

INITIAL PERFORMANCE PLAN FOR FY 2003 AND REVISED PLAN FOR FY 2002

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was established pursuant to Public Law 103-354, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Reorganization Act of 1994, (7 U.S.C. 6962). The mission of NRCS is to provide leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Table 1 lists the Agency's strategic goals and objectives as presented in our strategic plan for fiscal years 2000-2005, and the annual performance indicators that we will use to measure performance for the objectives.

Services Delivered

NRCS provides assistance primarily through field offices where agency technical staff work directly with individual landowners, farmers and ranchers, resource managers, local and state officials and employees, and community groups. The services provided include technical assistance and information and financial assistance. Specifically, NRCS:

- Helps individual land users plan, apply, and maintain conservation systems that are economically and environmentally sustainable. Local NRCS staff provide on-site technical assistance in planning, applying, and maintaining conservation systems and practices. Assistance in applying conservation systems includes advice in the design, layout, construction, management, operation, maintenance, and evaluation of the practices in a conservation plan. Assistance may include financial assistance through programs administered by NRCS. Practices also may be applied with cost share assistance from the USDA agencies or other Federal, state, or local programs or entirely with the resource manager's own funds.
- Assists units of government and community groups to protect the environment and improve the standard of living and quality of life for the people they represent. This includes providing resource information planning and technical assistance to local officials so that they can set standards and develop plans for resource management and development and providing technical training to employees of local, state, and Tribal agencies. NRCS administers programs that provide financial assistance for certain activities, such as watershed protection and farmland protection.
- Conducts inventories and assesses natural resource conditions and makes this information available to the public for use in individual and community resource planning. NRCS conducts inventories such as soil and snow surveys, conducts basic and applied soil science research, monitors natural resource conditions and trends through the Natural Resources Inventory and conducts resource assessments. These science-based efforts present an accurate, unbiased look at the condition of key natural resources.
- Develops and maintains conservation standards, specifications, and guidelines pertaining to conservation practices and systems. These technical tools ensure that conservation is based on sound and up-to-date science. NRCS technical guides are used not only by NRCS staff, but also by private consultants and engineers, conservation district staff, state agencies, and Federal agencies.

Program Accounts The activities that NRCS is authorized to conduct are funded through the following appropriation accounts. See Appendix B for additional description of NRCS programs.

Conservation Operations This account funds the basic activities that support all NRCS programs and services. **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)** provides the infrastructure through which NRCS responds to conservation needs across the Nation. Through CTA, NRCS provides assistance to conservation districts, develops technical standards and technical guides, conducts natural resources inventories, and provides assistance in planning and managing natural resources. This basic technical assistance includes assessing natural resource conditions and explaining the USDA programs that are available to address them. This assistance helps land users to assess conservation needs, consider alternative courses of action, set goals, and develop conservation plans. CTA also provides assistance in implementing these plans and follow-up assistance to maintain the conservation system and revise it when the operator's situation changes. In addition, as a reimbursable activity under CTA, NRCS provides technical assistance to farmers and ranchers participating in programs administered by the Farm Service Agency, such as CRP and ECP. The **National Cooperative Soil Survey** program and the **Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting** program develop and disseminate basic information on soil resources and on seasonal water supplies respectively and provide recommendations for managing these resources. The **Plant Materials** program evaluates native plant materials that can help address conservation needs.

Water Resources NRCS programs that focus on water resources include **Watershed Surveys and Planning, Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations, and Emergency Watershed Protection**. Water resources activities focus on restoring the health of watersheds through a comprehensive planning approach. These programs assist communities to protect watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment, and to conserve and develop water and land resources. Planning involves assisting local sponsoring organizations to develop plans for small watersheds (not larger than 250,000 acres). Surveys include river basin studies and floodplain management studies. Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations provides technical and financial assistance to local sponsors to install watershed improvement measures. Measures may include land treatment, structural, and non-structural measures. Emergency Watershed Protection provides immediate assistance to reduce threats to life and property in watersheds damaged by severe natural events such as floods, hurricanes, or droughts, and to restore damaged sites to pre-disaster conditions. The **Watershed Infrastructure Rehabilitation** program, provides technical and financial assistance for planning, design, and implementation of rehabilitation projects to address public health and safety concerns and environmental impacts of aging dams. Projects may include upgrading or removing the dams.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) The RC&D Program provides technical assistance to assist state and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development.

Financial Assistance Programs (Farm Bill Programs) Since passage of the 1996 Act, the Secretary of Agriculture has assigned to NRCS responsibility for administering a number of programs that provide financial as well as technical assistance. The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**, provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to address priority natural resource concerns identified at the local level. NRCS helps participants plan and apply conservation on the land. FSA makes

payments to participants and is responsible for financial reporting. In addition there are programs that are primarily single purpose: **Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and Farmland Protection Program.**

*Agricultural Risk
Protection Act of
2000*

This Act authorized **Agricultural Management Assistance** to provide financial and technical assistance to producers to construct or improve watershed management or irrigation structures; plant trees to form windbreaks or improve water quality; and mitigate financial risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices. It also authorized **Soil and Water Conservation Assistance** to provide financial and technical assistance (in FY 2001 only) to farmers and ranchers to make beneficial, cost-effective changes to their operations to conserve and improve soil, water, and related natural resources.

**Interagency
Cooperation**

NRCS is USDA's lead agency for assisting owners and managers of non-federal lands to protect and manage soil, water, and related resources well. In addition to administering its own programs, NRCS provides assistance to other USDA agencies who need access to NRCS's technical expertise, resources information, or delivery system to deliver their own programs effectively. For example, NRCS works with the Farm Service Agency, providing technical determinations and recommendations FSA needs to administer the conservation compliance requirements of its programs and to administer the Conservation Reserve Program and Emergency Conservation Program. In turn, NRCS relies on FSA to implement administrative processes for contracts, payment, and financial reporting for several of the Farm Bill financial assistance programs administered by NRCS.

Many Federal and State agencies rely on NRCS technical expertise to plan and implement their natural resource programs. Examples of coordination with non-USDA agencies include: the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Programs of the Department of the Interior; the Coastal Zone Management Program of the Department of Commerce; and the Chesapeake Bay Agreement, National Estuary Program, and Clean Lakes Program of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Table 1: Strategic Goals, Objectives and Targets, and Annual Performance Goals and Indicators

1: Enhance natural resource productivity to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector.	
<i>Objectives and Targets</i>	<i>Performance Goals and Indicators</i>
<p>1.1. Maintain, restore, and enhance cropland productivity. By 2005, 89 percent of the annual conservation need on cropland will be met – 20 million acres will be treated each year to address problems that adversely affect the resource.</p>	<p>Maintain, restore, and enhance cropland productivity. Cropland where resource management systems were applied, acres Cropland erosion reduction applied, acres</p>
<p>1.2. Maintain, restore, and enhance Irrigated land. By 2005, 85 percent of the annual conservation need will be met on irrigated land – 6 million acres will be treated each year to address problems that adversely affect the resource.</p>	<p>Maintain, restore, and enhance Irrigated land. Irrigated land where irrigation water management was improved, acres</p>
<p>1.3. Maintain, restore, and enhance grazing land productivity. By 2005, 95 percent of the annual conservation need on rangeland will be met– 32 million acres of rangeland will be treated each year to address problems that adversely affect the resource. By 2005, 100 percent of the annual conservation need on pastureland will be met – 8 million acres of pastureland will be treated each year to address problems that adversely affect the resource.</p>	<p>Maintain, restore, and enhance grazing land productivity. Grazing land where resource management systems were applied, acres</p>
<p>1.4. Maintain, restore, and enhance forestland productivity. By 2005, 81 percent of the annual conservation need on forestland will be met– 10 million acres of forestland will be treated each year to address problems that adversely affect the resource.</p>	<p>Maintain, restore, and enhance forestland productivity. Forestland where the stand was reestablished or improved, acres</p>
2: Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use to ensure a high quality environment	
<p>2.1. Protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses. By 2005, 90 percent of all counties that have identified a need for a local Land Evaluation and Site Assessment systems will have one approved by the state conservationist.</p>	<p>Protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses. Counties with LESA systems developed, percent</p>
<p>2.2. Promote sound urban and rural community development. By 2005, 2,000 communities will have been assisted in preparing natural resource plans to address farmland protection, erosion, and sedimentation from developed sites, stormwater management or natural resource protection. By 2005, 500 communities will have implemented natural resource plans that address farmland protection, erosion, and sedimentation from developed sites, stormwater management or natural resource protection.</p>	<p>Promote sound urban and rural community development. Group and area plans developed to address farmland protection, non-ag. effects on water quality, number Community improvement projects completed, (RC&D) number Urban and built-up land where erosion control measures were applied, acres</p>

<p>2.3. Protect water and air resources from agricultural non-point sources of impairment. By 2005, an additional 2 million acres of buffers will be installed to help reduce the movement of potential pollutants into water and air resources.</p>	<p>Protect water and air resources from agricultural non-point sources of impairment. Buffers applied annually, acres</p> <p>Agricultural land where systems that reduce potential for nutrient delivery were applied (includes both AFO and non-AFO), acres</p> <p>Agricultural land where pest management was applied, acres</p>
<p>2.4. Enhance animal feeding operations to protect the environment. By 2009, 272,600 AFOs will have developed Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans to manage animal waste properly</p>	<p>Enhance animal feeding operations to protect the environment. Comprehensive nutrient management plans written or applied, number</p>
<p>2.5. Maintain, restore, or enhance wetland ecosystems and fish and wildlife habitat By 2005, 82 percent of the annual conservation need for wetlands and fish and wildlife habitat will be met— 7.6 million acres will be treated annually to maintain and enhance locally and regionally important fish and wildlife populations. By 2005, wetlands will be maintained, restored, or enhanced to meet the "no net loss" goal.</p>	<p>Maintain, restore, or enhance wetland ecosystems and fish and wildlife habitat Wetlands created, restored, or enhanced, acres</p> <p>Land where measures to improve habitat for wildlife were applied, acres</p>
<p>3: Reduce risks from flooding and drought to protect individual and community health and safety</p>	
<p>3.1. Protect upstream watersheds from flood risks. By 2010, plans will be developed and implementation underway to rehabilitate or decommission 2,200 watershed structures that have reached or are nearing the end of their design life. By 2005, flood damage reduction benefits in watershed project areas will exceed \$1 billion.</p>	<p>Reduce risks from flooding and drought Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation plans developed, number Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation projects installed, number</p> <p>Flood control structures completed, number</p>
<p>3.2. Protect watersheds from the effects of chronic water shortages and risks from drought. By 2005, the conservation partnership will assist 500 communities each year to develop, revise, or implement group or area plans that address water supply concerns to help with drought preparedness. By 2005, the conservation partnership will provide drought risk information on a regular basis, education, and decision support assistance to 500 drought prone areas including Indian Reservations.</p>	<p>Conservation systems applied to address water supply concerns, acres</p> <p>Water supply forecasts issued, number</p>
<p>4: Deliver high quality services to the public to enable natural resource stewardship</p>	
<p>4.1. Deliver services fairly and equitably. By 2005, 100,000 members of racial and ethnic minority groups will be receiving NRCS conservation assistance annually to help them plan and apply conservation on their lands and the lands that they manage..</p>	<p>Deliver services fairly and equitably. Parity in service delivery New NRCS offices established on reservation land, number</p>

<p>4.2. Strengthen the conservation delivery system. By 2005, NRCS will have in place a workforce recruitment plan that will include criteria that the agency workforce will reflect the diversity of the Nation</p>	<p>Strengthen the conservation delivery system. (Included in agency business plan rather than this performance plan.)</p>
<p>By 2005, NRCS will have developed and in place an agency-wide training and certification system to maintain professional competency of workforce.</p>	<p>(Included in agency business plan rather than this performance plan.) NOTE: Updating PRMS to gather numbers.</p>
<p>(USDA Strategic Plan, Goal 5, Objective 5.2 - Improve organizational productivity, accountability, and performance. Key Outcome Measure Target: USDA will have a secure electronic filing and retrieval system. . . . for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. . . .(by the end of 2002) that will enable customers to file all required paperwork electronically and access all current publications over the Internet.)</p>	<p>By October 2002, NRCS will have a secure electronic filing and retrieval system in place that will enable customers to file all required paperwork electronically and to access all current directives over the Internet. Customers accessing NRCS technical information electronically: Water users and managers utilizing information developed by the snow survey and water supply forecasting program, number of homepage accesses Customers accessing or downloading soils data, total number of STATSGO and SSURGO downloads or CD orders Customers accessing or downloading plant science information (PLANTS database)</p>
<p>4.3. Ensure timely, science-based information and technologies. By 2005, 85 percent of the national conservation practice standards are current and reflect best available technology. By 2005, each State will have 85 percent of their Field Office Technical Guides up to date with current technology and consistent with related national level guidance By 2004, a total of 2,800 soil surveys will be available in digital form, making interpretations of soil survey information easily accessible to our customers, partners, and other users.</p>	<p>Provide timely, science-based information and technologies. National conservation practice standards reviewed annually, number (Implementation steps included in agency business plan rather than this performance plan.) Soil surveys available in digital form, cumulative number Soils mapped or soil surveys updated in the fiscal year, acres New plant releases, number Technology transfer: PMC publications, number Plant materials studies evaluated (The Plant Materials Program supports achievement of all NRCS strategic goals; measurable targets for the program are set annually rather than in the strategic plan.)</p>

Table 2. - Relation of Program Activities to Strategic Goals

Programs	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4¹
<i>NRCS Programs:</i>				
Conservation Technical Assistance	X	X	X	X
Soil Survey	X	X	X	X
Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting	X	X	X	X
Plant Materials	X	X	X	X
Watershed Surveys and Planning	X	X	X	X
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations	X	X	X	X
Emergency Watershed Protection Program			X	
Watershed Infrastructure Rehabilitation			X	
Resources Conservation and Development Program	X	X	X	
Forestry Incentives Program	X			
Wetlands Reserve Program		X	X	
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	X	X	X	
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program		X		
Farmland Protection Program	X	X		
Agricultural Management Assistance	X	X	X	
<i>Farm Service Agency Activities Implemented with NRCS Assistance:</i>				
Conservation Reserve Program	X	X		
Agricultural Market Transition Act contracts (conservation compliance)	X	X		
Emergency Conservation Program	X			

Goal 1: Enhance natural resource productivity *to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector.*

Goal 2: Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use *to ensure a high quality environment*

Goal 3: Reduce risks from flooding and drought *to protect individual and community health and safety*

Goal 4: Deliver high quality services to the public *to enable natural resource stewardship.*

¹ Column shows only the programs that support Objective 3: Ensure timely, science-based information and technologies. Activities to support objectives 1 and 2 cannot be separated from activities to achieve Goals 1-3. An X in the column means that program funds are used to generate basic resources inventory data and develop technology.

Goal 1

Enhance natural resource productivity to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Target	FY 2003 Target
Maintain, restore, and enhance cropland productivity.	Cropland where resource management systems were applied, 1000s of acres	10,200	9,470	7,768	7,700
	Cropland erosion reduction applied, 1000s of acres*	9,441	7,594	6,756	6,700
Maintain, restore, and enhance Irrigated land.	Irrigated cropland where irrigation water management was improved, 1000s of acres*	1,251	1,246	1,049	1,000
Maintain, restore, and enhance grazing land productivity.	Grazing land where resource management systems were applied, 1000s of acres	10,700	11,290	10,382	10,500
Maintain, restore, and enhance forestland productivity.	Forestland where tree and shrub establishment was applied, 1000s of acres	640	526	386	370
	Forestland where the stand was improved, 1000s of acres	390	400	351	340

Means and Strategies

The strategy for conservation of private land relies on many individuals, groups, and governmental entities working together to achieve common goals. The foundation of this partnership effort is the traditional partnership between NRCS, state conservation agencies, and local conservation districts. NRCS provides assistance to individual land managers through the local districts. Conservation districts are units of state or tribal government that are responsible for setting priorities and developing conservation programs for their area. They are operated by boards of locally elected or appointed officials who serve without salary. District employees administer local and state conservation programs and cooperate with NRCS specialists in delivering Federal programs in the district. In some field offices, state and local employees outnumber NRCS staff. NRCS and state and local employees in a field office work as a team, using the same case files and technical tools. NRCS's Conservation Technical Assistance account is the primary source of Federal support to this partnership effort.

A part of the strategy for preventing erosion damage on highly erodible cropland relies on the conservation compliance provision of farm bills since 1985. Conservation compliance requires that operators maintain practices on highly erodible land in order to remain eligible for benefits under USDA agricultural programs. More than 141 million acres in highly erodible fields are managed under conservation compliance plans. All compliance plans were to be fully implemented by 1995, but farmers need assistance in maintaining their conservation system and in modifying it when they make changes in their production systems. In FY2001, NRCS helped producers maintain or improve erosion control on 1.8 million acres subject to the Farm Bill rules; the workload to maintain conservation on HEL land will be about that level in FY 2002 and FY 2003.

A second component of the strategy to protect cropland is to help producers apply buffer practices that reduce erosion. Incentives for establishing buffers are available under the continuous sign-up of the Conservation Reserve Program and under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and, in some states, under programs funded with State appropriations. In FY 2001, buffer practices applied included more than 4,200 miles of windbreaks and shelterbelts to reduce wind erosion and 27,694 acres of contour buffer strips to reduce sheet and rill erosion. Emphasis on buffer application will remain a key part of the strategy in FY 2002 and FY 2003.

The strategies for protecting grazing lands and for improving irrigation water management rely on the voluntary efforts of farmers and ranchers, with Conservation Technical Assistance, Educational assistance, and with financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The strategies also rely on cooperative, regional approaches. In the West, where much of the grazing resource is a mixture of private and public land, cooperative efforts between private operators, Tribal governments, State agencies, and federal land management agencies are necessary to control noxious and invasive species and address other concerns. Conservation of irrigation water from surface supplies requires cooperation between the Bureau of Reclamation, which helps irrigation districts better manage the delivery of water from the source to farms, and NRCS, which provides on-farm assistance to individual irrigators.

The strategy for improving forestland is based on cooperation between NRCS, the Forest Service, and State departments of forestry.

The fundamental basis for all strategies to manage land and water sustainably is timely, accurate information about the capabilities and limitations of the soil resource and reliable forecasts of water supply. The Soil Survey Program and Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting programs provide this information.

	Objectives	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Funding: \$ in thousands	Cropland	254,573	259,918	290,441	257,553
	Irrigation	56,337	71,133	69,240	75,823
	Grazing land	119,092	167,225	161,270	177,422
	Forestland	34,695	41,164	39,065	30,995
	Total, Goal 1	464,698	539,439	560,015	541,793
FTEs:	Cropland	2,995	2,655	2,746	2,509
	Irrigation	362	387	366	415
	Grazing land	1,399	1,499	1,409	1,585
	Forestland	296	287	274	288
	Total, Goal 1	5,052	4,828	4,794	4,797

Dollars and FTEs include the fiscal year appropriation, any carryover funds, and reimbursements.

The President's Budget for FY 2003 transfers to the agency certain costs that were previously paid through other accounts. The dollars shown above for FY2001 and 2002 have been adjusted for comparability to the FY 2003 dollars. FY 2000 dollars have not been adjusted.

The estimates for each objective are for activities taken primarily to address that objective. Conservation systems and practices produce multiple benefits; activities taken to address one resource concern affect others as well. The estimate for an objective, therefore, does not represent the full cost of achieving the objective.

Goal 2

Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use to ensure a high quality environment.

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Target	FY 2003 Target
Protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses.	Counties that develop Land Evaluation and Site Assessment systems, number	NA	35	57	50
Promote sound urban and rural community development.	Group and area plans developed to address farmland protection, non-ag. effects on water quality, number	NA	365	539	539
	Community improvement projects completed (RC&D Program), number	NA	3,043	2,908	3,000
	Urban and built-up land where erosion reduction measures were applied, 1000s of acres	46	70.7	71.5	71
Protect water and air resources from agricultural non-point sources of impairment.	Buffers applied annually, 1000s of acres		524	421	420
	Agricultural land where practices that reduce potential for nutrient delivery were applied, 1000s of acres	4,300	5,400	4,630	4,600
	Agricultural land where pest management was applied, 1000s of acres	3,969	5,400	4,186	4,100
Enhance animal feeding operations to protect the environment.	Comprehensive nutrient management plans developed or applied, number	---	---	7,854	7,900
Maintain, restore, or enhance wetland ecosystems and fish and wildlife habitat	Wetlands created, restored, or enhanced, 1000s of acres	290	362	274	230
	Land where measures to improve wildlife habitat were applied, 1000s of acres	12,300	11,700	7,116	7,200

Means and Strategies

The strategy for protecting the environment in developing areas is to provide local, State, and Tribal governments and non-government organizations with the information on natural resource and environmental issues they need to manage growth. NRCS encourages regional planning efforts to balance growth (economic and developed uses of land) with natural resource conservation and social objectives of the area. A key activity is to complete and implement the Computer Assisted Land Evaluation System to provide a tool for local governments to evaluate the potentials and limitations of land resources for proposed uses. NRCS also provides training that Federal agencies need to conduct site assessments in accordance with the requirements of the Farmland Protection Policy Act.

The strategy for protecting water and air against damage from non-point sources of pollution builds on the activities taken to prevent cropland erosion and enhance grazing land health and uses some of the same practices. Buffers along field borders and streambanks prevent eroded soil from moving offsite. Using reduced tillage and restoring grassland and woodland helps to store carbon, reducing the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere

USDA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have developed a joint Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations (AFO). NRCS technical assistance for AFOs is provided primarily through the Conservation Technical Assistance account, which also funds most technology development and training activities and outreach efforts. NRCS financial assistance is provided primarily through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which also provides technical and educational assistance for planning and applying cost-shared practices.

Operators will need increased assistance to plan and implement comprehensive nutrient management plans at an accelerated rate to respond to public concerns about the adverse environmental effects of animal operations. To provide this assistance, NRCS is working with a wide range of other agencies and the private sector in cross-cutting efforts to develop the needed technology and resources information to plan effective systems.

The targets for comprehensive nutrient management plans include the contributions of other members of the conservation partnership at the field level working with NRCS. The partnership workload assessment estimated that NRCS funds support about two-thirds of the partnership's total work on animal waste management.

The strategy for protecting wetlands and wetland wildlife habitat relies heavily on financial assistance to encourage producers to protect wetlands under long term or permanent easements. The absence of such assistance under the Wetlands Reserve Program in FY 2002 and 2003 will limit the acreage of wetlands restored, created, or enhanced in those years. The second component of the strategy is requiring agricultural producers to protect wetlands values in order to remain eligible to participate in USDA programs.

The program mix involved in the strategy for improving wildlife habitat varies across the nation. For example, in FY 2001, acres where wildlife habitat management was applied in the Midwest were mostly associated with CRP. In the West, the primary program for improving wildlife habitat in FY 2001 was EQIP.

	Objectives	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Funding: \$ in thousands	Farmland protection	2,558	18,250	2,356	1,670
	Urban/community	51,802	65,863	70,503	76,831
	Non-point source pollution	71,412	133,522	132,426	131,650
	Animal feeding operations	117,504	159,210	142,923	159,296
	Wetlands & wildlife habitat	250,823	267,366	88,728	101,494
	Total, Goal 2	494,099	644,211	436,937	470,940
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FTEs:	Farmland protection	12	16	16	16
	Urban/community	639	672	666	742
	Non-point source pollution	528	960	875	869
	Animal feeding operations	803	1,009	917	1,056
	Wetlands & wildlife habitat	1,092	987	788	964
	Total, Goal 2	3,074	3,643	3,262	3,648

The estimates for each objective are for activities taken primarily to address that objective. Conservation systems and practices produce multiple benefits; activities taken to address one resource concern affect others as well. The estimate for an objective, therefore, does not represent the full cost of achieving the objective.

Dollars and FTEs include the fiscal year appropriation, carryover, and reimbursements.

The President's Budget for FY 2003 transfers to the agency certain costs previously paid through other accounts. The dollars shown above for FY 2001 and 2002 have been adjusted for comparability to the FY 2003 dollars. FY 2000 dollars have not been adjusted.

Goal 3 **Reduce risks from drought and flooding to *protect individual and community health and safety.***

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Target	FY 2003 Target
Reduce risks from flooding and drought	Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation plans developed, number			22	0
	Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation projects installed, number	---	0	13	0
	Flood control structures completed, number	NA	51	115	0
	Conservation applied to address flooding concerns, 1000s of acres	1,303	3,078	2,013	1,200
	Conservation applied to address water supply concerns, 1000s of acres	6,500	8,600	5,427	3,300
	Watershed plans and surveys approved, no.			50	0
	Water supply forecasts issued	6,875	9,007	9,200	9,600

Means and Strategies

NRCS both helps protect watersheds to prevent damages from flooding and provides emergency assistance in watersheds damaged by flooding or other severe natural disasters to help people quickly remove threats to life and property and restore the watershed to pre-disaster conditions. Watershed protection involves a range of actions, including: treatment of critical areas, local land use planning, floodwater-retarding structures, purchase of easements in flood-prone areas, and early warning and emergency response plans.

In FY 2002, NRCS's strategy for assisting the residents of watersheds to protect their homes and property against flood damages will continue to include

- Assisting local sponsors in assessing conditions in their watershed, conducting river basin surveys and studies, conducting flood hazard analyses, and providing flood plain management assistance
- Providing the information and tools communities need so that they can guide development to reduce potential damages from natural disasters
- Working with watershed project sponsors to evaluate and assess the need to repair, upgrade, or decommission existing watershed structures.
- Providing technical and financial assistance to local sponsors to implement watershed protection plans.
- Providing water supply forecasting information to reduce potential damages from flooding or drought in western states.

The means to support watershed protection against flood damages in FY 2002 includes an increase of \$10,000,000 and 74 staff years for Rehabilitation of Structural Measures (P.L.106-472) to initiate and implement a new program to rehabilitate aging dams originally installed with Federal assistance through USDA water resources programs.

In FY 2003, the President's strategy for addressing water resources is to discontinue funding for technical and financial assistance through NRCS programs.

NRCS's strategy for addressing drought relies on Conservation Technical Assistance to help producers drought-proof their operations and improve irrigation water management. Some financial assistance is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for practices that reduce the strain on limited water supplies with competing uses.

The strategy to help water users prepare to reduce impacts of water shortages includes efforts to:

- Provide additional moisture and climate data to an expanded customer base.
- Enhance assistance to tribal governments to protect reservation land.
- Enhance assistance to communities to assess conditions and needs and develop plans to prepare for and minimize the effects of drought.

	Objectives	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Funding: \$ in thousands	Flood damage reduction	204,549	278,021	255,289	113,692
	Drought mitigation*	18,969	18,932	2,424	2,592
	Total, Goal 3	223,518	296,953	257,712	116,284
FTEs:	Flood damage reduction	960	916	926	225
	Drought mitigation*	60	53	0	0
	Total, Goal 3	1,020	970	926	225

* Costs of activities to mitigate drought are included in the objectives for cropland and irrigation management and in the flood damage reduction costs. Costs of water forecasting are included in the objective for information and technology development.

Conservation systems and practices produce multiple benefits; activities taken to address one resource concern affect others as well. Funds and FTEs have been estimated based on the primary purpose of an activity. No attempt has been made to allocate costs to account for the multiple benefits they produce. Therefore, estimates do not show the full costs of achieving an objective.

Dollars and FTEs include the fiscal year appropriation, carryover, and reimbursements.

The President's Budget for FY 2003 transfers to the agency certain costs previously paid through other accounts. The dollars shown above for FY 2001 and 2002 have been adjusted for comparability to the FY 2003 dollars. FY 2000 dollars have not been adjusted.

Goal 4

Deliver high quality services to the public *to enable natural resource stewardship*

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Actual	FY 2002 Target	FY 2003 Target
Deliver services fairly and equitably.	Ensure parity in delivery of services. ¹	---	---		
	New NRCS offices established on reservation land, number	NA	4	3	3
Strengthen the conservation delivery system	Paperwork for program participation that can be filed electronically by customers, percent of all forms required for all programs	---	---	100	100
	Current directives accessible to customers over the Internet, percent	---	---	100	100
	Customers accessing NRCS technical data electronically:				
	Water users and managers utilizing information developed by the snow survey and water supply forecasting program, number of accesses to water supply web pages	55,261	69,300	80,000	90,000
	Customers accessing or downloading soils data -- total number of STATSGO and SSURGO downloads or CD orders	11,505	34,700	35,000	35,000
Customers accessing or downloading plant science information (PLANTS database) 1000s of customers	745.5	1,230	1,250	1,250	

Ensure timely, science-based information and technologies.	National conservation practice standards reviewed to ensure they are current and reflect best available technology, number	28	11	36	36
	Soil surveys available in digital form, cumulative number	941	1,080	1,380	1,600
	Soils mapped or soil surveys updated in the fiscal year, 1000s of acres	24,391	24,365	22,023	20,000
	New plant releases, number	25	24	32	25
	Plant materials technology transfer: publications, number	---	366	273	275
	Plant materials studies evaluated, number	---	463	409	400

¹See "Explanation of Performance Measures."

Means and Strategies

Fair and equitable program delivery. The major strategies for ensuring that all customers are treated fairly and with respect are to ensure that all employees understand their responsibilities and to conduct intensive outreach efforts to historically underserved groups.

The strategy for strengthening the conservation delivery system includes management improvements that are described in the NRCS Business Plan rather than this performance plan.

The means for maintaining the delivery system in FY 2003 include increases to fund the anticipated pay raise, contributions to Federal Employees Retirement System and non-salary support costs.

In FY 2003, the strategy for enhancing conservation technology includes accelerated development of the technology needed to address climate change. The Administration will institute a new Climate Change Research Initiative. NRCS will work with other USDA agencies and with NOAA, NSF, DOE, and NASA to evaluate and pilot test using the current inventories of carbon biomass. The means to implement this strategy include an increase of \$500,000 in the Conservation Technical assistance account.

	Objective	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
Funding:	Resource inventory &				
\$ in thousands	technology development	186,467	189,403	205,042	210,518
FTEs:		2,327	2,003	2,026	2,087

Costs shown above include only costs of objective 3.

Dollars and FTEs include the fiscal year appropriation, carryover, and reimbursements.

The President's Budget for FY 2003 transfers to the agency certain costs previously paid through other accounts. The dollars shown above for FY 2001 and 2002 have been adjusted for comparability to the FY 2003 dollars. FY 2000 dollars have not been adjusted.

Verification and Validation of Performance Data

In FY 1999, NRCS implemented a new accountability system to provide a balanced, reliable, and timely picture of the agency's performance. The system makes use of site-specific information on activities and accomplishments of NRCS front-line employees, information from the agency's natural resources inventories and the National Cooperative Soil Survey, and information collected by other Federal, state, and other entities. The performance data collected through the system will enable agency managers to: estimate the effect of programs on the condition of natural resources systems, assess the cost-effectiveness of service delivery, identify opportunities for business process improvement, and respond to customers' needs with strategies and assistance tailored to local conditions. In FY 2001, the agency's national oversight and evaluation staff conducted a review to identify improvements needed. The review included on-site reviews of 67 offices across the country. As a result of the review, numerous changes have been implemented to streamline data entry and improve data quality. A focus of the changes made for FY 2002 was to improve the linkages between time and attendance data and performance data to support program management and fund accountability.

Data collection.

Components of the system include:

- *Detailed data on how we spend our time.* The Time and Attendance Report each employee submits every two weeks reports the hours spent for each of 23 programs (e.g. Watershed Surveys and Planning, Grazing Lands Conservation) and for each of 13 major activities (e.g. providing assistance in developing conservation plans, conducting resource inventories) The T&A tool used to report these data is a user-friendly web-based tool that enables each employee to record time and activities and includes built-in edit checks to minimize keying errors. Supervisors review T&As before they are submitted to ensure that data entered accurately reflect how the employee's time is spent. In FY 2000, additional training for field office employees was initiated to ensure consistency in data entry. For FY 2002, program and activity definitions have been revised and clarified and additional training conducted.
- *Data on the workload in each field office area.* We have developed a process for analysis of the workload at the field office level that provides a basis for developing strategies and allocating field staff time and funds. The initial phase of the analysis identified the major products and services that are delivered at the field level as mutually exclusive activities and identified the tasks required to deliver each product or service. The analysis divided the Nation into geographic areas with resource conditions and agricultural enterprises similar enough to permit description of typical activities. Estimates of the time needed to execute each task were developed, by resource area, for each technical discipline needed to carry out the task. The analysis is a partnership activity conducted by NRCS, conservation districts, state conservation agencies, and resource conservation and development councils. It identifies tasks and resources of each member of the partnership. It is conducted according to consistent methodology nationally. The methodology includes procedures for quality control.
- *Complete and consistent data on key performance measures.* We have identified key measures that are appropriate indicators of annual progress toward strategic goals. These indicators are conservation practices and systems that are defined in NRCS field office technical guides. Field offices report their accomplishments for each measure on a regular basis. The reporting system is a user-friendly, web-based application that minimizes the time required for data entry. For FY 2002, improvements have been made in the system to streamline data entry, and additional guidance and training have

been provided to ensure consistency in data across the Nation.

In addition to the conservation practices and systems, which are indicators of outcomes, the new system will report other data needed to manage activities. Among these data are data on selected output and input indicators, including program management items (such as number and acres in contracts), and other NRCS state and national office outputs. Data about customer satisfaction will be collected through surveys.

- *Data on resource condition collected by resources inventories.* Statistically valid inventories are an essential part of strategic planning. The data on annual measures collected by the Performance and Results Measurement System cannot be used to determine whether overall resource condition is improving or deteriorating. Inventories, which collect data on a sample that represents the whole landscape, are necessary to determine the direction and degree of change in conditions and shifts in climatic trends. The National Resources Inventory conducted by NRCS is the major inventory of the status, condition, and trends of soil, water, and related resources on the Nation's nonfederal lands. In addition to the NRI and other NRCS data, we will make use of data compiled by other agencies' inventories and utilize performance indicators identified by them when appropriate. USDA agencies that collect data NRCS uses include: Forest Service; Agricultural Research Service; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; Economic Research Service; National Agricultural Statistics Service; and Farm Service Agency. Other Federal agencies provide valuable information for validation of NRCS data and Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These agencies include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Interior Department's U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Data that NRCS relies on other agencies to provide is from major inventories collected according to well-defined protocols and with internal quality assurance procedures. Differences in definitions or procedures between other agency's inventory data and NRCS data are identified and their implications for use of the data noted.

Quality Assurance The Agency's performance measurement system, PRMS, was designed to ensure the data would be collected accurately and consistently nationwide. The internal controls to ensure data quality include:

- Data definitions and clearly defined performance measures. The data entered in PRMS are a subset of the information that are recorded in client case files in each field office. The system references existing definitions in the agency's Field Office Technical Guide, National Planning Procedures Handbook, Engineering Field Handbook, and other technical and program policy directives.
- On-line definitions and help screens for all performance data collection items.
- Telephone hotline. Employees can call a telephone hotline if they have any problems entering performance data. If the questions are related to a business definition, they are routed to appropriate performance data stewards to ensure consistent interpretation.
- PRMS Data Quality Assurance Plan. A detailed data quality assurance plan outlines specific responsibilities associated with quality control of all agency performance data. PRMS coordinator positions have been established in all states and the six regional offices to ensure data quality is monitored on a continuous basis.
- Built-in data tools to ensure data quality. Two types of tools help to ensure data quality. Automated tools built into the software either operate at the time of data entry, to prevent incorrect entries, or perform data validation checks after

the data are entered. Both of these checks operate through a Quality Gate server that prevents the inaccurate data from being posted in the PRMS database. The second type of automated tool built into the software is a manual review capability for use by PRMS coordinators at the state, regional, and national level. Coordinators review the data quality on a regular basis to identify progress items that appear to be in error. The software allows them to “tag” the questionable item, so that it is removed from the national PRMS database and re-submitted to the person who entered the item the next time that person enters PRMS. The employee then fixes the problem and resubmits it to the system. This entire process is fully automated.

- Individual employee accountability for individual data entry. All employees enter performance data through an individual login. This allows the system to track every progress item to an individual.
- Oversight and evaluation (O&E) surveys and reviews. PRMS and the other components of the accountability system undergo reviews and evaluations to identify problem areas or areas that could reduce overall data quality. The first such survey was initiated in late 1999 to look at key PRMS data issues during the transition year. A more extensive O&E survey was conducted in FY 2000-2001.
- On-going state-level quality assurance activities. Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted annually at selected field offices. Program and functional appraisals are also carried out. Performance data are reviewed as part of these efforts.
- Quality action plans and data certification. Comprehensive quality action plans will be developed by each organizational unit responsible for data accuracy, completeness, and currency. Performance data are certified to be an accurate representation of the performance accomplished in that fiscal year
- Periodic performance analyses and reports. Ongoing analyses and weekly, monthly, and quarterly performance summaries and assessments serve to maintain the focus of leadership and field staff on providing quality performance data. The primary point of quality assurance resides at the field delivery point. The periodic analyses and reports provide tools to improve the reporting process

Table 3: NRCS Resources in FY 2002

		Goal 1 Productive Resource Base	Goal 2 High Quality Environment	Goal 3 Flood & Drought Mitigation	Goal 4 Objective 3 Technology	TOTAL
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$ in 1000s	456,104	262,831	10,907	84,546	814,388
	FTEs	4,359	2,512	104	808	7,784
Soil Survey	\$ in 1000s				97,870	97,870
	FTEs				1,040	1,040
Snow Survey & Water Forecasts	\$ in 1000s				9,929	9,929
	FTEs				67	67
Plant Materials	\$ in 1000s				12,697	12,697
	FTEs				111	111
Watershed Surveys and Planning	\$ in 1000s			12,597		12,597
	FTEs			116		116
Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations	\$ in 1000s			136,943		136,943
	FTEs			555		555
Emergency Watershed Protection	\$ in 1000s			84,736		84,736
	FTEs			77		77
Watershed Rehabilitation	\$ in 1000s			10,000		10,000
	FTEs			74		74
Forestry Incentives Program	\$ in 1000s	8,546				8,546
	FTEs					0
Resources Conservation & Development	\$ in 1000s	13,040	41,294			54,334
	FTEs	121	384			505
Wetlands Reserve Program	\$ in 1000s		1,817			1,817
	FTEs					0
Environmental Quality Incentives	\$ in 1000s	69,334	115,137	2,530		187,000
	FTEs	236	255			491
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs	\$ in 1000s		888			888
	FTEs					0
Agricultural Management Assistance	\$ in 1000s	5,402	1,598			7,000
	FTEs	13	4			17
Farmland Protection Program	\$ in 1000s		720			720
	FTEs					0
Trust Funds	\$ in 1000s		270			270
	FTEs		1			1
TOTAL	\$ in 1000s	560,015	436,937	257,712	205,042	1,459,706
	FTEs	4,794	3,262	926	2,026	11,009

Funds and FTEs shown for Goal 1 provide for planning and applying the fundamental conservation management needed to protect the resource base and protect the environment. Funds and FTEs shown for Goal 2 are for additional activities focused on specific potential risks to environmental quality and opportunities to enhance environmental quality. Activities funded under Goal 1 also contribute to the outcomes of Goal 2; for example, cropland erosion control protects water and air quality off-site. Funds and FTEs shown for Goal 3 are for additional activities that focus specifically on flood and drought damage mitigation and recovery. Activities funded under Goal 1, such as improving irrigation water management, help to address Goal 3 outcomes also.

The table shows all funds available in the fiscal year to achieve performance targets. Dollars and FTEs include the fiscal year appropriation, carryover, and reimbursements. Dollars have been adjusted for comparability with the President's FY 2003 Budget.

Values shown for CTA include reimbursements from Commodity Credit Corporation for technical assistance to CRP.

Table 4: NRCS Resources in FY 2003

		Goal 1 Productive Resource Base	Goal 2 High Quality Environment	Goal 3 Flood & Drought Mitigation	Goal 4 Objective 3 Technology	TOTAL
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$ in 1000s	449,473	305,350		89,231	844,055
	FTEs	4,431	3,018		904	8,352
Soil Survey	\$ in 1000s				98,875	98,875
	FTEs				1,014	1,014
Snow Survey & Water Forecasts	\$ in 1000s				9,673	9,673
	FTEs				62	62
Plant Materials	\$ in 1000s				12,739	12,739
	FTEs				107	107
Emergency Watershed Protection	\$ in 1000s			113,579		113,579
	FTEs			225		225
Resources Conservation & Development	\$ in 1000s	12,803	40,542			53,345
	FTEs	119	376			495
Environmental Quality Incentives	\$ in 1000s	74,209	123,086	2,705		200,000
	FTEs	229	247			476
Agricultural Management Assistance	\$ in 1000s	5,308	1,692			7,000
	FTEs	18	6			24
Trust Funds	\$ in 1000s		270			270
	FTEs		1			1
TOTAL	\$ in 1000s	541,793	470,940	116,284	210,518	1,339,535
	FTEs	4,797	3,648	225	2,087	10,757

Funds and FTEs shown for Goal 1 provide for planning and applying the fundamental conservation management needed to protect the resource base and protect the environment. Funds and FTEs shown for Goal 2 are for additional activities focused on specific potential risks to environmental quality and opportunities to enhance environmental quality. Activities funded under Goal 1 also contribute to the outcomes of Goal 2; for example, cropland erosion control protects water and air quality off-site. Funds and FTEs shown for Goal 3 are for additional activities that focus specifically on flood and drought damage mitigation and recovery. Activities funded under Goal 1, such as improving irrigation water management, help to address Goal 3 outcomes also.

The table shows the total funds available in the fiscal year to achieve the performance targets. Dollars and FTEs shown include the fiscal year appropriation and reimbursements.

Appendix 1: Explanation of Performance Indicators

Goal 1	Enhance natural resource productivity to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector
	<p>These indicators reflect land protected and enhanced with NRCS assistance <u>in this fiscal year</u>. Although systems and practices remain on the land for many years, we do not report cumulative accomplishments for most indicators.</p>
<p><i>Resource management systems – cropland and grazed land</i></p>	<p>NRCS helps producers adopt management practices that will enable the producers to meet their short term production and profit goals without damage to the capacity of the resources to meet future needs. Conservationists refer to management that achieves this as a "resource management system." Because land use and land management are not static, annual goals to support the long-term strategic objective include helping farmers and ranchers to maintain good management as well as helping to improve management on land not in good condition.</p>
<p><i>Erosion reduction</i></p>	<p>Erosion is one of the best indicators of whether soils are stable, improving, or degrading. For FY 2002 and 2003, the indicator includes <u>all</u> cropland where erosion will be reduced by either applying conservation systems or retiring the land from crop production. The indicator for earlier years included <u>only</u> cropland where the erosion rate before treatment was at least twice T (T is considered the safe level) and the after-treatment rate was T or less.</p>
<p><i>Irrigation water management</i></p>	<p>Irrigation makes a significant contribution to the U.S. farm economy. Improvements in irrigation water management can help to maintain the viability of the irrigated agricultural sector and help to protect water quality. This indicator reports the adoption of improved technology to replace older methods and also changes that producers make to fine-tune existing systems. For FY 2002 and 2003, the definition of the indicator has been revised to include a wider range of irrigation practices. The definition earlier required full implementation of irrigation management to meet the NRCS standard for practice #449.</p>
Goal 2	Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use to ensure a high quality environment.
<p><i>Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Systems</i></p>	<p>LESA systems designed to fit local conditions are an important tool for local governments to use in natural resource assessment and suitability evaluations to assist communities in planning for growth and conservation that preserves the quality of the environment. An estimated 20 percent of all counties presently have LESAs systems developed.</p>
<p><i>Urban erosion reduction</i></p>	<p>Urban erosion and sediment are major concerns in many areas. NRCS provides resource information and technical advice to local governments to assist them in reducing urban erosion, developing and enforcing sediment control ordinances, controlling streambank erosion, and managing stormwater.</p>
<p><i>Buffers</i></p>	<p>Conservation buffers are areas or strips of land established and maintained in permanent vegetation along streams and other bodies of water, field edges, headlands, and end rows, or across critical long slopes to intercept runoff and pollutants and to improve habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species.</p>

Buffers are essential elements of conservation systems to reduce erosion and protect water quality and aquatic and riparian habitat. The performance targets for FY 2002 and 2003 are annual targets for buffers applied using NRCS practice standards and reported through the NRCS reporting system. The initial FY 2001 plan set a cumulative target rather than the annual targets set in other years. Further evaluation has resulted in a decision that annual targets are more appropriate for this indicator.

Nutrient and pest management The indicator for nutrient management includes both nutrients applied in manure and nutrients applied in chemical fertilizers. The pest management indicator is acres where environmentally sensitive strategies are used for prevention, avoidance, monitoring, and suppression of pests. For both practices, the reported data include land where practices were applied to NRCS standards for the first time during that year or where NRCS staff provided substantial assistance in fine-tuning and maintaining practices already applied.

Comprehensive nutrient management plans Goals for ensuring proper management of animal wastes have been included in all NRCS performance plans, beginning in fiscal year 1999. The performance indicator has been refined each year as the performance reporting system and the strategy to address concerns related to animal feeding operations (AFO) matured. FY 2002 is the first year for which progress will be reported in terms of the new technical guidance for comprehensive nutrient management plans. These plans are more complex and take longer to develop and apply than the waste management systems that were used as an interim measure while the guidance was under development. The goals for FY 2002 and 2003 reflect that greater investment of time in each plan.

Wetlands The wetland performance indicator is conservation practices applied to meet criteria in local field office technical guides. The acres of "wetlands created, restored, or enhanced" reported by NRCS may not be the same acres reported as "wetland restored" in the same fiscal year under FSA's Conservation Reserve Program or as the acres for which easements are recorded in that year under the Wetlands Reserve Program. Acres are reported under this performance only when a practice has been applied to NRCS technical standards. Program performance measures (both CRP and WRP) that report acres when the land is enrolled in the program or the easement is recorded represent an earlier point in time than this indicator because, in many cases, needed practices are not installed until a later year. The indicator is an annual measure that includes only those acres on which the practice was completed in that fiscal year; it cannot be compared to measures of cumulative acreage enrolled in the CRP or WRP. It includes wetlands created, restored, or enhanced under all programs, including but not limited to WRP and CRP. The measure includes only the wetland acres treated; it does not include associated upland acres that may have been treated or placed under easement to protect the wetland itself.

Wildlife habitat The indicator includes both land where the primary land use is for wildlife habitat and also land where the primary use is for production of crops, livestock, or forest products but management has been planned to also benefit wildlife.

Goal 3	Reduce risks from drought and flooding to protect individual and community health and safety.
<i>Flood control structures</i>	NRCS assists local sponsors with watershed protection projects that include a combination of structures, land treatment measures, and other non-structural measures to provide full protection. The number of structures completed is used as an indicator because a significant portion of federal funds supporting watershed protection are for financial assistance to local sponsors to build needed structures. Flood control structures are complex engineering structures that generally take several years to complete. The number of structures completed in a given year may differ substantially from the target set because the projects are supported by a combination of federal, state, and local funds; unexpected increases or decreases in non-federal funds may alter the schedule for completing structures.
<i>Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation</i>	NRCS has helped local sponsors install more than 10,000 floodwater-retarding structures in small upstream watersheds to protect communities from flooding, ensure water supplies, and provide recreational and other benefits. Many of these structures are near the end of their design life. Others are located in watersheds where rapid development has changed the conditions in the watershed and created a need for modification of the structure. The indicator for <i>watershed infrastructure rehabilitation projects installed</i> measures progress in efforts to ensure continued safety of lives and property in these watersheds.
<i>Systems to address water supply</i>	Basic on-farm conservation measures can provide individuals some protection against the limitations and risks imposed by climate and weather. More complete protection is afforded by action at a broader level when communities plan and manage land and water to protect a watershed as a whole. The indicator includes conservation applied on the land to address identified concerns about water for agriculture or for community or individual use.
<i>Water supply forecasts</i>	Accurate information on water supply and reliable predictions of future supplies is an essential part of effective management of water resources to meet the diverse needs of the people and ecosystems in a watershed. To derive the greatest benefits from the limited water supplies of the arid West, farmers and the managers of the reservoirs that store and supply water for irrigation, power generation, homes, cities, and industries depend on the predictions of annual streamflow that USDA provides by monitoring snowpack and snowmelt through the Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program.
Goal 4	Deliver high quality services to the public to enable natural resource stewardship
<i>Parity in service delivery</i>	NRCS is committed to treating all customers with dignity and respect and providing services on a non-discriminatory basis. Parity in service delivery means that in any year, the percentage of the minority customer base who receive services does not differ significantly from the percentage of the non-minority customer base who receive services. In the performance reporting system, changes have been made in the way demographic data are reported for agricultural producers; these changes will facilitate comparison of NRCS data on customers served and Ag. Census data on the make-up of the potential

customer base. Each field office is expected to ensure parity in service delivery. For the agency performance report, parity will be reported for the agency as a whole. The agency will continue to collect data in each field office and to analyze data to ensure that all NRCS employees are working toward this goal. This indicator replaces the indicators for *Members of racial and ethnic minority groups who applied a conservation system with NRCS assistance* and *Minority customers applying a system with assistance from an NRCS-administered financial assistance program*, which were tested in FY 2001. Data for those two items will continue to be collected and shown on reports, but targets will not be set.

Offices established on reservation land The 1990 farm bill requires USDA to establish sub-offices at the Tribal headquarters of Tribes who request it and to staff the office at least one day a week. Numbers in the table include NRCS offices at tribal headquarters and offices elsewhere on tribal lands. As of September 2001, NRCS had 40 full-time and 75 part-time offices on tribal lands.

Electronic access to services Technical information, including soils data, water supply information and forecasts, plants data, conservation practice standards, and NRCS program information are currently accessible to the public over the Internet. The indicators demonstrate the level of use of the available data.

Information and technology The information on soils and on water supply that NRCS produces are the essential foundation to the agency's technical assistance and are also used by many other governmental entities and by the private sector. Digitized soils data is critical to achieving the goals of USDA's service center modernization initiative. Other conservation technology developed by NRCS, including the plant materials for conservation work, the conservation practice standards in local field office technical guides, and engineering directives are widely used by the public and private sectors.

Customer satisfaction NRCS is committed to providing high quality service that satisfies its customers' expectations. NRCS has used several types of surveys to measure customer satisfaction over the past few years. In FY 2000, customers receiving assistance through Conservation Technical Assistance, NRCS's largest program, were surveyed as part of University of Michigan's survey using the American Customer Satisfaction Index, a uniform, cross industry/government measure that allows benchmarking between public and private sectors. CTA received a satisfaction index of 81 out of a possible 100. This is 10 points higher than the average for private sector services and 12 points higher than the index for Federal services. CTA received a trust index of 90 out of a possible 100. Additional programs and customer segments will be surveyed in future years.

Appendix B: NRCS Programs, Program Purposes, and Major Activities

Program	Purpose/mission	Objectives/authorized activities
Conservation Operations		
1. Conservation Technical Assistance	Sustain agricultural productivity and protect and enhance the natural resource base by assisting land-users, communities, units of state and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems to reduce erosion, improve soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture and range condition, reduce upstream flooding, and improve woodlands.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assist individual landusers, communities, conservation districts, and other units of State and local government and Federal agencies to meet their goals for resource stewardship and assist individuals to comply with State and local requirements. 2. Assist agricultural producers to comply with the highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland (Swampbuster) provisions of the Farm Bills and wetlands requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. 3. Assist resource users who have received USDA cost shares to enhance resource condition 4. Conduct comprehensive inventories and assessments of the status and condition of soil and other natural resources on private lands. 5. Develop effective science-based technologies for natural resource assessment, management, and conservation.
2. Soil Survey	Help people understand soils.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a basic inventory of soil information for the entire country, produced according to consistent standards and procedures. 2. Provide soils information to the public. 3. Provide technical services to help people use soils information.
3. Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts	Provide western states and Alaska with information on future water supplies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide customers with accurate forecasts of surface water supply within the first 5 working days of each month, Jan.-June. 2. Efficiently obtain, manage, and disseminate high quality information on snow, water, climate, soil moisture, fire hazard, and hydrologic conditions. 3. Develop and apply technology necessary to meet changing needs of water users.
4. Plant Materials Program	Provide native plants that can help solve natural resource problems. Uses of plant materials include biomass production, carbon sequestration, erosion reduction, wetland restoration, water quality improvement, streambank and riparian area protection, coastal dune stabilization, and other special conservation treatment needs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assemble, test, and encourage increased propagation of plant species. 2. Develop technology to enable better establishment, maintenance, and management of plant species.
5. Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative	Maintain and improve private grazing land to ensure long-term sustainability and to conserve and improve wildlife habitat, fish habitat and aquatic systems, water quality and quantity, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic character of the lands.	Provide technical, educational, and related assistance to owners and managers of private grazing land and public agencies, through local conservation districts, to conduct all activities relating to grazing land management, including planning, managing and treating grazing land to ensure long-term sustainability, harvesting, processing and marketing, and addressing weed, noxious weed, and brush problems; and encouraging diversification of private grazing land enterprises.

Watershed Surveys and Planning Watershed Planning River Basin Surveys and Investigations	Assist Federal, State, and local agencies and tribal governments to protect watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment and to conserve and develop water and land resources. Address water quality concerns, opportunities for water conservation, wetland and water storage capacity, agricultural drought problems, rural development, municipal and industrial water needs, upstream flood damages, and water needs for fish, wildlife, and forest-based industries.	Develop watershed plans, conduct river basin surveys and studies, conduct flood hazard analyses, and provide flood plain management assistance.
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations		
1. Watershed Operations authorized by P.L. 78-534,	Prevent flooding; conserve, develop, utilize, and dispose of water; and reduce sedimentation and erosion damages in 11 watersheds covering about 35 million acres in 11 states. May also include development of recreational facilities and improvement of fish and wildlife habitat.	Cooperate with State and local agencies, tribal governments, and other Federal agencies to assist local sponsors in assessing conditions in their watershed, developing solutions to their problems, and installing necessary measures to alleviate the problems. Measures may include land treatment and structural and nonstructural measures.
3. Small Watersheds authorized by P.L. 83-566	Protect, manage, improve, and develop water and related land resources of watersheds up to 250,000 acres.	
2. Emergency Operations	Reduce hazards to life and property in watersheds damaged by severe natural events.	Provide technical and financial assistance for: disaster cleanup and subsequent rebuilding; stream corridor, wetland and riparian area restoration; and for urban planning and site location assistance to FEMA when relocating communities out of floodplains.
Watershed Infrastructure Rehabilitation authorized by P.L. 106-472	Address public health and safety concerns and environmental impacts of aging dams.	Provide technical and financial assistance for planning, design, and implementation of rehabilitation projects. Projects may include upgrading or removing the dams.
Forestry Incentives Program	Increase production of sawtimber and pulpwood on nonindustrial private forest lands; decrease, over time, expected shortages and rising prices of timber; and help ensure effective use of available forest lands.	Provide cost-shares and technical assistance to landowners for installation of forestry practices
Resource Conservation and Development	Improve the capability of state and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop, and carry out programs for resource conservation and development and community sustainability.	Strengthen coordination systems in rural communities to utilize Federal, State, and local programs. Provide technical, financial, and loan assistance to local project sponsors.
Wetlands Reserve Program	Preserve, protect, and restore valuable wetlands in the agricultural landscape in order to improve wildlife and migratory bird habitat; improve water quality; and provide flood water retention, ground water recharge, open space, and aesthetic values.	Enroll up to 1,075,000 acres in a balance of permanent easements, 30-year easements, and voluntary restoration agreements by the end of calendar year 2002.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Achieve solutions to local community concerns related to farms, ranches, and rural lands	Assist farmers and ranchers to make changes in cropping systems; grazing management; manure, nutrient, pest, or irrigation management; land use, or other conservation measures by providing technical assistance, cost-share payments, incentive payments, and education through 5- to 10-year contracts based on conservation plans.
Farmland Protection Program	Protect soils by limiting conversion of prime, unique, statewide and locally important farmland to nonagricultural uses.	Purchase conservation easements or other interests in not less than 170,000 nor more than 340,000 acres of prime and unique farmland that are subject to a pending offer from a Tribal, state or local government .
Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program	Develop habitat for upland wildlife, wetlands wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish, and other types of wildlife	Provide technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address protection of wetlands, wildlife habitat, and related concerns on their lands.
Programs Authorized by the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000		
Agricultural Management Assistance	Strengthen the safety net for agricultural producers by providing cost shares for resource conservation and financial risk management assistance to participants in 10 to 15 states in which participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program has historically been low	Provide financial and technical assistance to producers to construct or improve watershed management or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and to mitigate financial risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices.
Programs Terminated by the 1996 Farm Bill		
Colorado Salinity Control Program	Reduce the salinity content in the upper Colorado River basin in support of the 1973 International Boundary and Water Commission treaty to improve water quality delivered to downstream users in the U.S. and Mexico.	Continue to fulfill the obligation of the 1973 Treaty by providing Financial, technical, and education assistance to producers in the Colorado River Basin to install salinity reduction practices such as improved irrigation systems, irrigation water management, and grazing land practices.
Great Plains Conservation Program	Bring about a long-term solution to natural resource problems in the 10 States of the Great Plains region.	Continue to address problems in the Great Plains by providing financial, technical, and education assistance through EQIP, which encompasses the functions of GPCP.
Water Bank Program	Preserve and improve migratory waterfowl and wildlife-related resources; conserve surface water and reduce runoff, soil and wind erosion; improve flood control; contribute to improved soil moisture; enhance landscape aesthetics; and promote comprehensive water management planning.	

Appendix C: Minor Revision to the NRCS Strategic Plan

As permitted by the Government Performance and Results Act, the following minor change has been made to the NRCS Strategic Plan for FY 2000-2005. (Change shown in bold.)

<i>Performance Target as stated in the strategic plan released in September 2000.</i>	<i>Updated Performance Target::</i>
2.1. Protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses. By 2005, 90 percent of all counties will have Land Evaluation and Site Assessment systems developed and placed on the state conservationist list of approved systems.	By 2005, 90 percent of counties that have identified a need for a local Land Evaluation and Site Assessment system will have the LESA system approved by the state conservationist.
