

# Technical Note

## North Carolina



### "Environmental Evaluation Worksheet"

#### COMPLETING THE FORM

The form NRCS-CPA-52 is the instrument used to summarize the effects of conservation practices and systems. It also provides summary documentation of the environmental evaluation (EE) of the planned actions. The EE is “a concurrent part of the planning process in which the potential long-term and short-term impacts of an action on people, their physical surroundings, and nature are evaluated and alternative actions explored” (NPPH-Amendment 3 January 2000). The EE applies to all assistance provided by NRCS (GM190 Part 410.5).

The following are instructions for completing form NC-CPA-52:

- ❖ **Client:** Record the client's name.
- ❖ **Farm/Tract/Field:** Enter the Farm, Tract, or Field Number.
- ❖ **Natural Resources Evaluation:**
  - The “NC Inventory of Planning Area Form” is required to guide you in evaluating the Benchmark Condition. The no action alternative is the predicted future condition if no action is taken.
  - Use the record of landowners’ decisions or Conservation Plan to guide you in evaluating the Conservation Plan.
  - Use the NC CPA-3, Conservation Treatment of Alternatives, to guide you in evaluating the Alternatives. Alternatives shall always be identified if the Conservation Plan is not treated to the Resource Management System (RMS) level. Also, additional alternatives may be developed and their effects evaluated at the request of the client. This may be done in order to more fully inform the client about the decision to be made.

*Note: When evaluating the Conservation Plan or Alternatives, the Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) sheets (eFOTG, Section V), may be used to determine if the conservation practices have a positive, neutral, or negative effect on the resources identified. Consider any effects which may be individually minor but cumulatively significant at a larger scale or over an extended time period. Refer to the applicable quality criteria (eFOTG, Section III) to determine if the resources identified will meet quality criteria.*
- ❖ **Socio-Economic Considerations:** Answer yes/no to each of the proposed questions based on the Conservation Plan and Alternatives. Please note: NRCS Policy prohibits employees from obtaining financial information beyond what is provided voluntarily by the client. (Natural Resources Economic Handbook, Part 610). Please use your own professional judgment in answering these questions.

- ❖ **Special Environmental Concerns:** Answer yes/no to each of the proposed questions based on the Conservation Plan and Alternatives. Please document in the “Effect” columns whether the Conservation Plan and/or Alternatives will have any effects on the Special Environmental Concerns. Consider any effects, which may be individually minor but cumulatively significant at a larger scale or over an extended time period.
- ❖ **List any reviewing/regulatory agencies that need to be contacted, or permits that may be needed before practices are installed.**
- ❖ **Describe mitigation to be applied that will offset any adverse impacts.** Some examples of mitigation include use of atypical specifications for materials, methods, or timing of installation, operation and maintenance specifications, implementation of additional conservation practices; as well as replacement of a resource by restoration.
- ❖ **NRCS Findings:**
  - Statement 1: Select which is the preferred action by the landowner
  - Statement 2: Select one of the following statements.
    - Is not a federal action. No further analysis is required at this time means the landowner is not receiving any federal dollars to implement his preferred action through a Farm Bill program.
    - Has been sufficiently analyzed in the NRCS environment document checked below. No further analysis is required means the landowner is choosing to possibly implement his preferred action with the financial assistance of one of the selected programs.
    - There is or may be a significant impact (adverse or beneficial) on one or more of the above environmental evaluation aspects. SEE CRITERIA BELOW FOR IDENTIFYING SIGNIFICANT CIRCUMSTANCES. Further analysis, including the possibility of an EA or EIS will be necessary. Forward to the attention of the Area Office and ASTC-Technology.
  - Signatures:
    - The individual responsible for completing the CPA 52 must sign and date the Form indicating they have used the best available information. This signature is particularly important when a TSP is completing the CPA-52 or when NRCS is providing the technical assistance on behalf of another agency.
    - The District Conservationist, only, must sign and date all forms as the Responsible Federal Official.
    - For all CRP plans, NRCS employees shall skip items 1 & 2, but “Completed By” and “Concurred by District Conservationist” should be signed indicating concurrence.
- ❖ **FSA Findings:**
  - Statement 1: Select which is the preferred action by the landowner
  - Statement 2: Select one of the following statements.
    - Is not a federal action. No further analysis is required at this time, means the landowner is not receiving any federal dollars to implement his preferred action through a farm bill program.
    - Has been sufficiently analyzed in the NRCS environment document checked below. No further analysis is required, means the landowner is

choosing to possibly implement his preferred action with the financial assistance of one of the selected programs.

- There is or may be a significant impact (adverse or beneficial) on one or more of the above environmental evaluation aspects. SEE CRITERIA BELOW FOR IDENTIFYING SIGNIFICANT CIRCUMSTANCES. Further analysis, including the possibility of an EA or EIS will be necessary. Forward to the designated FSA official.

## **CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING SIGNIFICANT CIRCUMSTANCES**

Significant/Extraordinary circumstances usually involve impacts on environmental concerns such as wetlands, floodplains, or cultural resources. The circumstances that may lead to a determination of extraordinary circumstances are the same factors used to make determinations of significance and include the following:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse and that significantly affect the quality of the human environment.
2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.
3. Unique characteristics of the area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.
5. The degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. Individually insignificant but cumulatively significant activities that have not been analyzed on a broader level, such as on a program-wide or priority area basis.
8. Adverse effects on areas listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or that may result in loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
9. Adverse effects on an endangered or threatened species or its designated critical habitat.
10. Circumstances threatening the violation of Federal, State or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

If one or more extraordinary circumstances are found to apply to the proposed action, determine whether the proposal can be modified to mitigate the adverse effects and prevent the extraordinary circumstances. If the proposed action cannot be modified or the client refuses to accept a proposed change, further analysis, including the possibility of an EA or EIS will be necessary. Forward to the attention of the Area Office and ASTC-Technology, as indicated above.