Explanation Sheet

RESOURCE CONCERNS & PLANNING CRITERIA FOR CONSERVATION PLANNING

10/1/2012

Resource Concern - Cause	Description of Concern	Land Use	Planning Criteria		Measurement & Assessment Tools
A resource concern (RC) is an expected degradation of the soil, water, air, plant, or animal resource base to an extent that the sustainability or intended use of the resource is impaired. Because NRCS quantifies or describes resource concerns as part of a comprehensive conservation planning process that includes client objectives, human and energy resources are considered components of the resource base. The "Cause" is the specific reason or threat to the resource that results in the resource concern.		* Required Assessment	A planning criterion is a quantitative or qualitative method to assess the existing condition of the natural resources on a site to determine whether additional treatment is needed to address a specific potential resource concern. **Planning Consideration** A planning consideration is a description of potential actions or activities that should be considered to help address an identified resource concern and/or to address unintended consequences of an action. Planning considerations are identified for resource concerns when it is not appropriate or technologically feasible to identify specific criteria or a threshold for treatment.		Description of the technology or process for determining if assessment criteria are met.
			Screening Level Screening level criteria are defined, when appropriate, to identify sites with conditions that have little or no probability of needing additional treatment to address the specific resource concern. If the site meets the screening level criteria, then no other assessment is needed to document that planning criteria are met on this site. States can delete or edit nationally identified screening criteria to address localized conditions.	***Basic Assessment Level*** Basic assessment level criteria are used when a site does not meet screening level criteria, or when no screening level criteria are defined. Assessment levels are also used when formulating and evaluating alternatives. National criteria establish the minimum for all sites. States may add state-specific criteria to address local conditions.	

Soil

SOIL

- 1 **SOIL EROSION - Sheet, rill, & wind erosion**	Detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash, irrigation runoff or wind that degrades soil quality	• Crop*	Permanent ground cover > 90% and slope < 10%	Water erosion rate ≤ T **AND** Wind erosion rate ≤ T	RUSLE2 WEPS
		• Developed Land* • Farmsteads* • Associated Ag Land* • Designated Protected Area* • Other Rural Land* • Pasture*	Permanent ground cover > 90% and slope < 10%	Water erosion rate ≤ T **AND** Wind erosion rate ≤ T	RUSLE2 WEPS
		• Forest*	Soil surface organic residue cover > 80%	Site is stable and without visible signs of erosion	Visual Inspection
		• Range*	State established criteria.	RHA - soil site stability - slight to moderate or less **OR** Rangeland Planned Trend is positive	RHA - Rangeland Health Assessment Rangeland Trend Worksheet

- 2 **SOIL EROSION – Concentrated flow erosion**	Untreated classic gullies may enlarge progressively by head cutting and/or lateral widening. Ephemeral gullies occur in the same flow area and are obscured by tillage. This includes concentrated flow erosion caused by runoff from rainfall, snowmelt or irrigation water.	• Crop*	Ephemeral gullies are not occurring **AND** Classic gullies are not present	Conservation practices and managements are in place to prevent or control ephemeral gullies **AND** Classic gully management is adequate to stop the progression of head cutting and widening and are offsite impacts are minimized by vegetation and/or structures	Field measurements / observations
		• Forest* • Farmsteads* • Pasture* • Range* • Developed Land* • Associated Ag Land* • Designated Protected Area* • Other Rural Land*	Classic gullies are not present	Classic gully management is adequate to stop the progression of head cutting and widening and are offsite impacts are minimized by vegetation and/or structures	
- 3 **SOIL EROSION– Excessive bank erosion from streams shorelines or water conveyance channels**	Sediment from banks or shorelines threatens to degrade water quality and limit use for intended purposes	• Crop* • Forest • Range* • Developed Land* • Associated Ag Land* • Designated Protected Area* • Water* • Other Rural Land* • Farmsteads*	No streams or shoreline are on or adjacent to site **OR** No bank erosion from streams, shorelines or conveyance channels present	[For shorelines and water conveyance channels; Banks are stable or commensurate with normal geomorphological processes **AND** For streambanks; SVAP2 bank condition element score ≥5] **OR** If present, bank erosion is caused by upstream land use and beyond the client's control	SVAP2
		• Pasture*	No streams or shoreline are on or adjacent to site **OR** No bank erosion from streams, shorelines or conveyance channels present	PCS - streambank / shoreline erosion element score ≥ 4 **AND** For shorelines and water conveyance channels; Banks stable or commensurate with normal geomorphological processes **AND** If present, bank erosion is caused by upstream land use and beyond the client's control	SVAP2 PCS - Pasture Condition Score

- 4 **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION - Subsidence**	Loss of volume and depth of organic soils due to oxidation caused by above normal microbial activity resulting from excessive water drainage, soil disturbance, or extended drought. This excludes karst / sinkholes issues or depressions caused by underground activities.	• Crop • Forest • Associated Ag Land • Designated Protected Area • Pasture	Histisol soils are not present **OR** Histisol soils are not exhibiting subsidence	Subsidence is adequately managed to meet client's objectives	Client input / planner observation
- 5 **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION – Compaction**	Management induced soil compaction resulting in decreased rooting depth that reduces plant growth, animal habitat and soil biological activity	• Crop • Forest • Associated Ag Land • Designated Protected Area • Other Rural Land	Soil compaction is not a problem **AND** Activities do not cause soil compaction problems	Compaction is managed to meet Client's production and management objectives	Observation of soil and/or plant condition Client input / planner observation
		• Pasture	Soil compaction is not a problem **AND** Activities do not cause soil compaction problems	PCS – compaction element score ≥ 4	PCS - Pasture Condition Score
		• Range	Soil compaction is not a problem **AND** Activities do not cause soil compaction problems	RHA - soil site stability - slight to moderate or less **OR** Compaction is managed to meet Client's production and management objectives	RHA - Rangeland Health Assessment Observation of soil and/or plant condition

- 6 **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION – Organic matter depletion**	Soil organic matter is not adequate to provide a suitable medium for plant growth, animal habitat, and soil biological activity	• Crop*	Permanent ground cover > 80%	SCI > 0	RUSLE2 WEPS
		• Pasture	Permanent ground cover > 80%	SCI > 0 **OR** [PCS - plant cover element score ≥ 4 **AND** PCS - plant residue element score ≥ 4]	PCS - Pasture Condition Score RUSLE2
		• Range	Soil organic matter depletion is not a problem **AND** Activities do not cause soil organic matter depletion	[RHA - soil site stability - slight to moderate or less **AND** RHA – biotic integrity attribute rating - slight to moderate departure or less] **OR** Rangeland Planned Trend is positive	RHA - Rangeland Health Assessment Rangeland Trend Worksheet
		• Forest	Soil organic matter depletion is not a problem **AND** Activities do not cause soil organic matter depletion	Ground cover meets state criteria specific to ecological site **OR** Soil organic matter is managed to meet Client objectives	Client input / planner observation
- 7 **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION – Concentration of salts or other chemicals**	Concentration of salts leading to salinity and/or sodicity reducing productivity or limiting desired use Concentrations of other chemicals impacting productivity or limiting desired use	• Crop • Pasture • Range • Associated Ag Land • Farmsteads	Activities do not cause salinity/sodicity problems	Conservation practices and managements are in place to mitigate on-site effects	Soil diagnostic evaluations