USDA NRCS

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

fiscal years

2011 – 2015

NRCS MISSION

NRCS improves the health of our Nation's natural resources while sustaining and enhancing the productivity of American agriculture. We achieve this by providing voluntary assistance through strong partnerships with private landowners, managers, and communities to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters upon which people and the environment depend.

NRCS VISION

Productive working lands in harmony with a healthy environment.

NRCS conservation process

Resource Inventory and Assessment > *Technical Assistance/ Technology Transfer* > *Conservation Implementation* > *Productive Lands Healthy Environment*

MESSAGE FROM NRCS CHIEF DAVE WHITE

Greetings,

I'm pleased to share with you the "NRCS Strategic Plan: 2011-2015." This document outlines the Agency's mission and vision and charts a course for the future as we begin the next five years of service to the Nation. A core team consisting of employees from the field, States and various disciplines worked with national leadership to develop a practical plan to help us address conservation challenges and identify opportunities for improvement going forward. We used feedback from both our employees and partners to craft this document.

The plan targets three priorities:

1. Getting More Conservation on the Ground

This is what we're here to do. NRCS is committed to developing, implementing and evaluating strategic conservation solutions; delivering the highest quality technical expertise; and proactively addressing emerging natural resource issues.

2. Increasing Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency

NRCS will change as needed to ensure that we have the right people with the right skills in the right places to get conservation on the ground and produce the results that our customers and stakeholders expect. We will improve our organizational processes, quality assurance, and accountability in product and service delivery.

3. Creating a Climate Where Private Lands Conservation Will Thrive

NRCS believes that voluntary, incentive-based conservation is the best way to achieve positive environmental results. To that end, we will build and strengthen partnerships and coalitions and promote an ethic of conservation stewardship among America's private landowners. We will meet the needs of our traditional customers while expanding opportunities for new and underserved ones. We will employ, develop, and retain a highly skilled workforce and provide a safe and productive work environment for them.

This strategic plan is not intended to sit on a shelf. Instead, NRCS will use it regularly to develop specific tactics to meet natural resource challenges and opportunities. And it is vital that we succeed. Projections are that the world population will increase by 2-3 billion people in the next four decades. With that increase comes the need to increase our food production capability by at least 70 percent. Our challenge will be to increase our productivity ***sustainably***; making room for all the creatures with whom we share this earth and in a way that ensures that those little Americans who aren't here yet will have the same bounty we enjoy today.

Dave White

Dave White
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service

1 strategic goal

Get More Conservation on the Ground

Objective 1.1

Advance the performance of voluntary, incentive-based conservation solutions

Strategic Initiatives:

- Solve natural resource concerns at local and landscape scales.
- Effectively deliver conservation technical assistance and programs to agricultural producers and landowners.
- Improve development and delivery of technical expertise.
- Help farmers and ranchers comply with existing environmental regulation and obviate the need for further regulation.

Objective 1.2

Proactively recognize and address emerging natural resource issues

Strategic Initiatives:

- Assess the needs of the land in order to strategically deliver products and services at farm and landscape scales.
- Design standards and deliver assistance to address emerging resource concerns.
- Accelerate the development and transfer of conservation technologies for use in the field.
- Support the development of markets for environmental goods.

Performance Measures:

- Maintain productive working farms and ranches.
- Eliminate and reduce impairments to water bodies and help prevent the designation of additional water bodies to the "impaired" list.
- Decrease threats to "candidate" and threatened/endangered species.
- Increase number of conservation practice standards that address emerging issues (such as energy).
- Increase conservation treatments in critical areas.
- Increase number of agreements to provide agricultural producers "certainty" so they will be in compliance with federal environmental regulations.

2 management initiative

Increase Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency

Objective 2.1

Improve quality and accountability to deliver better products and services

Strategic Initiatives:

- Maximize conservation assistance in the field by streamlining the Agency's structure and processes.
- Simplify and efficiently deliver conservation assistance to customers.
- Deploy technology, training, and equipment to provide more cost-effective service.
- Improve internal controls for key Agency functions.
- Incorporate continuous process improvement into the Agency's operations.
- Improve data integrity and analysis.

Objective 2.2

Strengthen and streamline financial management

Strategic Initiatives:

- Invest in human resources and information technology systems to strengthen and streamline financial management performance.
- Successfully deliver the Agency's financial audit remediation plan.
- Achieve a clean audit.

Performance Measures:

- Increase customer satisfaction.
- Increase field office time spent working with customers to 75 percent.
- Increase the number of technical personnel providing direct service to customers to 80-to-90 percent.
- Eliminate 80 percent of administrative and clerical time associated with program management.
- Decrease time to develop and deploy Farm Bill conservation programs.
- Decrease defects in the delivery of conservation to the customer.
- Decrease or eliminate financial management deficiencies.
- Increase integrity and reliability of data.
- Increase reliability and productivity of information technology.

3 management initiative

Create a Climate Where Private Lands Conservation Will Thrive

Objective 3.1
Build and strengthen partnerships and coalitions

Strategic Initiatives:

- Strengthen relationships with agriculture, conservation, and community organizations, and other mission stakeholders.
- Help build and support coalitions of public and private partners based on ecologic and industry needs.

Objective 3.2
Promote an ethic of conservation stewardship among America's farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and stakeholders

Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop and launch a conservation education initiative to increase public understanding of the value of conservation and natural resource protection.
- Increase landowner and operator involvement in implementing conservation systems.

Objective 3.3
Expand opportunities to deliver conservation products and services to new and underserved customers

Strategic Initiatives:

- Deliver flexible outreach strategies to reach traditionally underserved customers.
- Develop flexible outreach strategies to reach urban/suburban stakeholders and international partners.
- Develop and implement a strategic comprehensive communications plan for external and internal customers.

Objective 3.4
Employ, develop, and retain a highly skilled and diverse workforce

Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop and deploy an innovative Agency recruitment and employee development strategy that increases the number of qualified employees of diverse ethnicity, experience, gender and physical abilities.

Performance Measures:

- Increase outreach and delivery of NRCS products and services to underserved customers.
- Increase leveraging of investments and resources with traditional and non-traditional partners.
- Increase employee job satisfaction and retention.

“ Out of the long list of nature’s gifts to man, none is perhaps so utterly essential to human life as soil.”

— Hugh Hammond Bennett, First NRCS Chief

“ Private land represents many rich, diverse places, full of life. Those places, when healthy, function in ways essential to the sustenance of all creatures on earth, including humankind.”

— Paul Johnson, Tenth NRCS Chief

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Natural Resources Conservation Service

To learn more about NRCS, visit our web site at:

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Helping People Help the Land
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