Chapter 18  Conservation Practices

18.1 Overview
This chapter covers data elements relating to:

- Conservation Practices

Data entry screens for Conservation Practices:

18.2 What’s New

- Update of section 18.4.1 Conditions for Data Collection to reflect updates to land cover/use codes in Chapter 6.
- Practice 575 now correctly labeled as “Trails and Walkways” instead of “Animal Trails and Walkways.”

18.3 Critical Points to Remember

- Conservation practice application and needs are determined for the conservation management unit (CMU). The point need not fall directly on the practice to be considered applied/needed for the point. The area of consideration for determining conservation application/need may extend beyond the segment boundary, but must be in the conservation management unit where the sample point falls.
- Conservation practices should be recorded if visually apparent for any NRI year in which they are applied, maintained, and functioning according to the State practice standard. They are not just reported the year they are first established. For example, the practice Pond [Practice = 378] should be reported when the pond is initially established and thereafter as long as it is maintained and functioning according to the practice standard.
18.4 Preliminary Steps

18.4.1 Conditions for Data Collection

• For the non-Federal range sample, conservation practice data are documented for non-Federal points with land cover/use of grassland (LCU = 2001 Grassland defined as range or 2000 Grassland not defined as range) or scrub shrub (LCU = 2201 Scrub Shrub defined as range or 2200 Scrub Shrub not defined as range).
• For the non-Federal pasture sample, conservation practice data are documented for non-Federal points with land cover/use of grassland (LCU = 2001 Grassland defined as range or 2000 Grassland not defined as range) or scrub shrub (LCU = 2201 Scrub Shrub defined as range or 2200 Scrub Shrub not defined as range).
• For the BLM range sample, conservation practice data are documented for BLM-managed Federal points with land cover/use of 2001 Grassland defined as range or 2201 Scrub Shrub defined as range.

18.4.2 Ancillary Resources

In addition to the basic data collection materials noted in chapter 2, the following ancillary resource is required:

• Field Office Technical Guide Section IV (See appropriate state.)

Materials useful in collecting data for this chapter include:

• National Handbook of Conservation Practices
• Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Conservation Practices
• Glossary
• Ancillary information provided by field office staff

18.5 Data Collection Procedure for Conservation Practices

18.5.1 Definitions

Conservation practice. A specific treatment, such as a structural or vegetative measure, or management technique commonly used to meet specific needs in planning and implementing conservation for which standards and specifications have been developed. Conservation practices are in the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, which is based on the National Handbook of Conservation Practices [NPPH-98]. The practices recorded for NRI have been applied to the area of land in which the NRI point falls or the portion of the field that would be used in conservation planning (CMU). The point need not fall on a specific practice. [NRI-97]

Each state determines which national practice standards will be adapted for use in their state and issues them as state conservation practice standards in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide. The state adds technical details and minimum standards for practice application. This guide should be referenced for state-specific practice information. Practices reported as applied for the point must meet the minimum standards established in the published state practice standards.

Conservation Management Unit (CMU). For purposes of the NRI, a defined area for
consideration of a protocol. For conservation practices, the CMU shall be considered equivalent to the field (fenced or delineated by other means) where the NRI point resides. If no field boundary exists, use a distance of 1,000 ft as a boundary. Do not cross public roads, railroads, or obvious ownership boundaries within the 1,000 ft distance. [NRI-2008 Pastureland On-Site Study].

18.5.2 Procedure

1. Identify the CMU in which the point falls for the current survey year.

2. Identify any conservation practices that are applied in the specified area associated with the point.
   - A detailed definition of each NRI conservation practice and the appropriate land cover/use category are included in Section 18.6, Supporting Materials.
   - To be considered applied, a conservation practice must:
     - be visually apparent on the site,
     - meet the national standard definition and the minimum state standard, and
     - be functioning and maintained according to the intended purpose.
   - If multiple sample points occur within the same field or treatment unit, conservation practice information must be entered for each point.

3. Enter the applied practice information in the CASI.
   - Check the Yes (Y) box for any applied practices for the current survey year.
   - Check the No (N) box if the practice is not present.
   - A Yes (Y) or No (N) must be checked for each practice on all CASI screens (Set I and Set II).

4. If a ‘no’ is entered for a practice, determine if the practice is needed to treat a resource concern or facilitate other conservation practices in a resource management system.
   - Check the Yes (Y) box if the practice is needed.
   - Check the No (N) box if the practice is not needed.
   - A Yes (Y) or No (N) must be checked for each practice shown as not applied.

Note: Depending on initial land classification (pasture or rangeland), some practices will be grayed out so they cannot be answered.
### 18.6 Supporting Materials

**Table 18-1.** Summary of practice codes, names, and definitions (source: National Handbook of Conservation Practices)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Number</th>
<th>Practice Name</th>
<th>Practice Description</th>
<th>Range only</th>
<th>Pasture only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>314</td>
<td>Brush Management</td>
<td>Removal, reduction, or manipulation of nonherbaceous plants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338</td>
<td>Prescribed Burning</td>
<td>Applying controlled fire to a predetermined area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>378</td>
<td>Pond</td>
<td>A water impoundment made by constructing an embankment or by excavating a pit or dugout.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment</td>
<td>Linear plantings of single or multiple rows of trees or shrubs or sets of linear plantings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>382</td>
<td>Fence</td>
<td>A constructed barrier to livestock, wildlife, or people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>390</td>
<td>Riparian Herbaceous Cover</td>
<td>Grasses, grass-like plants and forbs that are tolerant of intermittent flooding or saturated soils and that are established or managed in the transitional zone between terrestrial and aquatic habitats.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>393</td>
<td>Filter Strip</td>
<td>A strip or area of herbaceous vegetation that removes contaminants from overland flow.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>449</td>
<td>Irrigation Water Management</td>
<td>The process of determining and controlling the volume, frequency and application rate of irrigation water in a planned, efficient manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>512</td>
<td>Forage and Biomass Planting</td>
<td>Establishing native or introduced forage species.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>516</td>
<td>Pipeline</td>
<td>Pipeline having an inside diameter of 8 inches or less.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>528</td>
<td>Prescribed Grazing</td>
<td>Managing the controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing animals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>548</td>
<td>Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment</td>
<td>Modifying physical soil and/or plant conditions with mechanical tools by treatments, such as pitting, contour furrowing, and ripping or subsoiling.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Number</td>
<td>Practice Name</td>
<td>Practice Description</td>
<td>Range only</td>
<td>Pasture only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550</td>
<td>Range Planting</td>
<td>Establishment of adapted perennial vegetation, such as grasses, forbs, legumes, shrubs, and trees.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>574</td>
<td>Spring Development</td>
<td>Utilizing springs and seeps to provide water for a conservation need.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>575</td>
<td>Trails and Walkways</td>
<td>A trail is a constructed path with a vegetated or earthen surface. A walkway is a constructed path with an artificial surface. A trail/walkway is used to facilitate the movement of animals, people, or off-road vehicles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>614</td>
<td>Watering Facility</td>
<td>A device (tank, trough, or other watertight container) for providing animal access to water.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>642</td>
<td>Water Well</td>
<td>A hole drilled, dug, driven, bored, jetted, or otherwise constructed to an aquifer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>666</td>
<td>Forest Stand Improvement</td>
<td>The manipulation of species composition, stand structure and stocking by cutting or killing selected trees and understory vegetation.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>