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NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NATIONAL PLANNING PROCEDURES HANDBOOK (NPPH)
NOTICE WI-1

This notice transmits an amendment to the NPPH developed to provide conservation planners with clarification on the minimum activities that must be carried when a client requests conservation planning technical assistance related to implementation of USDA programs.

The final Wisconsin policy clarifies the following:

Part 600.2 NRCS Planning Process Subpart B, 600.20 Planning Steps
Provides expanded narrative explanation of the minimum expectations for delivery of conservation planning technical assistance to USDA program applicants.

Part 600.31 Conservation Plan, 8. Conservation Plan Maps
Provides expanded narrative explanation of the process that Wisconsin NRCS shall use to develop conservation plan maps.

Filing Instructions: Please insert these pages in the appropriate section of the NPPH.

Wisconsin supplements and transmittal notices for the NPPH can be found on the Wisconsin NRCS web site at *http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/consplan/npph-1*.

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Acting for
PATRICIA S. LEAVENWORTH
State Conservationist

Attachments

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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National Planning Procedures Handbook
600.2 NRCS Planning Process
Subpart B

600.20 Planning Steps - The following minimum conservation planning activities shall be conducted, documented in the case file, and reviewed with the client prior to finalizing the plan of operations.

600.22 Determine client objectives. The conservation planner should spend the time necessary to determine the short and long range goals of the client. The planner shall document any state or federal programs that the client is currently participating in and determine any program requirements that the conservation plan must address. The client's program application will likely contain a significant amount of information for this analysis.

600.23 Conduct a resource inventory of the land where a conservation plan and/or a USDA program application has been requested. As a minimum, collect or review resource data available in existing conservation plans, soil surveys, aerial photography and wetland inventories. Conduct a detailed on-site "resource assessment" for the land that the client has requested planning assistance. Personal knowledge of the area based on previous site visits may be used to conduct the resource assessment. Assess the requirements of any known programs already in effect on the site during the development of conservation planning alternatives.

A basic assessment of Soil, Water, Animal, Plant, Air, and Human (SWAPA+H) resources must be conducted for the land where a conservation plan and/or a program application has been requested. The areas immediately surrounding the land being planned must also be assessed to identify potential offsite impacts of the conservation practice alternatives developed during the planning process.

All new or revised soil erosion calculations shall utilize RUSLE2. RUSLE2 calculations may be displayed as a printout in the case file or stored in Toolkit as an electronic file. Existing USLE soil loss calculations may continue to be utilized if they accurately represent the current management of the land, are recorded on WI-CPA-15 or equivalent and effectively document the alternative selected by the client.

The results of the resource inventory shall be recorded in the case file or Toolkit using maps, assistance notes, database queries, model or laboratory analysis results, or other appropriate types of documentation.

600.24 Analyze resource data to identify problems and opportunities. Data analysis will be based on the client's goals, RMS Quality Criteria and templates in Section 3 e-FOTG, applicable laws and regulations, applicable USDA program requirements, and other known programs the client is participating in.

600.25 Formulate and evaluate resource alternatives to address the resource concerns identified during the resource inventory and define the actions necessary to meet the client's goals, applicable laws, regulations, requirements of known programs that the client is participating in or has applied for. A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment (WI NRCS 52) and/or Cultural Resources Initial Review Request shall be carried out where conservation alternatives will be offered that are considered an undertaking as defined in e-FOTG Section 2. Resource alternatives offered to the client shall include options to achieve a RMS level of protection for the site being planned.

600.27 Document the clients' planning decisions assuring that applicable laws, regulations and applicable USDA and non-USDA program requirements have been addressed in the conservation planning options that are offered to the client. If the client is unable to address all the resources concerns that were identified in the planning process, document the identified resource concerns that remain unaddressed for future planning activities.

National Planning Procedures Handbook
600.31 Conservation Plan
8. Conservation Plan Maps

When assisting USDA program participants a set of digital conservation plan maps must be developed in the Customer Service Center Toolkit to record resource concerns and document client decisions. The following sources of maps will be used for conservation planning based on availability:

Farm Service Agency Common Land Unit (CLU) – where the CLU (final or draft) is available the tract boundaries and digitally measured field acreages identified on the CLU shall be used for all NRCS conservation planning and cost sharing program activities. If the CLU contains more detailed field boundaries than are necessary for conservation planning purposes the planner may dissolve the internal field boundaries to document a more generalized conservation treatment unit. The treatment unit boundaries should be developed to reflect the client's actual management of the site. The acreage for the modified field boundaries within the treatment unit shall match the total field acres documented for the area by the CLU.

If the NRCS field office staff identify quality control issues with the CLU, the Area Resource Conservationist and Area GIS/Toolkit Specialist should be contacted for assistance. The CLU tracts and field boundaries data layer may be placed over a more current orthophoto to improve the quality of the conservation plan map.

Existing Conservation Plan Maps – where a Farm Service Agency CLU is not available, existing plan maps that have been created for conservation planning purposes by using heads-up digitizing on orthophotographs shall be used for development of NRCS conservation plans and contract support documents.

Ortho Photographs with Field Boundaries Overlaid – if the CLU (draft/final) or existing maps created utilizing digital measurement of orthophotography are not available, new maps shall be created to establish field boundaries and official field acreage. The new maps will be created using heads-up digitizing on orthophotography and must identify as a minimum tract boundaries, conservation treatment unit boundaries, field or treatment unit identification number, digitally measured acreage, and land use.

The District Conservationist, the County Executive Director, and the County Conservationist, where there is an interest, should meet to create a strategy to share digital maps created prior to the CLU being available.

Field Numbering - CLU field numbers should be preserved to the extent possible. Where fields are combined into a treatment unit, the planner shall select lowest number within each treatment unit as the map field number.

When conservation plans are being developed for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the field numbers and field acreage must match the CRP-2 form provided by the Farm Service Agency.

Cropland fields will be numbered utilizing FSA's guidance for CLU development found in 2-CP. In general, fields will be numbered from left to right, top to bottom. Use of three character field numbers to identify non-cropland areas (300 - 349 Woodland, etc.) will continue to be used.

Wisconsin NRCS Field Numbering Protocols

1-299	Cropland
300-349	Woodland
350-399	Grazed Forest (Grazed Woodland)
400-499	Pasture
500-549	Headquarters (Farmstead)
550-599	Other Buildings (Non-Farmstead)
600-649	Stream Corridor/Riparian Corridor
650-699	Lakeshore
700-749	Commercial
750-799	Wildlife
800-849	Urban
850-899	Rural Residential
900-949	Wetlands
950-999	Natural Area