

CULTURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

Definition

Cultural resources are all of the past activities and accomplishments of people. They include buildings, objects, locations, and structures that have scientific, historic and cultural value.

Policy

It is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) policy to identify and protect cultural resources that may be encountered in conservation activities. It is, therefore, very important for all NRCS personnel to identify and protect cultural resources during their technical assistance activities. This includes planning conservation practices to avoid affecting cultural resources, and obtaining assistance from the state Cultural Resources Coordinator when an effect cannot be avoided. It also includes not collecting artifacts from archaeological sites without first reporting these sites to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and obtaining permission to collect from both the SHPO and the landowner.

Procedures

Cultural resources are some of the many resources NRCS should consider during conservation planning. Because they cannot be replaced, it is important to plan for the presence of cultural resources in order to protect them.

Protecting cultural resources is required by law and steps must be taken to ensure their protection. By considering them early in the planning process, NRCS saves TIME and MONEY as well as CULTURAL RESOURCES. The lack of consideration in the planning stage could possibly result in delays or cancellations of NRCS activities after they are under way.

The procedures for planning for cultural resources are covered in Parts 401.6 and 401.7 of GM 420. This guide outlines the procedure in five steps, which are summarized below.

Step 1 - Determine Nature of Assistance

First, be aware of the kinds of NRCS activities that might harm or destroy (adversely affect) cultural resources. Part 401; Section 20 of GM 420 contains a list of activities that might harm cultural resources.

Many NRCS practices, such as conservation tillage cropping, only involve working in the surface plow zone and will not have any harmful effects on cultural resources. Others, like grass seeding on HEL acres, will benefit the resource by preventing erosion and subsequent information loss. However, NRCS practices that extend below the plow zone or remove ground surface by excavation or grading can have an adverse effect on resources by disturbing their placement, resulting in a loss of information.

Step 2 - Identify Cultural Resources

If a practice has the potential for affecting cultural resources, it is necessary to find out if there are any in the planning area. This is accomplished through checking the state records of known sites. If a site is located in the section where the practice is to be installed, plans and related materials are to be sent to the Cultural Resources Coordinator at the State Office for review. The materials will then be submitted to the SHPO for a formal review. The materials should contain:

- a. A cover letter describing what will be done and where. A short history of any building that is at least 50 years of age and located within the Area of Potential Effect (APE)*.
- b. An FSA photo and USGS quad map showing where the practice will be installed.
- c. Color photos of the site, the site from the road (if possible), and any building(s) at least 50 years of age or older and located within the APE.

* The APE covers the site and surrounding areas used for operating equipment. The APE will include driving lanes and areas used to access the site(s) if construction equipment is larger than those used in traditional farming. Such equipment can potentially cause damage to historic structures.

Step 3 - Avoid Adverse Effects on Cultural Resources

If cultural resources are present, the recommended action is to design the practice or project to avoid or work around the cultural resource.

Step 4 - Determine Significance if Avoidance is not Feasible

If you cannot avoid the cultural resource or redesign the practice or project, it is necessary to contact the cultural resources specialists to determine the significance of a cultural resource.

Step 5 - Develop Mitigation Measures

If the practice will have adverse effect on a significant resource, a cultural resource coordinator or specialist will work with you in developing mitigation measures or protection alternatives.

Contacts for Cultural Resource Assistance:

1. For cultural resource reviews and procedures

William Bowman, SS
Cultural Resources Coordinator (CRC)
NRCS
3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 250
East Lansing, Michigan 48823
517-324-5241

Gary Rinkenberger, RC
National Environmental Protection Act Liaison (NEPA Liaison)
NRCS
3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 250
East Lansing, Michigan 48823
517-324-5266

2. For cultural resource reviews pertaining to known sites in a particular area.

State Historic Preservation Officer
Michigan Historical Center
717 W. Allegan Street
Lansing, Michigan 48918-1800

3. For general information in the absence of the CRC or NEPA Liaison in item 1 above.

Area Cultural Resources Coordinators

Dwight Jerome, SS	Marquette MLRA Project Office 201 Rublein Street Marquette, Michigan 49855	906-226-8871
GayLynn Kinter, SS	Flint Service Center 1525 North Elms Road Flint, Michigan 48532	810-230-8766 ext. 3
Bruce Knapp, SS	Traverse City Service Center 1501 Cass St., Suite A Traverse City, Michigan 49684	231-946-6811 x113
John Werlein, SS	Grayling MLRA Project Office 501 Norway Street Grayling, Michigan 49738	989-348-9523
Greg Thoen, SS	Hastings Service Center 1611 S. Hanover (M-37), Suite 105 Hastings, Michigan 49058	616-948-8038 ext. 113