Washington Planner's Guide
(106) Conservation Activity Plan
Forest Management Plan

Refer to required items in the National Criteria along with the following guidance for the State of Washington. Italicized sections are quoted directly from the National criteria.

1. Definitions

This Planner's guide is to assist the Applicant, Technical Service Provider (TSP) and NRCS Field Office in the interpretation of the National Criteria and help the TSP in the preparation of the Conservation Activity Plan (CAP106) Forest Management Plan (FMP). It will address critical elements that must be included and additional considerations acceptable for inclusion to meet participant's objectives.

The National Criteria can be found on the Washington NRCS Website within the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), in Section III under the Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) Technical Criteria.

"A forest management plan is a site specific plan developed for a client, which addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied."

CAP106 is developed by a Technical Service Provider, who is registered and certified on the TechReg website. Each forest management plan is developed for and specific to the client's land. Canned or generalized plans are not acceptable. A variety of templates may be used (see Section **6. Definitions of Forest Stewardship Plan and Forest Management Plan (106)**) as long as the criteria within the National Criteria and this planner's guide are met**.** Here in Washington State we encourage the use of the Washington State Integrated Forest Management Plan Guidelines (WA-IFMP), because of its acceptance by many of our partners such as WA DNR Forest Stewardship programs, Tree Farm Certification and Department of Revenue.

The CAP106 is designed to be compatible and useful for the delivery of EQIP and other Farm Bill programs. However, a CAP106 Forest Management Plan (FMP) does not have to be implemented through EQIP or any other Farm Bill program. The plan belongs to the client and the implementation process and funding will be directed by the client.

Having a CAP106 Forest Management Plan does not mean that everything within the CAP106 will be eligible for reimbursements through a Farm bill program. There may be practices within the FMP that: 🌲 do not have NRCS practice standards available, such as harvesting methods for timber products ; 🌲🌲 do have a NRCS practice standard or enhancement criteria but are not eligible for funding in that particular year; 🌲🌲🌲 or do have NRCS practices standards that are available for funding in that particular year.

On the other hand, all CAP106 Forest Management plans will meet the following items:

A. <u>Meet Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) quality criteria for the identified resource concern(s).</u>

For this CAP106, planning criteria and quality criteria will be treated as synonymous. On a Practice by Practice basis planning criteria may or may not be equivalent to quality criteria.

For the list of NRCS ***resource concerns***, the ***planning criteria*** for each resource concern, and acceptable ***tools*** for inventory and analysis of each resource concern, go to the Washington NRCS Website within Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG). Section III has the planning criteria for each resource concern. The National Forestry Handbook and Section I of the eFOTG has many of the recommended tools for inventory and analysis.

B. <u>Comply with federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations, and permit requirements.</u>

All regulations and permit requirements that are likely to apply during the implementation of this CAP106 will be included in either the ***B. Background and Site Information*** section or in the discussion of ***E. Desired Future Conditions*** or both.

C. <u>Meet the client's objectives.</u>

It is the responsibility of the TSP to work with the client in order to clarify and define the clients values, goals and objectives associated with and for the land within the planning area. If the clients objectives are in conflict with items A. or B. above then CAP106 is not an appropriate funding source for the client's FMP. The site specific CAP 106 FMP must meet all three: 🌲 NRCS criteria; 🌲🌲 federal, state, and tribal or local regulation and permitting requirements; 🌲🌲🌲 and client objectives.

2. Forest Management Plan Criteria (CAP106)

A. <u>General Criteria</u>

1) *A* (CAP 106) *Forest Management Plan shall be developed by certified technical service providers. In accordance with Section 1240 (A), the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program provides funding support through contracts with eligible producers to obtain services of certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) for development of a Forest Management Plan (FMP). The specific criteria required for each type of certification for TSP is located on the following web site:* *<u>http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp</u>*

For further guidance on NRCS's conservation planning procedures, go to: NRCS's National Forestry Handbook section 636; NRCS's National Planning Procedures Handbook: Title 180, Part 600 and/or Section VI of eFOTG/ Non-Practice Statement of Work/ Conservation Planning Statement of Work.

*Forest Management Plans signed by DNR Forest Stewardship Forester, (regardless if a consulting forester has written the plan or the plan was written by a landowner as part of a Coached Forest Stewardship Planning class) which fully meet the Washington Integrated Forest Management Plan Guidelines are accepted by NRCS to meet the forest management plan requirements for certain Farm Bill programs but only forest management plans written by Technical Service Providers certified on TechReg website are eligible for CAP106 (EQIP) funding.

B. Background and Site Information

1) ***Landowner information-name, address, operation and size*** **is required** information. Operation refers to the operation type, ranch with grazed forestland, non-industrial private forestland, designated wildlife area of a dryland farm… and so on. Total size of the operation is required information. Additional information such as total forested acres, as well as acreages for other land uses would be recommended and acceptable to include this section.

2) ***Farm and Tract number along with legal description*** **is required** information. ***"Location and Plan map of parcel"*** **is required,** with parcel or project area outlined and high enough scale to show main roads, rivers, communities or other features that would help locate the property. Map format will include title, north arrow, scale, and legal description, and farm & tract number or parcel number.

3) ***Documentation of existing practices*** **is required** *information* and should include all existing treatments and processes that reduce resource concerns and/or improve the state of natural resources as defined by planning criteria in Section III of the eFOTG.

4) ***Past harvest history*** **is required** information**.** Additional information such as date of land acquisition and silviucltural or forest management activities other than harvest are recommended and acceptable information for inclusion in this section. A forest history could also include information about sites, features or objects of family, cultural or historical interest.

5) ***Identification of resource concerns*** **is required** information. Document method & tools used to identify resource concerns and existing (benchmark) condition. See NRCS's National Forestry Handbook and eFOTG\Section I and III for recommended methods and tools for inventorying resource concerns and benchmark conditions

If your client's objective include qualifying for the Designated Forest Land (Tax) Program, then it is acceptable to including additional information within this plan needed for that program, such as Parcel number.

Additional information such as: tree farm or sustainability certifications for the property, along with the certifying organization, certification type, certification date and its expiration date would be appropriate to include in this section.

Additional information on fire protection districts and assessments may also be included in this section.

*If using the WA-IFMP guidelines: I. Cover Page & IV. Introductory Overview of the Property covers most of this sections required information.

C. Client Objectives (which may include these and others)

It is required to include the client's goals and objectives for the project area, and may include a wide variety of personal values, human considerations (economics, recreation, aesthetics …) and natural resource concerns (forest health, wildlife habitat, water quality…). However, if the client's objectives include the conversion from forestland to conditions that make cropping a possible option, then the potential consequences associated with the conversion of forested wetlands should be included in the plan.

1) ***Expected income*** : this a human consideration and it might include their harvesting schedule, biofuels, specialized non-timber forest product opportunities as well as other income options or opportunities.
2) ***Forest Stand Improvement*** : this maybe a personal value, resource concern or a human consideration and might include improvement of forest health, timber production, wildfire risk reduction, wood quality or any number of other forestry related issues and resources.
3) ***Wildlife habitat/riparian habitat***: this is often a resource concern and personal value and it might include fish and wildlife habitat for uplands, streams, lakes, ponds ,wetlands, riparian areas and so on. If a specific wildlife species is the primary focus then a Wildlife Habitat CAP might be a better choice for the Participant.
4) ***Recreation*** : this is a human consideration and personal value and might include aesthetic appreciation, hiking, birding, hunting and so on.
5) ***Agroforestry***: this usually a human consideration and sometimes a resource concern. Multi-story cropping where the landowner is using silvicultural techniques for improving timber and non-timber forest products or opening up the forest to promote grazing and forest products would both fit into this category. If forestland is being converted to cropland which might occur when converting to Alley cropping then see comments below about this type of conversion and its risks.
6) ***Pollinator Habitat and Protection*** : this is often a resource concern if Agroforestry practices are employed or even a personal value in the forestland setting. If pollinators are a focus, then a Pollinator Habitat CAP maybe an alternative choice to CAP 106 or a future choice.

Conversion from forested wetlands conditions to a state that is capable of being cropped is a violation of the Food Security Act of 1985 and would make the Participant ineligible for USDA programs. If the site has hydric soils then contact your local NRCS field office and request a determination (even if agricultural crops are not the objective of the converted forestland a determination will be required).

* If using the WA-IFMP guidelines: you will include this sections information under III. Lanowner's Objectives.

D. Existing Conditions

1) *Identify resource concerns based on an inventory to assess these concerns and opportunity for treatment. A forest inventory will be conducted using generally accepted forest inventory methods. Describe the inventory process in the plan. The inventory typically includes forest management unit and stand boundaries,*

> *site index, basal area, species, size class, wood product potential, soil conditions, slopes, topography, aspect, natural and cultural features, roads, wildfire risk (surface and crown fires), risk of insect and disease infestation, fish and wildlife species and habitat elements, noxious and invasive species, water quality and other important features as applicable.*

See National Forestry Handbook, part 636 and eFOTG sections I, for acceptable inventory methods and tools for establishing benchmark (existing) conditions during conservation forestland planning process. The inventory methods and analysis tools used for establishing existing (Benchmark) conditions will be documented in this section as well as the intensity of the inventory. Examples of forest inventory methods are100th ac. fixed area plots, BAF 20 variable radius plots, and 200’ long, 1’ wide fixed area transects. Intensity would equate to # of plots per acre or amount of sampling. For fish and wildlife, Biological Technical Note 14’s “Present” condition (for wildlife habitat elements) is an example of an inventory tool. Examples of analysis tools are Forestry Technical Note 10: Stand Density Guidance or Biological Technical Note 14 for No Action, Planned A and Planned B options for wildlife habitat. **Photos** are great benchmark inventory documentation. Photos of forest management units and resource concerns are recommended and encouraged. Videos are more difficult to include in a forest management plan but are acceptable.

A Resource Inventory Map is not required, however it is an excellent way to show some required information such as **forest management units, stand boundaries,** and **acres by forest management unit** **(field or forest stand). This data will also be show on the plan map along with the planned practices.** Other resource inventory data not usually put on a plan map like forest type, species mix and stand density, could easily be shown on a resource inventory map and would be an excellent spatial representation of benchmark conditions and likely very helpful to the client. A topographic map is recommended and would cover items like **slope, aspect and topography**, otherwise a narrative description of these items will need to be included.

Species composition, Stocking and size class information is required for each forest management unit (field or forest stand). Here in Washington State, basal area with general size class information is not the preferred form of data for stocking & size class, but will be acceptable. The preferred form for stocking density and size class information is an estimate of **Trees per acre, along with average tree data-- average DBH or DBH range, average height of crop trees, and average crown ratio of crop trees.** Plus, a description of average forest health conditions is needed. For forest management units that are ***not*** receiving a forest stand improvement treatment then a walk thru estimate of trees per acre with an estimate of general size class information such as seedling (< 4.5’ in height), sapling (4.5’ in height to 5” DBH), pole (5”-9”DBH) or sawlog (>9” DBH) is acceptable. For treated stands, stocking and size class data will be documented in this section and/or on the Jobsheets (site specific specifications)**.** For forest management units that are not receiving treatment, then the approximate size class, stocking density, and a description of forest health condition will be documented in this section. For species composition, document the species found in the over-story and the understory for each forest management unit. Species that make up less than 10% of the overall stocking only needs to be documented if their presents could affect management decisions.

Forestry Technical Note 10 (Forest Stand Density Guide) is a good stocking guide for most commercial tree species in Washington State, except for Red Alder. In Western Washington, Red Alder will have the same stocking guidelines as Douglas-fir (Coastal). Stocking recommendations outside of or in contradiction of Forestry Technical Note 10 will need to be justified with references. USDA Plants Database is a good source of information for non-commercial or conservation species.

Soil condition and site index is required information. Web Soil Survey is the best tool for providing a **soils map of the plan (project) area, which is required.** The Web soil survey can also provide you with the information for site index and basic soils data (map unit descriptions) either in tabular form or spatially on a map. Plus, additional inventory information that can support treatments and treatment options can also be found on the Web Soil Survey, like common tree species found on a soil, soils sensitivity to compaction or rutting, chemical properties like PH, physical properties like available water holding capacity … and so on.

Wood product potential is a required item. Potential for non-timber products may also be included.

Biological Technical Note 14 is a recommended inventory and analysis tool for fish and wildlife habitat. Biological Technical note 14 has several worksheet based on land use. For forestland, Upland Woodlands, Riparian Area, Wetlands, Ponds & Lakes, and Stream SVAP are commonly used worksheets. Use all the appropriate worksheets for the specific site and project area. **The habitat elements addressed within Biological Technical Note 14 will be inventoried and analyzed whether Biological Technical Note 14 is the format used or not.** Maps from the WA DNR's FPARS stream typing website are acceptable and recommended source of information for hydrology and potential fish habitat. * In addition, review for ESA species and their habitat is required with the use of the WA-IFMP guidelines.

At a minimum the forest roads inventory requires the location of all the roads and trails (trails used for management) documented on a map, with stream crossings, average width and surfacing also documented either on a map or in a narrative. In addition, erosion and water quality issues associated with Forest Roads will be documented along with their approximate locations. The following information is also recommended for inclusion: which roads are active or in-active, their purpose (recreation, management, development…), the age of the road system, traffic level and any access control in place or needed.

Information on forest health issues such : wildfire risk, insect and disease infestations and noxious and invasive species is required. For wildfire risk, annual average precipitation, fuel loading (current or predicted post-pct), fuel type, distance from public use roads, public use areas or neighbors structures and so on are all recommended information to support a risk level. For insect and disease and other pest issues (like bears or porcupines), current infestations and damage levels, will be documented. Risk of damage may also be included, such as: bear foraging on trees found in adjacent stand so a PCT of this stand may increase its risk of bear damage; or planting trees in an abandoned pasture comes with risks of rodent damage to seedlings.

Natural and cultural features of interest to the participant or in need of protection will be documented. Actual locations may or may not be documented depending on the sensitivity of the data.

* If using the WA-IFMP guidelines: the information for this section will be covered within V. Resource Descriptions and Management Practices, Resource Categories I-IX and VII Aerial Photo(s)/Property Map(s)

E. Desired Future Conditions:

1) *Goals such as stocking, basal area, species composition, wildlife, pollinator habitat and protection, recreation, etc. for stands where practices/activities are recommended to meet future goals.*

338 Prescribed Burning is not offered here in Washington State. If burning is a treatment chosen by the client to meet their desired forest condition then burning activities must meet local and state burning regulations. NRCS will not be responsible for reviewing the planning, design and/or implementation of prescribed burning. Proper authorities, such as but not limited to, Washington Department of Natural Resources, will be contacted prior to any burning.

If fish, wildlife or pollinator habitat are included in the clients goals for desired conditions, then be sure to include Practices 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Improvement, 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat , 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats, 647 Early Successional Habitat Development and Management or 395 Stream Habitat Improvement in your conservation plan. Other associated practices commonly used in forestland settings are 314 Brush Management (post-plant weed control only), 315 Herbaceous Weed Control (post-plant weed control only), 342 Critical Area Planting, 396 Fish Passage and 484 Mulch.

* If using the WA-IFMP guidelines: the information for this section will be covered within V. Resource Descriptions and Management Practices, Resource Categories I-IX and VII Aerial Photo(s)/Property Map(s)

F. Forest Management Plan Documentation:

The plan narrative includes 2. Forest Management Plan criteria sections B. through E is required *documentation.*

Forest Management Plan Map is required and must have a Title using Client name (or project name), the legal location (and/or farm and tract #), total project acres, date created, north arrow, scale, TSP's name as map creator and if needed a legend. Each forest management unit (field or forest stand) will need to be labeled with the land use and its acres. Plus the location of the proposed practices will be approximately indicated. If the forest management unit (field or forest stand) is 10 acres and you are only planting 1acre, provide the approximate location (on the map) within the forest management unit the 1 acre of planting is going to occur.

Soils Map for project area is required along with soils reports and interpretations on needed for individual Conservation Practices. (See "Practice Documentation Requirement" form found in Practice folder in section IV of eFOTG. The title will be Soils Map and may include client or project name and legend indicating the soil name or code found on current soil survey. North arrow and scale are also recommended.

Wetland delineation map and associated wetland compliance documentation (if applicable) is required and may be included in a resource inventory map if one is created. The map will have a title, north arrow, scale and legend (if needed). Additional, wetland compliance documentation is necessary if forest land is being cleared so that annual crops could be planted even if annual crops are not part of the plan for the project area.

Conservation plan with the record of decision, practice list with extent and implementation schedule is required.

Here in Washington State the recommended template is the Washington State Integrated Forest Management Plan. However, the National Forest Management Plan template, Managing Your Woodlands template, American Tree Farm template or the consulting forester's own standard template may be used as long as all the required maps, goals & objectives, benchmark inventory & analysis data, desired future conditions and record of decisions are included. The record of the participants decisions on how to treat the resource concerns and other treatments to meet their objectives will include the practice (or treatment list), the extent of the practice (acres treated, linear feet treated, number of treatments… and so on), and when the treatments will occur (implementation schedule), at least by year. **Practice codes, names and units will be used** if NRCS has a practice standard that will cover the proposed treatment.

* If using the WA-IFMP guidelines: the information for this section will be covered within VI. Management Plan Implementation Timetable.

Site specific specifications for each non-engineering practices are required and will be developed using NRCS jobsheets, specification worksheets, standard drawings and Planner guides, if available for that treatment. For practices that require engineering, site specific specifications are not required unless the TSP is certified for those practices. NRCS has standard drawings, specifications and operation and maintenance plans found on **WA NRCS website under the Technical Resource Tab then click on Conservation Engineering (see Washington CAD Support and Drawings, Construction and Material Specifications, Operation and Maintenance Plans (O&M)).** If the TSP is not certified for the engineering practice then the inventory information, approximate location, approximate extent of treatment and implementation schedule will be included in the conservation plan and map. In addition, make sure required documentation for each practice, which are found on the "Documentation Requirement" form and deliverables for each practice, which are found in the "Statement of Work" (SOW) are included in the overall plan or site specific specification package. Required adherence to these forms depends on their availability for each individual practice. **Refer to the USDA NRCS Field Office Technical Guide section IV for the available practice forms and documents.** All the basic Forestry and Agroforestry practices will be finalized and signed by the TSP. The other practices will remain in draft form.

G. References

References used will be listed.

> *1) Refer to the USDA NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//efotg_locator.aspx , Select State, Select Section 4 Conservation Practices) for a complete list of potential conservation practices.*

The practice Standard and a practices Statement of Work document will have a list of reference use in their development and may be useful to the TSP in the planning process.

3. Deliverables to Client a hardcopy of the plan that includes:

All the Forest Management Plan Documentation is required.

Here in Washington State the recommended template is the Washington State Integrated Forest Management Plan. However, the National Forest Management Plan template, Managing Your Woodlands template, American Tree Farm template or the consulting forester's own standard template may be used as long as all the required maps, goals & objectives, benchmark inventory &

analysis data, desired future conditions, record of decisions and site specific practice specifications are included.

Cover & Signature Page are required.
These two items can be the same page or separate pages. Both TSP and Participant must sign and date the document.

* If using the WA-IFMP guidelines: the information for this section will be covered within I. Cover Page and VIII. Landowner Signatures.

Here in Washington State, the NRCS employees use a checklist for Quality Control to ensure all required items are included in the plan. A second process, Quality Assurance Review, is done on at least 10% of each TSP's plans and includes a technical review. An NRCS employee may provide the checklist in lieu of signature or may sign the plan after the Quality Control phase has been completed, with the understanding that a Quality Assurance review may find the plan to be deficient and the plan will need to be brought up to standard by the TSP in order for the TSP to remain certified, reimbursement not to be revoked from particiapnt or the plan allowed to move into an EQIP contract

It is also understood that not all planned practices or treatments are eligible for Farm Bill programs in any particular year or at all. In any given year, Farm Bill Programs may be focused on a particular set of resource concerns and practices and only those resource concerns may be treated under that program with only a certain suite of practices available for financial assistance. Some practices or treatments may never be eligible for Farm Bill program financial assistance.

4. Deliverables for NRCS Field Office:

A Hardcopy and Electronic copy of the client's plan is required. This copy should be signed by both the TSP and the participant. The clients plan will include copies of all maps, goals & objectives, benchmark inventory & analysis data, desired future conditions, record of decisions and site specific practice specifications.

Digital Conservation plan map w/ project area, forest management units, features and practice locations outlined is required.

Digital Soil Map is required. Other resource inventory map(s) including the wetland delineation information, topography maps, FPARS stream type maps are recommended to be provided in digital format as well.

5. Coordination with State Forestry Agencies and U.S. Forest Service.

A. Forest Stewardship Plan

The Washington State Integrated Forest Management Plan is also considered the template for the WA DNR forest stewardship plans and is the recommended template here in the state of Washington for NRCS CAP106.

B. Another practice plan approved by the State Forester.

American Tree Farm template or the consulting forester's own standard template might be acceptable as long as all the required maps, goals & objectives, benchmark inventory & analysis data, desired future conditions, record of decisions and site specific practice specifications are included.

C. Another plan determined appropriate by the Secretary.

National Forest Management Plan template, Managing Your Woodlands template and guidelines are supported at the National NRCS level and are available here in Washington State.

6. Definitions for Forest Stewardship Plan and Forest Management Plan (CAP 106)

A. Forest Stewardship Plan

If the Washington State Integrated Forest Management Plan guidelines are followed then the plan will be acceptable for, Farm Bill programs, WA DNR Forest Stewardship programs and American Tree Farm certification. This plan is also accepted by the WA Department of Revenue for use in the Designated Forest Land (Tax) Program but it is still necessary to contact the local county Assessor's office for specific information required by that county in order to authorize the use of Designated Forest Land (Tax) Program. Check with your local Conservation District to see if this plan will be acceptable for their programs or additional information needed for acceptance.

B. Forest Management Plan (CAP106)

Other templates that may be acceptable for CAP106 but may not be acceptable for the state and county programs.

References: This section is not in the National Criteria.
National Planning Procedures Handbook: Title 180, Part 600

National Forestry Handbook section 636

Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG)
eFOTG and all its sections are found on the Washington NRCS website:
http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/ . The eFOTG link is on the left side of the home page. Then select Washington State by clicking on it, then select your county by clicking on it, then on the left hand side select the appropriate section.

Section I : In the "Reference List" folder is the folder for "Technical Notes by Discipline" . This is where you find Biological Technical Note 14 and Water Quality Technical Note 1 and Forestry Technical Note 10 along with other technical notes that may interest you.
Section II: Has information on soils, climate and other natural resources information that maybe of use for inventory and analysis purposes.
Section III: Has the "Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs) Technical Criteria" folder and the "Resource Quality Criteria for RMS" folder.
Section IV: In the "Washington Conservation Practices" folder you find the folders for the individual conservation practices. In the "Non Practice Statement of Work" folder you will find the general deliverables for conservation planning.

NRCS-CPA-70 is found on the TechReg site: http://techreg.usda.gov/static/documents/NRCS-CPA-70.pdf .

Web Soil Survey: http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm .

Soil Data Mart: http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/.