

Indiana Instructions for Completing Form NRCS-CPA-52, "Environmental Evaluation Worksheet"

COMPLETING THE FORM

The form NRCS-CPA-52 is the instrument used to summarize the effects of conservation practices and systems. It also provides summary documentation of the environmental evaluation (EE) of the planned actions. The EE 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 surroundings, and nature are evaluated and alternative actions explored” (NPPH-Amendment 3 January 2000). The EE applies to all assistance provided by NRCS (GM190 Part 410.5).

The following are instructions for completing form NRCS-CPA-52:

- A Record the client's name.
- B Enter the conservation plan identification number.
- C Enter the conservation management unit to which this evaluation applies. This may be done by field, pasture, tract, landuse (i.e. cropland, rangeland, woodland, etc.), by resource area (i.e. riparian corridor or wetland area) or any other suitable geographic division.
- D Briefly summarize the client’s objective(s).
- E Briefly identify the purpose and need for action. Reference the resource concern(s) to be addressed.
- F, G Use the provided resource, economic, and social considerations or list considerations identified during scoping or by any existing areawide, watershed or other resource document appropriate for the planning area. The list of considerations may be expanded by listing subcategories, such as wind erosion, sheet erosion, gully erosion etc. Refer to the applicable quality criteria.

Indiana Note: It is important to list the specific resource, economic, and/or social consideration or concern applicable. For example if “Soil Erosion” is the concern, is it sheet and rill, wind, ephemeral gully, classic gully, streambank, etc, or a combination of these concerns? If it is “Water Quality” contamination is it from pesticides, nutrients, pathogens, etc. or combinations? If you are going to describe impacts you need to be as specific as possible about the condition or resource concern as possible.

- H, I Briefly summarize the practice/system of practices being proposed, as well as any alternatives being considered. Document the effects of the proposed action for the considerations listed in E and F. Reference applicable quality criteria, information in the CPPE, and quantify effects whenever possible. Consider both long-term and short-term effects. Consider any effects which may be individually minor but cumulatively significant at a larger scale or

over an extended time period. At the request of the client, additional alternatives may be developed and their effects evaluated. This may be done in order to more fully inform the client about the decision to be made. In these cases, briefly describe alternatives to the proposed action, including the “no action” alternative. The no action alternative is the predicted future condition if no action is taken. Clearly define the differences between proposed action, no action, and the other alternatives if applicable.

Indiana Note: Initially we recommended on the front side of the form (Section H), that you use “+” or “-“ signs as an indication of positive or negative indicators respectfully. However it has come to our attention that when you use multiple signs to indicate the magnitude of the impact electronically, you often can not tell the differences very easily, This is particularly true with the use of the negative sign “ - “ between one (-), two (--), or three (---). Therefore, until additional instructions are provided, we would recommend you use the following words instead of signs on the form.:

To show magnitude of impact use:

- Insignificant or slight to indicate minor impact
- Medium or moderate to indicate moderate impact, and
- Significant or major to indicate major impact

As for positive or negative impacts use:

- Beneficial, positive, improved, or reduction as appropriate for positive, and
- Detrimental, negative, degraded, or decreased as appropriate for negative.

i.e. an item having a major positive impact may be stated as: significant beneficial and an items have a minor negative impact may be stated as: insignificant degradation. Refer to example completed forms (as available) for ideas. We are supposed to indicate these effects for the short term (ST) and the long term (LT) of the practice or series of practices. I would not take time to indicate if a box is not applicable by placing an “N/A” in a box, just leave the box blank. It should be understood that only those items applicable would have information shown in the appropriate box. If you need more guidance on the effects of conservation practices go to the Indiana Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and see individual conservation effects shown for any conservation practice under Section V. Realize these national conservation effects information sheets refer to an average condition across the nation, and realize you must use your own professional judgment to determine which conditions apply to your specific site and situation.

J, K See the Special Environmental Concerns Evaluation Procedure Guide Sheets in Appendix 610.70 of the National Environmental Compliance Handbook. Completion of Help Sheets is not required, but may provide additional documentation that the appropriate processes have been followed. Complete section J by documenting the effects of each alternative on the special environmental concerns listed in I. Quantify effects whenever possible. Consider both long-term and short-term effects. Consider any effects, which may be individually minor but cumulatively significant at a larger scale or over an extended time period.

Indiana Note: As for the back side of the form (Section K) Utilize the Worksheet “Special Environmental Concerns” guidance provided, when needed, to help you identify effects. Appropriate additional comments will be needed on the form if a moderate or major change is indicated. If additional information is utilized for a specific environmental concern, just write in the box "see attached additional information attached", and attach the information pages to the form.

L List any necessary easements, permissions, or permits (i.e. 404, ESA section 10, State or county permits or requirements).

M Describe mitigation to be applied that will offset any adverse impacts. Attach documentation from other agencies.

Indiana Note: If the project is funded by NRCS funds, a field staff person would sign the form in section "N", and the District Conservationist would sign the section "R" as the RFO (Responsible Federal Official). If the project is funded by FSA, NRCS would sign the form in section N, and FSA will sign the section R of the form. You could have a situation where a Technical Service Provider would provide the assistance on a project, and they would need to sign the Section N line. In that case the Federal agency providing the funding would sign the R section of the form.

N The individual responsible for completing the CPA-52 must sign and date the Form indicating they have used the best available information. This signature is particularly important when a TSP is completing the CPA-52 or when NRCS is providing technical assistance on behalf of another agency.

O Document contact and communications with USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, COE, EPA, NRCS State Biologist, State Environmental Agencies, or any others consulted. Include public participation activities, if applicable.

P Check the applicable finding being made.

Indiana Note: For more guidance on finding check the following REQUIREMENTS section of this handout. It explains what a federal action and the other choices are in more detail. In most cases in Indiana, if no major impacts that are detrimental are found, we will be checking one of two boxes in the findings section.

- If no federal funding is being utilized in the proposed project area, we will be checking the first box, ____ is not a federal action. No additional analysis is required.
- If federal funding is provided, and impacts are within applicable levels, we will be checking the third box down, ____ has been sufficiently analyzed in an existing NRCS environmental document. No additional analysis is required. If the latter is the case, we also need to document in the Q part of the form about the "Rationale supporting the finding": The proposed actions was analyzed in the (appropriate) National (Program Name) Program Environmental Assessment (EA).

Again refer to example completed forms available for ideas.

Q Explain the reasons for making the finding identified in P. Cite any references, analysis, data, or documents which support the finding. Add additional pages as necessary. To find that an action has been sufficiently analyzed in an existing NRCS environmental document, the document must cover the area in which the action is being implemented.

R NRCS responsible official must sign and date for NRCS actions. The FSA or other federal agency responsible official must sign and date for FSA or other agency funded activities.