

Conservation: Start with a good plan

By Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist, Iowa NRCS

The starting point for managing natural resources is developing a conservation plan. Every farm has a unique mix of natural resources, and without conservation management, modern farming practices raise environmental concerns that include:

- Soil erosion
- Air quality
- Invasive plant species
- Livestock waste management
- Water quality
- Overgrazing
- Decline of wildlife habitat

A conservation plan combines farming skills with the science-based knowledge and tools of the conservation planner. With Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) advice, landowners can select the best combination of conservation practices to meet natural resource needs as well as their own individual management goals.

Conservation planning | A Record of Decision-making

A conservation plan is a written record of management decisions and conservation practices used on the farm. Carrying out a plan will achieve the goals of better protecting the environment as well as meeting individual management objectives.

After soil, water, air, plant and animal resources are inventoried and evaluated, a Certified Conservation Planner can review the plan and present some alternatives. The selections made are recorded in the conservation plan, which becomes a roadmap to better management of natural resources.

The benefits for developing a conservation plan include:

- Identifying immediate or potential problems that will result in resource degradation and diminished production
- Protecting soil and the land's productivity
- Helping you comply with environmental regulations
- Adapting to changing farm operational goals
- Establishing a reasonable schedule for applying needed conservation practices that will fit time-tables and resources
- Qualifying for various USDA conservation programs that can help with the implementation of a conservation plan

To learn more about conservation planning, financial incentives, and how to get help creating a conservation plan, visit the NRCS office in a local USDA service center or visit www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov.

“As a result of having a conservation plan, producers know their farm goals and objectives and use it as a spring board to find the funding sources to help them improve their own operation and the environment.”

– Dave York,
Carroll County District Conservationist

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