

How to Identify Resource Concerns and Practices

(AACD Technical Reference #A-19)

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The Resource Need Assessment and Conservation Plans (hereafter called Plans) being developed for each of the NRCDs in Arizona are organized around a set of Resource Concerns developed by the NRCS and a list of applicable practices that can be applied to address those concerns. Plans for other areas of interest (AOI), e.g., watersheds, may also follow this outline. The material presented in this Technical Guide is intended to help those preparing such plans to identify the resource concerns and the practices that may be applicable to addressing them. Identification of resource concerns and applicable practices is also information that will be entered into the ConserveAZ Portal as planning progresses.

A *resource concern* is a problem that has been identified as contributing to resource degradation, a danger to humans or animals, an inefficient use of resources, or a lack of adequate infrastructure to support conservation-based management. In the initial planning, resource concerns may be identified in very general terms based on local experience and generalized data such as projections of vegetation change. The concerns may be estimates of where resource concerns are likely to exist given the information available, but actually documenting whether the concerns do exist, and their location and severity, will depend on further field documentation.

The NRCS has developed a list of resource concerns that are used in planning and setting priorities for that agency and that list has been adopted for use in the ConserveAZ Portal and the District Plans. The list was developed for use nationwide and contains 47 different concerns (see AACD Ref. # A-7 “Resource Concerns and Definitions”). In order to simplify the process of identifying resource concerns this list has been shortened to 15 concerns most commonly encountered on rangeland, forestland, and cropland in Arizona. The other concerns may occur in some cases, and may be important, but they will usually not be among the most important issues in any given District or AOI. The resource concerns are listed and briefly described in the NRCS List of Resource Concerns and Definitions.

NRCS also defines a long list of land management *practices* that may be used to address one or more of the resource concerns. A resource concern identifies a problem; a practice identifies a possible solution to the problem. For example, if Plant Structure and Composition is the resource concern, there may be several applicable practices to correct this depending on the vegetation type, precipitation zone, topography, etc. The practices might include one or more of the following: prescribed grazing, brush management, prescribed fire, mechanical range treatments, reseeding, etc.

The complete list of NRCS conservation practices contains over 400 different practices that may be used for specific situations. Many of these practices are not generally applicable to rangelands and forestlands that occur in Arizona, and many are used mainly in areas where cropland agriculture is mainly rain fed rather than intensively irrigate as in Arizona. Therefore, the list was shortened to about 50 practices which are commonly used in Arizona, and these will be the ones available to choose from in the ConserveAZ Portal. The spreadsheet called “NRCS Resource Concerns vs Practices” (AACD Ref. # A-20) shows these common practices and which resource concerns to which they may be applicable. The individuals preparing the Plans will have to decide which practices are likely to be effective for the resource concerns they have identified. Again, this may be a tentative decision at first, and could be changed as more complete site-specific information is obtained.

For a complete list of all practices and a description of each practice go to the following URL:

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849

You can download a PDF file describing each practice under the heading “Info Sheet/Practice Overview.” NRCS standards for each practice can also be downloaded on this page and the physical effects of the practice can be downloaded under CPPE on the same page.

The descriptions of the practices selected for use in the ConserveAZ Portal have been downloaded for convenience and are presented in “Conservation Practice Descriptions” (AACD Ref. # A-8).

The steps are:

1. Identify resource concerns using “Resource Concerns and Definitions” (AACD Ref. # A-7)
2. Identify practices for each concern using “Resource Concerns vs Practices” (AACD Ref. # A-20)
3. If you need more information on what a practice involves in order to decide if it is applicable go to “Conservation Practice Descriptions” (AACD Ref. # A-8).