



# Resource Plan Format and Content

USDA • Natural Resources Conservation Service • July 1999

### What is it?

The Resource Plan describes the planning process and documents all its outcomes—the concerns and objectives of stakeholders, resource inventories, resource management strategies, and implementation information.

### Why is it important?

The Resource Plan provides written guidance to local people about the management of their resources over time. The plan demonstrates broad community support for the identified resource management alternatives. It informs grant-making agencies and technical experts who help with implementation about current conditions in the planning area, the interests of stakeholders, and their preferred strategies for managing natural resources.

### When do we do it?

Writing the Resource Plan begins after resource inventorying has been completed and the Planning Committee has identified their preferred management alternatives.

### How do we do it?

Resource Plans come in a variety of formats. Some are professionally produced glossy publications with photos and drawings; others are text-only documents prepared on a home computer. To keep the plan reader-friendly, technical details might be provided in appendices. Or a single Resource Plan might consist of several different documents—a leaflet highlighting major elements of the plan, a simplified plan for the general public, and detailed technical information for stakeholders who will be directly involved in implementation.

No matter how its formatted, most stakeholders have found the following topics to be necessary minimum elements of an effective resource plan.

- Title Page
- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Description of the Planning Area
- Public Participation
- Problems, Opportunities and Objectives
- Scope of the Plan
- Comparison of Alternatives
- Recommended Alternatives
- Implementation
- Supporting Maps and Data

In addition, if the Planning Committee received funding from any organization for the purpose of developing a resource management plan, they'll need to ensure their plan meets the requirements of that organization. Here's more information about each topic.

**Title Page** - This page indicates the name of the planning area (watershed, city, etc.) and its location; who developed the plan (usually the Planning Committee); supporting partners (usually SWCD, NRCS, etc.); and the date the plan was completed.

**Executive Summary** - This is a brief overview of the plan. The summary is less than two pages in length. Nothing is included here that is not described in detail in the body of the plan. In addition to informing the reader about the contents of the plan, the summary is useful for related publications, to distribute at meetings and other events, and to provide to the media.

**Introduction** - The purpose of the introduction is to help the reader understand the rationale for the planning action. It introduces the resource concerns, objectives, and goals of stakeholders. Unique circumstances in the planning area which motivated the planning project are included here. Identify all people who served on the Planning Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee. Acknowledge all organizations that provided input, sponsored the project, and otherwise contributed to the development of the plan.

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**Description of the Planning Area** - This section describes the planning area for all “SWAPA+H” elements— or for the Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals and Humans. The sources of this ecological and human information are the resource inventories developed by the Technical Advisory Committee (refer to “Conducting Resource Inventories”).

Land use changes and current management activities are particularly critical for understanding the physical setting of the planning area. Describe the present land use and predicted future land use. Long-range trends for social and economic conditions affecting land use and management are also forecasted. This information is needed in order to forecast expected conditions with and without implementation of the resource management alternatives.

At a minimum, include the following information about physical conditions in the planning area:

- Land Use
- Agriculture
- Soils
- Water Resources
- Climate
- Erosion
- Sedimentation
- Forestry Resources

Include at least the following information about human aspects of the planning area:

- Demographics
- Cultural Resources
- Relevant regulations, activities and programs
- Employment, development, and population trends
- Recreation
- Attitudes and values

**Public Participation** - This section documents the opportunities provided for public participation throughout the planning process— from the initial request for NRCS/SWCD assistance to preparation and distribution of the final plan. Describe the citizen-based Planning Committee. Include a description of all public input activities initiated by the Planning Committee, the names of participating organizations, and the results. Refer to “Public Participation in Resource Planning.”

**Problems, Opportunities and Objectives** - This section details the problems needing to be solved, existing opportunities, and the goals and objectives of stakeholders in the planning area (see fact sheets “Identifying Resource Concerns” and “Determining Objectives”). This information demonstrates the need for resource planning. It also justifies the implementation of the resource management strategies that are advocated in the plan.

Each problem or opportunity is quantified and its extent and magnitude clearly explained. Resource inventories compiled by the Technical Advisory Committee are used to quantify existing conditions. Discuss problems and opportunities for both current and expected future conditions.

**Scope of the Plan** - Scoping is used to determine what is important to investigate during the planning process. It involves determining the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts that need to be considered (see “Scoping the Planning Process”). This section describes the scoping process. Items which were considered during the planning, such as cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, human health and safety, water quality, or wetlands are described here.

This section also indicates which issues were considered, but found to not require detailed discussion in the plan. The relative insignificance of these issues should be agreed upon by all parties involved in the planning.

**Comparison of Alternatives** - This section conveys why certain management strategies are being advocated by the Planning Committee. It describes the development and comparison of alternatives and the selection of recommended actions (see “Evaluating Alternatives”).

Describe each alternative action, including the “no action” alternative. Include information about impacts and effects of each alternative for SWAPA +H concerns. For each alternative, describe any required mitigation, including costs and impacts.

**Recommended Actions** - Identify the resource management strategies preferred by stakeholders in the planning area (see “Making Decisions”). These are the strategies that stakeholders will work to implement. Describe in detail all activities. For structural measures, review avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation, if needed. Also indicate the permits required for the projects. Describe the costs of the proposed actions, who is responsible for them, and how success will be measured.

**Implementation** - The Implementation section of the plan is a schedule detailing who, when, and how the preferred actions will be implemented. (Refer to “Implementing the Resource Plan”).

**Supporting Maps and Data** - Provide as a minimum the following support maps: location map, project area map, potential mitigation areas. Also include in this section any additional data not otherwise detailed in the plan, such as Technical Advisory Committee reports.

### **The Next Step**

After a draft of the plan is written, it is distributed to the Planning Committee, the Technical Advisory Committee, all interested stakeholders, and everyone who will be involved in implementation. After all comments and concerns have been addressed, the final plan is similarly distributed, and implementation formally begins. The fact sheet “Implementing the Resource Plan” provides more information about implementation.