

## § 650.23

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(iii) Discussing the kinds of measures important to preserve their habitat.

(iv) A monitoring program that would obtain advanced warning of actions or conditions that could further endanger these species, thereby enabling NRCS and others to take appropriate protective action.

(v) Assisting recovery teams, as appropriate, in preparing species recovery plans of those endangered and threatened species included in Federal lists.

(4) The state conservationist will also:

(i) Keep NRCS area and field offices informed of species listed as being threatened or endangered, geographic area in which they are found, and information such as their numbers, preferred habitat, and critical factors.

(ii) Review the status of threatened and endangered species each December and send a report of the review to the Administrator.

(5) NRCS district conservationists within the geographic range of threatened and endangered species will examine conservation district programs and NRCS operations to evaluate their effects on these species, and recommend to district officials and the state conservationist any action needed for their protection.

(6) NRCS field employees within the geographic range of threatened and endangered species will be continually alert to conditions, actions, or trends that may adversely affect the welfare of these species and report adverse situations to the state conservationist.

### § 650.23 Natural areas.

(a) *Background.* (1) Natural areas are defined as land or water units where natural conditions are maintained insofar as possible. Natural conditions usually result from allowing ordinary physical and biological processes to operate with a minimum of human intervention. Manipulations may be required on natural areas to maintain or restore features that the areas were established to protect.

(2) Natural areas may be designated areas of Federal, non-Federal government, or privately controlled land. Designation may be formal as provided for under federal regulations for areas

of federal land to be administered as natural areas or by foundations or conservation organizations specifically created to acquire and maintain natural areas. Designation may be informal in the case of private landowners who designate a specific area as a natural area and manage it accordingly. Several professional societies concerned with renewable natural resources encourage establishment of natural areas withdrawn from economic uses and recognition of natural areas maintained and managed in economic enterprises.

(3) Natural areas are established and maintained for a variety of purposes including:

(i) *Furthering science and education.* Natural areas provide sites for research and outdoor classrooms for study of plant and animal communities in environments with particular ecological conditions.

(ii) *Monitoring the surrounding environment.* Natural areas serve as gauges against which to evaluate changes in land use, vegetation, animal life, air quality, or other environmental values.

(iii) *Providing recreation attractions.* Natural areas are valued by many people for their scenic, wild, and undisturbed character but must be protected, as needed, to prevent disturbance or alteration of the resources.

(iv) *Preserving unique values.* Natural areas may be established to protect scenic, biologic, geologic, or paleontologic features.

(v) *Serving as a genetic base for native plants and animals.* Natural areas may be established to preserve examples of land and water ecosystems with their full range of genetic diversity of native plants and animals including threatened and endangered species.

(b) *Policy.* NRCS will recognize natural areas, if so dedicated, as a land use, and will support the designation of appropriate natural areas.

(c) *Responsibility*—(1) *NRCS national office.* The Administrator will designate a member of the national office staff to act as NRCS representative on the Federal Committee for Ecological Preserves and to provide appropriate liaison with other federal agencies and non-Federal groups concerned with natural areas.

(2) *Technical service center.* The TSC director will designate a TSC plant sciences discipline leader to provide leadership, appropriate liaison, and assistance on natural areas to NRCS state offices.

(3) *NRCS state office.* The state conservationist will designate an appropriate NRCS representative to work with other agencies and groups, and will coordinate assistance on natural areas needed by area and field offices.

(d) *Coordination and implementation.* (1) NRCS technical assistance will be furnished to representatives of administering agencies, foundations, groups, and individuals when requested through conservation districts. Conservation district officers will be encouraged to recognize appropriate natural areas concepts and programs and to participate in them.

(2) NRCS employees will report to state conservationists abuses and potential or actual damages to natural areas that may be found in the course of ordinary business.

(3) NRCS will cooperate with professional societies, groups, and individuals in locating areas suitable for and needed as natural areas.

(4) NRCS employees providing technical assistance to land users must inform them about the impact their decisions may have on adjacent or nearby natural areas. Land users will be encouraged to consult with concerned agencies, societies, and individuals to arrive at mutually satisfactory land use and treatment.

(5) Recommended classification systems for characterizing areas designated as ecological preserves or as natural areas are contained in the following publications:

Soil Taxonomy, a Basic System of Soil Classification for Making and Interpreting Soil Surveys, USDA-NRCS Agricultural Handbook 436.

Forest Cover Types of North America Exclusive of Mexico, Report of the Committee on Forest Cover Types, Society of American Foresters, 1964.

Potential Natural Vegetation of Conterminous United States. A. W. Kuchler, American Geographical Society Special Publication 36, 1964.

Wetlands classification described by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in its Circular 39.

NRCS will, to the extent feasible, use these classification systems when providing technical assistance on public and private natural areas and ecological preserves.

(6) The NRCS published National List of Scientific Plant Names will be used when scientific names or name symbols are needed for automatic data processing.

**§ 650.24 Scenic beauty (visual resource).**

(a) *Background.* Contributions to scenic beauty are a normal product of NRCS work. Strip-cropping, field borders, field windbreaks, and ponds are examples. Emphasis is given to those soil and water conservation measures that contribute to a productive and efficient agriculture and increase the attractiveness of rural America and are in line with goals and objectives of conservation districts. This is best accomplished by considering the landscape visual resource when providing planning assistance to individual landowners, groups, units of government, and watershed and resource conservation development project sponsors. NRCS responsibilities in recreation also offer opportunities to develop the scenic beauty of the rural landscape. Department of Agriculture Secretary's Memorandum 1695, May 28, 1970, "Protecting and Improving The Quality of the Environment," includes scenic beauty as an objective of the Department's programs.

(b) *Policy.* NRCS will:

(1) Provide technical assistance with full consideration of alternative management and development systems that preserve scenic beauty or improve the visual resource;

(2) Emphasize the application of conservation practices having scenic beauty or visual resource values particularly in waste management systems; field borders, field windbreaks, wetland management, access roads, critical area treatment; design and management of ponds, stream margins, odd areas, and farmsteads; siting or positioning of structures and buildings to be in harmony with the landscape while reducing the potential for erosion; using native and other adaptable plants for conservation which enhance