

National Conservation Planning Partnership

Planning for Tomorrow, Together



Conservation Planning for the Future

American farmers and ranchers are faced with a seemingly impossible task today — to sustainably feed a rapidly growing global population and ensure food security on an ever decreasing number of farmable acres. They must do this while still providing clean water, wildlife habitat, and other ecosystem services that agricultural lands provide for society. And, at the same time, they face annual market uncertainty and small profit margins that challenge their ability to keep operating as family businesses in rural America.

More than ever before, the vitality of American agriculture, grazing lands, and privately owned forests relies on sound, state-of-the-art, science-based information delivered to landowners through modern software, tools, and highly trained technical specialists. As conservationists, we recognize the importance of this one-on-one personalized advice and planning assistance.

For this reason, the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) was formed to emphasize the critical role better planning plays in advancing voluntary conservation efforts on private lands and enhancing conservation and financial assistance delivery to our customers.

Our Goals

NCP has four overarching objectives:

1. Reinvigorate conservation planning;
2. Improve the partnership's capacity to deliver one-on-one conservation planning assistance;
3. Ensure the delivery of voluntary, science-based assistance;
4. Build and sustain a workforce of strong conservation planners.

We are Working to Address Your Needs

We have been working with the help of four subcommittees to ensure we are meeting our customers' expectations for the challenges ahead for conservation and agriculture.

- Communication and Messaging
- Partnership and Leveraging Capacity
- Training, Certification, Technical Processes and Tools
- Performance, Goals, Outcomes and Accountability

What is NCPP?

The National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) represents the efforts of five key national conservation partners to reinvigorate conservation planning by enhancing and strengthening the effectiveness of planning and our partnership workforce.

In 2015, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Association of Conservation Districts, the National Association of State Conservation Agencies, the National Conservation District Employees Association, and the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils signed a memorandum of understanding to bring our staff and members' greatest skills, strengths, and passion to this endeavor.

As NCP efforts grow, we are looking to expand the partnership to leverage all of the possible resources in the conservation planning arena.



Below are a few of our accomplishments to date:

Communication and Messaging Efforts

- Surveyed employees, partners and landowners to identify training and marketing needs.
- Developed internal communications plan, NCPP logo, tagline and visual identity.
- Developed internal conservation planning brochure.
- Developed NCPP briefer with talking points.
- Designed new conservation planning folders.
- Delivered FAQ publication for new conservation planner certification policy.
- Engaging staff via *What Works in the Field* peer-to-peer web conference series.

Technology Access and Improvements

- Implemented Document Management System, to streamline financial assistance contracts.
- Developed National Conservation Planner Database containing 6,400 planners, including 1,200 partners.
- Completed roll-out and expansion of the Conservation Client Gateway.
- Updated Customer Service Toolkit to increase user productivity.
- Completed testing of Conservation Desktop with over 100 tester including partners.
- Appointed POCs for each state for Conservation Desktop activities.
- Delivered a nationwide integrated CDSI training to staff and partners.
- Completed roll-out of Conservation Desktop-Release 1 and trained 175 people as trainers.

Training Access and Opportunities

- Hosted Conservation Boot Camp training for 112 District and 150 NRCS employees.
- Reduced costs by promoting state-led or regionally customizing Conservation Boot Camp training.
- Updated Conservation Planner Policy. (January 26, 2017).
- Developed web-based trainings and alternatives for conservation planner trainings.
- Provided guidance on approval of state sponsored courses and equivalent courses for soil health.
- Issued National Instructions for providing partner access to AgLearn.
- Hosted workshops to assist states with updating state supplements.
- Executed agreements to improve training deliver and access.

Process Improvements and Resource Leveraging

- Collaborated with new partners to provide precision agriculture and economic data for producers.
- Developed core competencies for job approval authorities, alleviating concerns for employee KSAs.
- Placed 550 program support specialists to assist field with ProTracts, FundMgr, and FATracker.
- Hired 250 field level technical staff to strengthen conservation planning cadre in high workload areas.
- Executed an agreement to provide CTA for urban small farmers, organic and specialty crop growers.
- Executed an agreement to demonstrate the high tunnel conservation practice for Tribal communities.
- Completed job approval authority review.

NCPP's next steps are to:

- Continue implementation of the new Conservation Planning Certification Policy and Procedures.
- Revision of Conservation Planning Modules 1-8 and Area Wide Conservation Planning.
- Convert the Economics of Conservation Planning training to an online format.
- Pilot Conservation Planner Internship Framework in FY18.
- Develop proficiency exams for conservation planner designations to efficiently prioritize resources.
- Enter into more agreements with professional organizations to increase availability of specialized continuing ed courses.
- Expand NCP database to include a geospatial mapping tool and portal to allow states to enter and manage data effectively.
- Integrate RSET and other technical tools and Client Gateway into Conservation Desktop for 2018 release.
- Develop a streamlined approach for conservation practice standards.
- Finalize resource concerns, improve screening and assessments to create efficiencies, while maintaining technical integrity.
- Develop external communications products.