

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION

Conservation planning is a natural resource problem solving and management process. The process integrates economic, social, and ecological considerations to meet private and public needs. This approach, which emphasizes desired future conditions, helps improve natural resource management, minimize conflict, and address problems and opportunities. The nine-step planning process used by NRCS is discussed in detail in the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH).

The first step in the planning process is an initial determination of the client's problems, opportunities, and concerns related to natural resources and human considerations within the planning area.

Resource inventories and an analysis of resource data are completed in steps three and four. The results of this analysis are compared to quality criteria to document the kind, amount, and extent of existing and potential resource problems.

A broad range of technically feasible conservation alternatives are developed with the client. Alternatives may include structural and management practices that directly affect resources, or practices that indirectly mitigate potential adverse impacts on the resources. The purpose of formulating alternatives is to provide the most effective, efficient, and economical conservation treatments that address resource concerns and are acceptable to the client in solving problems, addressing opportunities, and meeting the stated objectives.

Conservation alternatives are developed at a Resource Management System (RMS) level. An RMS is a combination of practices that, when installed, will meet or exceed established quality criteria for identified soil,

water, air, plant, and animal resource problems for resource sustainability. The installation of the planned practices will provide for the long-term conservation, protection, and/or improvement of the resource base. When one or more of the resource concerns do not meet the minimum requirements for sustainability, planning is considered "progressive".

Progressive Planning

Progressive planning is used when a client is ready, willing, and able to commit to implementing some, but not all, of the conservation practices needed to achieve an RMS. Progressive plans should be developed with a goal in mind to later plan and install all the practices needed for a RMS. Follow-up is a key to achieving that success.

FARM BILL PROGRAMS

When programs or initiatives exist, for example, Highly Erodible Land provisions, that define other levels of planning for specific resources issues, clients will be offered alternatives that, as a minimum, meet the criteria of those programs. However, the conservation planner will encourage the client, who is a participant in programs that are related to specific resource issues, to develop a RMS plan or progressive plan as appropriate. This will help the client identify and address all resource concerns and provide a plan to use with other existing or future programs.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FORMULATION

The RMS formulation process is discussed in detail in the NPPH. The preplanning phase can involve the use of information found in the FOTG. These include:

- **General Resource References for Resource Planning:**

Field office resource inventory and other supporting data are located in Section I of the FOTG.

Site and soils information are found in Section II of the FOTG.

- **Quality Criteria:**

Quality Criteria are in Section III of the FOTG.

- **Guidance Documents:**

Guidance documents are located in Section III of the FOTG. These documents are usually specific for a particular area, generally a county or a group of counties, such as a Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) and Common Resource Area (CRA).

- **Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) Document:**

The CPPE document is in Section V of the FOTG.

- **Conservation Effects for Decision-Making:**

Section V of the FOTG shows affects of applying practices in the RMS examples.