

SECTION III-C-2

BASIC CONSERVATION SYSTEMS (BCS)

A Basic Conservation System is a practice or combination of practices that, as a minimum, provides for the reduction and/or maintenance of soil loss on Highly Erodible Land (HEL) to tolerable limits and conserves wetlands.

The objective in the planning and application of basic conservation systems is to meet, as amended, the minimum requirements of the Food and Security Act (FSA) of 1985. A basic conservation system that meets the requirements of the FSA may differ from a resource management system in that it deals only with erosion control for highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland conservation.

A producer may want to redefine a field(s) to reduce the number of

acres that will require treatment to meet the HEL provisions. As part of the conservation planning process NRCS can provide assistance in redefining fields. It will be the producers' responsibility to work out the details of redefining fields with the Farm Service Agency.

During the process of developing a basic conservation system, attention will be given to providing the producer with sound alternatives. The alternatives should give producers a chance to consider the most cost-effective treatment that meets their objectives and also provides for compliance with the Food Security Act.

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A. ESSENTIAL TREATMENT

The minimum level of essential treatment for a basic conservation system is that which when applied, results in soil loss at or below tolerable levels for HEL. In developing a basic conservation system, sheet, rill, and ephemeral gully erosion must be controlled to the established acceptable level as defined in Resource Quality Criteria for RMS –Soil (Section III-B).

As necessary, wetland determinations are conducted on the farm unit in order to maintain wetland compliance. Wetland determinations should be requested prior to the undertaking of any hand-disturbing practices. Appropriate practices and/or mitigation must be employed for wetland areas that will be disturbed.

Basic conservation systems are developed by the producer and conservation planner utilizing

current conservation practices found in Field Office Technical Guide Section IV.

Typical conservation practices used in Vermont to achieve BCS include but are not limited to: 328-Conservation Crop Rotation, 340-Cover and Green Manure Crop, 557-Row Arrangement, 362-Diversion, 412-Grassed Waterway, 586- Field Stripcropping, 329-Residue Management (No-Till).

B. ADDITIONAL TREATMENT

By definition, a basic conservation system deals only with the erosion control needs of the resource base and wetland conservation. For additional treatment, guidelines for the development of resource management systems (RMS) should be consulted.