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# Conservation Planning Tool

The following document is designed to be a user friendly conservation planning tool for field staff, landowners and producers.

This tool is designed to pose questions that landowners can easily understand and relate to in a way that is friendly and approachable. It will collect basic information about their agricultural operation, resource conditions and concerns, and conservation options. It also will serve as the basis for conservation planning and any application for financial assistance through NRCS or other sources.

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Conservation Partner Name:

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Interview Date



Producer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## FARM OVERVIEW

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
County: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### ABOUT YOUR FARM

How many **acres** of each type of farmland do you operate?

\_\_\_\_\_ Cropland    \_\_\_\_\_ Hayfields    \_\_\_\_\_ Pasture    \_\_\_\_\_ Forested

How many **acres** do you rent or own?

\_\_\_\_\_ Own    \_\_\_\_\_ Rent

How long have you been farming (years)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Years

If applicable, list other decision makers (business partners, co-owners, parents/spouse/children etc), and their involvement?

Are there any existing easements on the property? Does the land have a conservation, wetland, ROW, or access easement and who holds the easements?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you working with other technical service providers or conservation minded organizations including crop advisors, soil conservationists, land preservation agencies, or other non-profit organization?

Are there any deed restriction through a National, Local or State Farmland Preservation Program; if so who holds the easements?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What type of operations do you run on the farm? (Check all that apply)

- |  |                                   |                                       |  |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crop (Grain/Bean) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hay      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasture      | <input type="checkbox"/> Orchard/Fruit   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horses            | <input type="checkbox"/> Beef     | <input type="checkbox"/> Dairy        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Livestock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery           | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry  | <input type="checkbox"/> Forestry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Vineyard        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crop (Vegetable)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mushroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |  |

Is any part of your farm in organic or are you transitioning any part of your operation to organic?

- All organic     Some organic     Transitioning to organic     No organic

# FARM GOALS

## COMMON EXAMPLES

- Profit
- Business Growth
- Diversification
- Environmental stewardship
- Family and community involvement
- Personal Enjoyment

What are your priorities or goals?

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## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Do you have fallow fields you would like to farm in the future?

Do you have land that you would consider removing from operation?

Do you do plan to expand or reduce flock / herd?

Do you plan to add new operations or diversify?

Do you plan to expand or reduce your operation?

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What changes or improvements would you like to make in the near term? Long term?

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## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Common challenges might include deer, weeds, soil erosion, declining yields, equipment failures, etc.

Challenges on your farm?

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# ANNUAL CROPS

What types of crops do you produce? (Mark all that apply.)

- Corn     Soy     Wheat     Vegetable  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you practice regular soil nutrient testing?

- No     Yes

## MORE INFORMATION

Poor soil health (compaction, plowpans, and low organic matter) may result in inadequate surface drainage which greatly reduce the productivity of agricultural fields.

Does your farm have areas of poor drainage?

- No     Yes

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Are yields declining or improving?    How have yields changed over time?  
Are you concerned that some nutrients are lost through run-off?    Are you finding you need to apply more fertilizers to maintain yields?

Are you satisfied with your crop yields and fertilizer use?  
Are you interested in reducing fertilizer application?

What weeds or pests are a concern on your farm?  
Are you interested reducing pesticide application?

Which type of tillage do you use? (Mark all that apply?)

- Conventional    \_\_\_\_\_  
*Moldboard Plow, Chisel Plow, or Disk harrow*
- Conservation    \_\_\_\_\_  
*No-till, Ridge-till or Mulch till*

## MORE INFORMATION

Crop rotation is when different crops are grown on a piece of land in a pre-planned succession.    Common rotations are 2 or 3 year rotations of corn, soybeans and wheat.

Do you typically rotate crops year-to-year, or if so, what is a typical crop rotation on your farm?

Do you practice cover cropping? If so, what species do you use and how if it seeded?

- No  
 Yes, \_\_\_\_\_  
*Describe application method (Aerial, Drill, Interseed) and species (Rye, Clover, Oats, etc)*

## MORE INFORMATION

Highly erodible land (HEL) can erode at excessive rates.    It contains soils with an erodibility index of eight or more.

Does your farm contain Highly Erodible Land (HEL)?

- No     Yes

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# IRRIGATION SUPPLEMENT

Has all or part of your land been irrigated in the last five years?

- No  Yes

What type of irrigation system do you have? Mark all that apply.

- Drip  Gun  
 Center Pivot  Other

Are there aspects of your irrigation system you would like to improve?

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Are your irrigation mainlines working properly?

Are you satisfied with your irrigation system's ability to uniformly apply water?

Are you interested in irrigation systems that use less water?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you irrigate according to an Irrigation Water Management Plan?

- No  Yes

Do you apply pesticides through irrigation lines?

- No  
 Yes, WITH backflow preventer  
 Yes, NO backflow preventer

Do you apply fertilizer through your irrigation lines?

- No  Yes

# ANIMAL INFORMATION

Please indicate which of the following animals you have and provide some brief specifics about the operation.

**Dairy**

Average Number of Animals	
Calf	
Heifer	
Dry Cow	
Milking Cow	

Operation Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Example: Confinement or Pasture or Mix*

Animal Diet: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Portion forage, pasture, and grain*

How is parlor /milk-house wash water disposed of?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Beef**

No of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Operation Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Cow-Calf or Farrow to Finish*

Animal Diet: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Portion forage, pasture, and grain*

**Swine**

No of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Operation Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Farrow to Finish, Farrow to Feeder, Feeder or Finish*

**Equine**

No of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal Diet: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Portion forage, pasture, and grain*

**Sheep**

No of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal Diet: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Portion forage, pasture, and grain*

**Poultry**

Animal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Operation Details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Other:**

Animal Type: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Animals: \_\_\_\_\_

Operation Details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# ANIMAL INFORMATION

## MORE INFORMATION

A Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) is a management plan to utilize nutrients and to manage the collection, handling, storage, application, & utilization of animal waste. Landowner of animal feeding operations (AFO's) that receive technical and/or financial assistance from NRCS are required to have a CNMP.

Do you have a Nutrient Management Plan?

- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP)
- Nutrient Management Plan (NMP)
- Self Certified
- None

What are the drinking sources for your animals? Check all that apply.

- Well
- Spring/Stream
- Pond

Are heavy use areas, where animals regularly walk, drink or feed, frequently muddy or eroded?

- No
- Yes, description below

Do you store silage? If so, how is silage leachate handled?

- No
- Yes, description below

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Is manure stored in stockpiles, drystack, or composted?  
Do you have a manure stacking pad?

Do you have a manure lagoon, holding tank?  
Is it hauled away daily?

Describe your current animal waste management and storage system.

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Do you notice runoff from your animal waste storage?

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## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Is manure spread on fields as a slurry, sprayed on surface, or injected in soil?

Are solids separated?  
Is manure sold?  
Is manure exported?

Are you able to use manure as a farm asset? Is it a useful nutrient source?

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## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Does manure pile up in livestock buildings because it is the wrong time of year to spread it?

Is the manure too heavy and wet to spread easily?  
Are weed seeds in the manure a problem?

Are you pleased with your manure management? Do you have concerns?

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# PASTURE OR HAYFIELD INFORMATION

Do you have a Prescribed Grazing or Grazing Management Plan?

- No       Yes

What is your primary forage species?

- Cool season grasses       Legumes  
 Mixed Species

## MORE INFORMATION...

**Rotational Grazing:**  
A large pasture is divided into smaller paddocks allowing livestock to be moved from one paddock to the other.

**Conventional Grazing:** A set number of animals are assigned to a specific pasture for the duration of the grazing season.

Which type of grazing do you use?

- Rotationally Grazing      Length of Rotation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Continuous Grazing

Are animals moved to a "sacrifice" paddock or "dry lot" when soil are waterlogged?

- No       Yes

Do the animals have access or a stream, wetland or pond?

- No       Yes, restricted intermittent access  
 Yes, unrestricted access

Are you interested in providing more pasture for your animals or moving toward a more rotational pasture management system? If so, what impediments do you face?

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## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Is the forage growth rate and nutrition content enough to supply most of the animals caloric needs?

Are weeds a problems in your pasture?

Do you have trouble supplying fresh water year-round?

Are you satisfied with the quality of pasture, fencing, and watering systems?

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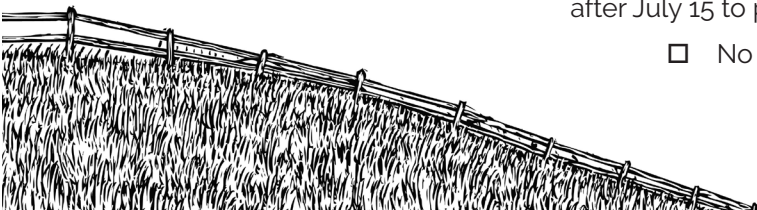
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## FOR HAYFIELDS ONLY

Would you be interested in delaying mowing some grassed areas until after July 15 to protect nesting birds?

- No       Yes





# WATER-BODIES

Describe any streams or water-bodies on your property? How large are they and do they run year-round or seasonally?

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Are you aware of any trout or migratory fish in them stream?

No       Yes: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in participating in programs aimed at improving fish habitat through stream restoration and/or removing dams and blockages?

No       Yes

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Do you farm or graze right next to the water body or is there a grass and/or forested area between the waterbody and fields?

Is it prone to flooding?

How do you manage areas along the water-body?

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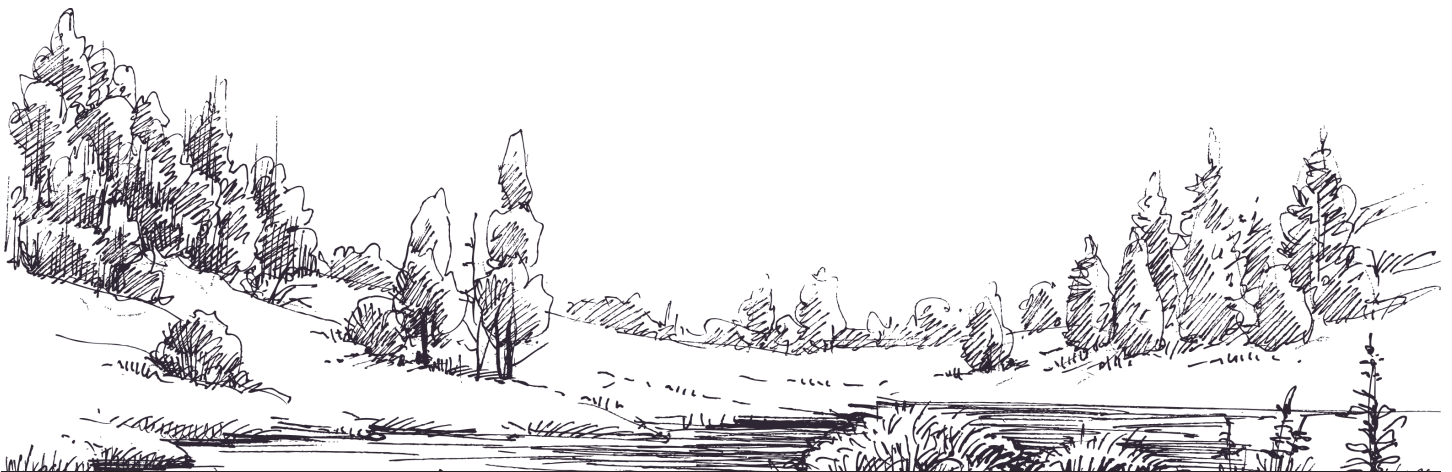
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Would you be interested in programs aimed at reducing the flows of nutrients and sediments into the waterway?

No       Yes

Do you have a wetland on-site? If so, would you be interested in improving wetland habitat.

No       Yes



# FORESTRY INFORMATION

## MORE INFORMATION

A **Forest Management Plan** includes (1) an inventory and map of the natural resources on your land, (2) your objectives for your land, and (3) a defined schedule of activities (or conservation practices) that will help you meet your goals while protecting the health of the forest.

Do you have a Forest/Woodland Management or Stewardship Plan?

No       Yes, When Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

By Whom: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you hunt or fish on the property and, if so, for what species?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## EXAMPLES

Saw logs

Biomass

Pulp

Firewood

Is anything harvested from your forest land? If so, what is harvested, how recently, and was the work completed by a forester, contractor, or yourself?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Any erosion concerns?

Are you satisfied with the forest productivity?

Are invasive species like the gypsy moth, ash borer a problem?

Are you satisfied with access to the forest?

Do you have any concerns about your forest or the process by which products are harvested?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any goals or objectives for managing fish, wildlife or natural areas on your land?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# CONSERVATION CONCERNS

## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

How would you rate your water infiltration? Does water pond on the soil surface after rain/irrigation? Is your soil surface crusted?

Are areas of your soil hard, cloddy, or compacted? Is there a hard pan present?

How much organic matter is in the soil?

Are you pleased with your soil quality and fertility?

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Are there areas on your farm where run-off water tends to accumulate contributing to excessively wet areas?

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## FOLLOWS-UP QUESTIONS

*Circle all that apply*

Do you have gullies that are difficult to cross or enlarging over time?

Do you notice sediment accumulations at the lower parts of the fields?

Are you concerned about losing topsoil? Is you runoff muddy?

Is stream-bank erosion a concern on your farm?

Does your farm have issues with soil erosion?

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Are heavy use areas like farm roads and areas around buildings frequently muddy? Is it problematic?

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Are gutters installed on farm buildings?

- All                       Some                       None

Are you satisfied with the quality and quantity of you drinking water?

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## FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Are chemicals stored safely away from farm home, wells, and buildings?

Are you aware of any storage tank leaks?

Are back-flow prevention devices on all pipes used to fill pesticide sprayers?

Are storage tanks large enough to accommodate your needs?

Do you have concerns about your chemical, fertilizer, and/or petroleum product storage and handling?

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# CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Would you be interested in participating in programs aimed at improving habitat for beneficial pollinators (like bees and butterflies)?

Yes

No

Are you aware of any archaeological or historic sites on your property?

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Are you aware of any rare species on site (both currently or historically)?

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Additional Notes

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# PLANS AND USDA ELIGIBILITY

## MORE INFORMATION

A conservation plans are tools designed to help you better manage the natural resources on your farm. In many cases are prerequisites for eligibility for certain USDA farm programs including EQIP.

Plans are non-binding and will cost you nothing. This service is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service in cooperation with your local Soil Conservation District.

→ Please Indication which of the following plan the has currently.

- Conservation Plan
- Comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP)
- Nutrient management plan (NMP)
- Integrated pest management plan (IPM)
- Grazing management Plan / Prescribed grazing
- Forest management plan
- Transition to organic plan

## COMMON EXAMPLES

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)

→ Have you participated in USDA programs before?  
If so list which programs.

- No       Yes      \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you file farm records with USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)?  
If so list FSA Form and Tract Numbers:

- No       Yes      \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## DEFINITIONS

### Limited Resource

**Farmer:** Direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 years, and who 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.

### Beginning Farmer:

Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years.

### Socially

### disadvantaged

**group** consist of the following: American Indians, or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics

### Veteran Farmer:

A person who served in United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.

→ Do you meet the criteria for any of the following categories (Mark all that apply)

- Limited Resource Farmers or Rancher
- Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher

## CONSENT STATEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_  
certify that the above information accurately represents the producer, land and agricultural operation associated with this survey.

Further, to help initiate planning and/or seek funding to help implement conservation practices, I understand that this information may be made available to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), soil conservation districts, pertinent state agencies, technical service providers (TSPs) and/or potential funders.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date