Example Conservation Plan
For a Grain-Beef Farm

You raise corn and soybeans and maintain a herd of beef cattle. You moldboard plow and disk in the spring, and plan to continue growing cash grain on most of your acreage. There are several fields on your farm and you want to control soil erosion.

Calculating soil loss on your field

The Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation estimates the amount of soil erosion caused by water. Five factors are used to figure soil loss:

Soil Loss
- rainfall
- soil erodibility
- slope length and steepness
- cropping and management
- erosion control practices and row direction

Notice that only the last two factors, cropping and management and erosion control practices, are in your complete control. These are things you can change to reduce soil erosion.

Options to reduce erosion

After working the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation, you realize that excessive soil erosion occurs on a field.

1. You could farm close to the contour instead of up and down hill, chisel plow instead of moldboard plow, and install a grassed waterway. The waterway will stop the gullying in the lower part of the field.
2. You could use no-till planting and install a grassed waterway.
3. You could construct tile outlet terraces and moldboard plow on the contour.
4. You could add a close-grown crop, such as winter wheat, to your corn-soybean rotation, chisel plow on the contour, and install a grassed waterway.



RECORD OF COOPERATOR DECISIONS

Field	Date	Narrative Record
		CROPLAND
1,2	2010	Conservation Crop Rotation – Corn 3 yr – Soybean 2 yr
1	2010	Stripcropping - 86' wide strips to fit equipment
2	2011	Residue Management – No till - 60% residue left after planting
1	2011	Grassed Waterway
3	2010	Contour Farming – Grain crops planted on the contour
1,2,3	2012	Nutrient Management – Apply nutrients according to soil test results and yield goals
		PASTURE
5	2010	Prescribed Grazing – Maintain optimum forage quality through rotational grazing system.
		WOODLAND
4	2010	Wildlife Upland Habitat Management – Create openings for quail habitat
		FARMSTEAD
6	2011	Waste Storage Facility



Before:
- Corn-soybean rotation
- Moldboard plow
- Up and down hill

Erosion = 8 tons/acre/year

Conservation planning makes a difference.

If your field had a 5% slope and a slope length of 200 feet, a tolerable soil loss might be 3 tons per acre per year. But, you and the NRCS professional assess the field and calculate that 8 tons per acre per year are being lost. A few adjustments in your practices can improve your operation by significantly reducing soil loss.



After:
- Corn-soybean rotation
- Chisel plow
- Contour farming
- Grassed waterway

Erosion = 2 tons/acre/year