

Natural Resources Conservation Planning For Forest and Wildlife Land

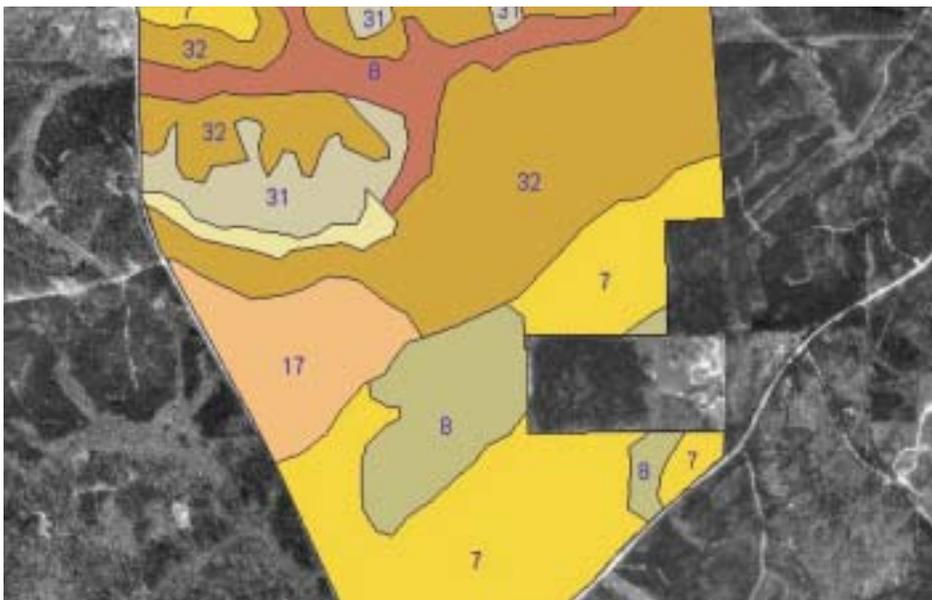
By **Bill Hughes**, Resource Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service

A Natural Resources Conservation Plan (NRCS) reflects the landowner/user's objectives and decisions for the future — a roadmap to future natural resources use. The plan contains an aerial photo of the property showing land use, a soils map, conservation practice guidesheets, and may include other supporting information such as maps reflecting topography, streams, site indices, and more. The conservation plan also shows natural resources conservation practices on the property, which protect the environment and improve water quality.

Local NRCS planners have a new computer program called Customer Service Toolkit that includes a Geographic Information System (GIS) which allows them to bring up digital photogra-



A Conservation Plan Map provides an aerial photo view of land displaying the common uses and acreage of fields.

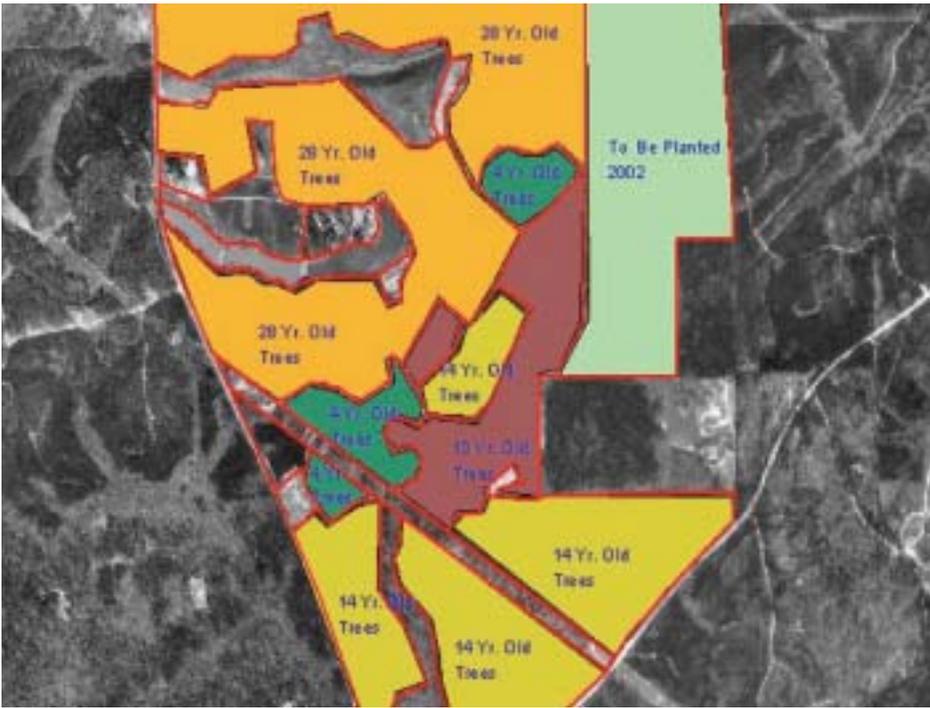


This example of a **Soils Map** helps determine the predominant soil type which is useful information for land management decisions.

phy of the county. Working with the landowner, the planner can delineate land units, bring in digital soils information, U. S. Geological Survey topographic information, etc., layered on the photo base. These maps can easily be sent to the color printer and become part of the plan. The landowner can either participate in the development of these maps or the hard copies can be taken to him/her to be used in evaluating future land use and management decisions. The maps and other resource information can be used by the landowner, consultants, contractors, and others who may assist in implementation of the plan.

Conservation Plan Map

The conservation plan map is on an aerial photo base and displays the fields



This "Forest Stand Map," which shows fields having similar age and types of trees, provides an example of a **Practice Map**.

with similar treated land use, i.e., planted loblolly pines 14 years of age. The common land uses on this plan map are forest, wildlife, pasture, crop, and hay. The farmstead or homestead is also commonly displayed on the map. Each field also includes the measured acres within that field and is identified by a number that refers to a narrative in the plan. The narrative describes the landowner's decisions and planned practice installation/implementation schedule.

Soils Map

The soils map shows the soils mapping units within the property boundaries. A soil map unit delineates a soil that has the same physical characteristics and should be managed for forest or agricultural purposes in the same way. The predominant soil type in a field can be determined for management decisions. A landowner's knowledge of his/her soils is essential to making good management decisions related to tree species, cutting cycles, site preparation methods, and many other decisions.

Topographic Map

Obviously the slope and contour of the land is invaluable to a forest/wildlife

landowner in planning access and harvest roads, harvest landings, and other practices to minimize forest land erosion. The streams identified on topographic maps are beneficial in planning streamside management zones, wildlife food plots, ponds, and other water-related practices.

Site Index Map

Another map that provides valuable information is the site index map. This map is developed using the soils information and displays the productivity of the soils for different species of trees.

This information helps the landowner determine the best tree species to plant and/or manage, cutting cycles, and rotation age.

Practice Maps

This assortment of maps provides the landowner information as to forestry, wildlife, or erosion practices planned on the property. Examples of these

maps are: a Forest Stand Map showing fields that have similar age and types of trees; a Wildlife Food Plot Map which shows the location, size, and types of food plots and wildlife species benefited; and an Access Road Map that displays both the improved and harvest roads throughout the property and erosion control measures that need installation or maintenance.

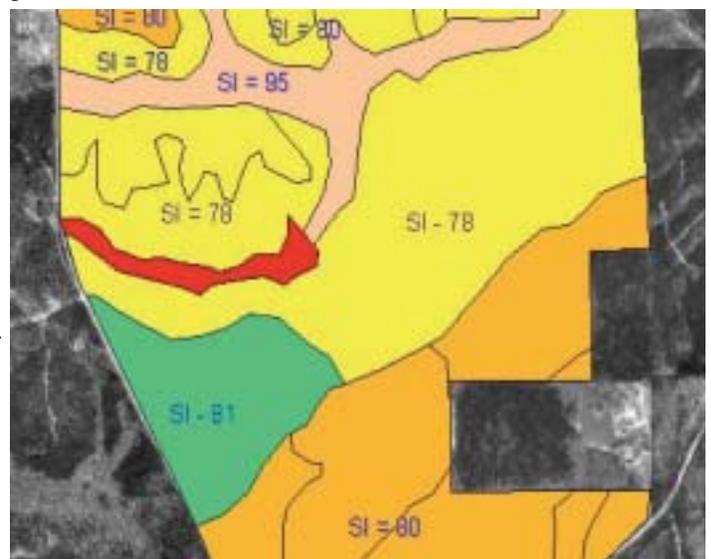
Conservation Practice Guidesheets

These guidesheets provide the landowner with information about forestry and wildlife practices related to natural resources management and conservation. Examples of these guidesheets are Forest Site Preparation, Tree Planting, Natural Regeneration of Southern Pines, Shrub Planting, Prescribed Burning, Wild Turkey Management, Wood Duck Nesting Boxes, Erosion Control on Forest Land, and many more related to forestry and wildlife.

Landowner's Planning Decisions

In addition to the maps, the NRCS conservation planner provides landowners with alternative management information related to forestry and wildlife practices. This information includes planting guides, cost and returns data, wildlife species management informa-

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A **Site Index Map** helps the landowner determine the best species of trees to plant and manage.

Natural Resources Conservation Planning

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In addition to providing the slope and contour of the land, streams identified on a **Topographic Map** are beneficial in planning streamside management zones and wildlife food plots.

tion, etc. The landowner uses the maps and technical information to decide the combination of conservation and management practices he/she wishes to implement over the next several years. This information is recorded and becomes part of the Natural Resources Conservation Plan.

The Natural Resources Conservation Plan can also address other land uses such as crops, pasture, hayland, and live-

stock operations. For more information on Natural Resources Conservation Planning, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District/Natural Resources Conservation Service office. ♣

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Albert Morris

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Additionally, Albert owns a small tract of land in Madison County that is also managed for timber and wildlife. Most of its 28 acres are planted in loblolly pines, but approximately seven acres are kept in their natural state of native trees and shrubs due to the low-lying bottomland topography. This idle piece of property is wonderful for wildlife habitat. The main reason for deciding to manage this property in timber and wildlife is because of its location and acreage. With it being several miles from Huntsville and only 28 acres, the most convenient and economically feasible management regime is to have it remain in trees.

The Horticulturist

As a horticulturist, Albert applies his stewardship knowledge when managing Albert's Flowers Inc., and Morris Greenhouses, Inc. In his greenhouses, he plants and grows the majority of the ornamental vegetation that supplies his floral shop and other florists in north Alabama, but occasionally he purchases exotic flowers from other countries to augment his diverse floral inventory. He is very proud of his floral business and the fact that his shop is the second oldest in Huntsville. Albert's beautiful floral arrangements make his shop a favorite with local citizens.

Albert continues to work hard towards accomplishing his goals as indicated by both his floral businesses and his forestland. He hopes that the results of all his efforts, knowledge, and experience can one day be passed on to his daughters, Margaret and Amoretta Morris. Perhaps his daughters will continue the practice of good stewardship and pass it on to the next generation. Incidentally, his oldest daughter Margaret is learning about the floral business.

It is reassuring to know people like TREASURE Forest landowner, Albert Morris, who is doing his part in protecting our natural resources. ♣