

Environmental Evaluation

An environmental evaluation (EE) must be conducted during conservation planning to assure that installation of conservation practice(s) will not adversely affect any federal species listed, or proposed for listing.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Region 2 web site, <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/endangeredspecies/lists/>, will be accessed to determine if a federal species is expected to occur within the county of planning assistance. If the web site does not include any species within the county, planning can continue without further evaluation. Document in conservation assistance notes that the web site did not report occurrence of any listed or proposed species in the county.

If the web site lists one or more species as occurring in the county, a determination of "effect" must be made for each species. An EE that results in a determination of "no effect" from implementation of the proposed resource management system (RMS) will allow assistance to continue without further action. "No effect" determinations should be documented in conservation assistance notes.

If the EE indicates a potential adverse effect, NRCS will advise the client of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and recommend alternative conservation treatment that avoids adverse effect. If the client does not select a RMS that will have "no effect" and wishes to continue with conservation treatment that "may affect" a federal species or its designated critical habitat, the client must request, in writing, that NRCS consult with FWS on possible effects of the proposed conservation plan.

Further assistance from NRCS will depend upon the opinion received from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. An opinion of "likely to adversely affect" the species(s) will require revision of the proposed plan to avoid adverse effect or termination of NRCS assistance. An opinion of "not likely to adversely affect" will allow NRCS to continue with conservation planning with inclusion of conservation measures suggested by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.