

NRCS COLORADO COORDINATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK AND GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) is a voluntary natural resource planning process to enhance resource management and resolve resource issues. Coordinated planning brings together stakeholders (landowners, users, resource managers, and other interested parties) who are interested and concerned about the land to achieve common goals and meet resource needs.

CRM recognizes natural resource management needs can best be identified and resolved on a local level. It encourages direct communication and relies on consensus building among all interested groups as a main strength of the process. To achieve common goals, the most effective process involves the local community, land management agencies and regulating agencies from the outset of the decision making process.

The basic concept underlying CRM is that coordinated management, planning, and implementation of field activities across ownership or management boundaries results in sustainable resource conditions, assists local people in meeting their objectives, and minimized conflict among land users, managers, and owners. It is important that all representatives have authority to speak for the groups they represent. **CRM plan recommendations do not override the authority for those ultimately responsible for federal, state and private resources.** This process is flexible and the plans address specific situations and contain practical and recommended actions.

The CRM planning process can be effectively applied in practically any resource management situation. The end result of CRM is constructive natural resource problem-solving through cooperative planning and management. Although the CRM planning process can be used anytime there is a group of interested people who have the same resource objectives, a CRM plan (CRMP) will be required when the process has been requested by the landowner/operator, there is financial assistance to federal agencies (440-M-Part 525.22), or when the plan alternative has the potential to affect change in resource condition or management on the federal land associated with the private land.

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook provides guidance and tools for Field Groups to develop Coordinated Resource Management Plans. These plans can be created at a sub-watershed scale (resource management plans) or at the ranch scale (ranch management plans). The handbook outlines the planning process, provides checklists of ideas to be considered during the planning process, and forms to help organize information.

The sample documents and forms in **Appendix A** will assist working groups in moving through the planning process of identifying issues, establishing goals and target conditions, determining and implementing actions, and finally evaluating effectiveness and revising actions as needed. The handbook also provides conflict resolution methods and how to establish meeting ground rules that should avoid conflicts from arising.

The CRM Planning Process

A request for a CRM plan can be initiated by a resource management agency, a conservation district, a land owner, a Native American Tribe, a land user, or other party. Requests are communicated to the Field Group. **The CRM process is initiated to address existing and potential resource management issues.** Who participates with the group depends on the scope of the operation, project, land ownership, and the interest in the resources. If the request is for a coordinated resource management on private land only, then the private land owner needs to agree on the process and to everyone that is participating in the group.

A CRM process is similar to NRCS's 9-Step Planning Process, except that it involves a group instead of a single decision maker.

Ground Rules

Early in the process, the group will need to collaboratively develop and commit to ground rules. This helps create healthy, productive communication habits, trust, and sense of safety when discussions get intense. A common understanding of the level of consensus expected should be determined.

Although they can be stated in various ways, four basic rules need to be established to enable this type of collaborative planning.

Collaborative Planning Rules

Commitment – All participants must be committed to the success of the program. The process should help participants identify common goals. Participants must enter with at least an open mind and willingness to listen. Undermining the group is not allowed. CRM groups should invite all stakeholders to express their needs and offer solutions. Blocking a suggested resolution carries with it the commitment to offer an alternative.

Broad Involvement – All interested parties need to be invited. Document who comes and who declines to participate. To leave out a group that has expressed interest invites eventual failure of the process. If a party is more interested in undermining than in expressing needs, the group will need to flush out the underlying issues and concerns.

Management by Consensus -- Participation in CRM is explicitly voluntary, and therefore, everyone needs to agree on conclusions. Abstentions are permitted. If everyone does not agree, you go back to the drawing board and listen further to expressed needs and concerns.

Express Needs Not Positions – “Positions” create confrontation and “needs” generate compassion and understanding. Groups are more likely to take care of legitimate needs. The group must discipline itself and help each other to speak in terms of “needs” and avoid position statements, grandstanding, or accusations typical of adversarial relations.

Consensus – A consensus is the collective opinion arrived at by a group of people working together under conditions that permit communications to be open, supportive and fair. All members understand the decision and are prepared to support it. A group consensus opinion will represent all of the stakeholders, whereas unilateral decisions tend to polarize the group. The greater time commitment to

reach consensus is balanced by the quality of the final decision.

Operationally, consensus means that all members can rephrase the decision to show they understand and everyone has a chance to say how they feel about it. Those who disagree are listened to and the reasons for disagreement are documented. If after hearing the reasons the group still agrees to the decision, an effort should be made to see if the disagreeing party will give the decision a try.

The group's composition, size, and the process used will affect the ability of the group to come to a consensus. It helps, for example, for groups to be seated in a democratic manner, such as in a circle, rather than in a shape placing one member in a prominent or "power" position.

Reaching consensus requires give and take by all participants. It is unlikely that two groups will reach the same "right" answer, or order the issues being considered the same way, because the dynamics of each group are different. The dynamics in a consensus exercise are similar to the dynamics of mediation. The resolution of the dispute depends on the flexibility and creativity of the participants. Success frequently depends on the ability of the facilitator to lead the parties toward a consensus solution. (See Appendix A, Facilitating Conflict Resolution.)

There is no one "right" process. The group may try to categorize the most important and least important issues. It is often easier to agree on what is least important than vice versa. The group may find it easier to achieve consensus by agreeing first on small issues before working on big, more complex issues or issues that are the basis for more disagreement.

Consensus Guidelines

- Get underlying assumptions out in the open where they can be discussed. Don't let unspoken opinions stay unspoken.
- Listen and pay attention to what others have to say.
- Be cautious of early and quick agreements. They may be based on erroneous assumptions that need to be challenged.
- Avoid competing and arguing. Treat information as neutral and don't argue over how "right" or "wrong" provided information may be. If information is thought to be lacking, say why and suggest ways to make it better.
- Be aware that voting may split the group into winners and losers and encourages either-or thinking and arguments.
- Encourage everyone, particularly the quieter members, to offer their ideas.

Planning Teams

Stakeholders – The Field Group will identify all individuals, interest groups, and agencies that could potentially be affected by decisions made or improvements to the resource issue (stakeholders) and invite them to participate in the planning effort. Groups that need to be invited will vary depending on the scope of the resource issues. Invite representatives living and working outside of the area to participate if they are familiar with the local issues. Local representatives of all levels of government should be invited. Ideally those present should have decision making authority for the group or agency they represent.

A complete group ensures a stronger plan that is less subject to future challenge. Participation is voluntary. Success is still possible even if some affected parties choose not to participate.

Teams – If a large group is assembled, it may be subdivided into two teams:

The Steering Committee– Its role is policy, guidance, and direction, not necessarily development of technical solutions. Steering Committee members are decision makers, policy makers, and representatives who can speak for their organization and should have the broadest possible stakeholder representation.

Technical Review Team – This team gets out on the ground and proposes technical solutions to bring back to the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee and Technical Review Team members need some orientation at the start of the planning process. Some questions need thorough discussion, such as: What steps to follow? What will be required of everyone involved? What planning can and cannot be expected to accomplish?

Facilitator – A facilitator often plays an important role for your planning group. This person will assume responsibility for setting the tone, reducing conflicts, and efficiently moving the entire group forward in decision making. Attributes of a good facilitator include professional competence in resource issues and the ability to work with people to achieve consensus. In more contentious situations, a facilitator with no perceived bias may be necessary. However, usually the planning group can agree on a local facilitator who will remain impartial when running the meetings.

An Effective Facilitator

- Creates a safe working environment in which members can contribute their thoughts and ideas.
- Gets agreement through consensus on desired outcomes.
- Makes sure that everyone has a chance to participate and treats everyone equally.
- Promotes respectful listening, defends others from personal attack, and prevents power plays.
- Ensures that time is monitored and information is recorded.
- Remains neutral and does not contribute content ideas or evaluate members' ideas.
- Creates opportunity, participation, involvement, ownership, belonging, and acceptance.
- Focuses on group accomplishment and team building.
- Encourages building relationships first before dealing with sensitive issues.
- Keeps the group's attitude positive.

The Scoping Process

Gather Information – Several weeks before the first meeting of the planning group, assemble information and circulate it among participants. The information can be as simple as a detailed agenda for the first meeting or fact sheet.

Compile all available and pertinent resource information for the planning area to identify issues, problems and opportunities. Needed materials may include; soil surveys, hydrologic studies, local land use plans, and resource inventory data. This will help the Steering Committee realize resource capabilities and potentials. The issues and problems will help direct the group in the collection of specific data. One agency may volunteer to take the lead on preparing this information. (Appendix A - Checklist Prior to First Meeting.)

Initial Meeting – Meetings should occur at a neutral location, such as a community center. To reach all interested people in the community, send a news release (Appendix A, Sample News Release). The agenda for the first meeting may vary based on the background information available and level of knowledge of

participants. The main goal of this meeting is to establish common goals and interests among participants, the ground rules and process, and initiate discussions of major resource issues. (Appendix A, Sample First Meeting Agenda.)

Identify Resource Issues and Opportunities – Based on the information gathered, create a list of major resource management issues and opportunities (Appendix A, Resource Issues and Opportunities). All suggestions are included on the list, even if some are controversial. Public scoping meetings may be necessary to identify issues and opportunities. All ideas will be considered in greater detail later during the planning process.

Field trips should be part of this process. The process of identifying the major issues may take more than one meeting. The process of identifying management objectives and potential actions (following sections) is also likely to require field trips. Field Inventory and Analysis of resource if not already completed will need to be done. Who completes that task should be identified. **Federal lands are the responsibility of the appropriate federal agency and not inventoried, planned or monitored by the NRCS unless the planning process is done with a representative of the federal agency.**

Define Planning Area -- The extent of the planning area will be defined by the planning team, based on the issues of concern and opportunities. Boundaries should be logical and recognizable. The area should include all private and public lands necessary to obtain solutions to identified problems. Be careful not to make the planning area too large or too small. If it is too big, the plan may become too complex and lengthy. If too small, the causes of some problems may be outside the planning area.

Set Goals and Objectives

Develop specific goals and management objectives to address issues identified (Appendix A, Planning Goals and Objectives Worksheet). Issues can be addressed individually or combined.

A **goal** is a concise statement of the state or condition a land and resource management plan is designed to achieve.

An **objective** is a specific statement of measurable results to be achieved within a stated time period to meet the goal. An objective should be quantifiable.

The planning goals and objectives are developed based on what “outcomes” need to be achieved in terms of resource sustainability for the resource uses. The management objective is more quantifiable and put in a time frame, while the goal is a broader statement.

Write down every suggestion in order received no matter how simple, controversial, or even contradictory. The group needs to reach consensus on the goals and management objectives. This may take several iterations to satisfy all participant needs.

Develop an Action Plan

For each objective, the Technical Review Team will identify potential actions to accomplish each objective (Appendix A, Potential Actions List). Do not overlook innovative suggestions.

Then compare potential actions to determine which actions are practical, workable, and are likely to achieve the stated objective (Appendix A, Action Evaluation Worksheet). Be sure to identify permits and authorizations that might be needed to accomplish each action and the process, costs, and time involved in obtaining them.

Field trips may help resolve difficult conflicts and dispel misconceptions about resources or features at a site. A planning group may need to develop and discard several different lists of actions for each objective before all agree on one that will do the job.

When the best actions to accomplish the objective have been selected, describe: responsible parties, resource needs, support and commitment, funding, a tentative time schedule for completion, milestones, and how effectiveness will be determined. (Appendix A, Action Assignment Worksheet).

Document and Approve the CRM Plan

A CRM Plan identifies the purpose of the plan, goals and objectives, selected actions, and methods for monitoring effectiveness. The draft plan assembles the information gathered during the prior steps. A plan format is provided in Appendix A. Environmental Assessments, Records of Decisions and/or Findings of No Significant Impact are to be attached to the plan.

Once the Steering Committee approves the draft plan, it should be shared with a larger audience of interested stakeholders. Any conflicts or concerns will need to be resolved. When everyone is in agreement with the plan, all Steering Committee participants sign the signature page, recording their agreement and willingness to carry out tasks described in the plan.

Fund, Implement, Monitor, Review

Funding and Support – Finding funds and support to implement actions can be a challenge. Here are a few suggestions.

Pursue grants. The list of potential grants provided in Appendix A is a good starting point. Consider hiring or finding a volunteer grant writer, such as a university student, or a watershed coordinator. Be sure that your grant application strongly reflects the purpose and priorities of the grant. Develop a strong track record with a grant institution by submitting high quality proposals and other documentation on time. Involve grant resource representatives in the CRM effort.

Network in the community. Find interested volunteers, students, or interest groups to provide labor, equipment, staff time, or more. Use media outreach to highlight your activities. Hold fundraisers. Ask sponsors for contributions. Look for education and training support from federal and state agencies. Look for in-kind services (labor, equipment, etc). Look for special assessments.

Broaden participation in the CRM effort. Invite grant resource representatives and interested volunteer groups to participate.

Look for additional agency support. Conservation Districts, Extension agencies, Universities, and other agencies or NGO's may be willing to provide training and support, such as: initial coordination, in-kind services (use of office, etc.), custodian of grant funds, grant sponsor, technical advice, access to mailing lists and landowner contacts, outreach, publicity, information, education, training, or monitoring support.

Implementation – Encourage stakeholders and if applicable, public participation in the implementation and monitoring phases.

It may take years to implement all components of the plan. To keep energy and momentum for implementation, consider sending news releases to stakeholders or local media highlight accomplishments. The community or interested stakeholders can be asked to a "field day" or workshop to view or help implement the project.

Authorizations and permits must be obtained before starting each action. The approval process may take time, so initiate well in advance of scheduled implementation.

Projects must be sized and placed in the best manner for the site. This may require engineering plans, technical assistance, and training. Many grants will pay for the engineering, technical assistance, and training as needed to assure project successful.

Effectiveness Monitoring – To determine if strategies are effective, one must have baseline monitoring that identifies critical sites where deterioration has been documented. It is also necessary to establish reference sites to properly interpret field data.

Monitoring is needed to determine if measurable management objectives are being reached. These management objectives will help determine the types of monitoring needed.

Develop a monitoring plan that provides monitoring method procedures, quality assurance, monitoring schedules, and responsibilities. An effectiveness monitoring worksheet is provided in Appendix A.

Progress and Effectiveness Reviews – The planning group needs to regroup periodically to review progress in achieving objectives in the plan. Make sure that planned actions are being completed. Adjust the priority lists and project schedule if needed. Educate new members to the team. Changes in land ownership, passage on new laws, or changes in agency priorities may require modifications of the plan.

Once a plan begins to be implemented, it needs to be evaluated to determine whether strategies and actions are achieving goals and targeted conditions. Review effectiveness monitoring data to see if the implementation is achieving the desired outcomes.

Keep the community involved and aware of your progress and accomplishments. Use the news media. Consider hosting a “field day” or “demonstration day” to bring targeted audiences or general public out to a project site. Look for ways to encourage face-to-face education and outreach about the project.



It is best to think of planning as a cycle, not a straight-through process. The process starts by identifying desired outcomes. Progress will occur if local level participation and control is encouraged at every stage. Long-term success will require commitments to maintain the improvements and adaptive management – ongoing monitoring and adjustment of land use practices.

APPENDIX A**Toolbox for Coordinated Resource Management**

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Facilitating Conflict Resolution

The meeting chair may want to use the following process to build a consensus.

1. Welcome – Commend people for their willingness to work towards an amicable resolution of the problem.
2. Establish shared goals and commitments – Determine common goals. All participants agree to work towards a resolution and to find a consensus opinion.
3. Ground Rules – All participants agree to abide by established rules of conduct.
4. Statement of the Problem – Each participant gives a summary of how they perceive the problem.
5. Clarifying Questions – Each participant may ask questions to better understand the other’s point of view. However, it is clarification only, not a debate.
6. Statement of Wants – Each participant in turn states what they want to see happen in order to resolve the problem.
7. Clarifying Wants – Each participant may again ask clarifying questions. The facilitator must ensure that each participant understands the “wants” of the others.
8. Statement of Willingness to Do – Each participant in turn states what they are willing to do.
9. Consensus Agreement – An agreement or consensus is reached and is formally recorded in the minutes.

Before the consensus is reached the group may need to repeat some of these steps in a feedback loop. Some decisions may require several meetings to present and digest ideas and concerns.

Sample News Release – As Applicable

News Release

For Immediate Release

Date: *(month/day/year)*

Contact: *(name and phone for the newspaper to contact for more information)*

Join Us for a Public Meeting

The first paragraph should include who, what, when where, and why.

For example:

The public is invited to attend a meeting to discuss the future of the [XZY Ranch] sponsored by the XZY Cattle Company, NRCS and USFS. The meeting will be held at the ABC Community Center on Friday, February 00, 2016 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. to discuss current use and management of the stream corridor running from Hillsville to Burro Lake.

The second paragraph should give a bit more detail about the goal of the meeting and mention of who should attend and why. For example:

The focus of the meeting will be a discussion of resource issues in this watershed and the use of coordinated resource management and planning to achieve success. Attendees are invited to join the discussion and state their concerns. This meeting is particularly important for community members and civic leaders who are concerned about the Little Javelina watershed and would like to get involved in improving this natural resource. The meeting will be of interest to people with homes along Little Javelina Creek.

Note any additional information in the final paragraph. For example:

For more information, please IMA Resource, President of the XYZ Cattle Company, at 123-456-7890 or jjwaters@earthnet.org or you can find additional information on the XZY Ranch at website: <http://www.xyzranchandcattle.com>.

Checklist Prior to the First Meeting

- Assemble a small planning committee to help pull together the first meeting.
- Identify potential stakeholders and develop a mailing list.
- Set the time and date for the first meeting. Use a neutral location for the meeting.
- Develop a meeting agenda. Include the issue(s) that led to the meeting being called.
- Make arrangements for a meeting facilitator.
- Identify someone to chair the first meeting.
- Plan to have a recorder present to take accurate notes.
- Send an announcement or news release to potential stakeholders announcing the first meeting 2–3 weeks in advance. Direct contact will encourage better participation.
- Prepare for audio-visual needs by having flip charts and felt markers, computers and projectors, etc.
- Create a map showing the *proposed* geographic boundaries to be encompassed by the planning effort. Consider using GIS at the meeting to display information about the area of concern and support discussions.
- Collect readily available data and information about your proposed planning area (see potential list below).
- Assemble and photocopy handouts for meeting.
- Have nametags and sign-in sheet available. Sign in sheet should include: name, address, organization, email, and phone number. Use this to start a permanent contact list.

Potential Resource Materials to Gather

- GIS covers and datasets (ownership, land use, soil, veg-gap analysis, allotments)
- Field monitoring and survey information (soil, wildlife population, habitat, fishery, vegetation, riparian proper functioning condition, stream, timber, watershed inventory)
- Water quality assessment report and impaired waters list
- Threatened and Endangered species critical habitat
- Livestock inventory or existing grazing plans
- Land management agency general plans

Sample First Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome participants. Have attendees introduce themselves. Be sure that everyone has signed in.
2. Describe general purpose of the meeting, the purpose of the plan, and results or outcomes anticipated.
3. Discuss the collaborative process to be used. Establish general rules of conduct needed to establish a consensus.
4. Designate: meeting chair, facilitator, and note taker.
5. Present information and data known about the area
 - a. Delineate geographic area (may be revised during process)
 - b. Characteristics, ownership, etc
 - c. Summarize monitoring and survey information, highlighting concerns and data gaps.
6. Brainstorm issues of concern and opportunities that could be addressed in this plan.
7. Brainstorm what needs to be learned before making planning decisions. Identify potential sources of missing information and who will obtain it for the group
8. Determine if other stakeholders should be participating in future meetings.
9. Determine action items and responsibilities prior to the next meeting
10. Set the agenda and date for next meeting.
11. Obtain participant feedback and commitment. Give each person a chance to express support, doubts, and fears about the possibilities for this process and an opportunity to share its responsibilities. (*Why did you come today? What issues concern you most, and why? Are you willing to commit to future participation as a member of this group?*)
12. Close with final comments and adjourn.

Meeting Chair: Provide ample time for individual input and comment. Promote respectful listening. Look for people who have not spoken or expressed ideas, and call on them specifically. All participants need to be included and heard.

Project Status and Plan Evaluation Meetings

Periodic meetings are used to maintain momentum and address issues during the implementation phase and evaluate progress after implementation. During periodic review meetings, the group will need to:

- Review the progress in implementing the plan
 - Recognize accomplishments
 - Discuss actions that are not completed and determine additional support and resources needed
 - Discuss new developments, issues, or unintended consequences
 - Formally adjust schedule, if needed.
- Review monitoring results
 - Determine any monitoring issues and revise plans as needed
 - Determine if monitoring data indicates progress at meeting targeted conditions
- Consider adaptive management strategies
 - Determine whether the plans need to be revised, and if so, how to proceed.
- Document what is to be done next, who will do it, and when it will be completed.

Action Evaluation Worksheet

Fill out one worksheet for each potential action. This evaluation will help select and prioritize potential actions.

Potential Action

Costs and benefits can be roughly estimated or judgments (e.g., high costs, moderate benefits)

Costs and Complexity
Estimated costs:
Complexity/technical assistance required:
Permits/permissions:
Maintenance requirements:
Other concerns:

Potential Benefits
Past use and benefits:
Who/what will benefit:
Expected life of benefit:
Desire to implement:
Commitment to maintain:
Time after implementation for benefits to be achieved:
Likelihood of achieving goal & objective:

Support
Commitments to Implement (who, where, when, what portion of the implementation)
Potential Funding Sources:

Other Comments

Monitoring Worksheet

For each Management Objective, describe how effectiveness will be monitored. Consider establishing “key sites” where deterioration can currently be measured so that effectiveness of improvements can be measured. Also consider monitoring reference sites so that variable climate impacts do not bias data interpretation.

Management Objective

Monitoring Method(s) (brief description)	
Field Protocols and Evaluation Criteria (citations)	
Criteria for Site Selection and Monitoring Times	
Existing Data	
Date to Initiate Monitoring	
Responsible Parties or Agencies	Monitoring Plan (if needed) Monitoring Data Tracking Data Interpretation Data Reporting
Parties to Receive Reports	
Other Information	

Action Assignment Worksheet

Fill out one worksheet for each action selected to be included in the plan.

Action	
Resources Needed (Costs, training, etc)	
Responsible Parties for Implementation and Maintenance (Who, what, when)	
Potential Funding Support	
Permits and Authorizations	
Effectiveness Monitoring (brief description)	
Tentative Schedule and Milestones to Implement and Monitor Effectiveness	

CRM Plan Format Outline

(Cover with name of plan, date of adoption)

(Acknowledgements – people and agencies involved in plan development)

(Plan agreement signature page)

Name of Plan

Purpose

Planning Area

Key natural and man-made characteristics, size, location in the state

General land uses

Land ownership by acres

Agency designated area (e.g., range resource area, conservation district, ranger district etc)

County

Attach maps delineating area (recommend topographic map)

USGS topographic quadrangles

Resource Management Issues and Opportunities (from Resource Issues and Opportunities Worksheet)

List and discuss problems and opportunities addressed by this plan.

Indicate how problems were documented

Could attach list developed if other important issues will need to be addressed later.

Resource Goals and Objectives (from Goals and Objective Worksheet)

List goals and management objectives. (Goals are desired conditions. Management objectives are measurable results within a stated time period needed to meet the goal.)

Action Plan (from Action Assignment Worksheet)

List actions to be taken to obtain each management objective

Resources needed

Responsible parties for implementation and maintenance

Funding sources

Permits and authorizations

Schedule and milestones

Evaluations and Revisions

Effectiveness monitoring

Evaluations, reviews, plan revisions

Attach: Maps

Lists and worksheets, as appropriate

Detailed monitoring plan

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