

## SECTION III

# RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (RMS) AND QUALITY CRITERIA

## QUALITY CRITERIA

### INTRODUCTION

Quality criteria establish the minimum treatment level necessary to adequately address the natural resource considerations that are identified during the planning process for the development of a RMS. Quality criteria are quantitative or qualitative statements that are established in accordance with local, state, and federal programs and regulations in consideration of ecological, economic and social effects.

Not all resource concerns have quality criteria that can be quantified or have assessment tools that can measure changes in the resource. National and State Resource Concerns and Quality Criteria identifies the resource concerns where quality criteria can be quantified and an assessment tool is available to measure changes in the resource. This table lists minimum treatment criteria for natural resource planning at the RMS level.

### DEFINITIONS

**Quality Criteria.** Refers to the level or condition of the resource that is considered to be minimally acceptable and sustainable. All technical assistance provided to resource users will be directed toward achieving the criteria level established for five resources: soil, water, air, plants, and animals (SWAPA). Resource quality criteria provide a means of determining the adequacy of technical assistance to land users by evaluating the ability of the planned RMS to achieve certain levels in an acceptable time frame.

**Resources and Considerations.** NRCS policy lists five resources (SWAPA) to include in all technical assistance efforts. The policy contains specific considerations related to each of the resources for which criteria were developed. Both the resources and their respective considerations are addressed individually.

**Treatment Standards.** These refer to the planned and/or applied conservation measures necessary to achieve quality criteria in the resources of concern. Resource quality criteria provide a "goal," while treatment standards provide the "means" by which to reach that goal. Treatment standards are the basis for a RMS and serve as the measure of adequacy for planned treatment.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF QUALITY CRITERIA

In the establishment of criteria, the following basic rules were followed for consistency and uniformity:

Quality criteria statements reflect a minimally acceptable condition of the resource. Quality criteria are quantifiable and have a tool to provide measurement. All resource concerns that may be addressed during the planning process may not have established quality criteria.

Established criteria represent a minimum level that is acceptable for a resource or resource concern. Because resource concerns as written in policy are problem oriented, the quality criteria in effect state the acceptable level of change in a resource.

Quality criteria are quantifiable. Terms for criteria must state clearly "*when enough is enough*," so planners know when planned treatment is adequate.

Quality criteria levels must be attainable with current technology and approved conservation practices.

Quality criteria relate directly to an acceptable planning level.

Quality criteria of the resource represents a level that sustains the use and productivity of the resource indefinitely. There may be some negative short term effects on the resources to obtain the long term positive effects.

Quality criteria levels should be usable, measurable, and/or recognizable.

#### **APPLICATION OF QUALITY CRITERIA**

Quality criteria establish the minimum treatment level necessary to adequately address the resource concerns identified during the planning process for the development of a RMS.

The RMS criteria are met when planned treatment, when applied, will resolve all of the identified resource problems (concerns) according to the quality criteria. The RMS will be considered applied when all of the conservation practices that make up the system have been installed, implemented or applied according to the South Dakota Technical Guide (SDTG), Section IV - Practice Standards and Specifications.

In some instances, actions by individual decision-makers cannot solve the resource concern because it involves more than one decision-maker. In these instances, group planning, project measures or multi-program activities may be required to meet the respective quality criteria. In cases where the decision-maker can not solve the problem as an individual, the criteria will be met when the land under the control of the decision-maker does not adversely contribute to the problem.

The use and implementation of these criteria will be consistent with federal, state, and local laws and regulations.