

Virginia Technical Note
Conservation Planning #1



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

“Conservation Assistance Notes”

June 2002

CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE NOTES

A written record of assistance provided to a land user is an essential tool in the preparation and implementation of a conservation plan. It serves a wide variety of purposes such as a record of prior field visits and discussions, documentation of resource concerns and problems associated with a particular tract of land, identifies the needs and objectives of the land user, and provides a historical view of prior conservation activities that may shape or lead future efforts with the land user. These notes also provide official documentation for compliance activities and may be needed in appeals or other legal circumstances where an official record of events is necessary. In offices with two or more people and/or where the land user may be participating in a number of program activities through USDA or the SWCD, conservation assistance notes can provide an accurate record of prior discussions and documentation of past accomplishments and future assistance needs to staff that may be on the farm for the first time or have no prior knowledge previous staff discussion. Conservation assistance notes are an effective and efficient means of preparing for a field visit and being well informed of the land user’s objectives, needs, and problems in order to provide the quality technical assistance we strive to achieve.

Conservation assistance notes are a required component of a NRCS case file (NPPH 600.31). General Manual Supplement Virginia documents that the Form NRCS-CPA-6 be included in all case files and where it should be filed. To serve the full purpose and function, all information requested on Form NRCS-CPA-6 should be completed in as much detail as possible. To ensure accuracy, it is recommended that the NRCS -CPA 6 Form be completed immediately following the delivery of the technical service or discussion with the client.

The following guidance is provided to assist users in completing the form and maximizing its function and value. See attached Form NRCS-CPA-6:

1. **LAND USER** – The block should contain the land user’s full and common name. It may be advantageous to list both the operator’s name as well as the landowner’s name if the farm tract is in a rental situation.
2. **ADDRESS** – This should be for the principal decision-maker. It may also be advantageous to list both the operator’s and land owner’s address also.
3. **ACREAGE** – List both the Tract Number as well as the acreage.

4. LOCATION OF UNIT – This block should indicate the watershed in which the tract is located, the closest county/state highway, and other narrative description need to locate the property.
5. CURRENT CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES – List the main objectives, goals, and long term desires that have been identified through conversations and discussions with the land user. This should identify key conservation and natural resources problems and issues that may be affecting these objectives.
6. LIST POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS – Provide both short term and long term alternatives that were discussed with the land user. Indicate future direction with farm operation and/or conservation practices.
7. DATE – Indicate month/day/year of any and all contact or technical assistance provided.
8. ASSISTED BY- Initials of person documenting the technical assistance provided. It may be advantageous to list here or in the narrative all staff that were present.
9. NOTE – “BE SPECIFIC”. The note should contain all the details of “who, what, when, where and why” of all conversations, decisions, future needs, etc., that were talked about, tasks that were performed, and conditions observed that affect the conservation on the farm. Additional notation may be extremely helpful to note location of layout notes, design data, etc.

A complete example follows to serve as a model for use.

Land User C. F. Jones – Owner (Bill Smith – Operator)	Address 2148 Wide Street Someplace, VA 29999	Acreage Tract 416 – 329 Acres	Location of Unit – HU-249 end of 714 off Hwy 46, near Showplace, VA.
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Current Conservation Objectives

Cash grain operation with long-term lease tenant. Owner desires to go into grass/stocker cattle system in several years. Some erosion taking place now. No livestock infrastructure present for land use conversation. Owner will assume operation in several years.

List Possible Alternative Resource Management Systems the NRCS Conservationist might consider with the land user (As objectives change, record them in the notes.)

Current short term – No-till system, cash grain agriculture,
Long term – Forage System, Intensive Rotational System

Notes of significant assistance provided, alternatives considered, decisions reached, management systems or component practices installed, and follow-up provided may be recorded chronologically below and on additional pages to provide a history of resource conservation planning and implementation activities with the land user. Include an evaluation of significant social, cultural, economic, and environmental resources. (These include consideration of wetlands, flood plains, endangered species, archaeological values, prime lands, etc.)

Date	Assisted By (initials)	Notes
10/12/92	LWK	Met with Bill Smith, farm operator, and Mr. C. F. Jones, owner, on the farm to discuss existing erosion at the request of Bill Smith. Bill has just rented the farm for the upcoming year and is concerned about the gullies that are forming. The farm has been in conventionally tilled continuous corn for the last several years by another farm tenant. Mr. Jones and Bill are working on a long-term lease arrangement and Bill plans a corn/small grain/soybean rotation until Mr. Jones retires in the next several years. At that time the farm will be planted to grass at the end of the rotation. Mr. Jones plans to have steers in a spring to fall stocker operation. There are no fences or water facilities on the farm at present. The only available water is a small stream in the lower portion of Field #4. Mr. Jones will contract with Bill to build fence at the appropriate time. Mr. Jones will call NRCS to plan

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10/12/92 Con't.		a water system prior to purchase of livestock.
		Discussed current situation and soils information for the tract. Discussed the
		erodibility and productivity of the soil types on the farm. Bill agreed to seed a cover
		crop in the next two weeks to stabilize existing erosion. The seedbed will be conven-
		tionally tilled to try to remove small gullies and rills. Additional work with
		heavier equipment (possible dozer) may be needed. I feel it is borderline at this
		time –but Bill is willing to try with his plow and disc first to keep the cost down.
		A heavy seeding rate (3 bu/ac of wheat) was recommended to ensure a good cover.
		Bill plans to no-till his corn into this residue next spring, with possible minimum-till
		for small grain next fall. Mr. Jones was very interested in having all of these
		recommendations documented in a conservation plan as they work toward his
		goals for the farm. I agreed to develop a draft plan for the practices we discussed
		today with alternatives on what would be needed for livestock operation in the
		future. Determined slope percent and length during the walk over with Jones/Smith
		(see soil loss calculation sheet). I will prepare this draft for discussion with Mr.
		Jones when he returns in December. We agreed to meet on Dec. 9 in the morning.
	LWK	Calculated all soil losses under existing rotation and alternatives (no-till corn/
		minimum-till small grain/no-till soybeans) as well as grass. Printed out soil legend
		and complete set of soil interpretations at Mr. Jones' request. Developed draft plan
		for the cropland practices we discussed on 10/12. Also developed alternatives for
		conversion to grass and listed practices/infrastructure that would be needed for
		grazing. Also prepared cost estimate using current average cost list so Mr. Jones
		could plan accordingly.
	LWK	Met with Bill Smith and Mr. C. F. Jones on the farm. The cover crop was planted
		and has germinated well. An excellent stand has been obtained. The conventional
		tillage did smooth out all of the small gullies and rills. Future critical area treatment
		will not be needed. Reported 135 acres of cover crop (#340) in Fields 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5
		based on his following our technical assistance. Both Bill and Mr. Jones are pleased
		with the stand and Mr. Jones is excited that Bill will be using no-till. Mr. Jones has
		no knowledge or experience with it. Discussed soil loss calculations and explained
		that no-till corn, minimum-till small grain, and no-till soybeans would reduce
		erosion under "T" for this rotation. Additional soil savings could be achieved if Bill

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12/9/92 Con't.		would no-till his small grain into corn stubble. Bill is worried about possible scab
		in wheat and has never no-tilled small grain before. Bill agreed to contact the
		County Extension Agent and attend the winter small grain meeting to learn more
		about it.
		Discussed the rotation and residue management in the plan and Mr. Jones agreed to
		carry out the plan. Mr. Jones signed the plan. Documented in the plan that the
		cover crop had already been planted and reported.
6/15/93	AG	Visited with Bill Smith on the Jones Farm. Was installing drop structure across the
		road when Bill came to the farm. Discussed the no-till that LWK had planned and
		both Bill and the landowner were pleased. Bill got an excellent herbicide kill with
		the new tank mix he used and the corn is coming on nicely. Good residue mulch
		cover, in excess of 90% after planting. Reported 135 acres of Conservation Tillage
		in Fields 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5.
8/13/96	GHW	Talked with Mr. Jones on the phone. Informed him I was the new DC since LWK
		retired. He notified me he was making plans to retire in about two years and wanted
		to discuss the water system and fence on the farm. Agreed to meet on the farm in
		two weeks (8/27) to start the planning process.
8/27/96	GHW	Met with Mr. Jones on the farm. Bill Smith, farm operator was also present, as was
		Technician AG. Farm was planted to no-till soybeans in wheat stubble. This was the
		second full rotation Bill had run on the farm. He was very pleased with his yield
		results. He did state this farm was a number of miles from his home operation and
		due to the travel distance of equipment he was supportive of giving up the farm soon
		as Mr. Jones converted the farm to grass. Discussed cattle operation in general with
		Mr. Jones. He had grown up on a livestock farm and knows the basic animal
		husbandry needs. Discussed soil productivity for grassland use, stocking rates, and
		possible seeding mixtures and methods. Bill Smith will continue with corn in year
		2000 and will seed orchard grass in with small grain in fall of 2000. Soybeans will be
		omitted in 2001. After small grain is removed in summer of 2001 grass stand
		should be present. A hay cutting is planned for late summer of 2001. A no-till
		legume (ladino clover) will be no-tilled in early fall. A broadcast over-seeding to
		frost seed additional ladino clover in February was discussed but not agreed to at
		this time. This will be determined later based on the success of the fall planting

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	(initials)	
8/27/96 Con't.	GHW	and the amount of vegetation/bare ground present in February to get good seed/soil contact. Also discussed fencing needs, rotational arrangements. It was agreed to fence the major field boundaries first (5 fields) and use temporary fence (2 strand poly-wire) to create paddocks within the fields. Mr. Jones has been doing research on rotational systems and wants to go the portable route. Discussed possible cost sharing alternatives with several programs. Several programs were not applicable as no major environmental degradation was observed on the farm. Conservation plan will be rewritten to reflect change of operation. Small stream in Field #4 will serve as water supply on a temporary basis to Field 4 and an alleyway will be fenced to Field #5. Fields 1, 2, & 3 are the top priority for a water system. Discussed possible water sources of well or pond, but Mr. Jones decided against a pond due to the cost at this time. A pond site does exist in Field #3 that may be developed at a later date. Plan will include a well and pump in Field #2 where electrical service is available. A pipeline will be run to troughs in Field #1 and a fence line trough to serve Fields #2 and #3. A second well will be dug in Field #4 to serve troughs in Fields #4 and #5 at a later date. Discussed the negative effects of livestock access to streams in Field #4 and cautioned Mr. Jones that he should remove the cattle from the streams as soon as possible. Reported 135 acres of Conservation Crop Rotation (#328) now that rotation had been completed. Reported 135 acres of RMS on cropland installed.
9/15/96	GHW	Completed conservation plan for grassland system. Discussed with Mr. Jones this afternoon and he agreed to the plan and signed this revision.
8/20/98	GHW, AG	Met with Mr. Jones and Bill Smith on property. Provided Bill a copy of our fencing standards to help them in the selection and installation of the fence. After much discussion it was agreed that Mr. Jones would go with the High Tensile option (6-strand non-electrified). Bill will order the material for Mr. Jones and begin installation as soon as his corn harvest is over. Mr. Jones had verified planned amounts of fencing with a measuring wheel in the actual location of the fence. Field #4 fencing amount should be modified to be 1550 feet rather than 1400 feet. Laid off the location of the well and troughs in Fields 1, 2, and 3. Verified the length of pipeline needed. Well driller is scheduled for next week and troughs will be delivered then also. Took elevation shots. AG to design pressure system

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8/20/98 Con't.		tomorrow and fax design to Mr. Jones
		Reported 135 acres of Pasture and Hayland Planting (#512) in Fields 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5.
8/21/98	AG	Completed design of pipeline and water system. Faxed to Mr. Jones at his new home
		at the farm as he had requested. Changed address in computer and on Cons 6 form
		and replaced old phone numbers with new.
9/15/98	GHW	Stopped by to visit with Mr. Jones while in the area on another call. Everything is
		looking great. Water system is in and functioning. Well depth was 325 feet.
		Grass stand is exceptional. Mr. Jones plans to add livestock in spring. Discussed
		stocking rates again and re-emphasized points from our discussion two years ago.
		Reported well, pipeline, trough, and fence. Still will need some follow-up with
		rotational grazing plan. Mr. Jones wants to "give it a try" on his own first. He will
		call if he needs help. Suggested he contact Extension to enroll in grazing school.
8/15/00	GHW	Visited farm at the request of Mr. Jones to look at streambank erosion in Field #4.
		Mr. Jones could not be present today but told me to go ahead and then contact him
		on my findings. Lower portion of the Field #4 at stream is completely bare from
		livestock traffic. The banks have severe erosion (>2 ft./yr.) and there are large
		accumulations of manure on the banks and in the stream. Travel lane to #5 is knee
		deep in mud and manure. Other fields look in fine shape.
3/16/00	GHW	Called Mr. Jones on phone to discuss yesterday's findings. Inquired about herd
		health. He had been experiencing problems. More this year, than last. Last year
		things started off fine then got bad. Discussed the manure accumulation and water
		quality where steers were drinking. Mr. Jones acknowledged that it was an eyesore
		but he didn't think that was the cause. Reviewed our discussion of alternative water
		system some years ago. But Mr. Jones said he was not in a position to spend any
		more money right now.
6/5/00	GHW	Called Mr. Jones to inform him of the recently announced CREP program. Discussed
		the program with him and agreed to mail brochure and other information to him.
		Estimated cost of his project would be \$4,000 to add two troughs to existing water
		system, pipeline, and establish a 100-foot riparian buffer. Due to the capacity of the
		well, Mr. Jones opted to use the existing well rather than dig a new well and run
		electric line. Utilizing existing well was the least cost alternative. Mr. Jones said he
		would stop by the FSA office next week to enroll.

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6/20/00	GHW	Met with Mr. Jones on site to discuss his needs and the CREP program. Discussed

		the possible alternatives and he agreed to establish a 100-foot buffer along the stream
		in Field #4. Laid off the buffer with a 100-foot width for 2500 feet of length
		(approximately 5.7 acres). Discussed hardwood planting of the riparian buffer and
		agreed to contact County DOF forester to send Mr. Jones an order form. Also
		agreed to discuss the buffer with DOF and they will be in touch. Also discussed
		the type of fence that will be installed. Mr. Jones will install the same type of fence
		he currently has even though the cost share rate will only cover a portion of the cost.
		He likes the fence and will pay the difference himself. While on site, measured the
		amount of pipeline that will be needed, and located the site of the troughs.
		Completed all of the paper work back at the office, modified the plan to include
		forested riparian buffer, and completed the contract support document. Returned
		all forms to FSA. Mailed Mr. Jones the plans and specifications for the pipeline and
		two new troughs.
7/23/00	GHW	Notified by FSA that they had measured the buffer, and that Mr. Jones had completed
		all the necessary signatures and the contract had been approved and signed by the
		County Committee. Actual measured size is now 5.8 acres. Called Mr. Jones to ask
		when he would be ready to start. He will start the fence and pipeline next week and
		has the order form from DOF to order his trees. DOF had met on site with him to
		discuss their involvement with the tree planting portion of this process. Planting is
		scheduled for next March. Modified plan and contract support to reflect 5.8 acres.
8/23/00	GHW	Made field visit at the request of Mr. Jones. All fences have been built and pipelines
		have been installed. Mr. Jones has broadcast seed over disturbed area of pipeline.
		Bill Smith had constructed the fence. Measured "as built" length of pipeline and
		fence and verified amounts. Aprons around troughs have been installed with geo-
		textile fabric underneath. Completed cost share paperwork for FSA and SWCD and
		returned appropriate documentation. Documented practices installed and reported
		practices in progress system.
4/3/01	GHW	Received correspondence and completed paperwork from DOF that the 5.8 acres had
		been planted to mixed hardwood according to specifications. Completed documenta-
		tion and forwarded on to FSA and SWCD. Reported 6 acres of tree planting.

Date	Assisted By (initials)	Continuation Sheet for Notes
6/6/01	GHW	Stopped by farm and met with Mr. Jones concerning his CREP buffer. He is quite
		pleased with the arrangement. He did not want to give up that much land but is now

