL EROSION - Wind erosion** | Detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash, irrigation runoff or wind that degrades soil quality | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.205 Crop rotation practice standard | Soil Loss per WEPS is ≤ T + 1 ton | Attach WEPS Printout for each field |
| **SOIL EROSION - Concentrated flow erosion** | Untreated classic gullies may enlarge progressively by head cutting and/or lateral widening. Ephemeral gullies occur in the same flow area and are obscured by tillage. This includes concentrated flow erosion caused by runoff from rainfall, snowmelt or irrigation water. | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.205 Crop rotation practice standard | Concentrated flow erosion is stabilized | In field observation |
| **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADTIONS - Organic Matter Depletion** | Soil organic matter is not adequate to provide a suitable medium for plant growth, animal habitat, and soil biological activity | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.205 Crop rotation practice standard | Soil condition index (SCI) per RUSLE2 is ≥ 0.0 | RUSLE2 printout with SCI calculation Printout for each field |

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| **INSUFFICIENT WATER - Inefficient use of irrigation water** | Irrigation water is not stored, delivered, scheduled and/or applied efficiently | • 205.200 General | • Water is scheduled and applied efficiently<br>• State established criteria is met | • Irrigation Schedule<br>• State established criteria |
| **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION - Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters** | Nutrients - organic and inorganic - are transported to receiving waters through surface runoff and/or leaching into shallow ground waters in quantities that degrade water quality and limit use for intended purposes | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.205 Crop rotation practice standard | • Nutrient applications are based on soil and/or tissue tests and nutrient budget for realistic crop yields<br>• Nitrogen & Phosphorus loss risk assessments are acceptable | Describe and attach N & P assessments |
| **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION - Plant productivity and health** | Plant productivity, vigor and/or quality negatively impacts other resources or does not meet yield potential due to improper fertility, management or plants not adapted to site<br><br>As an example this concern addresses pollinators, beneficial insects, wind erosion, and excess soil deposition that influence plant condition | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.205 Crop rotation practice standard | Plants are adapted to the site, managed to meet realistic production objectives identified by the client, and do not negatively impact other resources. | • Site observation and documentation of applicable practices<br>• Client-identified yield objectives<br>• Crop Damage Tolerance Tables from WEPS<br>• Plant ID field guides and pollinator guides to assess diversity |

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| **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION - Excess Pest** | Excessive pest damage to plants including that from undesired plants, diseases, animals, soil borne pathogens, and nematodes<br><br>As an example, this concern addresses invasive plant, animal and insect species | • 205.206 Crop pest, weed, and disease management practice standard | • Pest damage to plants does not exceed economic, environmental thresholds or other client-identified criteria<br>• Plant pests, including noxious and invasive species are managed to eradicate, control or minimize spread | • Client interview<br>• Site observation and documentation of applicable practices<br>• Available risk assessment tools for invasive species<br>• Field guides for plant, insect or disease pests<br>• PLANTS Database |

fields that DO NOT meet the minimum treatment level. Not all resource concerns listed apply or occur on all farms. For those resource concerns that do not apply indicate using a "NA" in the comments. Conservation practices that the producer makes a decision to apply shall be listed in the **Schedule of Planned Conservation Practices table.** All assessment and measurement data should be provided. Other resource concerns can be addressed in the plan if the producer is interested in addressing them.

| RESOURCE CONCERN ASSESSMENT FOR GRAZING SYSTEMS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Resource Concern** | **Description of Concern** | **NOP Regulation Practice Standard(s)** | **Minimum Treatment Level** | **Measurement & Assessment Tool** |
| **SOIL EROSION - Sheet, rill** | Detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash, irrigation runoff or wind that degrades soil quality | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.240 Pasture practice standard | Soil loss per RUSLE2 is ≤ T | Attach RUSLE2 Printout for each field |
| **SOIL EROSION - Wind erosion** | Detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash, irrigation runoff or wind that degrades soil quality | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.240 Pasture practice standard | Soil Loss per WEPS is ≤ T | Attach WEPS Printout for each field |
| **SOIL EROSION - Concentrated flow erosion** | Untreated classic gullies may enlarge progressively by head cutting and/or lateral widening.<br><br>Ephemeral gullies occur in the same flow area and are obscured by tillage.<br><br>This includes concentrated flow erosion caused by runoff from rainfall, snowmelt or irrigation water. | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.240 Pasture practice standard | Concentrated flow erosion is stabilized | In field observation |

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| **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADTIONS - Organic Matter Depletion** | Soil organic matter is not adequate to provide a suitable medium for plant growth, animal habitat, and soil biological activity | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard | • Soil condition index (SCI) per RUSLE2 is > 0.0<br>• Pasture Condition Score - plant cover ≥ 4<br>• Pasture Condition Score - plant residue ≥ 4 | • RUSLE2 printout with SCI calculation for each field<br>• Pasture Condition Score Card |
| **INSUFFICIENT WATER - Inefficient use of irrigation water** | Irrigation water is not stored, delivered, scheduled, and/or applied efficiently | • 205.200 General | • Water is scheduled and applied efficiently<br>• State established criteria if applicable are met | • Irrigation schedule<br>• State established criteria |
| **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION - Excess nutrients in surface and ground waters** | Nutrients - organic and inorganic - are transported to receiving waters through surface runoff and/or leaching into shallow ground waters in quantities that degrade water quality and limit use for intended purposes | • 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard<br>• 205.240 Pasture practice standard | • Plant Condition Score - plant cover ≥ 4<br>• Plant Condition Score - concentration areas ≤ 3<br>• Plant Condition Score - livestock concentration areas ≥ 4<br>• Nutrient applications are based on soil and/or tissue tests and nutrient budget for realistic crop yields | • N & P Risk Analysis Tools<br>• MMP - Manure Management Planner<br>• Approved nutrient management planning tools<br>• Pasture Condition Score |

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| **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION - Plant productivity and health** | Plant productivity, vigor and/or quality negatively impacts other resources or does not meet yield potential due to improper fertility, management or plants not adapted to site<br><br>This concern addresses pollinators, beneficial insects, wind erosion, and excess soil deposition that influence plant condition | • 205.202 Land Requirement<br>• 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard | • Plant Condition Score - desirable plants ≥ 3<br>• Plant Condition Score - plant cover ≥ 4<br>• Plant Condition Score - plant vigor ≥ 4<br>• Plants are adapted to the site, meet production goals and do not negatively impact other resources. | • Pasture Condition Score<br>• Forage Suitability Groups reports |