

Glossary of Conservation Terms and Acronyms Used in the Technical Guide

Agricultural Land. Land and associated facilities and structures that is used for the purpose of producing agricultural products including food and fiber, crops, fish, livestock, and wood products.

Alternative Conservation Systems (ACS). A conservation system for highly erodible land (HEL) that is documented in the FOTG and which achieves a substantial reduction in existing soil loss rates. This term applies only to conservation plans and conservation systems developed to carry out the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 Farm Bill) and the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (1990 Farm Bill).

Acceptable Management System (AMS). A combination of conservation practices and management (that meets criteria established in the FOTG by the State Conservationist) that is feasible within the social, cultural, or economic constraints identified for the resource conditions. It is expected that degradation will occur for one or more of the resources (i.e., soil, water, air, plants, and animals). This term applies only to conservation plans and conservation systems developed to carry out the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 Farm Bill) and the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (1990 Farm Bill).

Application. The act of installing conservation practices and management measures or actions in conformance with planning decisions. This is the same as implementation.

Areawide Planning Agency. An official state, regional, or metropolitan agency empowered under state laws or under an interstate compact or agreement to perform comprehensive planning in an area.

Basic Conservation System (BCS). A conservation system on HEL that reduces erosion to the soil loss tolerance value prescribed for the soil type and treats concentrated flow erosion. This term applies only to conservation plans and conservation systems developed to carry out the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended by the 1990 Farm Bill.

Best Management Practice (BMP). A practice, or combination of practices, determined to be the most effective and practicable means (including technological, economic, and institutional considerations) of reducing the amount of pollution from nonpoint sources to a level compatible with water quality goals. This term originated from the federal Clean Water Act and is used extensively by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the California State Water Resources Control Board, and the California Regional Water Quality Control Boards.

Case File. A paper or electronic file established and maintained in the NRCS office for each recipient of NRCS assistance where NRCS is providing continuing technical assistance on a planning unit.

Community. A particular locality, generally smaller than a county, in which people share concerns and responsibility for (potential impact on) soil, water, and related resources.

Comprehensive Plan. A plan for an area under the jurisdiction of a unit of government that may include but is not limited to policies, goals, and interrelated plans for private and public land use, transportation systems, community facilities, and capital improvement. The plan represents the decisions of local people as expressed through units of government. This type of plan may also be called a general plan, master plan, or a regional development plan.

Comprehensive Planning. A continuing process by a unit of government that includes preparation of a comprehensive plan and adoption of the administrative and regulatory measures to implement and maintain the plan. The Intergovernmental Cooperating Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-577) Section 109 states: comprehensive planning includes the following to the extent directly related to area needs or needs of a unit of general local government:

- (a) preparation, as a guide for government policies and action, of general plans with respect to:
- (1) pattern and intensity of land use;
 - (2) provision of public facilities (including transportation facilities) and other government services; and
 - (3) effective development and utilization of human and natural resources;
- (b) long-range physical and fiscal plans for such actions;
- (c) programming of capital improvements and other major expenditures, based on a determination of relative urgency, together with definitive financing plans for such expenditures, based on a determination of relative urgency, together with definitive financing plans for such expenditures in the earlier years of the program;
- (d) coordination of all related plans and activities of the state and local governments and agencies concerned; and
- (e) preparation of regulatory and administrative measures in support of the foregoing.

Conditional Use (Special Exception Use). A use of land or structures that is permitted only if special conditions described in a zoning ordinance or permit allow.

Conservation Alternatives (Options). A set of alternatives or options provided to the client or decisionmaker that gives guidance, by fields or conservation treatments units, for selecting major and minor uses of the land and water in the planning unit, and describing treatment and management that will address resource use problems and opportunities.

Conservation Assistance Notes. Information kept by NRCS personnel in the case file for each individual, group, and unit of government receiving planning and implementation assistance. These notes are to be a concise, factual, and chronological narrative of significant conservation

activities, and summarize progress in planning and implementation (including any other pertinent data relevant to the planner).

Conservation District Cooperator. An individual, group of people, or representative of a unit of government who has entered into an understanding, working arrangement, or cooperative agreement with a Resource Conservation District to work together in planning and carrying out resource use, development, conservation and/or protection on a specific area.

Conservation District Working Arrangements. Agreements, understandings, or arrangements between Resource Conservation District governing bodies and individuals, groups, and units of government establishing procedures by which NRCS and other assistance from and through the district will be made available.

Conservation Effects. The anticipated or experienced results of applying one or more conservation treatments on a planning unit in a particular resource setting or set of conditions.

Conservation Effects for Decisionmakers. A process for delivering conservation assistance to clients or decisionmakers. This process includes:

- a. Finding out the type of information growers, landowners, or other clients need to decide whether or not to adopt a conservation practice.
- b. Gathering and recording this information.
- c. Delivering this information to landusers in a manner they can use and understand.
- d. Helping influence them to adopt appropriate conservation technology.

Conservation Impacts. The differences between anticipated effects of treatments in comparison to existing or benchmark conditions. Differences may be expressed in narrative, quantitative, or visual format, or reflected by conservation decisions and behavior.

Conservation Management System. A generic term that includes any combination of conservation practices and management that achieves a level of treatment of natural resources specified by criteria contained in the FOTG, such as a resource management system, an acceptable management system or other program-designated system.

Conservation Plan. Decisions made, in accordance with the NRCS FOTG and National Planning Procedures Handbook, by a client or decisionmaker regarding the use and treatment of a unit of land or water. Also refers to the document containing the decisions of a person with respect to the location, land use, tillage systems and conservation treatment measures, and schedule, which, if approved, must be or has been established on highly erodible cropland in order to control erosion on such land (pertains to 1985 & 1990 Farm Bill requirements). Also refers to the document containing the decisions of a person applying conservation practices and systems under specific USDA programs.

Conservation Plan Documents. Written and graphic information provided in a specific format that documents decisions made as a result of the planning process, and describes the schedule of operations designed to solve identified problems. The conservation plan documents are typically the basis for long-term contracts for implementing the plan.

Conservation Practice. A specific treatment used to meet a specific need in carrying out landowner objectives and conservation programs for which standards and specifications have been developed. Standards and specifications for conservation practices are found in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide.

Conservation System. The part of a cropland resource management system applied to a field or group of fields that provides for cost effective and practical erosion reduction based upon the standards contained in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide. A conservation system may include a single practice or combination of practices. This term applies only to conservation systems developed to carry out the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 Farm Bill) and the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (1990 Farm Bill).

Conservation Treatment. Any and all conservation practices, management measures or actions, works of improvement, and legislative actions that have the purpose of solving or reducing the severity of natural resource use problems.

Conservation Treatment Unit (CTU). A field, a group of fields, or other units of land and/or water with similar resource use problems, opportunities, uses, and conservation treatment needs. A CTU is the unit of land and/or water, including the soil root zone, that will be used as a basis for setting objectives and for planning and applying conservation treatments.

Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP). A planning process (typically, consensus – based) that may include public and private land and addresses various objectives and demands for goods and services for all appropriate interested parties. The planning area may include multiple landownerships, operating units, allotments, an entire watershed, or other resource unit.

Council of Governments (COG)/Regional Council. A voluntary or legislatively created association of local governments represented predominantly by elected officials in a metropolitan or multiple government area for the purpose of identifying areawide problems and solutions, based on cooperation, coordination, and planning.

Cultural Resources. All the activities and accomplishments of people throughout time. The most common ones are sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have scientific, historical, archaeological, and cultural value. NRCS identifies such resources during planning, determines their significance according to the National Register of Historic Places criteria (420-GM, Part 401), avoids adverse effects to them, and protects and enhances them.

Decisionmaker. Also referred to as “Client(s)”. An individual, group of people, or representative unit of government with responsibility for making decisions about land, air, and water use and treatment. Examples: landowners who make decisions affecting areas they own; land and water users who make decisions affecting resources they lease, rent, or otherwise control; local governing bodies and their planning and zoning boards who make land, air and water use decisions affecting areas they do not own, lease, or rent.

Ecosystem Based Assistance. The appropriate application of integrated ecological, economic, and social factors through the NRCS Planning Process in order to maintain and enhance the quality of environment to best meet current and future needs.

Environmental Assessment (EA). A concise public document, required under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA) that briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis of the impacts of proposed actions on soil, water, air, plant and animal resources, to determine whether to prepare a more comprehensive environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact. (190-GM, 410.4 (b)).

Environmental Evaluation (EE). A concurrent part of the planning process in which the potential long-and short-term impacts of an action on soil, water, air, plant, animal and cultural resources, and people, including their physical or social surroundings, are evaluated and alternative actions explored.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A document prepared by a federal governmental agency or a private firm detailing the environmental impact of a proposed law, a construction project, or other major federal action that may significantly affect the quality of the environment. An EIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) whenever there is a major federal undertaking. In California, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required under State law, as specified in the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA).

Essential Practice. A practice that singly, or in combination with other practices or management measures or actions, is required to solve the identified resource problems to the level established in the FOTG to meet RMS and quality criteria, or that is required for a system to meet its intended purposes.

Field. A part of a farm which is separated from the balance of the farm by management practice or by some sort of boundary, such as fences, roads, permanent waterways, woodlands, borders, croplines (in cases where farming practices make it probable that such cropline is not subject to change) or other similar features.

Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). A document and associated reference material containing technical information, important conservation considerations for each natural resource, quality criteria for treatment of those considerations when problems occur, and NRCS practice standards for conservation of soil, water, air, plant and animal resources. The FOTG specifically applies to NRCS field office employees and others helping decisionmakers in resource conservation planning and implementation (450-GM, Part 401).

Follow-up. The act of maintaining contact with the clients and decisionmakers to provide timely assistance in implementing decisions, keeping current with new technology, encouraging implementation, updating objectives and decisions in a conservation plan, and determining the nature and level of conservation effects experienced.

Forest Land. Land at least 10 percent stocked by forest trees of any size, or formerly having had such tree cover, and not currently developed for nonforest use. The minimum area for classification of forest land is 1 acre and must be at least 100 feet wide. Where the land has been logged or otherwise cleared and is now being managed for use of the herbaceous and low shrubby vegetation that occurs, or to keep the area from going back to trees, but no tillage has taken place, it is considered native vegetation and is to be handled as if it were forest land.

Forest Land, Grazed. Forest land that is being grazed by livestock and managed using range management principles and practices adapted to the forest ecosystem.

Group. Two or more decisionmakers who are cooperating to achieve common or mutual conservation objectives, or an organization of individuals and community leaders who band together to take advantage of opportunities, or to solve problems having to do with their soil, water, air, plant and animal resources, land and water use planning, rural development, cultural resources, environmental and social conditions, and other community-related elements.

Highly Erodible Land (HEL). Land that has an erodibility index of 8 or more. A term used in reference to the 1985 and 1990 Farm Bills.

Hydrologic Unit (HU). A drainage basin or watershed that collects and discharges its surface stream flow through one outlet or mouth, typically implying a topographic divide. Also, a term used to reference specific geographic delineations made by federal agencies (such as NRCS, USFS & USGS), based on surface drainage characteristics.

Implementation. The act of installing the planned conservation treatment and management that is documented in conservation and resource plans. This is the same as application.

Inventory and Evaluation (I&E) Report. A document that contains information resulting from the process of developing and evaluating alternatives. It can range from a description of a simple inventory of resources to a description of viable alternative solutions to a set of problems. The I&E report may be in the form of a letter, detailed maps, compilation of tables, a detailed formal report, or other appropriate materials.

Land Cover. A categorization of a specified unit of land or water based on the primary kind of cover on the surface.

Land Kind. A categorization of a specified unit of land or water that describes the climax or pristine condition of the earth's surface prior to human alteration.

Land or Water Use. A categorization of a specified unit of land or water that describes the primary goods or services for which the area is to be treated and managed. The occupation or reservation of a land or water area for a human activity or a defined purpose. More than one use for a specific unit of land or water may be appropriate. See multiple use.

Landscape Quality. A composite of those landscape conditions and perceived values that provide diverse and pleasant surroundings for human use and appreciation. Recognized

components of landscape quality include visual resource, landscape use, viewscape, and visibility.

Management Measure. An action that is not a conservation practice described in Section IV of the FOTG, that has the effect of alleviating problems or improving the treatment of any of the five resources. Criteria need to be established in the FOTG for each management measure.

Multiple Use. Treating and managing the soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources in a single area for two or more complementary or compatible uses occurring concurrently or consecutively. Examples: (a) land used for wood and wildlife production; (b) water areas used for flood control, recreation, and wildlife production; (c) land used for livestock, wildlife, and wood production.

Native Pasture. Land that originally had a climax plant community of forage species is now being primarily used for grazing of native and/or introduced species. Range management principles and concerns are used to meet the resource needs and the decisionmaker's objectives.

Natural Resource. Any naturally occurring resource needed by an organism, population, or ecosystem. NRCS applies this term to soil, water, air, plants, and animals. This is the same as resource base.

Operational Plans/Implementation Measures/Regulations. These terms describe the administrative and legislative actions taken by units of government to carry out or implement the decisions that were made in the comprehensive plan. Such actions are generally those that are outlined in paragraphs (c), (d), and (e) of the definition of comprehensive planning. Examples of these actions include capital improvements program, financing plans for specific functions, intergovernmental coordinating committees, zoning and subdivision regulations, and building and housing codes.

Pastureland. Land that is used for production of forage crops for livestock using agronomic practices such as regular fertilizer applications, liming, and weed control in addition to grazing management.

Planning and Implementation. NRCS technical assistance activities with clients and decisionmakers on opportunities and problems dealing with use, development, and conservation of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. Assistance includes developing plans with individuals, helping develop resource inventories and interpretations (and assisting in their evaluation, analysis, and use), and assistance to representatives of units of government to develop and carry out resource plans for communities, areas, or regions. Planning and implementation assistance may be given for any non-Federal lands and, under certain conditions, for Federal lands.

Planning and Implementation Process. A flexible continuing process of identifying problems and opportunities, determining objectives, inventorying resources, analyzing resource information, and developing and evaluating alternatives to help decisionmakers make and implement decisions for the management of their natural resources.

Planning Unit. An area of land or water that has been delineated as having a need for identification and solution of natural resource use problems and opportunities.

Pollutant. Any introduced substance that limits the use of a resource for a specific purpose.

Priorities. A method of distributing NRCS resources to deal with identified problem areas. Objectives of the RCD as well as those of NRCS national, state, and local offices should be considered. Local conditions, the goals and objectives of local people, and the expressed long-range land and water use needs should be evaluated jointly by the RCD and the NRCS in setting priorities.

Progressive Planning. A process based on the client or decisionmaker making decisions in stages on the use and treatment of the planning units. Some situations make it difficult for people to be able to make all of the needed decisions at one time. The rate of progress in planning will depend on the decisionmaker's level of understanding, commitment to resource improvement, and financial capability.

Project. Any undertaking that will likely require a plan to accomplish, and that has a definite beginning and ending.

Public Participation. An integral part of a planning or major decisionmaking process which provides opportunities for the public to be involved in an interchange of data and ideas. It is required by the National Environmental Policy Act. [190-GM, 410 9 (d), 40 CFR part 1500-1508, and 400-GM Part 400].

Rangeland. Land on which the native vegetation (climax or natural potential) is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs, or shrubs suitable for grazing or browsing use. Rangelands include natural grassland, savannas, most deserts, tundra, alpine plant communities, coastal marshes, wet meadows and lands revegetated naturally or artificially to provide a forage cover that is managed like native vegetation.

Record of Decisions and Applications. A part of the conservation plan document that contains the decisions for one or more fields or conservation treatment unit (CTU).

Record of Decisions. A concise written rationale by the responsible Federal Official regarding implementation of a proposed action requiring an Environmental Impact Statement.

Region. A relatively large land area characterized by similar climatic, physical, economic, and social conditions. Its resource opportunities and problems may also be similar. A region may include parts or all of one or more states.

Request for Assistance. Making known to the Resource Conservation District or NRCS a need or desire for technical or financial assistance.

Resource Base. Soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources. This is the same as natural resources.

Resource Conditions. A definable, distinct set of resource conditions, such as cover, land and water uses, topography, climate zones, or aquifer recharge; and a distinct set of social, cultural, and/or economic characteristics that establish the basis for appropriate conservation management systems.

Resource Conservation District. A subdivision of the state organized pursuant to the state soil conservation district law, as amended. Resource Conservation Districts are locally created and operated with an elected and/or appointed governing body, generally made up of resident land owners.

Resource Management System (RMS). A combination of conservation practices and management actions identified by the primary land or water uses that will protect the resource base by meeting acceptable soil losses, maintaining acceptable water quality, and maintaining acceptable ecological and management levels for the selected resource use.

Resource Plan. A plan prepared under the direction of NRCS conservationists and normally used as an implementation plan to alleviate resource problems. See “Resource planning”.

Resource Planning. The act of formulating a plan of action to correct a public or community problem or to take advantage of an opportunity. Technical assistance for resource planning usually requires an interdisciplinary team with specialized expertise to address the problems.

Risk Analysis. A process for analyzing a selected course of action to determine risks expected from carrying out a course of action.

Rural Development. The utilization, protection, and development of natural, cultural, and human resources which affect the economic vitality, social well-being, or local management capacities of small towns, villages, and the countryside; also included are larger communities whose economic base depends on mining, forestry, agriculture, fishing, tourism, or recreation.

Scoping. The process of determining the extent and degree of detail to which problems and opportunities will be explored in the planning process.

Soil Map Unit. An area of the landscape shown on a soil map which consists of one or more soils.

Soil, Water, Air, Plant, and Animal Resource Conservation. The development, use, and management of soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources in a way that will restore, enhance, protect, or maintain their quality and quantity for the benefit of people and their environment now and in the future.

Sustainable Agriculture. Sustainable agriculture is a way of practicing agriculture which seeks to optimize skills and technology to achieve long-term stability of the agricultural enterprise,

environmental protection, and consumer safety. It is achieved through management strategies which help the producer select hybrids and varieties, soil conserving cultural practices, soil fertility programs, and pest management programs. The goal of sustainable agriculture is to minimize adverse impacts to the immediate and off-farm environments while providing a sustained level of production and profit. Sound resource conservation is an integral part of the means to achieve sustainable agriculture.

Technical Assistance. Help provided to clients and decisionmakers on opportunities, potentials, and problems related to natural resource use. Technical assistance may include program formulation, planning, application, and maintenance.

Unit of Government. A state or territorial government, together with its planning commissions, boards, agencies, and representatives, or a municipality, county, town, parish, or other general purpose political subdivision of a state or territory, including its planning commissions, boards and agencies having planning responsibility and concern over lands that it may or may not directly own or control.

Urban Area. An area predominantly occupied by manmade structures used for residential, commercial, and industrial purposes. The Bureau of the Census defines communities over 2,500 population and urbanized areas as urban areas.

Wetland. An area that has a predominance of hydric soils and that is inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances does support, a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, except lands in Alaska identified as having a high potential for agricultural development and a predominance of permafrost soils.

Woodland. See “Forestland”

Zoning Ordinance. An ordinance to control the type of use and intensity of development of land and structures thereby protecting the public health, safety, and general welfare. This authority is usually delegated to local governments. The ordinance consists of both a map and text. The map indicates the geographic area included in different zones and the text describes the regulations, some of which will vary from zone to zone, whereas others apply to the entire area covered.