Part 600 – National Planning Procedures Handbook

Subpart D – Plan Format and Content

600.30 Introduction

A. The conservation plan is developed jointly by the client and the planner, for the client's and planner's use to record decisions for natural resource protection, conservation, and enhancement. The NRCS copy of the plan is maintained in hardcopy or electronically, as appropriate.

Figure 600-D1: Client and conservationist discuss a conservation plan.

B. Decisions and resource information needed during implementation and maintenance of the plan are recorded throughout the planning process. The plan narrative and supporting documents provide guidance for implementation and may serve as a basis for compliance and program funding through Federal, State, Tribal, Territorial, or local financial support initiatives. Assistance notes are recorded at each step in the planning process to document important points or discussions with the client.

C. The following guidance helps to maintain quality and provide appropriate documentation of a plan. Though this section outlines required items to be included in a plan, the plan content will be tailored to the client's needs.

600.31 Conservation Plan

A. The plan document provided to the client must be a quality document containing meaningful information for the client. The document may be provided to the client electronically or as hardcopy. It must include the following items:

(1) A folder, binder, or other means to assemble the contents of the plan (if hardcopy).
(2) A conservation plan map. This may consist of several map documents to account for the entire planning area.
(3) Soils maps and other resource maps, as needed, with appropriate interpretations, such as soil descriptions or land cover descriptions.
(4) At a minimum, each map will include the following:
  (i) Title block showing the following:
    - Title, "Plan Map"
    - Client's name (individual or business)
    - "Prepared with assistance from USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service" and "ASSISTED BY [planners name]"
    - Name of the applicable conservation district, county, and State
    - Date prepared
  (ii) Scale of the map
  (iii) Information needed to locate the planning area, such as geographic coordinates, public land survey coordinates, etc.
  (iv) North arrow
  (v) Appropriate map symbols and a map symbol legend on the map or as an attachment
(5) The "Plan Map" will specifically include the following items:
  (i) Boundary lines for the PLUs with labels (name, number, or both)
  (ii) Land-use designation and applicable land use modifiers for each PLU
  (iii) Acreage for each PLU
(6) Location of planned and applied conservation practices, using NRCS map symbols (see Title 170, National Map Symbol Handbook, Part 601)
(7) If the conservation plan includes non-private lands, such as Federal or Tribal lands, a land status map must be included to display land ownership categories (Private, State Trust, BLM, Tribal, and Territorial, etc.)
(8) A record of the client's decisions, which includes the following:
  (i) PLU label (name, number, or both)
  (ii) NRCS practice name and code
  (iii) Amount or estimated amount to be applied (update amount when practice design is completed and when financial assistance is requested)
  (iv) Brief description of the practice (practice narrative)
  (v) Date the planned practice is scheduled to be implemented (update when financial assistance is requested)
  (vi) Certified amount of practice applied (after implementation)
  (vii) Date practice was certified (after implementation)
(9) Appropriate worksheets developed with the client. Worksheets include such things as forage inventories, erosion estimates, and cost estimates
(10) As needed, applicable "Conservation Practice Overview" sheets, specifications and implementation requirements (job sheets), and other prepared material
(11) Operation and maintenance agreements and procedures
(12) Practice designs, if completed at this time. Some designs may also be kept in the office file under the client's name when size limits duplication
(13) Conservation district cooperative agreement, where applicable
(14) Available maps, sketches, and designs resulting from the planning process that will be useful to the client in implementing the plan
(15) Information reflecting site-specific practice effects, based on onsite visits

B. Some component plans and resource concerns have specific plan requirements in addition to the items listed above. See subpart G, 600.60, for policy guidance to address these special plan requirements.

C. The NRCS case file contains the following, as applicable:

(1) Client information
(2) Client's objectives
(3) Conservation plan and record of decisions (practice schedule)
(4) Assistance notes
(5) Geospatial layers for PLU, practices, resource inventory, etc.
(6) Maps – conservation plan, soils, etc.
(7) Forms and worksheets used in developing and evaluating alternatives
(8) Conservation district information related to the plan
(9) Inventory and analysis information
(10) Practice design documentation and job sheets
(11) Engineering notes
(12) Operation and maintenance agreements and plans
(13) Documentation of applied practices
(14) Photographs, audio and video files
(15) Environmental documentation – CPA-52, "Environmental Evaluation Worksheet," and any other documents needed to meet the requirements of NEPA or other applicable environmental requirements, such as the Endangered Species Act.
(16) Financial contract documents
(17) Product documents resulting from the planning process
(18) Determinations (highly erodible land, wetland, etc.)
(19) Receipt for services
(20) Other appropriate supporting documents

600.32 Documentation of the Electronic Case File (RESERVED)