

Section III

Resource Management Systems and Quality Criteria

Introduction

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance to decision-makers to develop conservation plans that protect, maintain, and improve soil, water, air, plant, animal resources and related human considerations. A primary goal is to help each client attain a Resource Management System (RMS). The documents contained in Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) will help planners guide agricultural producers (clients) through the following phases of the NRCS 9-Step Planning Process:

- Step #1 - Identify Problems & Opportunities
- Step #3 - Inventory Resources
- Step #4 - Analyze Resource Data
- Step #5 - Formulate Alternatives
- Step #6 – Evaluate Alternatives
- Step #9 - Evaluate Plan

Conservation Plan - A record of the client's decisions and supporting information for the treatment of a unit of land or water as a result of the planning process. The plan describes the conservation practices and implementation schedule for the practices.

Conservation System - A combination of conservation practices and resource management that achieve a specific level of treatment of soil, water, air, plant, and/or animal resource concerns.

Resource Management System - A type of conservation system that meets or exceeds the quality criteria in the FOTG for resource sustainability for all identified resource concerns for soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Progressive Planning - A point in the planning process where the client is ready willing and able to make some but not all of the decisions necessary to achieve resource sustainability for soil, water air, plants and animals.

Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) includes the following subsections:

- A. Quality Criteria** – Includes quantitative or qualitative statements of the treatment level required to achieve a Resource Management System for identified resource considerations for a particular land use.
- B. Guidance Documents** – Provides examples of treatment alternatives common within the Field Office service area. They are used for information, training, and to support alternatives that are developed with producers during the planning process.
- C. Common Resource Areas** – Identifies geographical areas where resource concerns, problems, and treatment needs are similar. Landscape conditions, soil, climate, human considerations, and other natural resource information is used to determine the geographical boundaries of the common resource area.
- D. Legislated Programs** – Includes conservation systems established to meet levels of treatment defined by legislated programs and initiatives that are different from RMS criteria.

The contents of Section III were developed based on policy and guidelines in the following documents:

- **General Manual Title 450 – Technology, Part 401 – Technical Guides, Subpart A - Policy and Responsibilities.**
Available online at: http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_450_401.htm
- **General Manual Title 450 – Technology, Part 401 – Technical Guides, Subpart C - Resource Management System Quality Criteria and Guidance Documents.**
Available online at:
http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/gm_450_401_c.htm
- **General Manual Title 180 – Conservation Planning, Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy.** Available online at:
http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/gm_180_409.htm
- **National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH)** which provides procedures and guidance on implementing the Conservation Planning Policy, including relationships to the Field Office Technical Guide. Available online at:
http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/H/H_180_600.htm