



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

5

YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

fiscal years

2011 – 2015

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
& APPENDICES

NRCS STRATEGIC PLAN

The strategic plan is the foundation for all agency activities to accomplish our core mission and sets our direction and provides the focus for the agency over the next few years. It is both fluid and flexible while focusing on resulting evidence and will be used to develop specific short term tactics in our annual business plans to meet natural resource challenges and opportunities. It is the critical starting point for an integrated budget and performance process. The plan's foundation is based on projected fiscal scenarios that have been speculated and forecasted within the context of present funding parameters.

NRCS's core mission is delivered through one fundamental Strategic Goal: Get More Conservation on the Ground. This agency goal directly supports USDA Strategic Goal 2: Ensure Our National Forests and Private Working Lands are Conserved, Restored, and Made More Resilient to Climate Change, While Enhancing our Water Resources. The NRCS Strategic Goal is supported by the 2 Management Initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan.



NRCS Strategic Planning and Accountability framework: Primary Components

Planning the work, strategically and annually,



Managing the work,

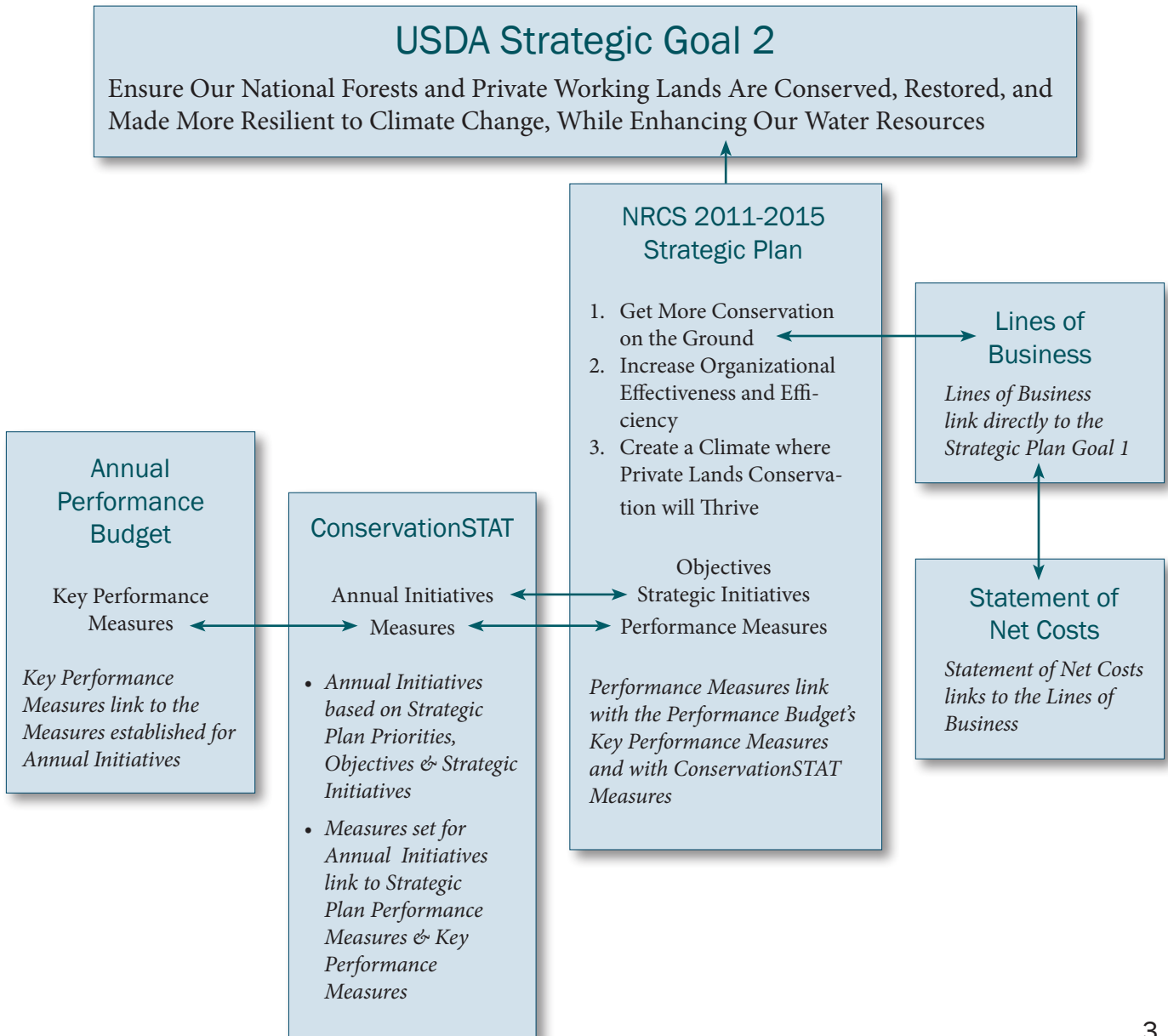


and Evaluating the work completed

The work is inclusive of the actual activities to be conducted (carrying out our mission) and the funding used to do them (budget). It is an ongoing cyclical process that provides for performance and demand, in the form of actual on the ground natural resource needs and concerns, to drive budgets. Figure 1 is a snapshot of the framework and NRCS management “tools” used to ensure effectiveness and transparency.

NRCS STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Fig. 1



IMPLEMENTATION

The Objectives and Strategic Initiatives within NRCS Goal 1 identify the high-level strategies and means for implementing it. There are six strategic performance measures to indicate progress in achieving this goal. The tools and methods for Strategic Plan implementation is as follows:

- A. *ConservationSTAT* is the annual business plan at the national level. The ConservationSTAT approach enables agency leadership to effectively facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It identifies the specific actions to be completed in the short term and measures and monitors progress.
- B. *Key Performance Measures* (KPMs) provide a direct indication of progress in achieving the Strategic Plan measures identified for Strategic Goal 1. Key Performance Measures are used in the Budget and Annual Performance Plan (APP).
- C. *State Resource Assessments* are the annual business and performance plans at the State level. These needs assessments identify at the local level the short-term priorities, activities, and the resources needed to conduct them to further implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- D. *NRCS' Six Lines of Business* are used by leadership to view cost by groups of similar products and services that Agency employees deliver to customers. The lines of business link to the Strategic Goal and will be used to develop the NRCS statement of net cost.

ConservationSTAT

Approach

ConservationSTAT is a results oriented decision-making approach to monitor budgets, solve problems, address challenges and reach consensus to achieve results.

Data Driven Approach

ConservationSTAT is a data driven and results oriented decision-making approach to monitor budgets, solve problems, address challenges, and reach consensus to achieve results. The Annual Initiatives in ConservationSTAT are the high level cross-functional actions for the short term that will link directly to the Objectives and Strategic Initiatives in the Goal 1. Each Annual Initiative will have 1 to 2 performance measures is directly linked to the appropriate Key Performance Measure (KPM) as a short term outcome or a specific metric of the KPM. The specific actions with time bounded deadlines and responsible individuals are identified by Milestones and Activities within each Annual Initiative.

Progress in completing the Annual Initiatives, meeting the planned KPM targets and including financial status is reviewed by the Chief and Executive Leadership at regular bi-weekly meetings. The benefits of this approach include:

- Provides managers with routine timely data to make informed proactive decisions on necessary adjustments to performance or activities throughout the fiscal year
- Aligns the implementation of the Strategic Plan and annual actions with the budget request, implementation and reporting processes
- Allows for development of Annual Initiatives as a corporate effort and leading to a collaborative corporate model for improved capacity and future performance
- Aligns the implementation of the Strategic Plan and annual actions with the requirements of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010

Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

S.M.A.R.T.

KPMs are indicators of NRCS goals that are **Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely.**

Quantitative Indicators

Key Performance Measures (KPMs) are quantitative indicators of progress in accomplishing NRCS mission goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely (SMART). Key Performance Measures are reported in the annual budget process and the Annual Performance Plan (APP) that NRCS is held accountable for.

NRCS' current Performance Measures represent the output of key conservation activities (practices) in terms of aggregated amounts such as acres, feet or number. This communicates the output of what the agency has done but not the outcome of those activities.

To better express the environmental outcomes and public value of our conservation work, NRCS is developing science based outcome measures for each of the 6 performance measures for Strategic Goal 1. The measures will indicate progress in meeting the overall Strategic Goal. Performance specific to an objective or strategic initiative are linked primarily through the ConservationSTAT process.

Table 1 outlines the linkage between current KPMs and the strategic performance measures for Goal 1. The current KPMs will serve only as "proxy" measures until the improved outcome measures are developed for use beginning in FY2013. These current measures will have annual targets only for FY2011 and FY2012, no baseline or other long term targets.

Table 2 outlines the linkage of the proposed outcome based KPMs and Goal 1. These KPMs are tentative pending further study of feasibility to be completed by December of 2011.

Table 1.

Current performance measures for Strategic Goal 1 – Get More Conservation on the Ground
(For Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012 only)

Strategic Performance Measure	Key Performance Measure
Maintain productive working farms and ranches	<i>Cropland with conservation applied to improve soil quality, acres</i>
	<i>Grazing and forest land with conservation applied to protect and improve the resource base, acres</i>
	<i>Prime, unique and important farmland protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses by conservation easements, acres</i>
Eliminate and reduce impairments to water bodies and help prevent the designation of additional water bodies to the “impaired” list	<i>Comprehensive nutrient management systems applied, number (FY2011 ONLY)</i>
	<i>Land with conservation applied to improve water quality, acres (FY2012 ONLY)</i>
	<i>Wetlands created, restored or enhanced, acres</i>
	<i>Priority landscapes with high impact, targeted conservation practices applied to improve water, acres</i>
Decrease threats to “candidate” and threatened/endangered species	<i>Non-federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality, acres</i>
	<i>Wetlands created, restored or enhanced, acres</i>
Increase number of conservation practice standards that address emerging issues (such as energy)	NONE
Increase conservation treatments in critical areas	<i>Priority landscapes with high impact, targeted conservation practices applied to improve water, acres</i>
	<i>Non-federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat quality, acres</i>
	<i>Wetlands created, restored or enhanced, acres</i>
Increase number of agreements to provide agricultural producers “certainty” that they will comply with federal environmental regulations	NONE

Table 2.

Strategic Goal 1 – Get More Conservation on the Ground (Beginning in Fiscal Year 2013)

Strategic Performance Measure	Key Performance Measure	Baseline 2010	Target 2015
Maintain productive working farms and ranches	<i>Acres of cropland with improved soil quality through organic carbon sequestered</i>	<i>TBD, Nov 11</i>	<i>TBD, Dec 11</i>
	<i>Acres of grazing land with improved grazing management</i>	<i>TBD, Nov 11</i>	<i>TBD, Dec 11</i>
Eliminate and reduce impairments to water bodies and help prevent the designation of additional water bodies to the “impaired” list	<i>Acres of cropland with at least X% reduction in pollutants in edge of field run-off to improve water quality.</i>	<i>TBD, Oct 11</i>	<i>TBD, Nov 11</i>
Decrease threats to “candidate” and threatened/ endangered species	<i>Acres of quality wildlife habitat</i>	<i>TBD, Nov 11</i>	<i>TBD, Dec 11</i>
Increase number of conservation practice standards that address emerging issues (such as energy)	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD, Nov 11</i>	<i>TBD, Dec 11</i>
Increase conservation treatments in critical areas	<i>TBD</i>	<i>TBD, Oct 11</i>	<i>TBD, Nov 11</i>
Increase number of agreements to provide agricultural producers “certainty” that they will comply with federal environmental regulations	<i>Acres benefitted from agreements</i>	<i>TBD, Sept 11</i>	<i>TBD, Oct 11</i>

State Resource Assessments

SRA

The information a State Resource Assessment Provides is utilized in preparing the annual budget and KPM targets.

State Resource Assessments (SRA) provide “bottom-up” input to ConservationSTAT and the budget and performance process, driven by the KPMs. Through the SRA, States identify for a 3 to 4 year period the:

- priority natural resource concerns and issues to be addressed,
- priority conservation areas,
- type and level of activities needed to address these concerns and issues,
- amount of operational support resources (funding, staff, equipment, etc.) necessary to accomplish these activities, and
- projected level of performance for each appropriate Key Performance Measure that will be accomplished with the requested operational resources.

This information is utilized in preparing the annual budget request and formulating the targets for the KPMs associated with the request.

Lines of Business

The lines of business link to the Strategic Goal and will be used to develop the NRCS statement of net cost.

NRCS Lines of Business

- A. *Conservation Planning and Technical Assistance* results in the transfer of data, information, or a conservation plan that helps customers protect, and conserve natural resources (soil, water, air, plant, animal, and energy) within their social and economic interests. The planning process identifies natural resource problems and opportunities, determines objectives, inventories resources, analyzes data, and formulates and evaluates alternatives.
- B. *Conservation Implementation* assists operators and landowners in installing conservation treatments, management measures, and management systems that result in improved treatment of the resources. Implementation of landscape scale approaches and adoption of reengineered processes enhance implementation effectiveness by getting enough conservation applied on the land in a geographic unit to achieve measurable improvements and meet the needs of the individuals and local groups.

Conservation implementation includes monetary incentives through program contracts, easements, or other means to qualified program participants who participate in authorized USDA NRCS conservation programs. Financial assistance purchases environmental benefits and helps motivate producers to treat natural resource problems and to help sustain natural resources.
- C. *Natural Resources Inventory* is the acquisition and development of natural resource data and information for natural resource planning, decision-making, and program and policy development at multiple scales. Natural Resource inventory includes strengthening cooperation with other Federal agencies, State agencies, and partners to collect natural resource data. Data collected is utilized at varying scales and compatible with data generated by other entities.
- D. *Natural Resources Assessment* is the interpretation and delivery of natural resource data and information for natural resource planning, decision making, and program and policy development at multiple scales. This includes strengthening cooperation with other Federal agencies, State agencies, and partners to analyze natural resource data. Data collected will be usable at varying scales and compatible with data generated by other entities.
- E. *Natural Resources Technology Transfer* acquires, develops, evaluates, and transfers conservation tools, techniques, and standards based on research and new technologies. It includes the production and delivery of technical tools used in resource assessment, conservation planning and implementation, conservation standards and guidance documents, and the development and delivery.

NRCS focuses on ensuring that appropriate technology is usable and easily accessible to internal and external customers. For internal customers, the highest priority is the integration of field level tools into a user-friendly system that better supports the conservation planning process. For external customers, NRCS works to translate science and technology into tools that are easy to understand and easy to use.
- F. *Conservation Operations* is the ongoing cyclical activities involved in the running of the Agency to fulfill the mission of getting conservation on the ground. It includes information technology, human resources and services, financial management, and operational management. NRCS works to increase reliability and productivity of Agency resources and operations to deliver conservation.



“National action may be led and aided by government, but the soil must be conserved ultimately by those who till the land and live by its products.”

— Hugh Hammond Bennett, First NRCS Chief

APPENDICES

Program Evaluation

NRCS used various tools in developing the strategic plan. The following table highlights some of these tools used to inform development of Strategic Plan Goal 1 and the Management Initiatives.

Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan			
Evaluations/Analyses	Brief Description	Effect	Date
<p>Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)</p> <p>A systematic method of assessing the performance of program activities across the Federal government. It is a diagnostic tool used to improve program performance. The PART assessments help inform budget decisions and identify actions to improve results. Agencies are held accountable for implementing PART follow-up actions and working toward continual improvements in performance.</p>	<i>Watershed Protection, Flood Prevention & Rehabilitation Programs</i>	<i>Score 65, Adequate</i>	<i>2004</i>
	<i>Farm and Ranchland Protection Program</i>	<i>Score 67.5, Adequate</i>	<i>2005</i>
	<i>Wetland Reserve Program</i>	<i>Score 66, Adequate</i>	<i>2005</i>
	<i>Conservation Operations</i>	<i>Score 83.5, Moderately Effective</i>	<i>2006</i>
	<i>Emergency Watershed Program</i>	<i>Score 58, Adequate</i>	<i>2006</i>
	<i>Resource Conservation & Development</i>	<i>Score 61 Adequate</i>	<i>2006</i>
	<i>Wildlife habitat Incentives Program</i>	<i>Score 68, Adequate</i>	<i>2006</i>
	<i>Environmental Quality Incentive Program</i>	<i>Score 72, Moderately Effective</i>	<i>2007</i>
	<i>Conservation Security Program</i>	<i>Score 35, Results not Demonstrated</i>	<i>2008</i>

Program Evaluation

Evaluations/Analyses	Brief Description	Effect	Date
<p>GAO REPORTS</p>	<p><i>Despite Cost Controls, Improved USDA Management Is Needed to Ensure Proper Payments and Reduce Duplication with Other Programs. A review of conservation programs to determine if participants in previous conservation programs were paid for the same practice in a new program.</i></p>	<p><i>NRCS developed a process to preclude and identify duplicate payments.</i></p>	<p>2006</p>
	<p><i>Stakeholder Views on Participation and Coordination to Benefit Threatened and Endangered Species and Their Habitats. A review of the effectiveness of incentives to encourage participation in programs benefiting endangered species.</i></p>	<p><i>USDA and USFWS to include mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on coordination efforts in the memorandum of understanding.</i></p>	<p>2006</p>
	<p><i>USDA Should Improve Its Management of Key Conservation Programs to Ensure Payments Promote Environmental Goals. A review of the process for allocating funds to the states to optimize environmental benefits</i></p>	<p><i>Agency to link financial assistance formula to program priorities and continually update data.</i></p>	<p>2007</p>
	<p><i>Beginning Farmers: Additional Steps Needed to Demonstrate the Effectiveness of USDA Assistance. A review of the effectiveness of the key steps used by NRCS/USDA to provide assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers including higher conservation payments</i></p>	<p><i>USDA to develop a cross cutting strategic goal and collect data to address the needs of this group.</i></p>	<p>2007</p>

Program Evaluation

Evaluations/Analyses	Brief Description	Effect	Date
<p>OIG REPORTS</p> <p>There were 20 audits completed on various NRCS activities from August 2005 through May of 2010. Some were general and some were very specific in nature. The audit findings were considered in identifying areas the agency needed to continue focusing on for the next 5 year period. Some examples of audits and how they effected the plan are listed.</p>	<p><i>Natural Resources Conservation Service Application Controls Program Contracts System (ProTracts). Review of the internal controls for granting and removing access to ProTracts.</i></p> <p><i>Review of Contract Administration at the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Evaluate NRCS's administration of the acquisition process to determine whether the agency's procurement activity was conducted in accordance with Federal, Departmental, and agency regulations, and determine whether NRCS maintained an adequate system of internal control over the contracting process.</i></p> <p><i>Natural Resources Conservation Service's Financial Statements for Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009. An audit of the financial statements as well as an assessment of NRCS's internal controls over financial reporting and compliance with laws and regulations.</i></p>	<p><i>Illustrated an ongoing need for internal controls to insure data integrity.</i></p> <p><i>Identified the need for financial internal controls and ongoing training in the use of automated tools.</i></p> <p><i>Identified additional need for internal controls and strategies to correct issues found.</i></p>	<p>2006</p> <p>2007</p> <p>2009</p>
<p>Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)</p>	<p><i>A multi-agency USDA-led effort to quantify the environmental effects of conservation practices. Model simulations suggest that adequate treatment for all resource concerns is rarely achieved with single practice solutions. Full treatment of the most vulnerable acres will require a suite of conservation practices.</i></p>	<p><i>Agency is reassessing the need for more Resource Management System (Whole Farm) Planning.</i></p>	<p>2010</p>

Program Evaluation

Evaluations/Analyses	Brief Description	Effect	Date
American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)	<i>Program Delivery assessment for:</i>		
	<i>Environmental Quality Incentives Program</i>	Score 80	2004
	<i>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program</i>	Score 77	2004
	<i>Conservation Security Program</i>	Score 76	2005
	<i>Snow Survey</i>	Score 77	2005
	<i>Conservation Technical Assistance</i>	Score 79	2007
	<i>National Resources Inventory</i>	Score 57	2007
	<i>Plant Materials Centers</i>	Score 83	2007
	<i>Soil Survey</i>	Score 79	2007
	<i>Technical Service Providers</i>	Score 78	2007
	<i>Wetland Reserve Program</i>	Score 69	2007
	<i>Farm Bill Participants – Successful</i>	Score 80	2008
<i>Farm Bill Participants – Unsuccessful</i>	Score 63	2008	
<i>Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program</i>	Score 73	2009	
Program Evaluations Used to Develop the Strategic Plan			
Evaluations/Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Date
Activity-Based Costing Assessment	<i>Develop estimates of the time, by technical discipline, required at all levels of the Agency to produce each of the major products and services of Agency programs.</i>	<i>Data acquisition and development of sampling frames for later updates.</i>	2011
Assessment of the Environmental Benefits of Farm Bill Conservation Programs	<i>Agency effort to develop capacity to explain and report in quantitative terms the annual gain in improvement related to soil quality, water quality, air quality, grazing productivity, energy conservation and production, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration resulting from application of conservation under the Farm Bill programs.</i>	<i>Standard modeling approaches acceptable to OMB Circular A-4.</i>	Ongoing
Program Evaluation of the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	<i>Identify new opportunities for improvements in achieving program purpose and evaluate program initiatives such as, Sage Grouse, Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (MBHI), and etc.</i>	<i>Development of case studies and data collection of data related to program benefits.</i>	2012

Program Evaluation

Evaluations/Analyses	General Scope	Methodology	Date
Program Evaluation of Water Resources Programs	<i>Determine whether water resources programs provide the planned benefits, are streamlined for efficiency, and are effective in meeting program objectives.</i>	<i>Standard cost-benefit analysis procedures.</i>	2013
Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Resources Conservation and Development Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, National Resources Inventory, Soil Survey Program, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting Program, and Plant Materials Program.	<i>Conduct internal program evaluations of all Agency programs to assess how effectively each contributes to achieving the desired outcomes and to estimate benefits achieved, cost effectiveness, and extent to which customer needs and congressional intent are met. In addition, reviews using OMB's PART tool will be conducted in cooperation with OMB.</i>	<i>Standard cost-benefit analysis procedures with more in-depth attention to specific activities in each program as warranted.</i>	2010-2015
Advisory Groups	<i>Water Resources and Climate Change Adaptation workgroup to the interagency climate change adaptation task force. Provides guidance to President with recommendations on climate change and water use effects.</i> <i>Interagency Task Force on Principal and Standards for Water Related Resources. Will change the way we fund water resource programs</i>		2011 2012
American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)	<i>Nutrient Management Program</i>	<i>Standard Methodology</i>	2011

Crosscutting Programs

To accomplish its mission, NRCS works with USDA and other Federal agencies, and with State, Tribal, local, and private partners. This table lists the primary partnerships that will enable NRCS to reach the outcomes set forth in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan.

Cross-cutting Programs	
Federal Agencies	External Organizations
<p><i>Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Forest Service (FS), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)</i></p> <p><i>Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA), Office of the Chief Economist (OCE), Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), Office of Civil Rights, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), Office of Personnel Management</i></p>	<p><i>Agriculture groups: American Meat Institute, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Irrigation Association, Crowell & Morning, LLP, The Fertilizer Institute, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Cotton Council, The Garrison Group, National Milk Producers Federation, American Farm Bureau Federation, USA Rice, National Turkey Federation, National Farmers Union, Strategic Conservation Solutions, US Poultry & Egg Association, Conservation groups: American Rivers, American Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Restore America's Estuaries, Northeast-Midwest Institute, Ducks Unlimited, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Environmental Working Group, Sand County Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, National Fish and Wildlife Federation, Pollinator Partnership, Environmental Defense, National Association of State Conservation Agencies, land-grant and other universities and colleges, National Association of Conservation Districts, research partnerships (with universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc.), Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D), State agencies, State soil and water conservation districts, and Tribal governments</i></p>

Strategic Consultation

NRCS regularly consults with external stakeholders, including NRCS customers, landowners, policy experts, industry and consumer groups regarding effective delivery of agency program. While many of the consultations were not expressly for the development of the NRCS's Strategic Plan, they did impact strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and targets. With the full support of the agency senior leadership, NRCS regularly consults with stakeholders and seeks validation of all goals, objectives, and performance measures from employees and the public.

Strategic Consultations	
Who	Purpose
NRCS Chief hosted two listening sessions with representatives from 18 agricultural and 21 conservation groups.	<i>To hear what they think NRCS is doing well, what it is doing wrong, and what it needs to do as the agency looks to the future.</i>
All NRCS Employee Survey.	<i>The survey was conducted to gather feedback from NRCS staff at all organizational levels in guiding discussions on agency core values, emerging issues that will impact natural resources and the environment, and an evolving customer base and the services it demands.</i>
Intra-agency consultation with the NRCS Executive Leadership Team.	<i>Provided input on the development of the Core Values, identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the next 5 years, identify emerging issues that will impact the agency for the next 5 years and identify areas for focusing to improve the agency and delivery of products and services.</i>
An intra-agency Strategic Planning Core Team was formed with representation from across all regions of the US and all levels of the agency from State Conservationists to Assistant State Conservationist to District Conservationists.	<i>Provided input on the development of the Core Values, identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the next 5 years, identify emerging issues that will impact the agency for the next 5 years and identify areas for focusing to improve the agency and delivery of products and services.</i>
Consultation with technical specialists across all disciplines within the agency and without.	<i>Comprehensive environmental scanning of emerging issues and what impacts they will have on NRCS, our customers and/or the environment and strategic planning. Assessment included both internal and external factors.</i>
Soil and Water Resource Conservation Act (RCA) held 21 national listening sessions.	<i>The public meeting offers stakeholders the opportunity to provide input on the status and trends of natural resources on non-Federal land and assesses their capability to meet present and future demands, evaluate program policies and to give direction to USDA soil and water conservation activities.</i>

External Risk Factors

NRCS and its customers work within an environment of risk. External factors are introduced by forces that are not of the agency’s own making and beyond its control. A group of internal and external experts completed an environmental scan to indentify the following priority external risk factors.

External Risk Factors	
Potential Factor	Potential Impact
Budget	<i>The forecast for budgets in the next five years projects probable decreases in funding levels. Less assistance available will decrease conservation applied.</i>
Economy	<i>The overall economy will impact how much conservation implementation farmers and ranchers will complete. As product revenues increase, costs of inputs increase.</i>
Climate Change	<i>In any given year, climatic factors impact how many conservation practices are implemented, both positively and negatively.</i>
Energy	<i>Energy sources and costs will directly impact conservation implementation. Some practices may decrease while others such as no-till could increase. Changing energy prices may also affect land use and nutrient management decisions.</i>
Increased Demand for Food	<i>Increased production demands will compete for some of the same acres that conservation practices could be implemented on.</i>
Demand and competition for conservation funds	<i>Demand for conservation funds will continue to increase. The most effective and efficient organizations and programs will be funded.</i>
Workforce Demographics	<i>As the workforce ages, agencies will be competing for fewer employees to retain and hire.</i>
Customer and farm worker demographics	<i>The average American farmer and rancher is aging, includes more women/minorities and is working off the farm more. New customers may offset losses to retirements but they tend to impact fewer acres. Immigration reform could impact farm workers and impact farm budgets.</i>
Land Demographics	<i>The number of farms is increasing while the acreage of each farm is decreasing along with average sales. Values of farmland may have decreased in the recession causing fewer farms to be sold.</i>
Regulatory Environment	<i>An increase in regulations will impact the timeliness and success of conservation.</i>



*“Take care of the land and the
land will take care of you.”*

— Hugh Hammond Bennett, First NRCS Chief

PA-2030
August 2011



United States Department of Agriculture
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