



Soil and Water Conservation Checklist for Landowners and Farmers

The following 22 questions are designed to help you consider the soil and water conservation opportunities for your farmland:

1. Do you have a conservation plan for your farm, developed by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the county Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)? When was it last updated?
2. Do you know the current soil losses for your fields? Would it be helpful to see color maps from a soil loss calculator to show how your current cropping practices perform on soil erosion?
3. Do you have vegetative buffer strips along the majority of any streams or waterways flowing through your fields?
4. Have you ever enrolled land into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or considered signing up for the Continuous CRP?
5. Do you use cover crops as a way to protect water quality, improve soil health, or manage nutrients on your land?
6. Do you know the measure of soil organic content of your soils?
7. Do you use strip till or no-tillage practices to limit soil erosion?
8. Do any of your fields experience ephemeral gullies you need to till over in the spring?
9. Have you applied to participate in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) or for Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) cost share funds, for example to install a grass waterway?
10. If you lease farmland, as a landlord or tenant, do you communicate with the other party about soil conservation and how to limit erosion?

11. Do you have a nutrient management plan for your farm to measure and determine your fertilizer needs and usage?
12. Do you have a manure management plan for how livestock wastes are applied to your land, and do you account for the manure's nutrient value when fertilizing your crops?
13. Have you ever signed an agreement or easement with someone else to use your land to dispose of manure?
14. Have you tested the water leaving your land, such as from the tile outlets, to see what levels of nitrates or other nutrients are in it?
15. If you have livestock are your pastures fenced to limit the access of your livestock to the streams or waterways?
16. Do you routinely harvest or remove corn stover or other crop residue, to use as biomass for cellulosic ethanol?
17. Have you visited with local NRCS or SWCD officials to speak about what conservation programs might be of interest or value to you?
18. Do you know if any public funds, such as state or USDA cost-share, have been used on your land to install conservation practices?
19. Is any of your land located in a drainage district or a planned watershed, and if so does a management system exist for the area?
20. Do you have the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) aerial photos for your farm and know how the fields are marked, e.g., as Highly Erodible (HEL) or Wetlands (W)? Do you remember signing USDA form AD-1026 certifying compliance with federal conservation rules?
21. Is any of your farmland operated in a trust or by a farm management company, and if so have you spoken with the farm manager or trustee about your conservation expectations?
22. Are you actively managing any of your land for wildlife habitat or to protect pollinators?