

Executive Summary



Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Planning Course

NRCS Conservation Planning Course Executive Summary

Background

To meet the requirements of the 1985 and 1990 Farm Bills, much of the conservation planning effort of NRCS in the decade or so since 1985 has been single resource oriented on highly erodible cropland. Plans were developed to meet BCS or ACS requirements on a single land use, instead of developing conservation plans for the unit to meet a resource management system (RMS) level.

Today agency direction is focusing on assisting the client in developing complete, comprehensive, conservation plans considering all of the resources (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) and the human concerns (economic and social). To support this effort, conservation planning policy and the National Planning Procedures Handbook have been revised and changes are being made to the FOTG. Conservation planning policy helps focus conservation partnership efforts on conservation planning in the field with the decisionmaker.

Many NRCS and conservation partnership employees providing conservation planning assistance need additional training in assisting clients with developing complete, comprehensive conservation plans.

Course Description

This course emphasizes the process of conservation planning, is field oriented, and can be tailored to fit a state's needs. It covers NRCS conservation planning and related policy, procedures and guidelines for carrying out the planning process, the RMS process, technical guidance, tools available to aid the planning process, and program guidance for plan implementation.

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Following the formal portion of the course the participants each have an assignment to (1) develop a conservation plan, (2) evaluate a conservation plan, and (3) revise a conservation plan. Satisfactory completion of the course will include the successful completion and evaluation of this assignment.

Purpose of the Course

The purpose of the course is to prepare the participant to be able to independently apply the NRCS planning process, and to utilize supporting technology, in order to assist clients in making decisions resulting in conservation plans that protect, conserve, and enhance the resources and meet the client's needs.

Course Emphasis

- The NRCS planning process
- Following the guidance in the NPPH
- Developing quality plans
- Developing plans on the entire unit
- Dealing with complete systems rather than parts of systems
- Including ecological, economic, and social considerations
- Considering the effects and impacts of planned actions, on-site and off-site
- Conservation district and other partnership involvement

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Target Audience

- NRCS and conservation partnership employees providing conservation planning assistance to clients
- Supervisors of conservation planners
- Personnel providing conservation planning support
- Personnel providing conservation planning oversight and evaluation
- Conservation district officials

Modules 1 - 4 are recommended for conservation district officials and others desiring an overview of conservation planning and the planning process.

Course Expectations

The minimum proficiency level expected of the participant at the end of the course is 4 - Apply Independently - can perform independently unless special problems are encountered; only a general check of the work is required.

Course Delivery

States are responsible for providing the training within their state.

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List of Modules

1. How NRCS Will Do Business
2. Planning Policy and Guidance
3. Key Elements of Conservation Planning
4. Conservation Planning Environment - Components and Interrelationships
5. Resource Management Systems
6. Phase I of the Planning Process - Planning Steps 1 - 4
7. Phase II of the Planning Process - Planning Steps 5 - 7
8. Phase III of the Planning Process - Planning Steps 8 - 9
9. Course Wrap-up and Assignment
 - Develop a Plan
 - Evaluate a Plan
 - Revise a Plan

Course Prerequisites - State (S) and Employee (E)

S—Field Office Technical Guides up to date.

E—Have the equivalent of one year or more experience in conservation planning, with a proficiency level of 3 - perform with supervision.

E—Have a good working knowledge of conservation planning policy, the NPPH, the FOTG, and data collection techniques.

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Major State Responsibilities

- Conduct the course within the state.
- Fine tune the course materials to meet the needs of the state and the audience.
- Select planning units and handle arrangements for conducting the course on the units.
- Select coaches and set up a coaching structure prior to the course in relation to the assignment with Module 9 - see the Course Description on page 1.
- Provide follow-up for completion of Module 9.

Note—additional items and details regarding state responsibilities, module by module, are included in this Instructor's Notebook for the course, under the title 'State Responsibilities'.