

What NRCS Can and Can NOT Do to Help Farmers Address Regulatory Requirements

1. NRCS can provide Technology through the Pennsylvania Field Office Technical Guide which is developed collaboratively by the Conservation Partnership. The criteria to install Conservation Practices for desired purposes are found in Section IV of the PA FOTG.
2. NRCS can provide Conservation Planning Assistance on a request basis to help farmers better understand their landscapes and make conservation decisions regarding the restoration, protection, sustainable use and enhancement of their natural resources for passing on to future generations. Farmers record their decisions to manage their natural resources of soil, water, plants, domestic livestock, fish and wildlife, air, and energy in their Conservation Plan.

Conservation planning assistance involves helping farmers inventory their natural resources, evaluate concerns about them such as degraded soil quality and soil erosion, insufficient or excess water, degraded water quality, degraded plant condition due to poor fertility and or other causes, inadequate feed and forage quality, inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, objectionable impacts to air quality, and inefficient energy use, developing solutions problems found, and evaluating the effects of their decisions.

3. NRCS can provide Technical Assistance on a request basis to implement USDA programs. TA is provided not just through our staff but also through agreements with partners such as our primary partner Conservation Districts but also NGOs and private consultants. If a request can not be serviced in a timely manner or is outside the scope of our program authorities, customers are referred to partners.
4. NRCS can provide Financial Assistance through NRCS administered conservation programs. Participation in NRCS programs is voluntary.
5. NRCS can help farmers address regulations applicable to managing natural resources. Conservation plans *CAN* be used to comply with the new Chapter 102 regulation Sediment and Erosion Control Requirements for Agricultural Activities *IF* it meets all of the new requirements.
6. NRCS can NOT enforce compliance with State regulatory programs! NRCS is NOT authorized by Congress to do so. NRCS is authorized to enforce compliance with its own programs such as ensuring participants stay on schedule with their EQIP contract for instance, or that they are in compliance with the Food Security Act Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation provisions of farm bill legislation.
7. NRCS can NOT provide follow up assistance to ensure farmers are on schedule with implementing practices in their Conservation Plan that are NOT under a USDA contract. Farmer's pick their own schedule to install new practices to be implemented when they are ready, willing, and able. Planners help farmers recognize the worst problems and encourage that they are treated first.
8. NRCS can NOT disclose the farmer's Conservation Plan records. The Conservation Plan is the farmer's decision and NRCS case file records pertaining to the farmer's Conservation Plan are protected by the Privacy Act.
9. NRCS can NOT fill out permit application forms. It is up to the farmer to get needed permits and to comply with applicable laws and regulations.