



Chapter 8: Implementation

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

INTRODUCTION

Implementing a watershed conservation corridor plan is a long, diplomatic process of collaborative problem-solving. All stakeholders have a role to play. Key implementation issues include:

- Landowner participation
- Funding and other forms of support
- Compliance with federal, state, and local regulations

Voluntary commitment of land resources by landowners is the key to implementing any watershed scale conservation corridor plan. Landowners participate in conservation corridor projects for many reasons but two stand out, increased economic returns and somewhat surprisingly, increased wildlife. It is assumed that all landowners are well aware of these and other benefits conservation corridors provide. Yet NRCS biologists cite a lack of knowledge of the value of conservation corridors as one reason that landowners are reluctant to participate in corridor projects. Landowners need to be informed about and constantly reminded of the value of conservation corridors. Chapter 4 in this manual provides numerous examples of corridor benefits that can be shared with landowners. This information needs to be disseminated beyond the NRCS office through a variety of outlets to reach the largest possible audience. It can be incorporated into newspaper articles, feature



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pieces in trade journals, extension service fact sheets, TV spots, FFA and 4H educational programs, and a variety of other information sources.

Ideally many landowners and communities in the watershed will participate in an area-wide planning process. In reality, some will voluntarily agree to commit land resources to conservation corridors and others will decline to participate. Having participating landowners speak publicly on behalf of projects can help increase participation. Neighbors talking to neighbors have greater potential for convincing their peers to cooperate in a corridor project than any group or organization. Consequently, it is essential participating landowners be kept informed and involved as the project progresses. Cultivating their enthusiasm by publishing their successes, answering their questions, and advising them on long-term corridor management will go a long way toward maintaining their continued support and willingness to talk about corridor benefits with their neighbors.



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In the 1997 survey, NRCS biologists estimated that only 15% of farmers and ranchers nationwide have participated in a conservation corridor project. They estimated that an additional 20% would be willing to participate at some level. The same biologists report that lack of sufficient financial support is the number one reason the remaining 65% may not participate in conservation corridor projects. Clearly, adequate financial resources are critical to implementation of any watershed plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIPS

In today's political environment, public, private, and non-profit partnerships are absolutely necessary to assemble the support necessary to implement watershed scale projects. Each of the case studies presented in this manual relied on partnerships. The following partners are actively involved in projects according to NRCS biologists.

- Landowners
- State agencies
- Federal agencies
- Local government
- Soil and water conservation districts
- Private non-profit conservation organizations
 - Nature Conservancy
 - Quail Unlimited
 - Pheasants Forever
 - Trout Unlimited
 - National Wild Turkey Federation
 - Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
 - Ducks Unlimited
 - Audubon Society
- Extension services
- Farm bureaus
- Community groups

This list is not comprehensive but does suggest the wide range of agencies and organizations willing to contribute to conservation corridor planning and implementation. The conservationist's charge is to build the partnerships necessary to convert plans into corridor habitat.

Before an area-wide or conservation plan can be implemented, all necessary titles, easements, permits and other types of authorization must be acquired. These legal aspects of the project, whether federal, state, or local, are identified in the inventory phase of the planning process and tracked through each succeeding phase. They will vary from state to state and with each project. However, a number of federal regulations should be reviewed for each project to determine if they apply.

States, regional planning authorities, counties, municipalities and special use or resource districts may also have regulations that require compliance and project approval. An excellent publication on plan implementation entitled *Conservation Partnerships: A Field Guide to Public-Private Partnering for Natural Resource Conservation* is available from:

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