

## Part 502 – Terms and Abbreviations Common to All Programs

### Subpart A – Common Terms

#### 502.0 Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>abandonment</b>	The cessation for five consecutive years of management or maintenance operations related to the use of commenced conversion, farmed wetland, or farmed wetland pasture and hayland. Land considered to be abandoned must meet wetland criteria.
<b>acquisition of technical knowledge costs</b>	A payment schedule cost category used to document estimated incurred costs associated with training obtained by the participant about practice implementation. Includes costs for these services from other than technical assistance provided by NRCS.
<b>administrative record</b>	All the materials maintained by the Secretary related to an agency determination or decision. This case record includes both the agency record and the hearing record and all other applicable materials.
<b>administrative and permit costs</b>	Costs typically associated with time and labor needed to complete forms, attend meetings, and cover office-related expenses, legal costs, overhead, or other costs indirectly related to practice implementation. May also include time and costs associated with obtaining permits, environmental certifications, and legal authorization to implement practices. These costs are not authorized for payment through NRCS program opportunities.
<b>Administrator</b>	A person or designee legally vested with the right of administration of an estate or who administers business, school, or governmental affairs.
<b>advance payment</b>	A payment that may be made available in advance of the installation of the conservation practice. An advance payment may only be made if authorized by program authority.
<b>adverse determination or decision</b>	A programmatic or technical determination or decision made by an officer, employee, or committee of an agency that is adverse to an applicant or participant.
<b>affiliated persons</b>	Family members, including spouses and minor children, or other individuals who have an ownership, financial, or beneficiary interest in any estate, partnership, or joint venture an applicant or participant as defined by 7 CFR 12.8.
<b>agricultural commodity</b>	Unless otherwise defined by program statute or regulation, any crop planted and produced by annual tilling of the soil, including tilling by one-trip planters, or sugarcane.
<b>agricultural energy management plan (AgEMP)</b>	A conservation activity plan developed by a certified technical service provider to reduce on-farm energy usage. The AgEMP identifies and documents energy utilization by specific equipment, farming practices, and components and makes recommendations for changes that conserve energy. Requirements for development of conservation activity plans are found in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).
<b>agricultural production</b>	The use of cultivated plants or animals to produce products for sustaining or enhancing human life.
<b>agricultural products</b>	Any commodity or product, whether raw or processed, derived from plants or livestock and marketed in the United States for human or livestock consumption.
<b>animal unit</b>	One thousand pounds of live weight of any given livestock species or any combination of livestock species.

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Term	Definition
<b>animal feeding operation (AFO)</b>	<p>An agricultural operation where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. AFOs generally congregate animals, feed, manure, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or otherwise seeking feed in pastures, fields, or on rangeland. An AFO is a lot or facility (other than an aquatic animal production facility) where both of the following conditions are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animals have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12-month period.</li> <li>• Crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility.</li> </ul>
<b>animal waste management facility (EQIP)</b>	<p>A structural conservation practice implemented on an animal feeding operation (AFO) consistent with the requirements of a comprehensive nutrient management plan and the Field Office Technical Guide, which is used for storing, treating, or handling (including transfer) animal waste or byproducts, such as animal carcasses.</p>
<b>annual rental payment</b>	<p>Unless the context indicates otherwise, the annual payment specified in a rental contract which, subject to the availability of funds, is made to a participant to compensate such participant for placing eligible land in a USDA conservation program. Programs that offer an annual rental payment include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and the Water Bank Program (WBP).</p>
<b>annual cost</b>	<p>An annual or recurring expense of practice implementation incurred during the lifespan of the practice. Annual costs are typically expenses associated with operation and maintenance.</p>
<b>appeal</b>	<p>A written request by an applicant or participant asking for a review when an agency has made an adverse decision.</p>
<b>applicant</b>	<p>A person, legal entity, Indian tribe, Tribal corporation, or joint operation who has requested in writing to participate in a conservation program.</p>
<b>approving official</b>	<p>The NRCS employee authorized to sign conservation program contracts, contract modifications, and payment requests.</p>
<b>at-risk species</b>	<p>Any plant or animal species listed as threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act; a species listed as threatened or endangered under State law or Tribal law on Tribal land; State or Tribal land species of conservation concern; or other plant or animal species or community, as determined by the State Conservationist, with advice from the State Technical Committee or Tribal conservation advisory council, that has undergone, or is likely to undergo, population decline and may become imperiled without direct intervention.</p>
<b>average adjusted gross income</b>	<p>The average of the adjusted gross income as defined under 7 CFR part 1400 or other applicable regulation.</p>
<b>average cost</b>	<p>The calculated cost, determined by averaging recent actual costs and current cost estimates, considered necessary for a participant to carry out a conservation practice or a designated component of a conservation practice. Actual cost includes labor, supplies, and other direct costs required for physical installation of a practice.</p>

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<b>beginning farmer or rancher</b>	<p>A person, Indian Tribe, Tribal corporation, or legal entity who—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Has not operated a farm, ranch, or NIPF, or who has operated a farm, ranch, or NIPF for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.</li> <li>(2) In the case of a contract with an individual (individually, or with the immediate family), material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.</li> <li>(3) In the case of a contract with an entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.</li> </ol>
<b>Central Contractor Registration (CCR)</b>	CCR is a government-wide registry for vendors doing business with the Federal government.
<b>Chief</b>	The NRCS Chief is responsible for administering a coordinated national program of natural resource conservation; planning, directing, and coordinating all program, technical, and administrative activities of NRCS; developing policies and procedures; correlating NRCS conservation programs with other agencies; accepting departmental leadership for programs for other activities assigned by the Secretary of Agriculture; and serving as Equal Employment Opportunity Officer for NRCS.
<b>community water systems</b>	A public water system that supplies water to the same population year-round with residences including houses, apartments, and condominiums in cities, towns and mobile home parks.
<b>compensatory treatment</b>	The installation of one or more conservation practices to replace a practice that has been destroyed or removed.
<b>component</b>	A specific part, input, or activity of a cost category that is typically needed to implement a conservation practice according to requirements of a design standard.
<b>comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP)</b>	A conservation plan that is specifically for an animal feeding operation (AFO). A CNMP identifies conservation practices which, when implemented as part of a conservation system, will manage the manure, wastewater, or organic by-products associated with a waste management facility. A CNMP incorporates practices to use animal manure and organic by-products as a beneficial resource while protecting all-natural resources including water and air quality associated with an AFO. A CNMP is developed to assist an AFO owner-operator in meeting all applicable local, Tribal, State, and Federal water quality goals or regulations.
<b>concurrence</b>	Agreement of all parties on the item in question.
<b>confined livestock operation</b>	See definition for AFO.
<b>conservation activity</b>	Activity performed that contributes to the protection, preservation, management, or restoration of natural resources on agricultural and forest lands.
<b>conservation activity plan (CAP)</b>	The conservation practice associated with the development of an approved conservation activity plan by certified technical service providers for which payments are made directly to an eligible participant.
<b>conservation benefit</b>	Conservation benefit means the improved condition of a natural resource resulting from the implementation of a conservation practice or activity.
<b>conservation impacts</b>	The differences between anticipated effects of treatment in comparison to existing or benchmark conditions. Differences may be expressed by narrative, quantitative, visual, or other means. Impacts are used as a basis for making informed conservation decisions.
<b>conservation priority area</b>	An area designated by USDA with significant natural resource concerns.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>conservation program contract (CPC)</b>	A binding agreement between NRCS and one or more participants that identifies and schedules conservation treatment and provides payments to participants.
<b>contract</b>	A legal document that specifies the rights and obligations of any participant enrolled in the program. A contract is a binding agreement for the transfer of financial assistance from USDA to the participant.
<b>contract item number (CIN)</b>	A number or number and letter used to identify required conservation practices and activities and identifiable components.
<b>contract period</b>	The term in which the contract is effective and legally binding.
<b>converted wetland</b>	Converted wetland (CW or CW+year) means a wetland that has been drained, dredged, filled, leveled, or otherwise manipulated (including the removal of woody vegetation or any activity that results in impairing or reducing the flow, circulation, or reach of water) for the purpose of, or to have the effect of, making possible the production of an agricultural commodity if such production would not have been possible but for such action, and, before such action, such land was wetland, farmed wetland, or farmed wetland-pasture and was neither highly erodible land nor highly erodible cropland.
<b>cost</b>	The estimated amount incurred, paid, or engaged to be paid by a participant for equipment use, materials, and services needed to implement a practice, component, or activity.
<b>cost category</b>	A consolidated group of components used in the payment schedule to document estimated incurred costs associated with implementation of a practice. Cost categories reflect the authorized costs associated with a program, including materials, equipment, installation, labor, mobilization, acquisition of technical knowledge (training), and foregone income. Not all cost categories are appropriate for all programs or conservation practices.
<b>cost data</b>	A dataset containing cost estimates and supporting documentation for practices and activities. Cost data are developed to technically support all conservation activities, including (but not exclusively for) financial assistance programs.
<b>cost-effectiveness</b>	The least costly option for achieving a given set of conservation objectives to address an identified natural resource concern.
<b>cost estimate</b>	An estimate of the cost associated with practice implementation.
<b>cost list</b>	A summary of practice payment rates for a select list of practices that is formatted for use in agency-approved contracting and planning software.
<b>cost-share payment</b>	The payments made to a participant, under the particular program, specifically mentioned. Calculated based upon determination of actual cost multiplied by the authorized cost-share rate. This method of payment is no longer supported for programs administered through ProTracts.
<b>cost-share rate</b>	The percentage of the cost paid by the Federal government for completing the installation of a practice.
<b>county executive director</b>	The FSA employee responsible for directing and managing program and administrative operations in one or more FSA county offices.
<b>Data Universal Number System (DUNS)</b>	A DUNS number is a unique nine-character identification number provided by the commercial company Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) to a single business entity.
<b>debarment</b>	An action taken by a debarment official under 2 CFR Part 180, Subpart H, to exclude a person from participating in covered transactions and transactions covered under the Federal Acquisition Regulation (48 CFR Chapter 1). A person so excluded is debarred.
<b>debarment official</b>	An agency official who is authorized to impose debarment. A debarment official is either the agency head or an official designated by the agency head.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>decision</b>	A conclusion reached by an official of NRCS or CCC representative based on applicable regulations and program instructions. May relate to eligibility for program benefits, including a technical determination used as a basis for the decision, compatible use authorizations, and other actions.
<b>Deputy Administrator</b>	The Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, FSA, or designee.
<b>designated conservationist</b>	An NRCS employee whom the State Conservationist has designated as responsible for administration of the program in a specific geographic area.
<b>digital signature</b>	See “electronic signature.”
<b>easement</b>	An interest in land defined and delineated in a deed whereby the landowner conveys rights, title, and/or interests in a property to the grantee, but the landowner retains fee-title ownership.
<b>easement area</b>	The portion of a parcel that is encumbered by an easement.
<b>easement payment</b>	The consideration paid to a participant or their assignee for an easement conveyed to a grantee.
<b>electronic signature (e-signature)</b>	Legally permitted digital versions of signatures that carry the full validity of “wet” signatures. E-SIGN permits the use and establishes the legal validity of electronic contracts, electronic signatures, and records maintained in electronic rather than paper form. It governs transactions relating to the conduct of business, consumer, or commercial affairs between two or more persons.
<b>eligible person</b>	A natural person who meets program requirements for participation. Does not include an eligible legal entity.
<b>enhancement</b>	Enhancements are conservation activities used to treat resource concerns and improve conservation performance. Enhancements address additional considerations or criteria that exceed the minimum requirements of the associated base conservation practice. NRCS identifies the enhancement criteria and implementation requirements in the enhancement guide sheet.
<b>enrolled land</b>	The land area identified and included in the program contract at the time funds have been obligated.
<b>entity</b>	See “legal entity.”
<b>environmental assessment (EA)</b>	A concise public document that briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis to determine whether to prepare a more comprehensive environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact.
<b>environmental evaluation (EE)</b>	A concurrent part of the planning process in which the potential long-term and short-term impacts of an action on people, their physical or social surroundings, and nature are evaluated, and alternative actions explored. Documented on Form NRCS-CPA-52.
<b>environmental impact statement (EIS)</b>	A document detailing the environmental impact of a proposed law, a construction project, or other major actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment. EISs are required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) and various State environmental laws.
<b>equitable relief</b>	Relief that is authorized by 7 CFR Part 635 and other regulations of the administering agency. The granting of administrative relief is at the discretion of the NRCS.
<b>erodibility index</b>	The factor, as calculated by NRCS, used to determine the inherent erodibility of a soil by dividing the potential average annual rate of erosion without management for each soil by the predetermined T value for the soil.
<b>estimated income foregone</b>	An estimate of the net income loss associated with the adoption of a conservation practice. Along with other estimated incurred costs, foregone income is one of the costs associated with practice implementation as recorded in a payment schedule.
<b>Excluded Parties List System (EPLS)</b>	The list maintained and disseminated by the General Services Administration (GSA) containing the names and other information about persons who are prohibited from participating in covered transactions, including whether the person has been suspended, debarred, or proposed for debarment.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>ex parte communications</b>	An oral or written communication by a party to any appeals proceeding with any officer or employee of the National Appeals Division (NAD) where a reasonable prior notification to all parties was not given. This definition does not include requests for status reports or inquiries on NAD procedure in reference to any matter or proceeding connected with the appeal involved in the communication.
<b>facilitating grazing practices</b>	Practices that control or influence the movement and handling of grazing animals that are necessary to apply vegetative management practices.
<b>farm number</b>	An identifier assigned by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to a farm.
<b>Farm Service Agency county committee (COC)</b>	A committee elected by the agricultural producers in the county or area, in accordance with section 8(b) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, as amended.
<b>Farm Service Agency State committee</b>	A committee in a State or the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands) appointed by the Secretary in accordance with section 8(b) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, as amended.
<b>federally owned land</b>	Land owned by the Federal government or any Department, instrumentality, bureau, or agency thereof, or any corporation whose stock is wholly owned by the Federal government.
<b>field</b>	A part of a farm that is separated from the balance of the farm by permanent boundaries such as fences, roads, permanent waterways, woodlands, other similar features, or crop lines (in cases where farming practices make it possible that such crop lines are not subject to change), or other similar features.
<b>financial assistance (FA)</b>	Funds paid to an eligible program participant under an agreement entered into with NRCS.
<b>flat rate (FR)</b>	A fixed dollar amount paid for carrying out certain conservation practices on a per-unit basis. Use of this method of payment is generally applied to incentive practices/activities and recurring payments.
<b>forest management plan (FMP)</b>	A site-specific plan that describes management practices that conserve, protect, and enhance the viability of the forest land. Forest management plans may include a forest stewardship plan, as specified in section 5 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. §2103a), or other plan approved by the State forester.
<b>grazing value</b>	The value assigned to the grassland cover when used for forage production. For rental agreements, this value is determined by USDA; for easements, this value is determined through appraisal or market analysis.
<b>GRP rental agreement</b>	An agreement where the participant will be paid annual rental payments for the length of the agreement to maintain and/or restore grassland or rangeland functions and values under GRP.
<b>habitat development</b>	The application of conservation practices to establish, improve, protect, enhance, or restore the present conditions of the land for the specific purpose of improving conditions for fish and wildlife.
<b>hazard analysis</b>	Analysis on areas selected for treatment that rates the lands for insect and disease hazards. Stands in “high-risk” categories require special treatments to reduce the hazard and prevent future spread.
<b>hearing</b>	A proceeding before the NRCS, or other USDA official, to afford a landowner or program participant the opportunity to present testimony, documentary evidence, or both in order to show why an adverse technical determination or decision was not proper.
<b>Administrative Judge</b>	An individual who hears and determines appeals of adverse technical determinations or adverse technical decisions.

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<b>hemp</b>	The term “hemp” means the plant species <i>Cannabis sativa</i> L. and any part of that plant, including the seeds thereof and all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 THC of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis. Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, is the primary intoxicating component of cannabis. Cannabis with a delta-9THC level exceeding 0.3 percent is considered marijuana, which remains classified as a Schedule I controlled substance regulated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) under the CSA.
<b>hydric soil</b>	Soil that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in its upper part (Field Indicators of Hydric Soils in the United States, NTCHS, 1994).
<b>hydrophytic vegetation</b>	Plants growing in water or in a substrate that is at least periodically deficient in oxygen during the growing season as a result of saturation or inundation by water.
<b>identifiable component</b>	All of an eligible conservation practice, or a part thereof, that when carried out can be clearly identified as a segment in the sequence of carrying out the conservation practice.
<b>improper payment</b>	Definition from Improper Payments Information Act of 2002, as amended by the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010: “The term ‘improper payment’— (A) means any payment that should not have been made or that was made in an incorrect amount (including overpayments and underpayments) under statutory, contractual, administrative, or other legally applicable requirements; and (B) includes any payment to an ineligible recipient, any payment for an ineligible good or service, any duplicate payment, any payment for a good or service not received (except for such payments where authorized by law), and any payment that does not account for credit for applicable discounts.”
<b>incentive payment</b>	The monetary or financial assistance to the participant in an amount and at a rate determined appropriate to encourage the participant to perform a land management practice that would not otherwise be initiated without program assistance.
<b>incentive practice</b>	A practice or set of practices approved by the Secretary that, when implemented and maintained on eligible land, addresses one or more priority resource concerns.
<b>Indian trust lands</b>	Real property in which— (1) The United States holds title as trustee for the Indian or tribal beneficiary. (2) The Indian or tribal beneficiary holds title and the United States maintains a trust relationship.
<b>informal appeals process</b>	The process required by agencies to establish a reconsideration of technical determinations or program decisions prior to an appeal to the National Appeals Division (NAD).
<b>inundation</b>	The ground is covered by water due to ponded, flowing, or flooded water.
<b>integrated pest management (IPM)</b>	A sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical, and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health, and environmental risks. See conservation practice standard 595.
<b>joint agreement</b>	A business arrangement where two or more participants cooperate to carry out conservation practices that can best be accomplished by combining resources. Such agreements must be formally documented and signed by all applicable parties.
<b>joint operation</b>	As defined in 7 CFR Section 1400.3, a joint operation is a general partnership, joint venture, or other similar business organization in which members are jointly and severally liable for the obligations of the organization.
<b>land-based conservation practice</b>	A land-based conservation practice is implemented on eligible land to address a resource concern.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>labor costs</b>	A payment schedule cost category used to document estimated incurred costs associated with expense of labor (own or hired) typically needed to implement a conservation practice.
<b>land cover/use</b>	<p>A term that includes categories of land cover and categories of land use. Land cover is the vegetation or other kind of material that covers the land surface. Land use is the purpose of human activity on the land; it is usually, but not always, related to land cover. The National Resources Inventory uses the term “land cover/use” to identify categories that account for all the surface area of the United States.</p> <p>A term used by NRCS to identify the intent of the client with regard to the purpose to which a land unit is to be put. The two designations of land use are the official NRCS designation and the client land use designation agreed to by the client and planner.</p>
<b>land management and management practices</b>	Management practices and activities are those associated primarily with techniques and methods used to support practice implementation. Management conservation practices and activities have a maximum lifespan of one year.
<b>landlord</b>	A person or legal entity who rents or leases acreage to another person or legal entity.
<b>land management practice</b>	Conservation practices that primarily require site-specific management techniques and methods to conserve, protect from degradation, or improve soil, water, or related natural resources in the most cost-effective manner. Land management practices include, but are not limited to, nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, stripcropping, contour farming, grazing management, and wildlife habitat management. Land management practices have a lifespan of one year.
<b>lands substantially altered by flooding</b>	Agricultural lands where flooding has created wetland hydrology conditions which, with a high degree of certainty, will develop and retain wetland soil, hydrology, and vegetation characteristics over time.
<b>land user</b>	Any eligible producer, operator, lessor, group, or nonpublic legal entity that individually or collectively has the authority to make and implement conservation planning decisions for the land involved. See also “owner.”
<b>legal entity</b>	<p>An entity, as defined in 7 CFR Part 1400, created under Federal or State law that meets either of the following criteria—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Owns land or an agricultural commodity, product, or livestock.</li> <li>(2) Produces an agricultural commodity, product, or livestock.</li> </ol>
<b>lifespan</b>	The period of time specified during which the conservation practice or activity is to be maintained and used for its intended purpose. Practice lifespans are documented by NRCS in the Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) database.
<b>limited-resource farmer or rancher</b>	<p>A limited-resource farmer or rancher is either of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) A person who meets both of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 fiscal years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service).</li> <li>• Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years (to be determined annually using U.S. Department of Commerce Data).</li> </ul> </li> <li>(2) A legal entity or joint operation if all individual members independently qualify under paragraph (1) above.</li> </ol>
<b>liquidated damages</b>	A sum of money stipulated in a program contract that the participant agrees to pay NRCS if the participant fails to adequately complete the terms of the contract. The sum represents an estimate of the technical assistance expenses incurred to service the contract and reflects the difficulties of proof of loss and the inconvenience or non-feasibility of otherwise obtaining an adequate remedy.
<b>livestock</b>	All domesticated animals produced on farms and ranches, as determined by the NRCS Chief.

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Term	Definition
<b>livestock production</b>	Farm and ranch operations involving the production, growing, raising, breeding, and reproduction of domesticated livestock or livestock products.
<b>livestock-related natural resource concern</b>	Any environmental condition, either onsite or offsite, that is directly related to any livestock activity or to livestock manure or waste.
<b>local</b>	A county, a portion of a county, a watershed, a multicounty region, or whatever geographic areas are best suited to address the resource conservation needs identified.
<b>maintenance</b>	Work performed by the participant to keep the applied conservation practice functioning for the intended purpose during its lifespan. Maintenance includes work performed to manage, prevent deterioration, repair damage, or restore the practice or eligible activities to their original condition if one or more components fail.
<b>materials cost</b>	A payment schedule cost category used to document estimated incurred costs associated with expense of materials typically needed to implement a conservation practice. Materials are inputs used to make, develop, or implement a practice such as sand, gravel, grass seed, soil amendments, plants, pipes, concrete, and similar products.
<b>measure</b>	One or more specific actions that is not a conservation practice, but has the effect of alleviating problems or improving the treatment of the resources.
<b>mediation</b>	A process in which a neutral third party, the mediator, meets with the disputing parties, facilitates discussions, and works with the parties to resolve their disputes, reduce areas of disagreement, and improve communications and relationships. A mediator has no authority to render a decision or determination.
<b>migratory bird</b>	Bird species whose life cycle includes long-distance seasonal flights for wintering, summering, or breeding purposes (e.g., migratory waterfowl, neotropical migrant songbirds, migratory shorebirds, and migratory hawks and eagles).
<b>minimal effect</b>	The determination that the conversion of a wetland, in connection with all other similar actions in the area, would have minimal effect on the hydrological and biological functions of the wetland or wetlands in the area.
<b>mitigation</b>	The compensation for functions and values that are lost on a converted wetland through restoration, enhancement, or creation.
<b>mobilization cost</b>	A payment schedule cost category used to document estimated incurred costs associated with the typical expense of moving large equipment or materials to and from remote sites where a practice is to be implemented.
<b>National Appeals Division (NAD)</b>	The division of USDA that was created to hear administrative appeals of adverse decisions made by officials of USDA, specifically the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, Rural Housing Service, Rural Utilities Service, and Rural Development.
<b>national conservation priority area</b>	A watershed, multistate area, or region of specific environmental sensitivity designated by the Chief of NRCS or FSA Administrator.
<b>National Organic Program (NOP)</b>	The national program, administered by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, that regulates the standards for any farming, wild crop harvesting, or handling operation that wants to sell an agricultural product labeled as “organically produced.” The program was established under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. §§ 6501 et seq.).
<b>nationally significant resource concerns</b>	The significant resource concerns identified by NRCS in conservation program announcements.
<b>national payment rate (CSP)</b>	Rate based, to the maximum extent practicable, on costs incurred by the participant, income forgone by the participant, and expected environmental benefits.
<b>native vegetation</b>	A species that is a part of the original flora of the area in question.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>natural area</b>	The land use designation for land and water used primarily for the preservation, protection, and observation of existing resources. Some of these areas may be officially designated by legislation or other authorities.
<b>Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)</b>	An agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, formerly called the Soil Conservation Service, that helps farmers and foresters better manage natural resources and improve their operations.
<b>operating unit</b>	Any parcels of land, whether contiguous or noncontiguous, constituting a single management unit for agricultural purposes. An operating unit is designated as located in the county in which the principal dwelling is situated, or, if there is no dwelling thereon, it is regarded to be in the county in which the major portion of the land is located.
<b>operator</b>	A person who is in general control of the farming operation on the farm. Also, an individual, entity, or joint operation that is determined to be in general control of the farming operations on the farm during the current year.
<b>organic system plan (OSP)</b>	A management plan for organic production or for an organic handling operation that has been agreed upon by the producer or handler and the certifying agent. The organic system plan includes all written plans that govern all aspects of agricultural production or handling established under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. Section 6501 et seq.).
<b>owner</b>	A person who has sufficient legal ownership of the land, including a person who is buying the acreage under a purchase agreement; each spouse in a community property State; each spouse when spouses own property jointly; and a person who owns life-estate property.
<b>participant</b>	A person, legal entity, Indian Tribe, native corporation, or eligible entity that has been accepted into the program and who is receiving payment or is responsible for implementing the terms and conditions of a USDA program contract or easement agreement to purchase.
<b>partner agreement</b>	An agreement entered into by the Chief or State Conservationist with other entities in order to leverage available resources to achieve a shared conservation goal.
<b>payment for performance (CSP)</b>	Annual land use payments for operational-level environmental benefits produced.
<b>payment</b>	A financial assistance payment through a USDA program provided to an eligible participant.
<b>payment rate</b>	The sum of all eligible estimated incurred costs and income foregone per typical unit of practice implemented multiplied by the program payment percentage.
<b>payment schedule</b>	A listing of all eligible practice and/or activity payment rates for a defined geographical area. Effective October 1, 2007, NRCS uses payment schedules for all conservation program contracts administered through ProTracts.
<b>payment schedule cost category</b>	Categories defined by NRCS used to document estimated incurred costs: materials, equipment, labor, mobilization, acquisition of technical knowledge (training), and foregone income.
<b>payment schedule economic region</b>	The geographic location of an area to which a payment schedule applies. Typically, the minimum geographic area associated with a payment schedule scenario is a State, and the maximum area is the nation.
<b>payment unit</b>	See “scenario unit.”
<b>perennial crops (from FSA AD-1026) HELC/WC</b>	Crops planted to reduce inputs necessary to produce food and fiber, but are not limited to, ornamentals, tree fruits, tree nuts, grapes, olives, native pasture, and perennial forage. These crops eliminating replanting after harvest, can reduce topsoil losses due to erosion, increase biological carbon sequestration within the soil, and greatly reduce waterway pollution through agricultural runoff.
<b>perennial stream</b>	A stream or river that usually has water flow during normal weather conditions and is shown as a solid blue line on the U.S. Geological Survey topographic quadrangle map.
<b>permanent easement</b>	An easement that lasts in perpetuity.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>permanent vegetative cover</b>	Perennial stands of approved combinations of certain grasses, legumes, forbs, and shrubs with a lifespan of 10 or more years, or trees.
<b>permanently submerged lands</b>	Soil lying beneath water or on the oceanside of the tideland it cannot be owned by private entities, they are owned by the state.
<b>person</b>	As defined in 7 CFR Part 1400, an individual, natural person, which does not include a legal entity.
<b>pest</b>	As defined in Title 190, General Manual, Part 414, a pest is a weed, insect, disease, animal, or other organism (including invasive and noninvasive species) that directly or indirectly causes damage or annoyance by destroying food and fiber products, causing structural damage, or creating a poor environment for other organisms.
<b>planner</b>	A person, qualified by training and experience, who effectively assists the participant in completing the planning process.
<b>plan of operations</b>	The document that identifies the location and timing of conservation practices that a program participant agrees to implement on eligible land enrolled in the program in order to address the identified natural resource concerns, optimize environmental benefit, and address program purposes.
<b>practice code</b>	The identifying number associated with a conservation practice, enhancement, enhancement bundle, or activity as assigned in the NRCS Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) database.
<b>practice average annual cost</b>	The annual amortized cost of implementing a conservation practice plus one year of estimated operation and maintenance costs. Practice average annual costs are recorded each fiscal year in the NRCS Practice Average Annual Costs (PAAC) database.
<b>practice implementation</b>	The action taken by a producer or contractor to install or carry out a planned conservation practice to address a natural resource concern, meet the technical requirements of the design standard, and achieve an environmental benefit for the intended practice lifespan.
<b>practice lifespan</b>	The time period in which the conservation practices are to be used and maintained for their intended purposes as defined by NRCS technical references.
<b>practice payment scenario</b>	Defines the most commonly used components (materials and quantities) to implement a practice or activity in a typical setting for a geographic area. The typical scenario forms the basis for cost data development. More than one scenario may be defined for a practice or activity.
<b>practice payment workbook</b>	A document that provides all the necessary details and data needed to establish a practice payment rate based on typical scenarios for a single conservation practice.
<b>practice reporting unit</b>	The unit of measure used for reporting progress or extent of practice implementation as defined in the NRCS Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) database. May be different from what is used for a payment schedule scenario unit.
<b>preliminary technical determination</b>	The initial written technical determination provided to a landowner or program participant, which will become final 30 days after the date of the letter unless the person takes action to stay the preliminary technical determination from becoming final by requesting a field visit or mediation.
<b>priority area</b>	A watershed, subwatershed, area, or region that can be geographically described and has specific environmental sensitivities or significant soil, water, or related natural resource concerns.
<b>priority resource concern</b>	A natural resource concern or problem, as determined by the Secretary, that— (A) is identified at the national, State, or local level as a priority for a particular area of a State; and (B) represents a significant concern in a State or region.
<b>program payment percentage</b>	The percentage of eligible costs the Chief or designee establishes in a payment schedule for reimbursement to a program participant to implement a conservation practice. Maximum payment percentages are payment limitations established in statute.
<b>ranking period</b>	Ranking period is synonymous with batching period or signup. The intent is to provide a deadline by which applications must be received in order to be considered for funding in that funding cycle.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>recurring payment</b>	A payment for repeated performance and/or maintenance of conservation practices and/or activities under a conservation program contract (may include payment for recurring activities or practices).
<b>recurring practices</b>	Practices repeated on the same field over the life of a contract to achieve specific resource objectives or benefits.
<b>Regional Conservationist</b>	The NRCS employee authorized to direct and supervise NRCS activities in an NRCS administrative region.
<b>required conservation treatment</b>	The combination of conservation practices that, when implemented, will provide the treatment required to address identified problems to the degree needed to meet identified program objectives, project plan requirements, and minimum requirements established in the practice standard and FOTG.
<b>resource-conserving crop</b>	<p>A resource-conserving crop is a crop that is one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A perennial grass;</li> <li>· A legume grown for use as a cover crop, forage, seed for planting, or green manure;</li> <li>· A legume-grass or diverse grass-forb mixture comprised of species selected for climate, rainfall, soil, and other region- specific conditions; or</li> <li>- A small grain grown in combination with a grass, legume, other forbs, or grass-forb mixture whether interseeded, relay-planted into the resource-demanding crop, or planted in rotation.</li> </ul>
<b>reviewing authority</b>	The NRCS official with responsibility to hear the appellant’s appeal.
<b>riparian areas</b>	Land that occurs along streams, channels, rivers, and other water bodies. They are normally distinctly different from the surrounding land because of unique soil and vegetation characteristics, may be identified by distinct vegetative communities that are reflective of soil conditions normally wetter than adjacent soils, and generally provide a corridor for the movement of wildlife.
<b>scenario unit</b>	The unit of measure used in a payment schedule to establish a payment rate for program payment (e.g., feet, acres, gallons, etc.). For purpose of program payment, the scenario unit may be different from a practice reporting unit.
<b>schedule of operations</b>	<p>1) Use the 1155 official title when referring to the schedule of operations.</p> <p>2) The portion of the plan that contains the practices, activities, extent, and timelines needed to address identified natural resource concerns.</p>
<b>Secretary</b>	The Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
<b>shrublands</b>	Lands where the dominant plant species is shrubs, which are plants that are persistent, have woody stems, a relatively low growth habit, and typically produce several basal shoots instead of a single bole.
<b>signup notice</b>	The public notification document that NRCS provides to describe the particular requirements for a specific conservation program signup.
<b>socially disadvantaged</b>	A producer who is a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudices without regard to members’ individual qualities. These groups consist of American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics. A socially disadvantaged applicant is an individual or entity that is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For an entity, at least 50-percent ownership in the legal entity must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals. Note: Gender is not a covered group under the 1990 Farm Bill definition.
<b>sodbusted</b>	Land that was converted from native vegetation, such as rangeland or woodland, to crop production after December 23, 1985.
<b>soil loss tolerance (T)</b>	The maximum average annual erosion rate specified in the FOTG that will not adversely impact the long-term productivity of the soil.

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Term	Definition
<b>soil map unit (or “map unit”)</b>	An area of the landscape shown on a soil map with a common definition and name in terms of soil types or other qualities.
<b>source water</b>	Surface water that collects on the ground or in a stream, river, lake, reservoir, or ocean it replenished through precipitation, and lost through evaporation and seepage into ground water supplies.
<b>State Conservationist</b>	The NRCS employee authorized to direct and supervise NRCS activities in a State; includes the Directors of the Caribbean Area and the Pacific Islands Area.
<b>State executive director</b>	The Farm Services Agency (FSA) employee authorized to direct and supervise FSA activities in a State, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), or the Pacific Islands.
<b>State forester</b>	Director of a State forestry agency.
<b>State Technical Committee</b>	A committee in each State established by the Secretary pursuant to 16 U.S.C. §§3861-3862 and 7 CFR Part 610, Subpart C that provides information and recommendations relating to the implementation and technical aspects of natural resource conservation activities and programs.
<b>structural and vegetative conservation practices and activities</b>	Structural and vegetative conservation practices and activities are those that primarily involve the establishment, improvement, construction, or installation of site-specific measures to conserve, protect from degradation, or improve natural resources in a cost-effective manner. Structural and vegetative practices and activities are those that have a lifespan of two or more years.
<b>structural practice</b>	A practice that involves a constructed facility, land shaping, or permanent vegetative cover designed to preserve soil; reduce runoff of nutrients, sediment, and pesticides; enhance wildlife habitat; or for other purposes. Examples include animal waste facilities, terraces, grassed waterways, contour grass strips, filter strips, tail water pits, permanent wildlife habitat, and constructed wetlands.
<b>suspending official</b>	An agency official who is authorized to impose suspension. The suspending official is either the agency head or an official designated by the agency head.
<b>suspension</b>	An action taken by a suspending official under 2 CFR Part 180, Subpart G, that immediately prohibits a person from participating in covered transactions and transactions covered under the Federal Acquisition Regulation (48 CFR Chapter 1) for a temporary period, pending completion of an agency investigation and any judicial or administrative proceedings that may ensue. A person so excluded is suspended.
<b>technical determination</b>	<p>A conclusion concerning the status and condition of natural resources and cultural practices based on science and best professional judgment of natural resource professionals.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> The term “technical determination” will always be used when referring to conclusions made related to the Food Security Act Title XII programs appealed to FSA county committees.</p>
<b>tenant</b>	One who rents land from another and pays a specified amount of cash or amount of a commodity, or one (other than a sharecropper) who rents land from another person and provides as payment a share of the crops or proceeds therefrom.
<b>tract number</b>	An identifier assigned by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to a land unit that is part of a farm.
<b>Tribal conservation advisory council</b>	In lieu of or in addition to forming a Tribal conservation district, an Indian Tribe may elect to designate an advisory council to provide input on NRCS programs and the conservation needs of the Tribe and Tribal producers. The advisory council may be an existing Tribal committee or department and may also constitute an association of member Tribes organized to provide direct consultation to NRCS at the State, regional, and national levels on NRCS rules, policies, and programs and their impacts on Tribes.
<b>vegetative practice</b>	A conservation practice that involves the establishment or planting of an herbaceous or woody vegetation to conserve, protect from degradation, or improve soil, water, or related natural resources in the most cost-effective manner. Examples include, but are not limited to, contour buffer strips, filter strips, critical area plantings, and tree and shrub planting.
<b>verbatim transcript</b>	An official, written record of a hearing that has been transcribed by a court reporter.

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<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>veteran farmer or rancher</b>	<p>A farmer or rancher who has served in the Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(10) of title 38) and who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) has not operated a farm or ranch;</li> <li>(B) has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or</li> <li>(C) or is a veteran (as defined in section 101 of that title) who has first obtained status as a veteran (as so defined) during the most recent 10-year period.</li> </ul>
<b>water cover</b>	<p>Flooding of land by water either to develop or restore shallow water areas for wildlife or wetlands or as a result of a natural disaster.</p>
<b>water management entity</b>	<p>A State, irrigation district, groundwater management district, acequia, land grant–merced, or similar entity that has jurisdiction or responsibilities related to water delivery on or management of eligible lands.</p>
<b>water quality</b>	<p>Describes the condition of the water and its resource concerns or opportunities, including concerns such as excessive nutrients, pesticides, sediment, contaminants, pathogens, and turbidity in surface waters and excessive nutrients and pesticides in ground waters.</p>
<b>watershed or regional resource conservation plan</b>	<p>A plan developed for a watershed or other geographic area defined by the stakeholders. The plan addresses identified resource problems, contains alternative solutions that meet the stakeholder objectives for each resource, and addresses applicable laws and regulations as defined in the NRCS National Planning Procedures Handbook.</p>
<b>wet signature</b>	<p>A “wet,” “pen-and-ink,” or physical signature is simply a handwritten mark of approval. Whenever a person directly signs a hard copy of a document like a contract or a proposal with a pen, they’ve applied a wet signature. Signatures are usually stylized cursive forms of the signer’s name.</p>
<b>wetland</b>	<p>Land that has a predominance of hydric soils and is inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of hydrophytic vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions that support a prevalence of such vegetation under normal circumstances.</p>
<b>wetland functions</b>	<p>An area of land having some or all of the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dynamic surface water storage</li> <li>• Long-term surface water storage</li> <li>• Subsurface water storage</li> <li>• Dissipation of energy</li> <li>• Cycling of nutrients</li> <li>• Retention of particulates</li> <li>• Export of organic carbon and detritus</li> <li>• Maintenance of plant and animal communities</li> </ul>
<b>wetland hydrology</b>	<p>Permanent or periodic inundation, or prolonged soil saturation sufficient to create anaerobic conditions on the soil.</p>
<b>wildlife</b>	<p>Undomesticated birds, fishes, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and mammals.</p>
<b>wildlife habitat</b>	<p>The aquatic and terrestrial environments required for wildlife to complete their life cycles, including air, food, cover, water, and spatial requirements.</p>