



# CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE

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PREPARED BY  
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Cover photo courtesy MacKenzie Hall

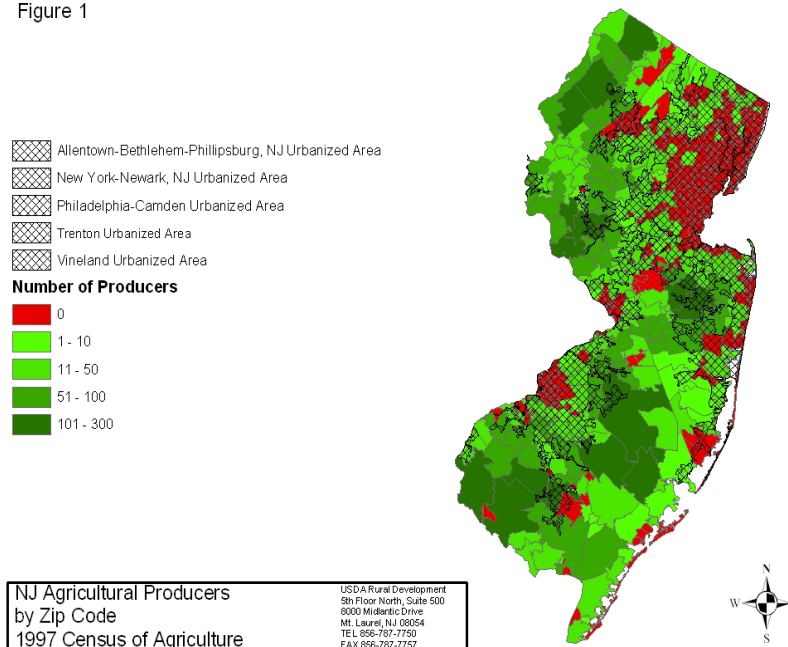
Agriculture’s relationship with conservation has an ironic duality. Residents of states whose agriculture is close to more urbanized areas have shown a strong willingness to fund farmland and open-space preservation. These residents live close enough to farms – sometimes in housing developments right next to them – to appreciate how farming adds to their quality of life.

On the flip side, farming near developed areas creates a demand for those farmers to be more mindful of conservation practices, due to the proximity of their neighbors. Many New Jersey farmers are already proactive in conservation efforts; they realize the benefits, both environmental and financial, of conservation on their farms. A Conservation Plan is one tool that farmers can use at the local level to help protect the natural resources on their farms.

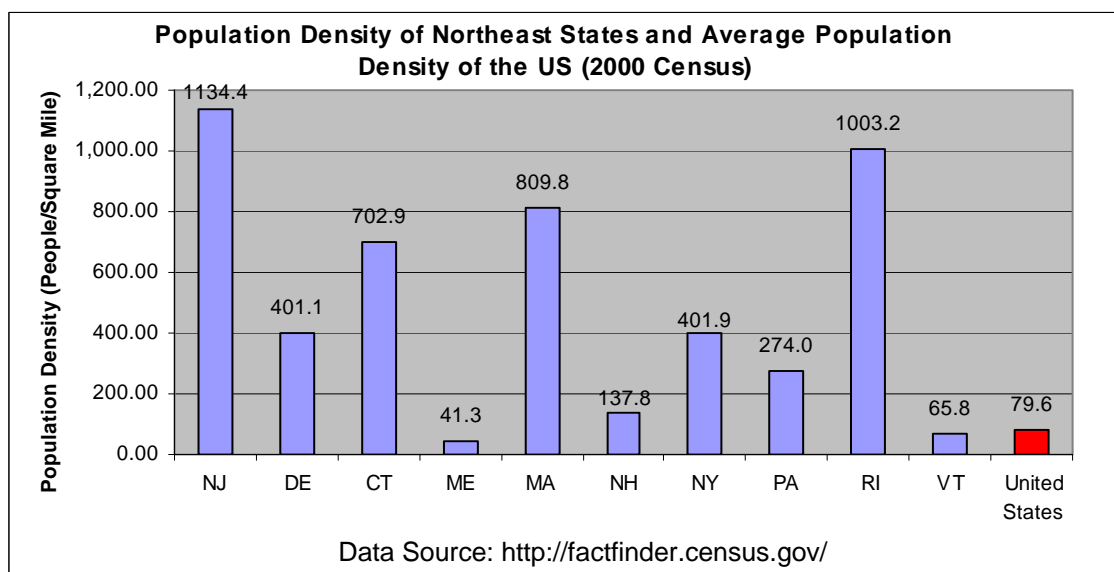


Figure 1

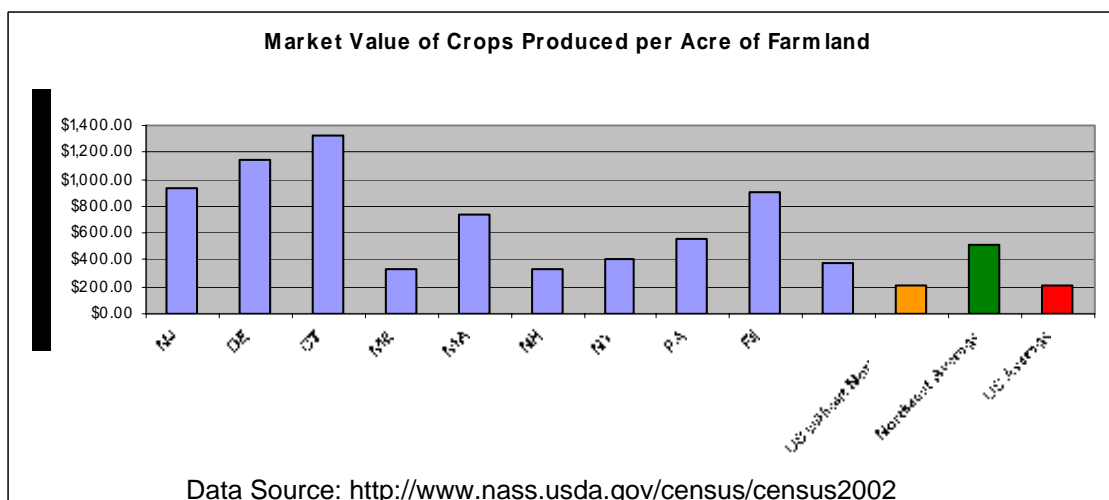
Local conservation efforts allow our state to benefit from the continued work to improve soil health, water quality, wildlife habitat, and the agricultural working landscape, which current and future generations can enjoy regardless of where they live.



The New Jersey Agricultural industry faces a unique set of challenges and opportunities compared to almost anywhere else in the United States. One of the most densely populated states in the nation, New Jersey has managed to maintain her agricultural roots—nearly 17% of the land base is still in active agriculture. Although many of our farms are located in rural areas of the state; in numerous cases the farming community is also integrated with urban and suburban communities. A limited land base and close proximity to the public creates the opportunity for intensive production with direct marketing to the public.



Intensive production requires intensive management of the farm. Wise use of conservation practices can enhance the cost-effectiveness and yield of the farm, as well as public perception. This can lead to increased direct marketing sales and greater profits for the farmer. Conservation plans are one tool that can help farmers manage their natural resources.



# Conservation Planning

The goal of Conservation Planning is to help a landowner or manager better manage the natural resources on their farm. The plan that is developed will consider your operation and evaluate the role of the soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources in relation to how you manage your land. Your plan will document the decisions that you have made as a landowner as well as ideas for the future of your operation. Developing a Conservation Plan will not cost you anything aside from some of your time and thought.

Conservation Plans are NOT regulatory documents and the process of developing a plan is non-regulatory, however in New Jersey, efforts are underway to utilize the farm conservation plan as a mechanism to meet the goals of certain regulations. A plan is put in place to establish the conservation goals that a farm operator is working toward and the path that is planned to achieve these goals. Your Conservation Plan remains confidential between you and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) unless you authorize its release.



## Who can get a Conservation Plan?

A Conservation Plan is developed for a specific piece of property in conjunction with the landowner, land manager, or both. Every agricultural operation should consider developing a Conservation Plan. A plan can be written for:

- Livestock Farms
- Grain Farms
- Vegetable Farms
- Hay Farms
- Nursery Stock Farms
- Aquaculture Operations
- Other Farmland Assessed Operations



## What does a plan include?

The Conservation Plan that is developed by you and your conservation planner will include several parts:

- An aerial photo or other representation
- A soils map and soil descriptions



**NRCS** HACKETTSTOWN SERVICE CENTER  
 101 BILBY RD STE 101  
 HACKETTSTOWN, NJ 07940-1753  
 (908) 852-2576

### Conservation Plan

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

OBJECTIVES: The following progressive plan, when fully implemented, will protect the natural resources of this tract and keep the producer in compliance with the Highly Erodible Land (HEL) portion of the Farm Bill (a) Practice in CRP area reserved for \_\_\_\_\_

**Conservation Crop Rotation (328)**  
 Grow crops in a planned rotation for biodiversity and to provide adequate amounts of organic material for erosion reduction, nutrient balance and maintain soil organic matter. The following rotation(s) are planned for the designated field: 1 year minimum till row crop followed by 2 year minimum till corn. May be substituted for the rotation as desired. Contact NRCS for acceptable alternative crop rotation prior to planting.

Tract	Field	Planned Amount	Month	Year	Applied Amount	Date
No Tract		ac				
	Total	ac				

**Contour Buffer Strips (332)**  
 Strip of perennial grass alternated with wider cultivated strips that are formed on the

**Critical Area Planting (342)**  
 Vegetation will be established and severely eroding areas or other areas requiring extra ordinary measures to establish vegetation.

**Field Border (386)**  
 Establish a suitable field border of perennial warm season grasses where indicated on plan.

CERTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Producer Signature DATE

CERTIFICATION OF:

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST \_\_\_\_\_  
 DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CONSERVATION DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_  
 SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT DATE \_\_\_\_\_

- A narrative discussion of the objectives of the plan
- A list of your management decisions
  - Practices to be implemented to reach your goals
  - An estimated schedule for implementation
- Information sheets that include more detail about the practices that will be implemented

The plan elements listed above are the basic components of all Conservation Plans. Depending on what your specific decisions include, your Conservation Plan may also include more detailed plans for:

- Nutrient management or comprehensive nutrient management
- Pest management
- Irrigation water management
- Engineering designs for structural practices
- Pasture and woodland improvement



## How is this plan developed?

A Conservation Plan is developed in a collaborative manner, between you and your conservation planner. This planning process begins with your request for assistance and a site visit with your planner. During the first visit with your planner you will:



- Walk the property that is being planned to evaluate the resources
- Highlight any natural resource problem areas on the farm
- Discuss your objectives
- Document your typical farming operations, including:
  - Crop rotation
  - Tillage
  - Type and number of animals
  - Other important farm practices
- Discuss potential solutions and alternatives

Your Conservation Plan is developed for your specific property and management. Based on the field visit, your conservation planner will evaluate your property and help you interpret the information about your farm.

At this point, you will decide what changes you can make to protect and improve your land. Your planner will help you by suggesting solutions and alternatives to fit your operation. All of these solutions will be based on the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). The FOTG prescribes practices and standards for the conservation and management of soil, water and related natural resources



People within NRCS who have additional expertise in specific areas may be con-



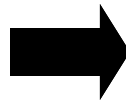
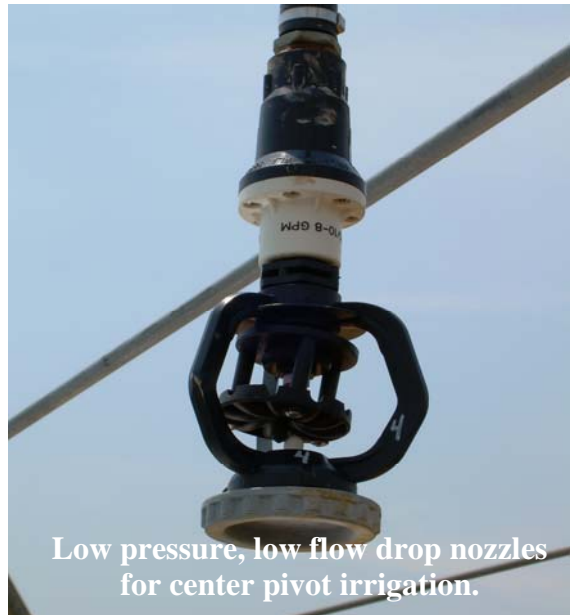
sulted for more detailed management plans or for the engineering of structural practices.

Once your plan is complete, you will be asked to review and approve the final document. The Conservation Plan will be approved by the NRCS and your local Soil Conservation District. Once approved, a confidential copy will remain at your local NRCS office and you will receive a copy for your own records.

## When should a plan be changed?

You can revise your Conservation Plan at any point in the planning process. Revisions will take place prior to your plan being finalized, but there are other times that you should revisit and consider revising your plan. You should speak to your conservation planner and revisit your plan when:

- Changes are made to your operation.
  - Change in crop or tillage
  - Change in the type or density of livestock on the farm
  - Change in land ownership
  - Change in land use
- New technology becomes available
- The plan is not working or could be improved
- You would like to implement other elements of your Plan
- Regulations change



## Why should you get a Conservation Plan?

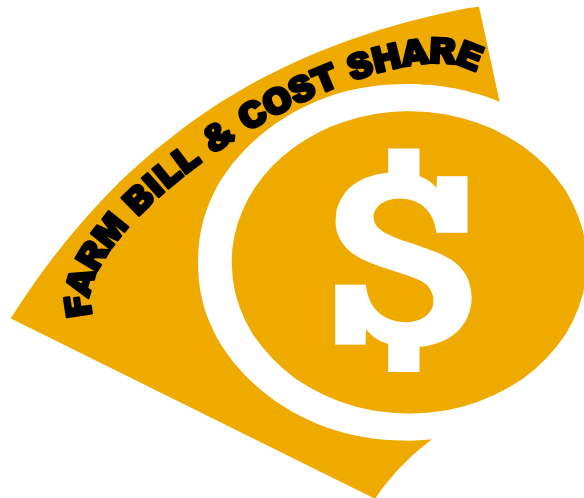
Some people are required to have Conservation Plans. If you are the owner of a preserved farm, it is likely that your deed requires you to have a Conservation Plan for your property. Also, if you are interested in participating in USDA programs, you must meet certain conservation standards. In some cases, this means that you will need a Conservation Plan. If you are not required to have a Conservation Plan, there are still many reasons that you should have one.



Courtesy: Morrispreservation.org

- A Conservation Plan can help you increase the efficiency of your operation
- The planning process will make you aware of all of the natural resources and resource concerns on your property
- A plan can help you to make decisions about your property

- A Conservation Plan may allow you to qualify for funding for conservation projects
- The existence of a Conservation Plan for a property can aid in “Right to Farm” protection
- Having a written plan can help you coordinate your operation with regulations and regulatory authorities



## Implementing your Conservation Plan

Once a Conservation Plan is in place, there are several opportunities to secure funding to help you implement your plan. Programs exist on the federal level through the Farm Bill as well as on the State level through the Farmland Preservation Program. There are also several non-profit organizations that may offer funding. It is best to work with your conservation planner to determine what funding opportunities are available to you.

# **Before and After:**

## **Conservation Practices make a difference!**



**Installing a concrete waste storage facility allows this farm to manage their dairy manure. Storing waste in a concrete facility helps to keep manure from leaching into the ground. This protects water quality and also keeps more nutrients available to spread on crop fields.**





**Before conservation practices were installed, cows had access to the entire streambed. This caused the shorelines and bed of the stream to erode. Fencing, a stream crossing, and a riparian planting still allow cows to cross and drink from the stream while protecting it from further erosion.**





**Severe gully erosion crossed this field, causing soil erosion and leaving portions of the field unharvestable. After a waterway and diversions were installed, water can be safely conveyed off the field with minimal soil and nutrient loss.**



## **Contact Information**

Several agencies are available to help you with conservation—both on and off the farm. Contact information for several agencies is listed below for your information.

### **NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

*Charles M. Kuperus, Secretary*

WWW.STATE.NJ.US/AGRICULTURE/

#### ***DIVISION OF AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES***

Monique Purcell, Director  
(609) 292-5532

#### ***NORTHERN NJ***

**David Clapp**

Agricultural Resource Specialist 3  
Frenchtown: (908) 782-4614 x 110  
Hackettstown: (908) 852-2576 x 117  
Cell Phone: (609) 475-5059  
David.Clapp@ag.state.nj.us

#### ***SOUTHERN NJ***

**Hillary Barile**

Agricultural Resource Specialist 3  
Woodstown: (856) 769-1126  
Vineland: (856) 205-1225 x 3  
Cell Phone: (609) 722-1256 x 3  
Hillary.Barile@ag.state.nj.us

Hillary and Dave work as field staff for the NJDA—Division of Ag and Natural Resources. They can help you develop a conservation plan as well as identify and apply for potential funding sources for implementation of conservation practices.

**NATURAL RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION SERVICE**  
*HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND*

*THOMAS DREWES, State Conservationist*

*WWW.NJ.NRCS.USDA.GOV*

**SERVICE CENTER LOCATIONS**

**Columbus**—*serving Burlington, Camden, and Ocean Counties*

1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Road, Columbus, NJ 08022

**Phone:** (609) 267-1639 ext. 3

**Freehold** — *Serving Mercer, Middlesex, and Monmouth Counties.*

4000 Kozloski Rd,  
PO Box 5033 Freehold, NJ 07728

**Phone:** (732) 462-0075 ext. 3

**Frenchtown** — *serving Hunterdon, Somerset, and Union Counties*

687 Pittstown Rd, Suite 2  
Frenchtown, NJ 08825

**Phone:** (908) 782-4614 ext. 3

**Hackettstown:** *Serving Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties*

Hackettstown Commerce Park, Building #1  
101 Bilby Road Hackettstown, NJ 07840

**Phone:** (908) 852-2576 ext.3

***State Office***

220 Davidson Avenue, 4th Floor, Somerset, NJ 08873

**Phone:** (732) 537-6040

**Northeast Office**—*Located in state office — Serving Bergen, Hudson, Essex, and Passaic Counties.*

**Phone:** (732) 537-6057

**Vineland** — *Serving Atlantic, Cape may, and Cumberland Counties*

Building 3, Suite A, 1317 Main Rd, Vineland NJ 08360

**Phone:** (856) 205-1225 ext. 3

**Woodstown:** *Serving Gloucester and Salem Counties*

51 Cheney Road, Suite 2  
Woodstown, NJ 08098

**Phone:** (856) 769-1126 ext. 3

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is the primary Federal agency that works with private landowners to help them protect their natural resources. NRCS conservationists can help you develop a conservation plan and apply for Federal and State funding to implement it.

# NEW JERSEY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Bergen SCD  
Phone: (201) 261-4407  
Email: acaruso@bergenscd.org  
Manager: Angelo Caruso

Hunterdon SCD  
Phone: (908) 788-9466  
Email: HCSCD@att.net  
Manager: William E. Engisch

Burlington SCD  
Phone: (609) 267-7410  
Email: dyarus@bscd.org  
Manager: Donald P. Yarus

Mercer SCD  
Phone: (609) 586-9603  
Email: mercersoil@aol.com  
Manager: William F. Brash, Jr.

Camden SCD  
Phone: (856) 767-6299  
Email: Robert.dobbs@camdenscd.org  
Manager: Robert K. Dobbs, Jr.

Morris SCD  
Phone: (973) 285-2953  
Email: morrisoil@optonline.net  
Manager: Joseph P. Dunn

Cape Atlantic SCD  
Phone: (609)625-3144  
Email: capeatlanticSCD@comcast.net  
Manager: Dominick J. Cassetta, Jr.

Ocean SCD  
Phone: (609) 971-7002  
Email: info@ocscd.org  
Manager: David B. Friedman, CPESC

Cumberland-Salem SCD  
Phone: (856) 451-2422  
Email: cumbsoil@aol.com  
Manager: Garry E. Timberman

Somerset—Union SCD  
Phone: (908) 526-2701  
Email: soilconsrv@co.somerset.nj.us  
Manager: Ernest H. Thurlow

Freehold SCD  
Phone: (732) 683-8500  
Email: info@freeholdscd.org  
Manager: Ines M. Grimm

Sussex SCD  
Phone: (973) 579-5074  
Email: Sussex@sussexscd.org  
Manager: Winifred A. Straub

Gloucester SCD  
Phone: (856) 589-5250  
Email: Gloucester@gloucesterscd.org  
Manager: Victor P. De Vasto

Warren SCD  
Phone: (908) 852-2579  
Email: wscsd@verizon.net  
Manager: David C. Schaaf

Hudson, Essex, Passaic SCD  
Phone (973) 364-0786  
Email: hepscd@bellatlantic.net  
Manager: Glen Van Olden

Soil Conservation Districts are responsible for implementing programs that conserve, control and prevent erosion and sedimentation, control pollution from sediment and associated nonpoint source pollutants on agricultural and urbanizing lands and, the conservation of water for agricultural purposes. Program implementation is accomplished through the core Conservation Partnership which includes the State Soil Conservation Committee, NJDA, Soil Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS, NJ Association of Conservation Districts and Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

\* Photos courtesy NJ NRCS or NJDA employees unless otherwise noted.







