

SECTION III-C-1

ALTERNATIVE CONSERVATION SYSTEMS (ACS)

An Alternative Conservation System (ACS) is a combination of practices that substantially reduce soil erosion on Highly Erodible Land. All ACS practices are to meet requirements of practice standard and specifications found in the Vermont Field Office Technical Guide Section IV when applied.

Alternative Conservation Systems are available for selection by every farmer unless the farmer is converting native vegetation (forest), or permanent hayland or pasture which has no cropping history. The goal in the selection and application of an ACS is to install conservation practices which achieve the highest level of erosion control when a Basic Conservation System (BCS) is impractical, not socially acceptable, or not cost effective.

ACS's are developed for specific soil conditions and crops. If it is identified that a landowner can not meet the BCS essential treatment level due to economic or social conditions, then one or more ACS's should be presented as additional conservation alternatives. The justification for the ACS must be documented in the Conservation Assistance Notes within the client's conservation plan folder. ACS's should provide for an orderly transition to a Basic Conservation System in the future. Follow-up should be made after implementation of an ACS to determine whether the identified social or economic conditions have changed, thereby allowing development of a BCS. All ACS's soil loss is calculated with RUSLE (Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation).

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A. ESSENTIAL TREATMENT

The minimum level of essential treatment for an ACS is the application and or installation of conservation practices that meet the following criteria: the system will result in soil loss which is at or below 2 times the allowable soil loss for the predominant HEL soil map

unit for the field (2T). In many cases, requirements for 'substantial reduction' in erosion will require soil loss to be below 2T (see Table 1). In addition, ephemeral gully erosion will be controlled to the established acceptable level as defined in Resource Quality Criteria for RMS-Soil (Section III-B).

When Are Alternative Conservation Systems Applicable?

(For definitions of ‘Substantial Reduction’ and ‘Substantial Increase’ in erosion see Exhibits 1 And 2)

SECTION III-C-2

Table 1

ALTERNATIVE CONSERVATION SYSTEMS (ACS)

IF the conservation system was developed and implemented...	AND the field had.....	THEN complying producers must implement and maintain a system.....
Prior to July 3, 1996	cropping history prior to December 23, 1985,	That does not allow soil loss that exceeds 2 times the sustainable soil loss tolerance level for the predominant HEL soil map unit for the field, or that meets the requirements for substantial reduction in erosion (see NFSAM 512.10c).
	no cropping history prior to December 23, 1985, and was converted from native vegetation (Sodbuster- Woodland)	That is an approved basic conservation system (BCS), or does not result in a substantial increase in erosion (see VT NFSAM Supplement page 512-4a) in any year that an agricultural commodity is planted or the land is considered planted.
	no cropping history prior to December 23, 1985, and was converted from non-native vegetation (Sodbuster - Pasture and Hayland)	That does not allow soil loss that exceeds 2 times the sustainable soil loss tolerance level for the predominant HEL soil map unit for the field, or that meets the requirements for substantial reduction in erosion (see NFSAM 512.10c).
After July 3, 1996	Cropping history for any year prior to December 23, 1985,	That meets the requirements for substantial reduction in erosion , not to exceed 2 times the sustainable soil loss tolerance level for the predominant HEL map unit for the field.
	No cropping history prior to December 23, 1985, and was converted from native vegetation. (Sodbuster- Woodland)	That does not result in a substantial increase in erosion. (see VT NFSAM Supplement page 512-4a) These fields must be seeded to permanent vegetation.
	No cropping history prior to December 23, 1985, and was converted from non-native vegetation. (Sodbuster - Pasture and Hayland)	That is an approved basic conservation system (BCS). These fields will be planned to tolerable soil loss levels (‘T’).

** The Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation must be used for all soil loss calculations.

Rows highlighted in yellow indicate when an Alternative Conservation System is applicable.