



PROGRAMS



The Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)

The Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) modernizes and streamlines NRCS' conservation planning and program delivery, reduces workload on field staff, and improves the customer experience by creating an efficient application process.

It is estimated that CART will save more than 200,000 hours of field office staff time.

CART is part of the NRCS of the Future effort which is making meaningful changes and improvements to all programs and services which will streamline processes, introduce efficiencies, incorporate technology, and improve communication and data availability.

HOW WILL CART BENEFIT EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS?

Field staff will have more time to provide technical assistance and producers will have less paperwork and fewer burdens in accessing our programs and services. CART reduces time spent managing conservation plans, program applications, and program contracts.

WHAT WAS THE PROCESS BEFORE CART?

NRCS assessed, evaluated, and prioritized conservation programs differently. The Conservation Stewardship Program used the Conservation Activity Evaluation Tool, while the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Agricultural Management Assistance Program rankings were completed using the Application Evaluation & Ranking Tool. That meant that a producer was required to submit multiple applications for the same land -- one for each program.

WHAT WILL THE PROCESS BE AFTER CART?

- **Streamlined delivery** of services and integration of all Financial Assistance Programs, resulting in one application and one contract, regardless of program.
- **Centralized system** for financial and technical assistance; including planning, applications, and ranking.
- **Simplified** integrated planning and program application process.
- **Improved conservation delivery** through a program neutral resource assessment, evaluation of alternatives, and application ranking in one unified system.
- **Reduced time** between program application and conservation implementation by eliminating duplicative data entry processes.
- **Automated** CPA-52 documentation that is in sync with assessment of resource concerns, planned practices, and program ranking.

HOW DOES CART WORK?

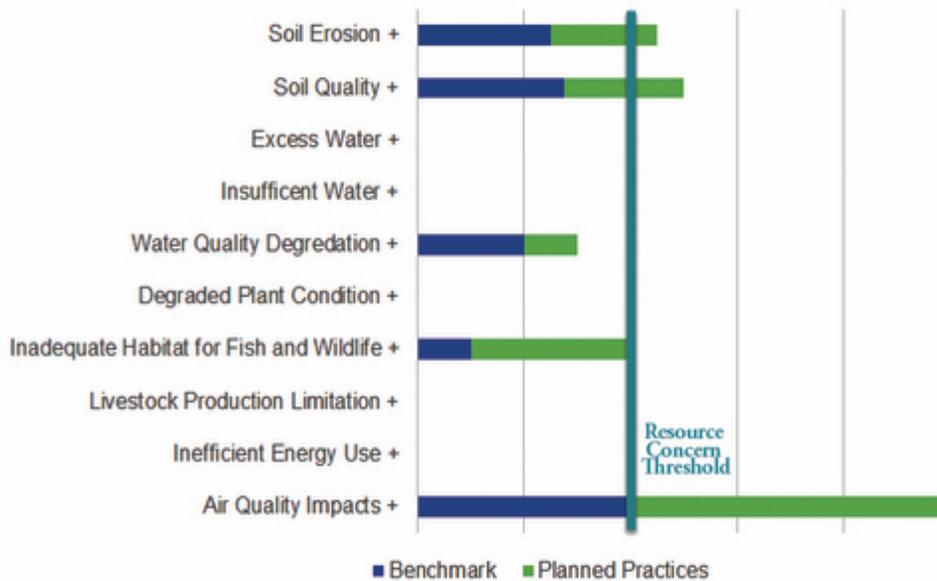
- Planners will use CART to assess a client's request(s) for assistance by evaluating the resource concerns, planned practices, and site vulnerability, while also ranking a client's request(s) for assistance in multiple funding pools for NRCS program funding consideration.
- To start a CART assessment, NRCS staff will select land units for evaluation in CART (all land uses will be available for selection). A base land inventory will be completed and the tool will use geospatial analysis to identify resource concern potential and vulnerabilities, as well as identify resource concern priorities, intersecting program ranking pools, and special resource concern areas (such as priority watersheds).
- Planners can also identify and assess resource concerns not captured by geospatial analysis. After the inventory assessment, planners can select conservation practices to create alternative plans for the client to address any resource concerns.
- Clients will then have the opportunity to select which ranking pools they would like to apply for to be evaluated for funding. CART simultaneously ranks the program neutral request for assistance in multiple funding pools and programs.

WHEN WILL CART BE READY AND WILL TRAINING BE PROVIDED?

On February 14, 2019, the first of several versions of CART will be delivered to the agency. User testing and training will take place in the spring and summer of 2019 for subsequent deployment to the field. The agency expects to fully deploy CART in 2020.

The example CART graph below highlights the client's score for different resource assessments and their score *after* implementing planned conservation practices.

Resource Assessment



COMING SOON: An NRCS of the Future **USDA Connect Community** is in development. This is a place where employees can learn more about the effort, who's involved, projects that are completed, and how these efforts will improve the customer and employee experience.



NRCS of the Future aims to make meaningful improvements to the way we implement our programs and services. Our goal is to ensure we're meeting the changing needs of our customers and making the greatest impact on conservation. We want to make the experience our customers have when they walk into their local field office as successful as it can be.

This is *your* NRCS of the Future.

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