

Options...

As you develop a conservation plan and/or conservation system that is right for your land, you will consider a number of options. Below are some examples of individual practices that could be incorporated into your plan to help you reach the natural resource goals and objectives you have identified within your plan.

Conservation Cover Crops, Critical Area Planting, Crop Residue Management, Crop Rotation, Diversions, Field Borders, Filter Strips, Grassed Waterway, Grazing Management, Nutrient Management, Pest Management, Forest Management, Irrigation Water Management, Buffers, Water Storage, Spring Development, Streambank Protection, Terrace, Riparian Buffers, Wetland Enhancement/ Restoration, Sediment Control, Wildlife Upland Habitat, and more...

When selecting conservation measures you and the planner will carefully consider how each treatment will function with the unique characteristics, land uses, and additional conservation treatments in place on your property.

Voluntary Technical And Financial Assistance

Once you have evaluated all of your conservation options, you may choose to seek technical or financial assistance. NRCS works with a growing conservation partnership offering a variety of technical and financial assistance to help you implement your conservation plan. This partnership includes local, private, state and federal entities.

NRCS Farm Bill programs are voluntary. Talk with your local NRCS Field Staff to learn more about programs and which types of assistance will work best to help reach the goals outlined within your conservation plan.

Learn More...

To learn More about USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), conservation planning, eligibility, and technical and financial assistance, contact your local USDA NRCS Field Office today and schedule an appointment to speak with our staff. You can also visit us on the Web at www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov.

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United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Planning

**Your guide to conserving, enhancing
and protecting natural resources on
your land...and Farm Bill
Conservation Technical and
Financial Assistance.**



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Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

What is Conservation Planning?

It's up to you, as landowners to decide on the best ways to improve the productivity, sustainability and profitability of your operation. For many producers, conservation planning serves as a fundamental starting point for maintaining and improving the natural resources that support productive and profitable agricultural operations. Every farm has its own unique resource problems or concerns.

Whether it's a large scale farming operation or a small acreage hobby farm, conservation planning is an important — **and voluntary** — first step that owners and operators can take to meet their land management goals.

At your request, conservation planners with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and local conservation districts can provide planning assistance to help producers identify options that provide the greatest conservation benefit while meeting production goals.

Benefits of developing a customized conservation plan for your farm:

- Identifies immediate or potential resource problems that could hinder your production.
- Helps you comply with environmental regulations.
- Is required for you to qualify for USDA NRCS conservation programs.
- Adapts to your changing operational goals.
- Establishes a reasonable schedule for you to apply needed conservation practices.
- Can save you time, labor and energy.

What's Included in Your Plan?

- **Your objectives and goals**
- **Aerial photographs**
- **Soils maps and soils descriptions**
- **Resource inventory and analysis data, which may include:**
 - **Forage or crop production potential**
 - **Forage-livestock balance calculations**
 - **Soil erosion calculations or estimates**
 - **Wildlife habitat assessments,**
 - **Surface and groundwater quality assessments**
 - **Agricultural waste management assessment**
 - **And more . . .**
- **Conservation plan alternatives for solving identified resource concerns**
- **Documentation of your decisions**
- **Tools, such as job sheets, to help you successfully implement your decisions**
- **A schedule for applying conservation practices**
- **Plan of operation and maintenance for your conservation practices and systems**

The Roadmap to Farm Bill Conservation Assistance

A conservation plan is required for you to qualify for most USDA NRCS Farm Bill Programs in North Carolina. Your plan will serve as a roadmap to a variety of technical and financial assistance available to you from your local USDA Service Center.

Once you and the conservation planner have evaluated all of your conservation options, you may choose to seek technical or financial assistance. Your plan will help you to identify the types of assistance options available to you that will best address your conservation and operational goals.

A Conservation System

The combination of different treatments that work together to address the overall natural resource needs on a farm is called a conservation system or a resource management system (RMS).

Conservation systems are sets of land treatments that, when properly planned and applied, work in tandem to provide the greatest overall conservation and production benefits. When designing an overall conservation system, land managers must consider all of the resources and activities on the land.

Depending on the operation, your farm may benefit from a simple conservation system or a combination of different systems to meet all of your natural resource needs and operational goals. This will depend on the landscape, resource concerns, type of operation, and landowner objectives.

Each land manager will determine the treatments to use based on these considerations. Because of this, each system is unique, even among similar operations.