

(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. Con-

servation 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 scenic beauty and create variety while linking beauty with utility; (3) promote personal pride in landowners in the installation, maintenance, and appearance of conservation practices and their properties; (4) select suitable areas for waste products and use of screens to hide "eyesore" areas, and (5) encourage conservation districts to include practices which promote scenic beauty in their annual and long-range programs.

(c) *Responsibility*. The Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide technical assistance through conservation districts to landowners, operators, communities, and state and local governments in developing programs relating to scenic beauty.

(1) *NRCS national office*. The Administrator will:

(i) Assign appropriate NRCS national office leadership to insure that enhancement of scenic beauty is included in national information, policy, guidelines, standards, guides to specifications for conservation practices without impairing basic soil and water conservation functions.

(ii) Emphasize in plant material center management and in plant materials functions that locating and evaluating plants for forage, erosion control, and recreation or wildlife uses be carried out with full attention to visual resource value.

(2) *NRCS state office*. The state conservationist will:

(i) Assign appropriate staff member(s) to provide leadership in carrying out scenic beauty policy and procedure within the state.

(ii) Develop and keep current a landscape management plan to improve and maintain the appearance of all real properties under NRCS control, and provide appropriate assistance to owners and managers of properties leased or rented by NRCS.

(iii) Give emphasis to preserving scenic beauty and contributing to the visual resource in the NRCS information program whenever opportunities exist.

(d) *Coordination and implementation*.

(1) The governing body of each conservation district will be encouraged to revise or update its district program to appropriately provide for beautification of the countryside through applicable land use changes and effective soil and water conservation treatment.

(2) In providing assistance to watershed and resource conservation and development project sponsors and other resource planning groups for soil, water, and related resources, emphasis will be given to measures that preserve natural beauty or contribute to the quality of the visual resource.

(3) Local organizations and groups interested in scenic beauty will be contacted and consulted for cooperation in and coordination with NRCS and conservation district efforts.

§ 650.25 Flood-plain management.

Through proper planning, flood plains can be managed to reduce the