

NRCS Planning Procedures for Complying with the Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Planning Steps 1-4: Investigate the potential for Federal Candidate, Threatened or Endangered (T&E spp.) or "Critical Habitat" presence on and around the planning area. Use fact sheets available on the USFWS Ecological Services Field Office website (Raleigh or Asheville) in combination with field investigations, county lists, Natural Heritage data, GIS query, and other technical references. Document survey results on Inventory of Planning Area form and file results of GIS query in the client's Toolkit folder. Although State listed species are not protected under ESA, they should be included in the inventory and documentation.

Planning Step 5: Develop and document alternatives that will achieve the client's stated objectives; solve natural resource problems; and take advantage of opportunities to improve or protect resource conditions.

Planning Step 6: Evaluate the alternatives using the USFWS-NRCS Interagency Consultation Matrix (ICM) to determine their possible effects on T&E spp. and Critical Habitat. The ICM is embedded within the NRCS-CPA-52 form and can be viewed by doing one of the following:

- 1) Select the EandTSpecies tab at the bottom of the Excel document.
- 2) Select the Guide Sheet link under Endangered and Threatened Species portion of Special Environmental Concerns.

Document analysis and findings on NRCS-CPA-52 "Special Environmental Concerns" section of the form. Categorize the potential effect according to one of the following by making notes in "Effect" section of NRCS-CPA-52. The current version of the NRCS-CPA-52 should always be used and can be found on the NC Share Point Site (ECS Site > Conservation Planning Forms folder).

