

## **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN FOR FY 2002 (INITIAL DRAFT) AND REVISED PLAN FOR FY 2001**

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 national leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, improve, and sustain the Nation's 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 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. Practices may be applied with cost share assistance from the USDA programs or other Federal, state, or local programs or entirely with the resource manager's own funds. NRCS administers programs that provide financial incentives for protecting natural resources and environmental quality.
- 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 information 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, trends and makes this information available to landowners and communities for use in individual and community resource planning processes. NRCS inventories and maintains detailed information on the Nation's soil and water resources and conducts conservation needs assessments. These science-based efforts present an accurate, unbiased look at the condition of key natural resources.
- Develops conservation standards, specifications, and guidelines to ensure that conservation systems are technically sound. These technical standards 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 A 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. 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 provides native plant materials that can help solve 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.

*Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)* The RC&D Program provides technical assistance to improve the capability of 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 largest of these, the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**, administered by NRCS with concurrence from the Farm Service Agency (FSA), 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. These programs also include three 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). NRCS has signed Memoranda of Understanding with EPA for cooperation on non-point source pollution control and air quality research, and with the U.S. Geological Survey for cooperation on water quality research.

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

<b>1: Enhance natural resource productivity to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector.</b>	
<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 where conservation was applied to fully protect against erosion damage, 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>
<b>2: Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use to ensure a high quality environment</b>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>Protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses. Counties with LESA systems developed, percent Farmland protected from conversion under Farmland Protection Program, acres</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, water quantity for community/individual, number (Baseline to be developed in FY 2001; target for FY 2002 to be set at end of FY 2001.) Community development projects completed, (RC&amp;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, acres</p>

	Agricultural land where systems that reduce potential for nutrient delivery were applied (includes both AFO and non-AFO), acres
	Agricultural land where pest management was applied, acres
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	Enhance animal feeding operations to protect the environment. Waste management systems planned or applied, number (FY 2001) Comprehensive nutrient management plans written or applied, number (FY 2002)
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.	Maintain, restore, or enhance wetland ecosystems and fish and wildlife habitat Wetlands created, restored, or enhanced, acres  Land where measures to improve habitat for wildlife were applied, acres
<b>3: Reduce risks from flooding and drought to protect individual and community health and safety</b>	
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.	Reduce risks from flooding and drought Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation plans developed, number  Flood control structures completed, number
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.	Conservation systems applied to address water supply concerns, acres  Water supply forecasts issued, number
<b>4: Deliver high quality services to the public to enable natural resource stewardship</b>	
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..	Deliver services fairly and equitably. Members of racial and ethnic minority groups who applied a conservation system with NRCS assistance, number Minority customers applying a system under NRCS-administered cost share programs Number of offices established on reservation land
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	Strengthen the conservation delivery system. (Included in agency business plan rather than this performance plan. Business plan action item no. ADM-1.)

<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. Business plan action item no. 4.2.4.)</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.</p> <p>By 2005, 85 percent of the national conservation practice standards are current and reflect best available technology.</p> <p>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</p> <p>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.</p> <p>National conservation practice standards reviewed, number</p> <p>(Implementation steps included in agency business plan rather than this performance plan. Business plan action item no. 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.7.)</p> <p>Soil surveys available in digital form, cumulative number</p> <p>Soils mapped or soil surveys updated in the fiscal year, acres</p> <p>New plant releases, number</p> <p>Technology transfer: PMC publications, number</p> <p>Plant materials studies evaluated</p> <p>(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**

<b>Programs</b>	<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Goal 4<sup>1</sup></b>
<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	
Resources Conservation and Development	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	
Rural Abandoned Mine Program	X	X		
<i>Farm Service Agency Programs 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.*

<sup>1</sup> 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 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Target	FY 2002 Target
Maintain, restore, and enhance cropland productivity.	Cropland where resource management systems were applied, 1000s of acres	8,680	10,200	11,000	9,000
	Cropland where conservation was applied to fully protect against erosion damage, 1000s of acres	5,320	4,100	5,000	3,000
Maintain, restore, and enhance Irrigated land.	Irrigated cropland where irrigation water management was improved, 1000s of acres	NA	1,251	1,000	1,000
Maintain, restore, and enhance grazing land productivity.	Grazing land where resource management systems were applied, 1000s of acres	7,900	10,700	11,000	10,000
Maintain, restore, and enhance forestland productivity.	Forestland where tree and shrub establishment was applied, 1000s of acres	NA	640	300	300
	Forestland where the stand was improved, 1000s of acres	NA	390	300	300

### Explanation of Performance Indicators

The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA's Goal 3 – Maintain and enhance the Nation's natural resources and environment. These goals also help to achieve Goal 1 -- Expand economic and trade opportunities for U.S. agricultural producers.

These indicators reflect land protected and enhanced with NRCS assistance in this fiscal year. Although systems and practices remain on the land for many years, we do not report cumulative accomplishments for most indicators.

#### *Resource management systems*

NRCS helps producers adopt management practices that will enable the producer to meet the 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 maintain land already in good condition as well as improving management on land not in good condition.

#### *Erosion control*

Erosion is one of the best indicators of whether soils are stable, improving, or degrading. The indicator includes land where erosion was reduced to the safe level ( which conservationists call the "T" value) by either applying conservation systems or retiring the land from crop production.

#### *Irrigation water management*

Irrigation makes a significant contribution to the U.S. farm economy—nearly 40 percent of total crop sales come from the 15 percent of cropland that is irrigated. 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.



## Means and Strategies

Conservation of private land is a partnership effort that relies on many individuals, groups, and governmental entities working together to achieve common goals. The foundation of the partnership 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 officials who serve without salary. District employees administer local and state conservation programs and cooperate with NRCS specialists in administering 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 to serve the local community

A part of the strategy for preventing damage on highly erodible cropland relies on the conservation compliance provision of farm bills since 1985. Conservation compliance requires that operators maintain practices on their 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 required 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 FY2000, NRCS helped producers maintain or improve erosion control on almost 2 million acres subject to the Farm Bill rules; the workload to maintain conservation on HEL land will be about that same level in FY 2001 and FY 2002.

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, programs funded with state money. In FY 2000, buffer practices applied included more than 3,800 miles of windbreaks and shelterbelts to reduce wind erosion and 12,100 acres of contour buffer strips to reduce sheet and rill erosion.

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 and with some 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 includes 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 and accurate information about the capabilities and limitations of the soil resource and reliable forecasts of water supply.

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2002</b>
<b>Funding:</b>	Cropland		271,359	280,926	293,807
\$ in thousands	Irrigation		55,276	69,259	62,215
	Grazing land		115,801	135,854	142,091
	Forestland		34,491	34,230	26,529
	<b>Total, Goal 1</b>		<b>476,928</b>	<b>520,269</b>	<b>524,642</b>
<b>FTEs:</b>	Cropland		3,477	3,252	3,451
	Irrigation		321	360	371
	Grazing land		1,273	1,350	1,443
	Forestland		290	275	297
	<b>Total, Goal 1</b>		<b>5,361</b>	<b>5,237</b>	<b>5,563</b>

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, any carryover funds, and reimbursements.

Methodology used to estimate dollars and FTEs for objectives for FY 2000-2002 cannot be applied to the sample data for FY 1999.

## Goal 2

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

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Target	FY 2002 Target
Protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses.	Counties with Land Evaluation and Site Assessment systems developed, (number)	NA	NA	50	50
	Farmland protected from conversion under Farmland Protection Program, 1000s of acres	---	---	27.8	---
Promote sound urban and rural community development.	Community development projects completed (RC&D), number	NA	NA	2,513	2,600
	Urban and built-up land where erosion control measures were applied, 1000s of acres	NA	46	50	60
Protect water and air resources from agricultural non-point sources of impairment.	Buffers applied annually, 1000s of acres			250	400
	Buffers applied, 1000s of miles, cumulative	803	1,000		
	Agricultural land where systems that reduce potential for nutrient delivery were applied, 1000s of acres	2,700	4,300	5,000	4,500
	Agricultural land where pest management was applied, 1000s of acres	NA	3,969	4,000	3,500
Enhance animal feeding operations to protect the environment.	Waste management systems planned or applied, number	6,170*	11,000*	11,000	---
	Comprehensive nutrient management plans planned or applied, number	---	---	---	4,500
Maintain, restore, or enhance wetland ecosystems and fish and wildlife habitat	Wetlands created, restored, or enhanced, 1000s of acres	270	290	250	200
	Land where measures to improve wildlife were applied, 1000s of acres	6,300	12,300	5,000	5,600

\* Definition of indicator varied in the period shown.

Explanation of Performance Indicators

The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA's Goal 3 – Maintain and enhance natural resources and the environment. It also supports achievement of Goal 4 -- Enhance the capacity of all rural residents, communities, and businesses to prosper.

*Urban and rural community conservation*

An increasing number of counties in the Nation are urbanizing. About 40 percent of soil and water conservation districts have reported that at least 50 percent of their workload was associated with urban resource issues. NRCS works with local and State agencies in urban and developing areas, providing technical information and advice on resource conditions and assistance in developing plans to achieve goals identified locally. *Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (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 LESA systems developed. This estimate will be validated and a baseline and targets will be established in early FY 2001. *Urban erosion and sediment* are major concerns in many areas. NRCS provides resource information and technical advice to local governments that

enables them in controlling urban erosion, developing and enforcing sediment control ordinances, controlling streambank erosion, and managing storm water.

*Buffers* Conservation buffers are areas or strips of land established and maintained in permanent vegetation along streams and other bodies of water, field edges, headlands, end rows, or across critical long slopes to intercept runoff and pollutants and to improve habitat for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species. Buffers are essential elements in conservation systems to control erosion and protect water quality and important components of aquatic and riparian habitat along stream corridors. The targets for FY 2001 and 2002 are annual targets for buffers applied and reported through the NRCS reporting system. The initial FY 2001 plan set a cumulative target rather than the annual targets set in earlier years. Further evaluation has resulted in a decision that annual targets are more appropriate for this indicator.

*Nutrient and pest management* Where water quality was reported impaired in 1998, agriculture was reported as the leading source of impairment for rivers, streams, and lakes. Sediment, nutrients, pesticides and pathogens were identified as the most important causes of pollution. Because excess nutrients and pesticides may be carried into water bodies either attached to soil particles or dissolved in runoff, the practices that reduce erosion or control runoff also help to reduce delivery of these contaminants. In addition, improving management of nutrients and pesticides will be needed to reduce the potential for delivery. 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.

*Animal waste management* 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 AFO-related concerns matured. The performance reported in FY 1999 included all waste management facilities applied with NRCS assistance. For FY 2000, the systems reported meet more restrictive criteria than were used in reporting FY 1999 performance, but the goal includes both systems planned and systems applied. This expansion of the measure was made to align with the new USDA-EPA Unified National Strategy for AFOs. FY2002 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 plan and apply than the waste management systems that were used as an interim measure while the guidance was under development. The goal for FY 2002 reflects 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 most 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 the land management has been planned to also benefit wildlife.

## **Means and Strategies**

The strategy for protecting the environment in developing areas relies on providing local, State, and Tribal governments and non-government organizations with the information on natural resource and environmental issues they needed 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 will be to complete and implement the Computer Assisted Land Evaluation System to provide a tool for local government to effectively evaluate the potentials and limitations of land resources relative to proposed uses. NRCS will also provide training Federal agencies need to conduct site assessments in accordance with the requirements of the Farmland Protection Policy Act.

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 effects of poorly managed animal operations. To provide this increased 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 and is expanding the share of its technical and financial assistance that is directed to this goal.

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 limited technical assistance for planning and applying cost-shared practices.

The targets include the contributions of other members of the conservation partnership at the field level working with NRCS. For FY 2000, NRCS funds are estimated to 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 program strategy for enhancing wildlife habitat varies across the country. In the Midwest and Northern Plains, acres where wildlife habitat management was applied in FY2000 were mostly in CRP or EQIP. In the West, improving wildlife habitat relies heavily on technical assistance under CTA without cost share program assistance.

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2002</b>
<b>Funding:</b>	Farmland protection		2,551	18,916	1,370
\$ in thousands	Urban/community		51,614	61,120	62,074
	Non-point source pollution		65,364	78,313	68,888
	Animal feeding operations		111,960	130,698	116,402
	Wetlands & wildlife habitat		250,346	253,898	61,904
	<b>Total, Goal 2</b>		<b>481,836</b>	<b>542,944</b>	<b>310,638</b>
<b>FTEs:</b>	Farmland protection		12	27	15
	Urban/community		635	674	680
	Non-point source pollution		321	344	349
	Animal feeding operations		716	774	815
	Wetlands & wildlife habitat		1,077	916	704
	<b>Total, Goal 2</b>		<b>2,761</b>	<b>2,735</b>	<b>2,564</b>

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.

Methodology used to estimate dollars and FTEs for objectives for FY 2000-2002 cannot be applied to the sample data for FY 1999.

## Goal 3

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

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Target	FY 2002 Target
Reduce risks from flooding and drought	Watershed infrastructure rehabilitation projects installed, number	0	0	11	9
	Flood control structures completed, number	NA	NA	81	100
	Conservation systems applied to address water supply concerns, 1000s of acres	NA	6,500	5,385	6,000
	Water supply forecasts issued	6,835	6,875	6,550	6,000

### Explanation of Performance Indicators

The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA's Goal 3 – Maintain and enhance natural resources and the environment. It also supports achievement of Goal 4 -- Enhance the capacity of all rural residents, communities, and businesses to prosper.

#### *Flood damage reduction*

*Flood control structures* are key elements in protection of public safety and property against flood risks. 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. 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.

NRCS has helped local sponsors install more than 10,000 of these 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 *watershed infrastructure rehabilitation projects installed* measures progress in efforts to ensure continued safety of lives and property in these watersheds.

#### *Drought and chronic water shortages*

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 systems applied on the land to address identified concerns about water for agriculture or for community or individual use. It is a new performance indicator for which a secure baseline does not exist; actual performance may differ significantly from the target.

#### *Water supply forecasts*

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, homes, cities, and industries depend on the predictions of annual streamflow that USDA provides by monitoring snowpack and snowmelt.

## **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 may require 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. NRCS's strategy for assisting the residents of watersheds to protect their homes and property 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 water supply forecasting information to reduce potential damages from flooding or drought in western states.

NRCS provides Conservation Technical Assistance to help producers drought-proof their operations and improve irrigation water management. Some financial assistance is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program for practices that reduce the strain of 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.



	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2002</b>
<b>Funding:</b>	Flood damage reduction		204,583	315,614	154,710
\$ in thousands	Drought mitigation*		18,971	24,368	2,255
	Total, Goal 3		223,554	339,982	156,965
<b>FTEs:</b>	Flood damage reduction		960	1,141	833
	Drought mitigation*		60	75	0
	Total, Goal 3		1,021	1,215	833

\* Funds and FTEs shown for drought mitigation reflect only Emergency Watershed Protection activities. All other activities to reduce the risk of drought are included in activities under Goal 1.

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.

Methodology used to estimate dollars and FTEs for objectives for FY 2000-2002 cannot be applied to the sample data for FY 1999.

## Goal 4

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

Performance Goals	Performance Indicators	FY 1999 Actual	FY 2000 Actual	FY 2001 Target	FY 2002 Target
Deliver services fairly and equitably.	Members of racial and ethnic minority groups who applied a conservation system with NRCS assistance, number	NA	9,342	10,000	6,800
	Minority customers applying a system with assistance from an NRCS-administered financial assistance program	NA	2,380	2,500	2,000
	New NRCS offices established on reservation land, number	73*	NA	5	4
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
	Current directives accessible to customers over the Internet, percent	---	---	---	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 homepage accesses	43,800	55,261	85,000	85,000
	Customers accessing or downloading soils data -- total number of STATSGO and SSURGO downloads or CD orders	2,611	11,505	10,510	18,000
	Customers accessing or downloading plant science information (PLANTS database) 1000s of customers	720	745.5	750	750
Ensure timely, science-based information and technologies.	National conservation practice standards reviewed to ensure they are current and reflect best available technology, number	---	---	36	36
	Soil surveys available in digital form, cumulative number	704	941	1,220	1,520
	Soils mapped or soil surveys updated in the fiscal year, 1000s of acres	24,000	24,391	24,000	21,500
	New plant releases, number	22	25	25	25
	Plant materials technology transfer: publications, number	---	---	345	220
	Plant materials studies evaluated, number	---	---	400	390
Satisfy customers' expectations for prompt, courteous, quality service.	(Customer satisfaction measures are under development.)				

\*Includes offices established in previous years as well as in 1999.

#### Explanation of Performance Indicators

The achievement of these performance goals supports achievement of USDA's Goal 5 -- Operate an efficient, effective, and discrimination-free organization. Achieving these internal goals is also essential to achieving all NRCS mission goals USDA goals for natural resources and the environment.

<i>Discrimination-free service</i>	The indicators for <i>service to minority customers</i> are new for FY 2001 and replace the indicator used in FY 1999-2000, which was “number of minority clients receiving assistance.” The new indicators are expected to better reveal the degree to which NRCS programs provide equal services to all customers without regard to racial and ethnic background. The number of customers served reflects the efforts of NRCS employees to inform underserved groups of the availability of assistance; those data are still collected. The new indicators tell whether the assistance provided by NRCS programs meets the needs of customers of diverse backgrounds. Because these are new measures, performance in FY 2001 may differ significantly from the target.
<i>Offices established on reservation land</i>	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 1 day a week. Numbers in the table include NRCS offices at tribal headquarters and offices elsewhere on tribal lands.
<i>Electronic access to services</i>	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
<i>Information and technology</i>	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.
<i>Customer satisfaction</i>	NRCS is implementing a new Customer Satisfaction Measurement System in two phases. Phase I, a survey of the recipients of conservation technical assistance is being conducted in FY 2001 through participation in the Customer Satisfaction Index Survey that Federal agencies are conducting. Phase II will be a more extensive customer assessment, involving both focus groups and a survey instrument. These activities will provide a baseline and identification of appropriate measures.
<b>Means and Strategies</b>	<p><i>Civil rights in program delivery.</i> The major strategies for ensuring that all customers are treated fairly and with respect (1) to ensure that all employees understand their responsibilities and (2) to conduct intensive outreach efforts to historically underserved groups.</p> <p>The NRCS national business plan includes activities to ensure that requirements for full access to all agency services are available electronically.</p>

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2002</b>
<b>Funding:</b>	Resource inventory &				
\$ in thousands	technology development		186,467	201,848	199,103
<b>FTEs:</b>			2,329	2,316	2,242

Costs shown above include only costs of objective 3.

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

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## 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.

*Data collection.* Components of the system include:

- *Detailed data on how we spend our time.* The Time and Attendance Report each employee submits every 2 weeks reports the hours spent for each of the agency's programs (e.g. Watershed Surveys and Planning, Conservation Technical Assistance) and for each major activity (e.g. providing assistance in developing conservation plans, conducting resource inventories) The T&A tool used to report these data is a user-friendly automated 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. Revisions of the system that will be implemented for FY 2002 will enhance data quality and usefulness.
- *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 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.

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.

Beginning in October 1998, a sample of field offices began entering data in the new system. The sample was sufficient to provide reliable reports at the

national level for FY 1999. The system was considered to be fully operational in FY 2000, when all offices, with the exception of a few still experiencing significant telecommunications access problems, were entering data. Major enhancements to the will be implemented on October 1, 2001, to streamline data entry and enhance data quality.

- *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. 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. 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 selection of clearly defined performance measures. The process of identifying the key agency performance measures was focused on ensuring that performance measures were understood by all employees and that items collected were directly linked to existing activities. Because the data entered in PRMS are a subset of items already reported in client case files, the new system established almost no new definitions for employees to learn, but rather 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. An example of the former is a check to verify that as a

performance report is linked to a county and a watershed, the combination entered is geographically possible. An example of the latter is a check to verify that the data entered does not contain illogical attributes. 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 will review the data quality on a regular basis to identify performance entries 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 logs into the system. 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 performance record to an individual.
- Oversight and evaluation (O&E) surveys and reviews. PRMS and the other components of the accountability system will 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 FY2001.
- On-going state quality assurance activities. Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted annually at selected field offices. Program and functional appraisals are also carried out. Performance data will be reviewed as part of each of these efforts.
- Quality action plans and data certification. A comprehensive quality action plan 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 alike 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.

## **Report Preparation**

Only federal employees were involved in the preparation of this Annual Performance Plan.

**Table 3: NRCS Resources in FY 2001**

		Goal 1 Productive Resource Base	Goal 2 High Quality Environment	Goal 3 Flood & Drought Mitigation	Goal 4 Quality Service: Information & Technology	TOTAL
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$ in 1000s FTEs	395,353 4,456	160,938 1,729	21,191 239	97,050 1,095	674,533 7,519
Soil Survey	\$ in 1000s FTEs				87,059 1,029	87,059 1,029
Snow Survey & Water Forecasts	\$ in 1000s FTEs				6,516 61	6,516 61
Plant Materials	\$ in 1000s FTEs				11,223 131	11,223 131
Watershed Surveys and Planning	\$ in 1000s FTEs			11,844 123		11,844 123
Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations	\$ in 1000s FTEs			119,032 538		119,032 538
Emergency Watershed Protection	\$ in 1000s FTEs			179,495 299		179,495 299
Forestry Incentives Program	\$ in 1000s FTEs	8,917 0				8,917 0
Resources Conservation & Development	\$ in 1000s FTEs	10,436 114	33,048 361			43,484 475
Wetlands Reserve Program	\$ in 1000s FTEs		182,407 232			182,407 232
Environmental Quality Incentives	\$ in 1000s FTEs	78,452 344	118,787 235	2,705 0		199,943 579
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs	\$ in 1000s FTEs		12,500 36			12,500 36
Soil and Water Conservation Assistance	\$ in 1000s FTEs	5,000 14	10,000 29	5,000 14		20,000 57
Agricultural Management Assistance	\$ in 1000s FTEs	3,376 9	1,909 6	715 2		6,000 17
Farmland Protection Program	\$ in 1000s FTEs		17,500 11			17,500 11
Trust Funds	\$ in 1000s FTEs		270 1			270 1
CRP	\$ in 1000s FTEs	18,735 300	5,585 95			24,320 395
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ in 1000s FTEs</b>	<b>520,269 5,237</b>	<b>542,944 2,735</b>	<b>339,982 1,215</b>	<b>201,848 2,316</b>	<b>1,605,043 11,501</b>

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. Some 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. Some 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, carryover, and reimbursement.



**Table 4: NRCS Resources in FY 2002**

		Goal 1 Productive Resource Base	Goal 2 High Quality Environment	Goal 3 Flood & Drought Mitigation	Goal 4 Quality Service: Information & Technology	TOTAL
Conservation Technical Assistance	\$ in 1000s FTEs	443,071 5,163	170,549 1,981	16,634 184	92,970 1,047	723,224 8,375
Soil Survey	\$ in 1000s FTEs				88,247 1,007	88,247 1,007
Snow Survey & Water Forecasts	\$ in 1000s FTEs				6,537 59	6,537 59
Plant Materials	\$ in 1000s FTEs				11,349 129	11,349 129
Watershed Surveys and Planning	\$ in 1000s FTEs			11,960 121		11,960 121
Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations	\$ in 1000s FTEs			125,413 526		125,413 526
Emergency Watershed Protection	\$ in 1000s FTEs					0 0
Forestry Incentives Program	\$ in 1000s FTEs					0 0
Resources Conservation & Development	\$ in 1000s FTEs	10,644 114	33,704 361			44,348 475
Wetlands Reserve Program	\$ in 1000s FTEs					0 0
Environmental Quality Incentives	\$ in 1000s FTEs	67,272 277	104,375 215	2,354 0		174,000 491
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs	\$ in 1000s FTEs					0 0
Agricultural Management Assistance	\$ in 1000s FTEs	3,656 9	1,740 6	604 2		6,000 17
Farmland Protection Program	\$ in 1000s FTEs					0 0
Trust Funds	\$ in 1000s FTEs		270 1			270 1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ in 1000s FTEs</b>	<b>558,538 6,088</b>	<b>320,743 2,730</b>	<b>156,965 833</b>	<b>199,103 2,242</b>	<b>1,191,348 11,200</b>

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, carryover, and reimbursements.

**Appendix A: NRCS Programs, Program Purposes, and Major Activities**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Purpose/mission</b>	<b>Objectives/authorized activities</b>
<p><b>Conservation Operations</b></p> <p>1. Conservation Technical Assistance</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>3. Assist resource users who have received USDA cost shares to enhance resource condition</p> <p>4. Conduct comprehensive inventories and assessments of the status and condition of soil and other natural resources on private lands.</p> <p>5. Develop effective science-based technologies for natural resource assessment, management, and conservation.</p>
<p>2. Soil Survey</p>	<p>Help people understand soils.</p>	<p>1. Provide a basic inventory of soil information for the entire country, produced according to consistent standards and procedures.</p> <p>2. Provide soils information to the public.</p> <p>3. Provide technical services to help people use soils information.</p>
<p>3. Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts</p>	<p>Provide western states and Alaska with information on future water supplies</p>	<p>1. Provide customers with accurate forecasts of surface water supply within the first 5 working days of each month, Jan.-June.</p> <p>2. Efficiently obtain, manage, and disseminate high quality information on snow, water, climate, and hydrologic conditions.</p> <p>3. Develop and apply technology necessary to meet changing needs of water users.</p>
<p>4. Plant Materials Program</p>	<p>Provide native plants that can help solve natural resource problems.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Assemble, test, and encourage increased propagation of plant species</p>
<p>5. Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

<p><b>Watershed Surveys and Planning</b> Watershed Planning River Basin Surveys and Investigations</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Develop watershed plans, conduct river basin surveys and studies, conduct flood hazard analyses, and provide flood plain management assistance.</p>
<p><b>Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations</b></p> <p>1. Watershed Operations authorized by P.L. 78-534,</p> <p>3. Small Watersheds authorized by P.L. 83-566</p> <p>2. Emergency Operations</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Protect, manage, improve, and develop water and related land resources of watersheds up to 250,000 acres.</p> <p>Reduce hazards to life and property in watersheds damaged by severe natural events.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>Forestry Incentives Program</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Provide cost-shares and technical assistance to landowners for installation of forestry practices</p>
<p><b>Resource Conservation and Development</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Strengthen coordination systems in rural communities to utilize Federal, State, and local programs.</p> <p>Provide technical, financial, and loan assistance to local project sponsors.</p>
<p><b>Wetlands Reserve Program</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Enroll up to 975,000 acres in a balance of permanent easements, 30-year easements, and voluntary restoration agreements by the end of calendar year 2002.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Quality Incentives Program</b></p>	<p>Achieve solutions to local community concerns related to farms, ranches, and rural lands</p>	<p>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.</p>

<b>Farmland Protection Program</b>	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 .
<b>Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program</b>	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		
<b>Agricultural Management Assistance</b>	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.	

## Minor Revision to the NRCS Strategic Plan

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

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*Performance Target as stated in the strategic plan released in September 2000.*

*Updated Performance Target::*

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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.

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