



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA NRCS Introduction

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9TH, 2021

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER, EMPLOYER AND LENDER.

Who is NRCS?

- NRCS STANDS FOR “NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE” AND IS A FEDERAL AGENCY UNDER THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.
- NRCS WAS CREATED IN 1935 AND BACK THEN WAS CALLED THE “SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE”. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REALIZED THE NEED FOR AN AGENCY TO GIVE VOLUNTARY ADVICE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS AND RANCHERS BECAUSE OF THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THE DUST BOWL.



What does NRCS do?

- ▶ NRCS is a voluntary agency.
- ▶ NRCS offers free, science-based advice to farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners.
- ▶ NRCS is non-regulatory.
- ▶ NRCS helps create conservation plans for your individual operation which can then be eligible for financial assistance to implement.
- ▶ NRCS has a number of professional scientific advisors within the agency including:
 - ▶ Soil Conservationist,
 - ▶ Rangeland Specialist,
 - ▶ Agriculture and civil engineers
 - ▶ wildlife biologists
 - ▶ Forest specialist
 - ▶ wetland specialists,
 - ▶ soil scientists,
 - ▶ agronomists,
 - ▶ air quality specialists,
 - ▶ archeologists
 - ▶ geologists and more!



NRCS Assistance

NRCS works with private farmers, ranchers and non-industrial forest landowners across the country to help conserve natural resources.

Natural resources are defined by NRCS to include soil, water, air, plants, animals, energy and human considerations (SWAPAE +H)

Technical assistance –

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA):

- ▶ Offers expertise, technical planning, documentation, engineering, etc.
- ▶ Does not offer funding to clients

Financial assistance –

- ▶ Offer financial assistance through Farm Bill Programs, to applicant in control of land (by deed, lease, or agreement)
- ▶ Financial assistance is contractual
- ▶ Financial assistance is only available for agricultural and forest lands

What is a NRCS Conservation Plan?

- ▶ A conservation plan is the record of decisions and supporting information for treatment of a unit of land meeting planning criteria for one or more identified natural resource concerns as a result of the planning process. The plan describes the schedule of implementation for practices and activities needed to solve identified natural resource concerns and takes advantage of opportunities.
- ▶ Addresses documented resource concerns.

Resource Concern—"An expected degradation of the soil, water, air, plant, or animal resource base to the extent that the sustainability or intended use of the resource is impaired." – NPPH

- ▶ During the planning process we will
- ▶ Consider the needs and capabilities of each acre within the plan
- ▶ Consider the client's facilities, machinery, and economic situation
- ▶ Incorporate the client's willingness to try new practices
- ▶ Consider the land's relationship to the entire farm, ranch, or watershed
- ▶ Ensure the conservationist's presence out on the land

****In order for an on-the-ground practice or treatment to receive financial assistance in an NRCS contract, it must be shown to be treating (or improving) an NRCS resource concern, or be part of a series or suite of practices that do so.**

Managing the Soil Surface

Poor Soil Cover:

- Soil surface compaction (Cowpan)
- Soil surface erosion
- Simplified plant communities
- Loss of forage production
- Ineffective precipitation (low infiltration)
- Loss of fish and wildlife habitats



EX: NRCS Resource Concerns Pertaining to Forestland

- ▶ Degraded plant condition
 - ▶ Undesirable plant productivity and health
 - ▶ Inadequate structure and composition
 - ▶ Excessive plant pest pressure
 - ▶ Wildfire hazard, excessive biomass accumulation
- ▶ Water Quality Degradation
 - ▶ Excessive sediment in surface water
 - ▶ Elevated water temperature
- ▶ Soil Erosion
 - ▶ Concentrated flow erosion (gullies from road infrastructure)
- ▶ Inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife (food, water, cover/shelter, continuity)



Typical Assistance on Forests

Treat overstocked forests, fire hazards, and improve forest health by:

- ▶ Thinning, pruning, slash treatment
- ▶ Tree planting,
- ▶ Shaded fuel breaks,
- ▶ Invasive weed control

Treat erosion issues by:

- ▶ Road infrastructure improvements (outsloping, rolling dips)
- ▶ Stream crossings
- ▶ Road decommissioning



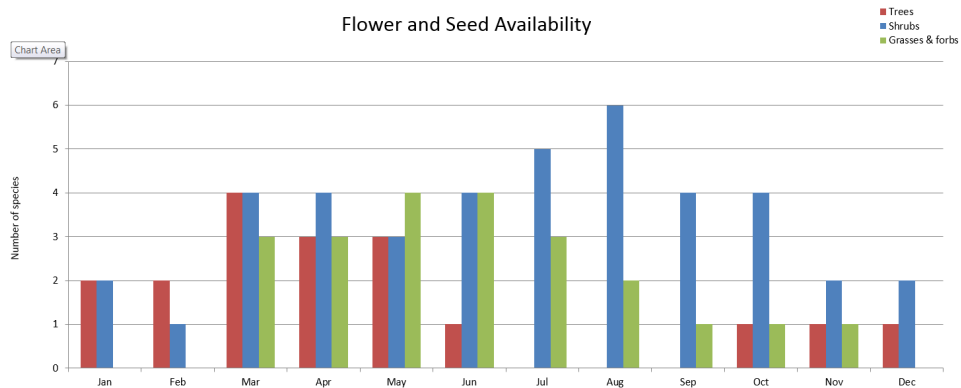
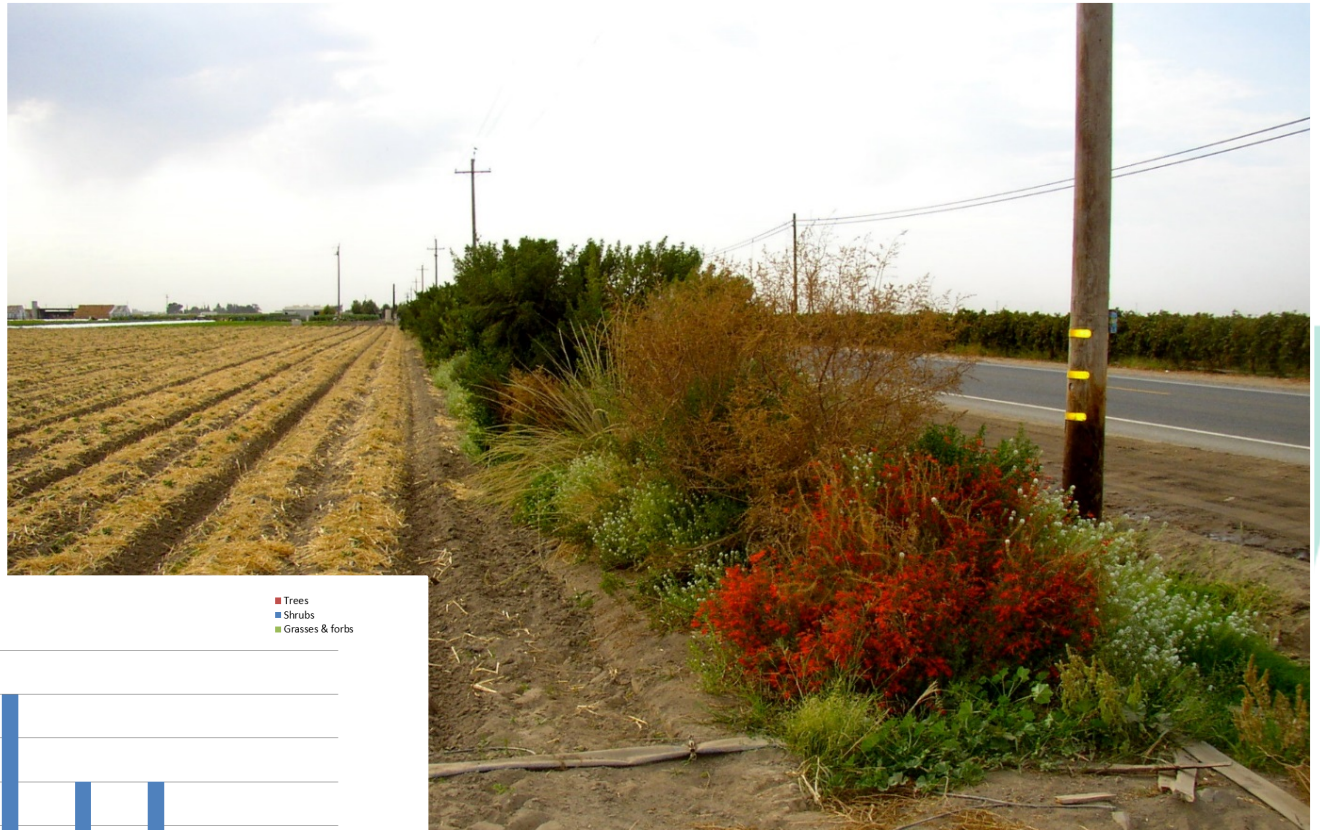


How can NRCS help on cropland?

- ▶ Organic or conventional!
Microirrigation, irrigation system improvements, nutrient management, cover crop, mulching, irrigation water management, hedgerow plantings.



Hedgerows - pollinators





Restoring Riparian Vegetation

Before planting



2 years later



USDA How NRCS can help on grazing lands?

- ▶ Cross fencing, watering facilities, range and pasture planting, herbaceous weed control, brush management, prescribed grazing plan.





How NRCS can help on confined animal feeding operations?

- ▶ Assistance in getting a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) that will identify ways to protect water quality, improve soil health, and propose a sustainable operation by managing manure.
- ▶ Improve barn infrastructure with roofs and covers, manure transfer, waste separation facilities and more.





If NRCS is unable to help you, we probably know someone who can! We work with many different partners in the area.



United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency





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