WA NRCS Resource Concerns Checklist

MAY 2014

Introduction and Directions for using Checklist

Purpose: Conservation Planning

Conservation planning is flexible in regard to units. Plans may include all contiguous and noncontiguous land that is part of the client's enterprise, including owned and rented land, or may include only a portion of the enterprise.

> **NPPH**: "The Conservation Management Unit (CMU) can be a field, group of fields, or other land units of the same land use and having similar treatment needs and planned management.
> A CMU, made up of one or more planning land units, has definite boundaries, such as fence, drainage, vegetation, topography, soil lines, or **land use**."

Conservation planners will inventory **ALL** applicable soil, water, air, plant, animal, energy, human (SWAPAE+H) resources identified in the **Resource Concern Landuse Checklists**. Existing or potential resource concerns are identified through screening and assessment as part of the planning process. This provides information to determine the resource concerns to be addressed. Alternatives are formulated, and the effectiveness of existing management measures and practices are determined.

After Screening, the Resource Concern Checklists contains various assessment tools to be used to document the benchmark condition and provide an effective evaluation of each resource concern identified. In all cases, the **Landscape Checklist** will be completed in addition to each Crop, Pasture, Range, Forest, and/or Farmstead identified. Details for each landuse should be well documented in the Assistance Notes (P & I) and within the CPA 52 Environmental Evaluation worksheet.

The LANDSCAPE tab will be evaluated in conjunction with any other land use.

Screening and Assessment levels of evaluation

I. Screening Level

Simple true-false statements of easily observable conditions planners can use to identify sites 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. Example: For water quality the screening level for cropland is organic or inorganic nutrients not applied and PLU is not grazed. So, no assessment is needed. If nutrient are applied and the PLU is grazed then an assessment is required.

II. Assessment Level

Criteria used when a site does not pass the screening level or when no screening level criteria are defined.

Assessment is the act of evaluating the physical condition or extent of management applied. Assessment level is a statement describing the physical condition or extent of management applied that is used by planners to determine if the resource concern planning criteria have been met. The appropriate methods needed for assessment are determined by experienced planners and identified on the Resource Concern Checklist. If additional guidance is needed contact your Area Office Representative.

Assessment Methods:

I. Procedural-

For some resources, planners use well-defined procedures to acquire data used to determine the resource condition. An example is determining the ecological health of rangeland using the Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health protocol. The appropriate discipline handbook or manual may be consulted for more information.

II. Predictive-

The condition of some resources is best assessed using models created to predict the probability of an outcome. An example is using RUSLE2 to estimate sheet and rill erosion rates.

III. Observation-

Where standard procedures to measure or model the condition of resources do not exit, planners often rely on direct observation or information provided by the client through an interview . Observation always implies onsite investigation. An example would be classic gully erosion site where physical soil can be observed from movement.

IV. Deduction-

When it is impractical to measure, model, or observe resource conditions, planners may rely on reason to deduce the status of a resource . Often, the deductive approach is related to treatment standards. In this case, the planner must assume that a certain condition is met if specific treatment is applied, and conversely, if the specific treatment is not applied, a less desirable condition will result. Planners must frequently rely on deductive methods to address offsite effects. An example would be Water Quality Degradation-Nutrients where knowing that by doing an effective nutrient management plan on field where nutrients are applied, you can reduce potential for nutrients in ground and surface water. In this example the other methods are not applicable to be used for measurement of Water Quality Degradation.