

ALTERNATIVE CONSERVATION SYSTEM (ACS)

The following section defines Quality Criteria for the soil resource when dealing with USDA program requirements for highly erodible land. These criteria apply only to conservation plans and conservation systems developed to carry out the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (FSA) and the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (FACTA).

To carry out provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act and the 1990 Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act an Alternative Conservation System is allowed. An ACS is a conservation system for highly erodible land (HEL) that is documented in the FOTG and which achieves a substantial reduction in current soil loss rates.

ASC's are only for the treatment of sheet, rill, wind, and ephemeral gully erosion on cropland.



June 13, 1988

ILLINOIS BULLETIN NO. IL-180-8-9

SUBJECT: CPA - Conservation Planning

Purpose. To provide updated criteria and information on Alternative Conservation Systems (ACS's).

Expiration Date. September 30, 1988.

**ACTION REQUIRED: Complete the enclosure NOW for your county
and include it in SECTION 3 of the Field Office Technical Guide.**

Much discussion at all levels in and outside of SCS has occurred concerning Alternative Conservation Systems (ACS's). Our earlier developed ACS is replaced with the enclosure. DC's are asked to complete the enclosed Cropland Alternative Conservation System Guide Sheet to include the common equivalents to a "CP" of 0.1 and include it in your Field Office Technical Guide. This should be done with inputs from others in the county, such as, the District Board, Extension Advisor and Farm Bureau.

The Basic Conservation System Guide Sheet developed for Soil Resource Management Group (SRMG) 5 sets the standard alternatives for the "CP" of 0.1. In other words, all of the displayed alternatives listed on SRMG 5 are ACS's for HEL soil map units in SRMG groups 6, 7, 8, 9 or 10.

Obviously, there are many other alternatives that are not shown on SRMG 5 that provide equivalent treatment. Develop the list of common alternatives in the field office technical guide that you and the District will provide to farmers in your county. These new ACS's are simply an expansion from the original ACS options. They will permit greater flexibility while being economically and socially more acceptable.

For example, the no-till, corn-soybean, not contoured option on Guide Sheet 5 is based on 80 percent corn residue and 40 percent bean residue. If a mulch till equivalent with a corn-soybean rotation is a common option it would include contour farming with 50 percent corn residue and 40 percent soybean residue after planting. Any alternative mix of crop sequence, residue, contour farming and terraces that equates to 0.1 or less is an acceptable ACS equivalent to no-till, corn-soybeans.

Those providing planning assistance need to understand the ACS's now available and how to use them to help farmers remain eligible for various USDA program benefits. Conservation plans developed, which include no-till need no reference to percent of residue cover.

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County _____

Cropland Alternative Conservation Systems (ACS) Guide Sheet

Applicable Soils:

Criteria:

Any system that is equivalent to corn-soybeans, no-tilled, is an acceptable alternative conservation system (ACS).

Additionally, practices to treat ephemeral gully erosion will be provided as part of any ACS where concentrated water flow is a problem.

Following are several ACS's that would commonly be used in _____ county:

Other ACS's may be developed that include terraces, longer rotations, or special combinations of mechanical and management practices. Other equivalent options will be developed based on landowner requests.

The above alternatives have been jointly developed, are technically sound equivalents and concurred in by:

District Conservationist

Date

SWCD

Date



August 18, 1997

TECHNICAL GUIDE NOTICE IL-108

Purpose. To provide an additional Alternative Cropping System (ACS) for certain soils in Northeast Illinois.

Background. The 1985 Food Security Act as amended allows for the use of Alternative Conservation Systems on HEL Cropland. Alternative Conservation Systems are documented in the field office technical guide as systems that achieve a substantial reduction in soil loss and therefore satisfy the requirements for Highly Erodible Land Compliance. The 1996 Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act defined substantial reduction to be a 75 percent reduction of the potential erodibility not to exceed:

- 2 T for local approval
- 2-4T for State Conservationist's approval
- >4T for Director of COD, National Headquarters approval

This standard applies to ACS developed after July 3, 1996. ACS's approved prior to July 3, 1996 will continue to be approved for use on HEL cropland.

This notice provides for the addition of the following Alternative Conservation System into Section III, FOTG in the following counties.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Champaign | LaSalle |
| Ford | Livingston |
| Iroquois | Will/South Cook |
| Kankakee | Vermilion |
| Kendall | |

Corn-Soybean rotation

Corn after spring tillage leaving 20% ground cover after planting. Soybeans no-till drilled leaving 70% ground cover after planting.

The above ACS applies only to the following soil series:

- | | | |
|----------|------------|-----------|
| Blout | Morley | Symerton |
| Swygert | Varga | Frankfort |
| Elliott | Nappanee | Markham |
| Clarence | Chatsworth | St. Clair |

This ACS may not be used where the 75% reduction in potential erodibility is less than 2 times the tolerable soil loss limit. Potential erodibility is determined using the following RUSLE Factors:

$$PE = R \times K \times LS$$

The State Conservationist must approve the use of this system where the resulting RUSLE soil loss exceeds 2 times the tolerable soil loss limit.

Actions. **File** this notice in Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide.

/s/
WILLIAM G. KOBLYSKI
Asst. State Conservationist for
Resource Assessment and Technology

DIST:
Field Offices
Zone Specialists
FOTG Holders