



Why Resource Planning?

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Do any of these describe the natural resource concerns in your community?

- ***The issues are so complex that people must work together to address them.***
- ***Everyone cannot agree about how to address the concerns.***
- ***Management strategies will take a long time to implement, and they will affect others.***
- ***Management strategies will require public funds or technical assistance to implement.***

Natural resource issues such as these can be most effectively addressed with the Resource Planning process. Locally-led resource planning is used to develop a resource management plan. The resource plan identifies actions that the community supports and strategies for how they will be accomplished. Because grant-making agencies often look for evidence of planning and public support as a criteria for funding, the resource plan can then be used to compete for funds to implement solutions.

How do we do Resource Planning?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) along with our partners, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), use Resource Planning to help communities develop resource management plans that meet locally-identified objectives. NRCS/SWCD facilitates this process when called upon by local people. Often the county SWCD will formally sponsor the planning effort, but the project may also be initiated by a municipality, a county agency, or concerned local citizens.

Moderately-sized watersheds comprise the typical planning area, although the same general process works equally well for large drainage basins, rural or urban towns, or single plots of land. Developing a resource

management plan takes about a year or two, depending on the size and complexity of the planning area.

Planning Partners

Resource Planning essentially involves the interactions of three groups—a **Planning Committee**, a **Technical Advisory Committee**, and the **“public” or the community** of all people in the planning area.

The Planning Committee is a group of about 10 or 15 people who are typical of all the stakeholders in the planning area. Stakeholders are those who will be affected by or have an interest in what happens in the planning area.

Stakeholders on the Planning Committee may include:

- Residents and/or landowners
- Farm owners & operators
- Local municipal officials
- Business & industry representatives
- Environment & conservation groups
- Other special interest representatives

The Planning Committee begins by identifying the resource concerns and objectives in the planning area. Then with assistance from the technical advisors and with periodic input from the public, they develop a management plan to solve the problems. Finally, with partners in the community, the Planning Committee--or a new “Implementation Committee”--coordinates efforts to implement the plan.

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is made up of subject-area specialists from various public and private organizations. Technical advisors work as an interdisciplinary team to help the Planning Committee develop the management plan. The TAC inventories resources and formulates alternative solutions for the Planning Committee’s consideration. They help the Planning Committee understand impacts and effects of alternatives on the natural resources and the people in the planning area. Technical advisors are also called upon to help implement actions selected by the Planning Committee.

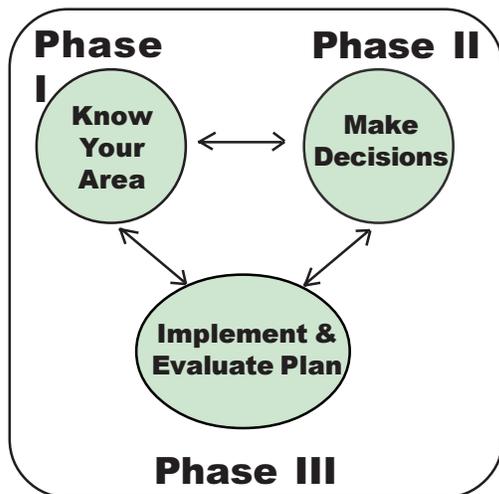
Technical Advisors may include:

- Federal and state natural resource agencies
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Universities and Cooperative Extension
- Local planning and zoning offices
- County Board members
- Public works departments
- Business and Industrial groups

The final resource plan must be acceptable to the *public*. The public are all stakeholders in the planning area. Some serve on the Planning Committee or Technical Advisory Committee. The remaining “non-committee” public contributes to the planning project by providing periodic input on their concerns, preferred alternatives, and desired outcomes.

The Nine-Step, Three-Phase Planning Process

NRCS uses a Nine-Step, Three Phase Resource Planning process. Here are more details about each phase.



Phase One

This is the information-gathering and data-collection phase. Phase One has four steps:

- 1. Identify concerns and opportunities**
- 2. Determine objectives**
- 3. Inventory resources**
- 4. Analyze resource data**

First, the Planning Committee identifies their resource concerns and opportunities using a nominal group process. Then they identify their objectives, or “desired future conditions,” for each concern.

Next, technical advisors conduct inventories of the resources related to the concerns of the Planning Committee and analyze the data they gathered.

Beginning in Phase One, and continuing throughout the planning process, the Planning Committee will engage with the public. They can seek input, ideas, and suggestions via the media, presentations to community groups, public meetings, brochures, and exhibits. This public participation creates awareness about the

planning process and sets the stage for successful implementation of the final resource plan.

Phase One involves learning about the planning area. During this phase, the Planning Committee will learn about existing conditions, resource concerns, and opportunities. To understand the planning area, the Committee works with their technical advisors, conducts tours (for example, “Rapid Resource Appraisals”), brings in educational speakers, or networks with other Planning Committees.

Phase Two

Decisions about what to do are made during Phase Two. During the three steps of Phase Two, the Planning Committee will come to understand the variety of solutions to their concerns, and they’ll select preferred management alternatives. Phase Two involves:

- 5. Formulate alternatives**
- 6. Evaluate alternatives**
- 7. Make decisions**

Using the information they collected, the technical advisors suggest a number of alternatives that will meet the objectives identified by the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee evaluates these alternatives and makes decisions about which actions they advocate. These decisions and supporting information are then documented in the resource management plan.

Phase Three

Phase Three is the implementation and evaluation phase. There are two steps in Phase Three:

- 8. Implement the plan**
- 9. Evaluate the plan**

During this last phase, funds and technical assistance are sought to implement the various actions articulated in the resource plan. As the plan is implemented, the results are continuously evaluated and modifications made as necessary.

Resource Planning

- Involves all stakeholders
- Uses consensus planning
- Identifies desired future conditions
- Inventories resources
- Determines priorities for action
- Builds local partnerships & coordinates with government
- Ensures implementation and follow-up

To learn more about resource planning in your community, contact the USDA NRCS Service Center nearest you. It is listed in the phone book under U.S. Government. In the appendix of the RPG is a list of all Illinois county NRCS/SWCD offices. The Illinois NRCS homepage can be found at www.il.nrcs.usda.gov