

## Typical Scenarios



Farm Bill Program payments are based on an average cost to implement a Conservation Practice. Because there are various ways to implement a Conservation Practice, practice scenarios are developed to describe the various methods and associated costs of installing a practice. There may be a dozen different scenarios that describe how one practice is implemented. These practice scenarios are a model of the costs of conservation practices based on “typical” situations that occur on the landscape. The typical scenario model, is a representation of a conservation practice(s) installation, or implementation, based on a representative sized operation or acreage on an average scale, during normal conditions with commonly used materials and equipment. However, every farm and ranch operation is different, particularly when you consider +H (Human) considerations. So, why do we have a typical scenarios and how do we use them?

Each Regional Payment Schedule Team is charged with building “typical scenarios” for each conservation practice. According to the Payment Schedule Handbook, a typical scenario is defined as containing the “most commonly used inputs and quantities associated with practice or activity installation in a typical setting for a geographic area.” A typical scenario describes the most common application of the practice, including how the practice is implemented and typical quantities, materials and other inputs used, and methods of implementation, on the most common, landscape setting and typical extent to address the resource concern.

But will this ‘typical scenario’ accurately describe what is happening on all farm or ranch situations you may encounter? Probably not, because every operation is different. What the typical scenario does is assist the planner with choosing the most appropriate Farm Bill payment for the conservation practice recommended. It is crucial that all planners understand that the Payment Schedule practice scenarios represent situations for practice installation that will meet the Conservation Practice Standard (CPS). They do not represent every situation that could be implemented that also meet the CPS. Planner therefore have to select the practice scenario closest to what each client intends to implement. There won’t always be a perfect match and judgment needs to be employed to avoid situations where windfall payments could be realized. If the Payment Rate will result in a significant windfall payment, then the Planner should simply explain that we don’t currently have a payment scenario that matches well with what they want to do within the Conservation Practice Standard. The planner also should explain that such a scenario might be added to the next FY’s Payment Schedule assuming it represents a “typical” situation not previously addressed (i.e., a natural resource setting and land use situation where the resource concerns merit an incentive payment to accelerate practice adoption).

Below are some examples of how to interpret typical scenarios descriptions and narratives.

The narrative for the typical scenario for 340 – “Cover Crop, Mix” states the following: “Typically a grain-legume mix (4 to 5 species - may also use forage sorghum, radishes, turnips, buckwheat, etc) will be planted as a cover crop after harvest of a row crop, and will be followed by a row crop that will utilize the residue as a mulch.” The Scenario Description specifically states ‘4 to 5 species’ which dictates the number of species within the mix. Though the scenario uses quantities of specific types of species of grains and legumes, the planner must know that the payment rate is specific to the number of species, which requires 4 to 5 species, but the type of

grains and legumes recommended, should be based on what is appropriate for the specific site per statewide plant establishment guidance.

The narrative for the typical scenario for 314 – “Brush Management, Hand Tools” is as follows: “Using hand tools such as axes, shovels, hoes, nippers, brush pullers, and including chainsaws to remove or cut off woody plants at or below the root collar.” Though the only hand tool that was used in the scenario to build the payment was a chainsaw, the planner may choose any hand tool that is described in the list, or any other tool that is not listed and not mechanized.

The narrative for the typical scenario for 578-“Stream Crossing, Culvert Installation” is as follows: “Install culvert so that crossing and water flow are able to cross each other in a stable manner.” The components listed include dewatering, earthfill, geotextile, rock riprap, excavation and HDPE pipe. The size of the HDPE pipe used in developing the payment was 40 feet of HDPE pipe with a 30 inch diameter. Though the scenario includes HDPE pipe, the planner may recommend corrugated aluminum or concrete pipe depending on the site conditions. In addition, the pipe length could be longer or shorter than the 40 feet used in the scenario. The scenario is for the installation of a culvert. The planner should not use this scenario unless the client intends to install a culvert.

All Payment Schedule typical scenarios should be based upon the Conservation Practice standards and specification(s). At the national level, it is already determined what type of components are allowed (i.e., material, labor, equipment) to reflect the installation or implementation of a conservation practice per standard and specification. Regional Teams populate each practice scenario with components and quantities. The Conservation Planner plans within a chosen scenario. The typical scenario is a “model” to determine a payment rate, the planner must determine the best “fitting” scenario for the operation, then develop details for site specific conditions.

The planner must also develop site specific Conservation Practice specifications that instruct the land user on how to implement the practice. The specifications do not need to be identical to all components or quantities that were used to construct the Payment Schedule typical scenario. The typical scenario is only used to determine the financial assistance payment, not how the practice is implement. Payment Schedule typical scenarios should be consistent with the CPS, and never be interpreted as a substitute for the CPS and site specific planning and installation specifications.

#### References:

USDA – NRCS, “National Payment Schedule Handbook,” Subpart B, 613.11 Cost Data, March 2009.