

The NRCS-CPA-52

A planning and
decisionmaking tool



Environmental Evaluation (EE)

- Specific to NRCS
- Required for all conservation planning activities
- Considers impacts of alternatives on
 - Soil, Water, Air, Plant, Animal, and Energy resources
 - Human social and economic concerns
 - “Special Environmental Concerns”
- Used to determine the level of NEPA analysis needed when NRCS funds or authorizes a planned activity
 - Categorical Exclusion
 - Environmental Assessment
 - Environmental Impact Statement

NEPA Sec. 102

...all agencies of the federal government shall

- A. utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decisionmaking which may have an impact on man's environment;
- B. identify and develop methods and procedures...which will insure that...environmental amenities and values may be given appropriate consideration in decisionmaking along with economic and technical considerations....

NRCS NEPA Implementing Regulations

[7 CFR, Part 650]

- Environmental evaluation (EE) is the part of planning that inventories and estimates the potential effects on the human environment of alternative solutions to resource problems.
- The EE integrates environmental concerns throughout the planning, installation, and operation of NRCS-assisted projects. The EE applies to all assistance provided by NRCS...

7 CFR Part
650.3 (b)(4)

Insure that plans satisfy identified needs and at the same time minimize adverse effects of planned actions on the human environment through interdisciplinary planning before providing technical and financial assistance.

An environmental evaluation is a concurrent part of the planning process in which the potential long-term and short-term impacts of an action on people, their physical or social surroundings, and nature are evaluated and alternative actions explored. The EE is required for all NRCS planning activities and is documented on Form NRCS-CPA-52, “Environmental Evaluation Worksheet.”

Required for planning and for programs!

PLANNING:

GM 180, Part 409(H): The EE, which may lead to an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS), **will be conducted for all NRCS planning activities** and will be used to help determine the level of NEPA documentation required

PROGRAMS:

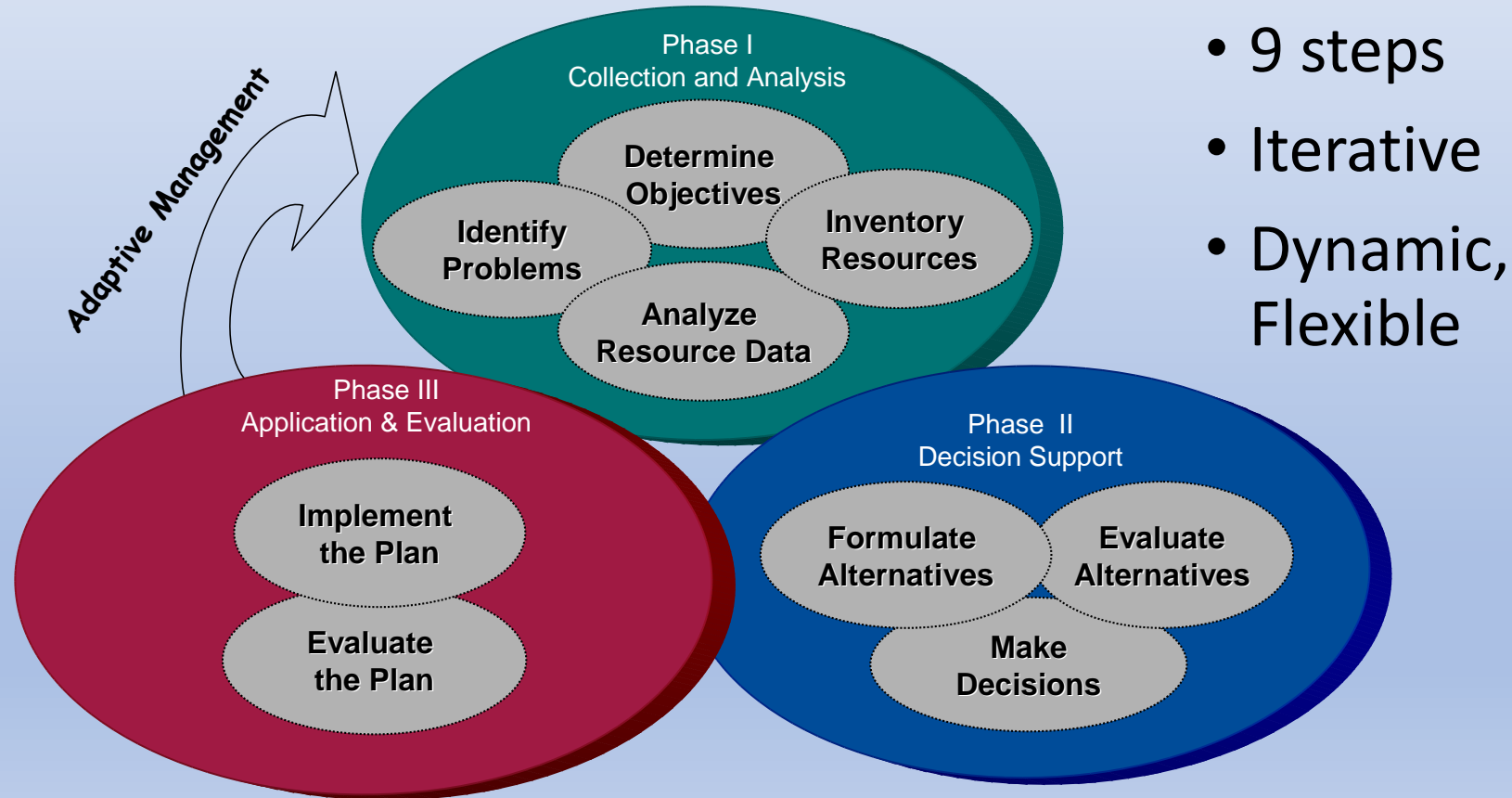
440 CPM 514.44 A. “...development of the preliminary WRPO begins during the onsite ranking visits with the landowner and NRCS...The purpose of the preliminary WRPO is to provide sufficient information to allow the landowner to understand the project’s anticipated scope and effect, including habitat objectives and anticipated restoration, management, and O&M requirements.... This basic information is necessary...to determine whether to proceed in the enrollment process.”

440-CPM 514.44 B. - “The preliminary WRPO— ...Includes an NRCS Environmental Evaluation using Form NRCS-CPA-52, which should be completed as part of the planning process....”

Just two of many references in NRCS regulations and policy

Conservation Planning Process

NRCS Planning Process



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NRCS-CPA-52
4/2013

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION WORKSHEET

A. Client Name:

B. Conservation Plan ID # (as applicable):
Program Authority (optional):

C. Identification # (farm, tract, field #, etc as required):

D. Client's Objective(s) (purpose):
Step 2 Determine Objectives

E. Need for Action:
Step 1 Identify Problems

H. Alternatives

No Action	√ if RMS	Alternative 1	√ if RMS	Alternative 2	√ if RMS
Step 5 Formulate Alternatives					

Resource Concerns

In Section "F" below, analyze, record, and address concerns identified through the Resources Inventory process.
(See FOTG Section III - Resource Planning Criteria for guidance).

F. Resource Concerns and Existing/ Benchmark Conditions (Analyze and record the existing/benchmark conditions for each identified concern)	I. Effects of Alternatives					
	No Action		Alternative 1		Alternative 2	
Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	√ if does NOT meet PC	Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	√ if does NOT meet PC	Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	√ if does NOT meet PC	
SOIL: EROSION						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
SOIL: SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
WATER: EXCESS/INSUFFICIENT WATER						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
WATER: WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION						
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC	

Step 6 Evaluate Alternatives

F. Resource Concerns and Existing/ Benchmark Conditions
(Analyze and record the existing/benchmark conditions for each identified concern)

L. (continued)

Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	√ if does NOT meet PC	Alternative 1		Alternative 2	
		Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	√ if does NOT meet PC	Amount, Status, Description (Document both short and long term impacts)	√ if does NOT meet PC
AIR: AIR QUALITY IMPACTS					
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
PLANTS: DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION					
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
ANIMAL: INADEQUATE HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE					
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
ANIMAL: LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION LIMITATION					
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
ENERGY: INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE					
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC		NOT meet PC
HUMAN: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS					

Step 3 Inventory Resources
Step 4 Analyze Resource Data
Step 6 Evaluate Alternatives

Special Environmental Concerns: Environmental Laws, Executive Orders, policies, etc.						
In Section "G" complete and attach Environmental Procedures Guide Sheets for documentation as applicable. Items with a "*" may require a federal permit or consultation/coordination between the lead agency and another government agency. In these cases, effects may need to be determined in consultation with another agency. Planning and practice implementation may proceed for practices not involved in consultation.						
G. Special Environmental Concerns (Document existing/benchmark conditions)	J. Impacts to Special Environmental Concerns					
	No Action		Alternative 1		Alternative 2	
	Document all impacts (Attach Guide Sheets as applicable)	✓ if needs further action	Document all impacts (Attach Guide Sheets as applicable)	✓ if needs further action	Document all impacts (Attach Guide Sheets as applicable)	✓ if needs further action
• Clean Air Act Guide Sheet FS1 FS-2		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
• Clean Water Act / Waters of the U.S. Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
• Coastal Zone Management Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Coral Reefs Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
• Cultural Resources / Historic Properties Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
• Endangered and Threatened Species Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental Justice Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
• Essential Fish Habitat Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Floodplain Management Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive Species Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
• Migratory Birds/Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural Areas Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Prime and Unique Farmlands Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Riparian Area Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
Scenic Beauty Guide Sheet Fact Sheet		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 3 Inventory Resources
 Step 4 Analyze Resource Data

Step 6 Evaluate Alternatives

•Wetlands Guide Sheet Fact Sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
•Wild and Scenic Rivers Guide Sheet Fact Sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Other Agencies and Broad Public Concerns	No Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Easements, Permissions, Public Review, or Permits Required and Agencies Consulted.			
Cumulative Effects Narrative (Describe the cumulative impacts considered, including past, present and known future actions, regardless of who performed the actions)	Step 6 Evaluate Alternatives		
L. Mitigation (Record actions to avoid, minimize, and compensate)			
M. Preferred Alternative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting reason	Step 7 Make Decisions		
N. Context (Record context of alternatives analysis)	The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality.		
O. Determination of Significance or Extraordinary Circumstances	Intensity: Refers to the severity of impact. Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.		
	If you answer ANY of the below questions "yes" then contact the State Environmental Liaison as there may be extraordinary circumstances and significance issues to consider and a site specific NEPA analysis may be required.		
	Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Is the preferred alternative expected to cause significant effects on public health or safety?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Is the preferred alternative expected to significantly affect unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Are the effects of the preferred alternative on the quality of the human environment likely to be highly controversial?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Does the preferred alternative have highly uncertain effects or involve unique or unknown risks on the human environment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Does the preferred alternative establish a precedent for future actions with significant impacts or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Is the preferred alternative known or reasonably expected to have potentially significant environment impacts to the quality of the human environment either individually or cumulatively over time?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Will the preferred alternative likely have a significant adverse effect on ANY of the special environmental concerns? Use the Evaluation Procedure Guide Sheets to assist in this determination. This includes, but is not limited to, concerns such as cultural or historical resources, endangered and threatened species, environmental justice, wetlands, floodplains, coastal zones, coral reefs, essential fish habitat, wild and scenic rivers, clean air, riparian areas, natural areas, and invasive species.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Will the preferred alternative threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements for the protection of the environment?
P. To the best of my knowledge, the data shown on this form is accurate and complete:	In the case where a non-NRCS person (e.g. a TSP) assists with planning they are to sign the first signature block and then NRCS is to sign the second block to verify the informations accuracy.		
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Signature (TSP if applicable)	Title	Date
	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Signature (NRCS)	Title	Date
If preferred alternative is not a federal action where NRCS has control or responsibility and this NRCS-CPA-52 is shared with someone other than the client then indicate to whom this is being provided.			

The following sections are to be completed by the Responsible Federal Official (RFO)

NRCS is the RFO if the action is subject to NRCS control and responsibility (e.g., actions financed, funded, assisted, conducted, regulated, or approved by NRCS). These actions do not include situations in which NRCS is only providing technical assistance because NRCS cannot control what the client ultimately does with that assistance and situations where NRCS is making a technical determination (such as Farm Bill HEL or wetland determinations) not associated with the planning process.

Q. NEPA Compliance Finding (check one)

The preferred alternative:		Action required
<input type="checkbox"/>	1) is not a federal action where the agency has control or responsibility.	Document in "R.1" below. No additional analysis is required
<input type="checkbox"/>	2) is a federal action ALL of which is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis AND there are no extraordinary circumstances as identified in Section "O".	Document in "R.2" below. No additional analysis is required
<input type="checkbox"/>	3) is a federal action that has been sufficiently analyzed in an existing Agency state, regional, or national NEPA document and there are no predicted <u>significant adverse environmental effects</u> or extraordinary circumstances.	Document in "R.1" below. No additional analysis is required.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4) is a federal action that has been sufficiently analyzed in another Federal agency's NEPA document (EA or EIS) that addresses the proposed NRCS action and its' effects and has been formally adopted by NRCS . NRCS is required to prepare and publish its own Finding of No Significant Impact for an EA or Record of Decision for an EIS when adopting another agency's EA or EIS document. (Note: This box is not applicable to FSA)	Contact the State Environmental Liaison for list of NEPA documents formally adopted and available for tiering. Document in "R.1" below. No additional analysis is required
<input type="checkbox"/>	5) is a federal action that has NOT been sufficiently analyzed or may involve predicted significant adverse environmental effects or extraordinary circumstances and may require an EA or EIS.	Contact the State Environmental Liaison. Further NEPA analysis required.

R. Rationale Supporting the Finding

R.1 Findings Documentation	
R.2 Applicable Categorical Exclusion(s) (more than one may apply)	
7 CFR Part 650 Compliance With NEPA, subpart 650.6 Categorical Exclusions states prior to determining that a proposed action is categorically excluded under paragraph (d) of this section, the proposed action must meet six sideboard criteria. See NECH 610.116.	

Step 7 Make Decisions

I have considered the effects of the alternatives on the Resource Concerns, Economic and Social Considerations, Special Environmental Concerns, and Extraordinary Circumstances as defined by Agency regulation and policy and based on that made the finding indicated above.

S. Signature of Responsible Federal Official:

Signature

Title

Date

Additional notes

Planning Step	NRCS-CPA-52 Section	NEPA Documents
1. Identify Problems and Opportunities	E. Need for Action	Need for Action
2. Determine Objectives	D. Client Objectives	Purpose
3. Inventory Resources 4. Analyze Resource Data	F. Resource Concerns E. Special Environmental Concerns	Affected Environment
5. Formulate Alternatives	H. Alternatives	Alternatives
6. Evaluate Alternatives	I. Effects of Alternatives J. Impacts to Special Environmental Concerns	Environmental Consequences
7. Make Decisions	M. Preferred Alternative Q.-S. NEPA Compliance Finding	Categorically Excluded Finding of No Significant Impact Record of Decision

WRP/WRE Examples

WRPO

- Client Objectives
 - Program purposes must be met
 - Restore, protect, enhance wetlands
 - Maximize wildlife habitat benefits
- Benchmark Conditions
 - Soil, water, air, plant, animal?
 - Public health and safety, land use, labor, management level?
 - Cultural resources, endangered/threatened species, invasive species?

Compatible Use Authorization

- Client Objectives
 - Further long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland and other natural values or the area
- Effects of Alternatives
 - Document how the CUA
 - Furthers long-term protection and enhancement
 - Effect on habitat
 - Migratory Birds
 - T&E, at-risk species

Section K. – Other Agencies and Broad Public Concerns

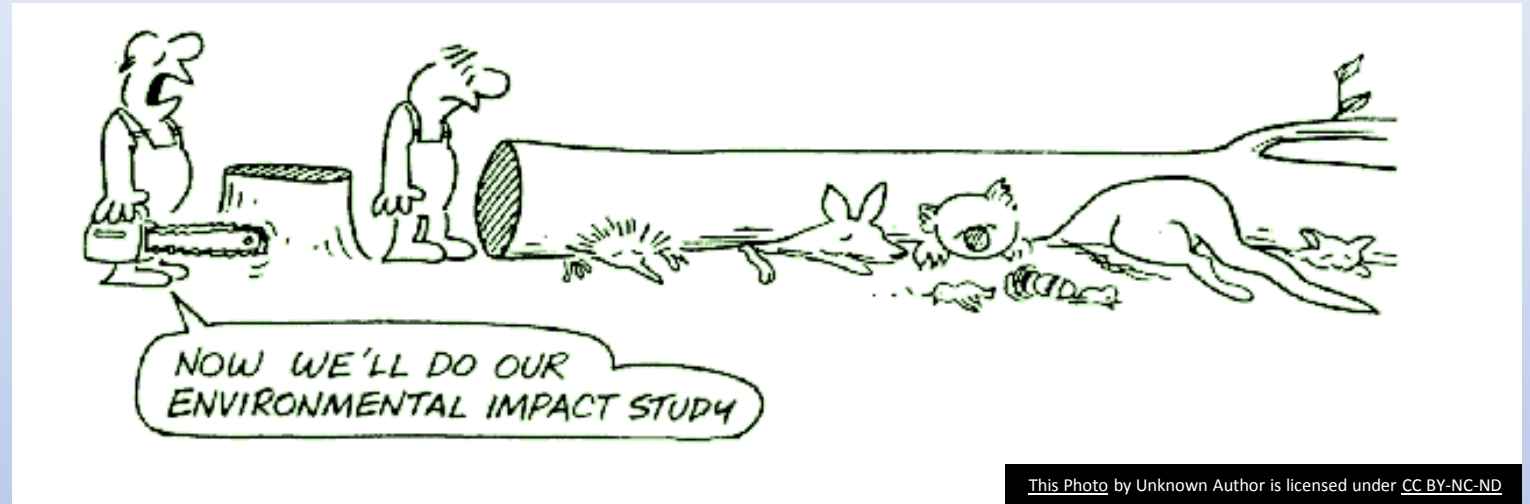
- Permits Required
 - Clean Water Act Section 404
 - Nationwide Permit (NWP) 27 - Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities
 - To be authorized by this NWP, the activity must result in aquatic habitat that resembles an ecological reference.



More NRCS-CPA-52 Training

- AgLearn Course NRCS-NHQ-000048
 - [The NRCS-CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation Worksheet](#)
 - Web-based, self-paced
 - 4 – 5 hours
- NRCS Environmental Compliance Web Page
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/ecoscience/ec/>
 - Environmental Evaluation Series Webinars (11)
 - Focused on Special Environmental Concerns
 - Johnny Chism's YouTube Channel
 - Demonstrate how to use the **Environmental Evaluation Planning Tool**

Questions?



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