

Q: What is a **resource problem**?

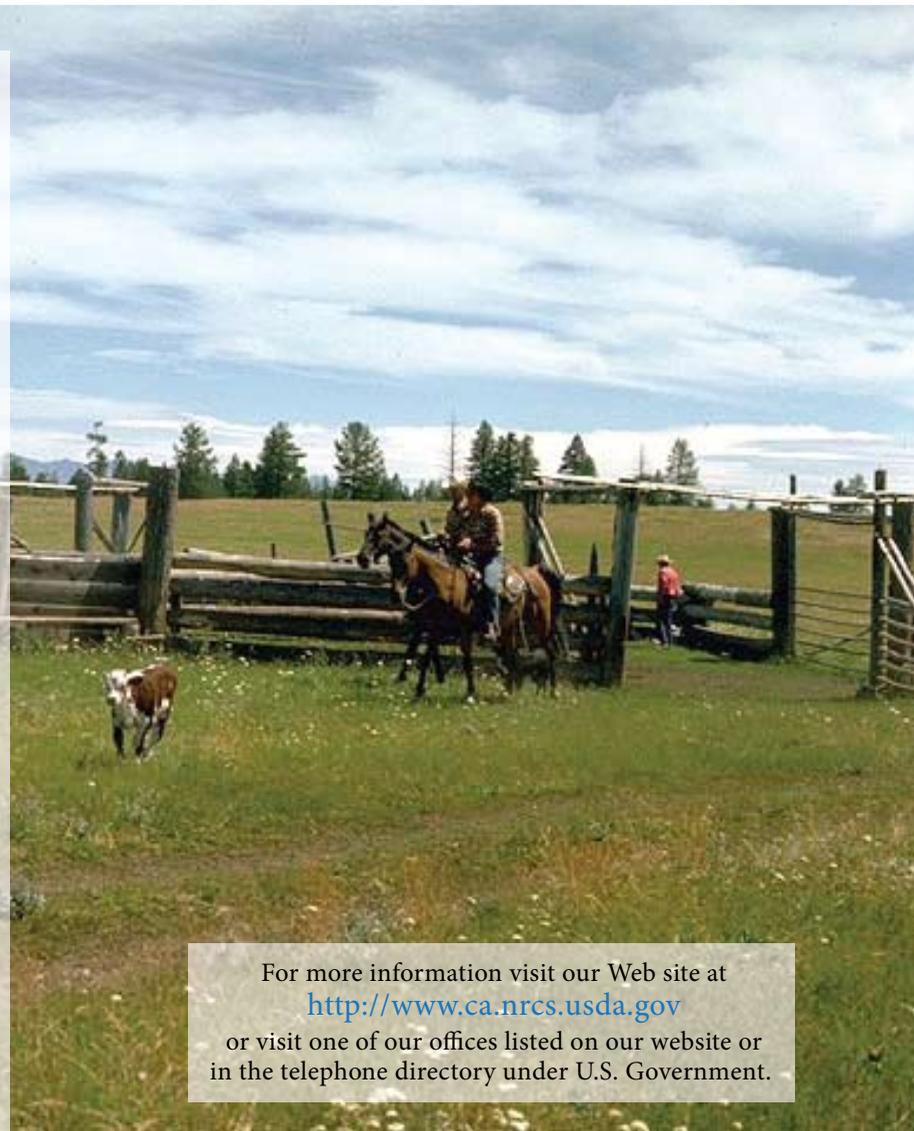
A: Natural resources such as soil, water, air, plants and animals sometimes become degraded through human or natural processes and show up on the landscape in various ways. Examples include excessive soil erosion, water pollution, low soil organic matter, other soil issues (e.g. compaction and poor tilth), undesirable plants (weeds), air pollutants (e.g. dust and smog), inadequate range and pasture forage, absence of wildlife and others. Through conservation planning, landowners can identify these problems and opportunities, and prioritize actions to make improvements. NRCS has identified a wide array of conservation practices and management activities that can be implemented to help solve these resource problems.

Q: What is a **conservation plan**?

A: A conservation plan is a process of gathering information and ideas for the farmer to consider when making decisions about their farm and resources. The result is a written plan of action outlining those decisions and identifying which conservation practices and improvements will be implemented on the landscape. The process is driven by both the needs of the natural resources and the objectives of the landowner/manager. The conservation plan is developed voluntarily by the landowner, with technical assistance and input from NRCS. Any interactions and information shared by the landowner are kept confidential by NRCS. The first step is for NRCS and the farmer to inventory resources on the farm, discuss the farmer's goals and identify areas needing work. Next, NRCS and the farmer discuss alternative actions, including possible changes in management and equipment. The farmer makes the final decision on what will be done.

Q: How does NRCS **share the cost** of conservation?

A: Landowners may submit a conservation plan and application to NRCS for programs such as EQIP. If approved, NRCS generally splits the cost (50%) of the proposed conservation project with the landowner.

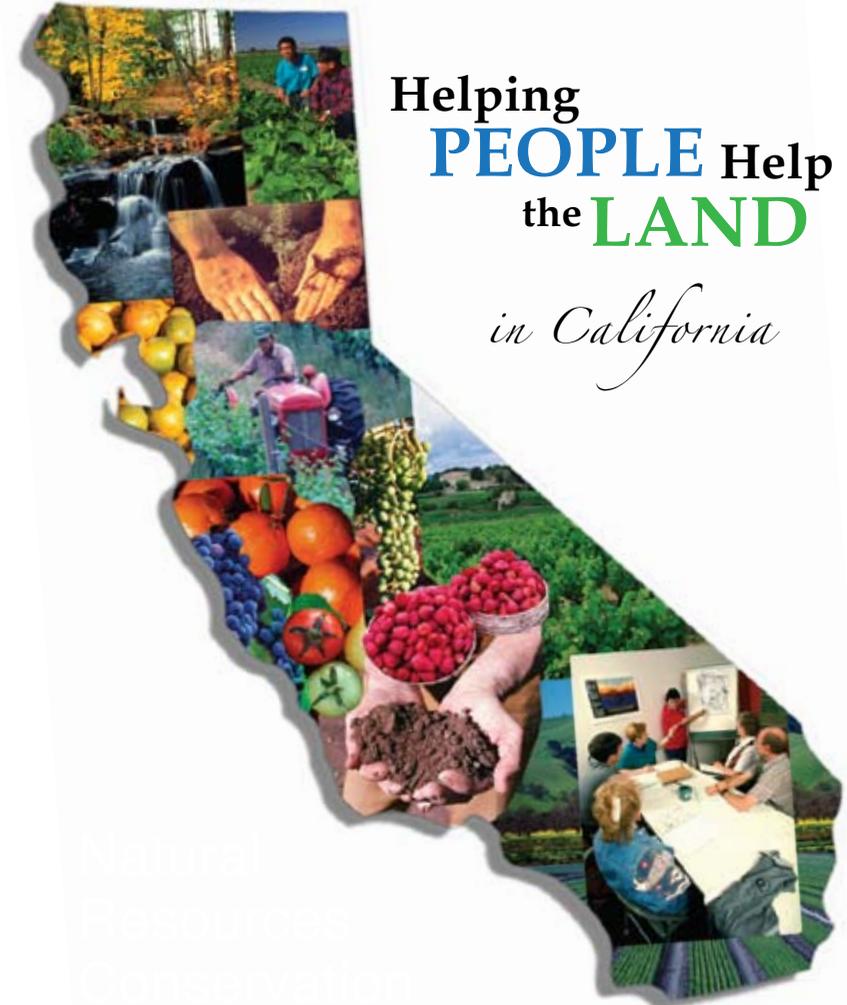


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NRCS Natural Resources
Conservation Service



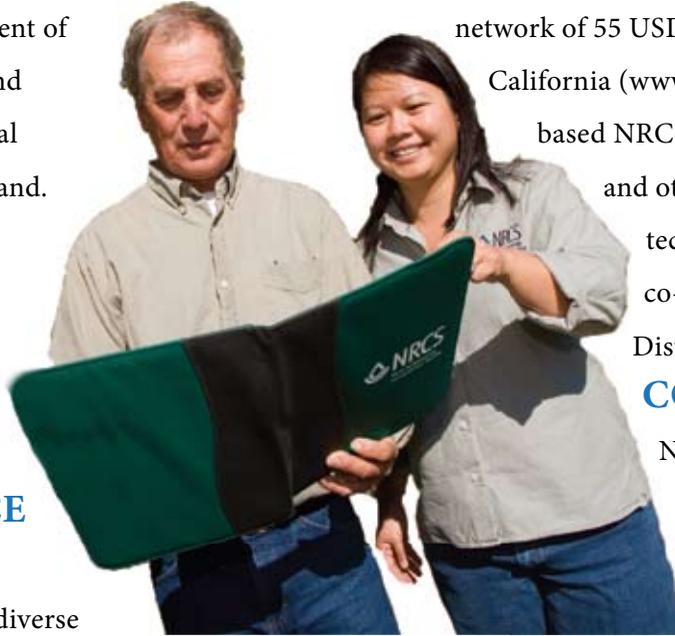
Helping
PEOPLE Help
the **LAND**
in California

HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers and others to care for the land. NRCS works with the landowner to develop **conservation plans** that consider both the needs of the landscape and the objectives of the customer.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PARTNERS

Technical assistance is provided by a diverse cadre of conservation professionals including soil scientists, agronomists, rangeland specialists, engineers, biologists, foresters and others. NRCS combines efforts with a broad range of partners, both to assist individuals and to plan and implement conservation on larger landscapes, such as a watershed basis. Chief among these partners are Resource Conservation Districts with whom NRCS works closely to assure local priorities are addressed. Additionally, NRCS works with Resource Conservation and Development Councils and with numerous agencies, industry and grower groups, environmental organizations and others to accomplish mutual goals.



LOCAL PRESENCE

NRCS provides assistance to local communities through a network of 55 USDA Service Centers, found in most counties in California (www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/). The locally-based NRCS staff works directly with farmers, ranchers and others to provide conservation planning and technical assistance. Many of these offices are co-located with local Resource Conservation Districts.

CONSERVATION PLANNING

NRCS encourages landowners to work with conservation planners to voluntarily develop a plan that meets the personal and business objectives as well as the specific needs of the landscape, the landowner or manager. NRCS conservationists and landowners together develop voluntary, science-based and technically sound options that are implemented over time. NRCS has developed a wide array of cost-effective conservation solutions designed to address many **resource problems** and opportunities landowners face in both the short term and long term.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Federal Farm Bill programs provide financial funding to farmers and ranchers through programs such as the Environmental

Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to share the cost of many conservation practices. In California, landowners who have developed a conservation plan have a greater chance of receiving the limited cost-share funding that is available. Prioritization of the many conservation needs is done at the local and state levels. In California, **cost-shared conservation** work includes cropland and rangeland improvement, riparian/wetland restoration, conservation tillage, soil quality improvement, wildlife management, manure management, forestry management, pest management, engineered practices, and new technologies in air quality and energy conservation. Information about the Farm Bill programs is available online. NRCS staff are available to help customers determine which options are best for them.



SOIL SURVEYS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

NRCS field staff are supported by professionals at the Area, State, Regional and National levels that provide in-depth technical support. Notably, NRCS is responsible for the National Cooperative Soil Survey System which gives invaluable information on soil characteristics and capabilities such as fertility, drainage and compaction. These soil surveys, now available online (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>), are the basis of many of the recommendations made to landowners by field-level conservationists.

