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A REPORT
on the

PANTHER HABITAT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Mandated by
CS/HB 2111
during the 1995 Legislative Session

Submitted to:

Lawton Chiles - Governor

Jim Scott - President of the Senate

Peter Rudy Wallace - Speaker of the House

January 1, 1996

A Staff Report
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
OBJECTIVES	5
PROCEDURE	5
Private Landowner's Working Group	6
Inter-Agency Working Group	6
Review of Existing Partnerships	6
On-Site Panther Habitat Demonstration Project	7
RESULTS	7
Private Landowner's Working Group	7
Inter-Agency Working Group	8
Consensus Recommendations and Observations from the Inter-Agency Working Group	10
Review of Existing Partnerships	14
On-Site Panther Habitat Demonstration Project	14
DISCUSSION	14
References:	15
Appendix A	A-1
Appendix B	B-1

INTRODUCTION

During the 1995 Legislative Session, CS/HB 2111 was passed which established the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) as the lead agency in the "...design and implementation of a demonstration project to develop a voluntary, incentive-based, resource and land-management planning process." This report is submitted in partial fulfillment of obligations mandated in that legislation.

A majority of the state's wildlife and the habitats upon which it depends is in private ownership. Prudent management of these lands is critical to the future of Florida's wildlife and their habitats. Privately-owned lands are integral parts of Florida's ecosystems and must be included in comprehensive ecosystems management plans. Private landowners are important partners with government in the management of Florida's wildlife and the ecosystems in which they live. Currently, they receive no compensation for many conservation practices already in-place. They are often heavily regulated by government and would benefit from participation in a program like the one this project was designed to develop.

The Florida Advisory Council for Environmental Education (FACEE) issued a request for proposals during early 1994 to develop panther habitat education projects using funds accrued to the Save Our State Environmental Education Trust Fund from the sale of panther and manatee license plates. A joint proposal was developed by the GFC and the American Farmland Trust (AFT), submitted to FACEE, and subsequently funded. The GFC implemented the project in February 1994. It was designed to open a dialogue between private landowners and government on issues relating to preservation of panther habitat on private lands. A working group of private landowners was organized that developed a conceptual strategy for protecting panther habitat on private lands in South Florida (Evans, et al. 1995). This strategy provided broad guidance for protecting essential habitat of the panther on private lands, providing economic incentives to landowners for doing so, and improving cooperation between private landowners and government.

This project was an additional step toward developing the necessary processes and design for an incentive-based approach for preserving panther habitat on private lands.

Florida panthers (*Felis concolor coryi*) are endangered by a combination of population and habitat factors. Loss and fragmentation of habitat and unregulated killing over the past two centuries have reduced and isolated populations in the southeastern United States to the point that only one population estimated at 30-50 adults exists on approximately 12,546 km² (4,844 mi²) of habitat in South Florida (Logan, et al. 1993). The wild population is isolated primarily in the Big Cypress and Everglades ecosystems of southern Florida. Human population growth and associated collateral loss of suitable panther habitat are major threats to survival of the species.

Wildlife Biologists have been conducting intensive research of the Florida panther since 1981 to understand its biology and the problems responsible for its endangered status. An objec-

tive of this process is the design of appropriate management strategies that would enhance the animal's survival. A major research focus has been to document the current distribution of the panther, to describe and measure habitats used by panthers within their current distribution and to analyze the preferences panthers demonstrate of the various habitat types they use. Panther distribution in south Florida, and why the habitats in those areas continue to support panthers has been documented. This information appears in the Florida Panther Habitat Preservation Plan (Logan, et al. 1993). The glaring conclusion from these studies is that at least one half of south Florida that continues to support panthers is in private ownership and management, and that panthers can not continue to exist if these private lands do not continue to support panthers as they currently are. However, current land uses of these properties which are compatible with panther conservation are perilously subject to global market economies, tax structures and complex regulatory processes that are encouraging conversion of critical natural cover types to intensive uses that will diminish the ability of those lands to support panthers. The result will be extinction of the panther because the panther can not exist solely on that half of their current range that is in public ownership. Thus, major efforts have been initiated to seek ways to work with private landowners to develop incentive-based processes for continuing those land uses that are mutually beneficial to the landowner's economic needs and preservation of panther habitats on those private lands.

This project originated out of a desire to compensate private landowners for wildlife values on their properties which government has an obligation to protect. In the demonstration project area, such an effort would also prevent the escalation of land uses on private lands toward those that would be incompatible with panther survival. Land management practices which are in the best long-term interest of Florida panthers can be defined. It seemed reasonable that landowners could be encouraged to either adopt or keep these practices in place through a voluntary, incentive-based planning process which leads to public/private partnerships. Partnerships which compensate landowners for wildlife values would also benefit wildlife, the economy, and be in the best public interest.

The current situation is that natural resource agencies and many private landowners desire to keep south Florida agricultural lands in land uses which promote panther habitat preservation. But, certain governmental taxing programs actually work as disincentives for these low intensity land uses. Tax burdens can often reduce, and even exceed, margins of profit from an agricultural practice. When this occurs, landowners often have little recourse apart from selecting a more intensive land use which deteriorates wildlife habitat values on the property. Incentives are needed which prevent this habitat loss through escalating land uses.

In similar fashion, choices which lead to more intensive land uses are often made by landowners due to cumbersome permitting processes of government. When a landowner cannot obtain necessary permits which would allow him to continue or initiate a low intensity land use more compatible with panther survival, he becomes discouraged. His discouragement leads him to alternatives which are not in the best interest of wildlife habitat preservation. For example, it may be easier to sell land to a developer than to obtain a permit for surface water use for an agricultural practice. If, as is usually the case, the agricultural practice maintains higher wildlife values on the

property than would be the case under more intensive forms of development, it would behoove government to develop a more efficient permitting process.

One of the purposes of this project was to identify regulatory alternatives which would be applicable to all private property owners who desired to voluntarily participate in preserving panther habitat. It was always believed, however, that processes and incentives developed as a result of this project would have the potential for statewide application. The same factors affecting panther habitat on private lands in south Florida also affect wildlife habitat and natural areas for other species throughout the state. It should follow then, that incentives attractive to landowners in south Florida should provide similar motivation for habitat protection among landowners throughout Florida.

OBJECTIVES

The stated objectives in the published study narrative for this project are as follows:

1. To design and implement a demonstration project creating a voluntary, incentive-based process, the purpose of which is to provide equitable incentives to private landowners to encourage voluntary preservation of panther habitat on private lands.
2. To demonstrate the successful protection of panther habitat in south Florida.
3. To identify those incentives which will benefit private landowners throughout Florida and, therefore, provide wildlife habitat protection values statewide.
4. To coordinate the land management processes developed on this project with the habitat conservation concepts identified in, Closing The Gaps In Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System (Cox et al., 1994).

PROCEDURE

Prior to developing a procedure for this project, we needed to make several determinations. The most important of these was the identification of the incentives which would be necessary to deliver to landowners to gain their voluntary participation in a habitat conservation effort.

In the joint project between the GFC and the AFT mentioned earlier, participating private landowners identified the types of compensation they sought from government in return for their agreeing not to escalate land uses in areas of wildlife habitat on their lands. The most highly sought incentives that landowners identified included income tax credits and federal estate tax deferments. Other potential forms of compensation identified included cash payments for non-agricultural development rights, access to surface and sub-surface water resources and reduction of ad-valorem taxes.

The majority of these requested incentives were determined to be not immediately deliverable by state government. None of the identified forms of compensation were under the authority of the GFC. What we needed to learn from private landowners then, was whether there were incentives that were perhaps more immediately deliverable by government which would encourage continued landowner cooperation in habitat conservation efforts.

Private Landowner's Working Group

The first step was to formulate a Private Landowner's Working Group consisting of landowners from the Panther Habitat Demonstration Project area (Figure 1). Invitations were sent to major landowners in the demonstration project area soliciting their interest in serving on the working group. Meetings with participating landowners were very informal and usually one-on-one as opposed to group meetings. Landowners were asked individually to identify forms of compensation or incentives that would encourage them to participate in voluntary habitat preservation partnerships. In addition, they were asked to suggest ways of improving the existing permitting process or a system to replace it.

Inter-Agency Working Group

It had been determined that panther habitat situated on private lands in the demonstration project area was critical to the panther's survival. Landowners had been invited to participate in the planning process to protect those habitats. The next step was to assemble a working group of governmental agency representatives from county, state and federal agencies. Invitations were sent to selected governmental agencies requesting the designation of a representative.

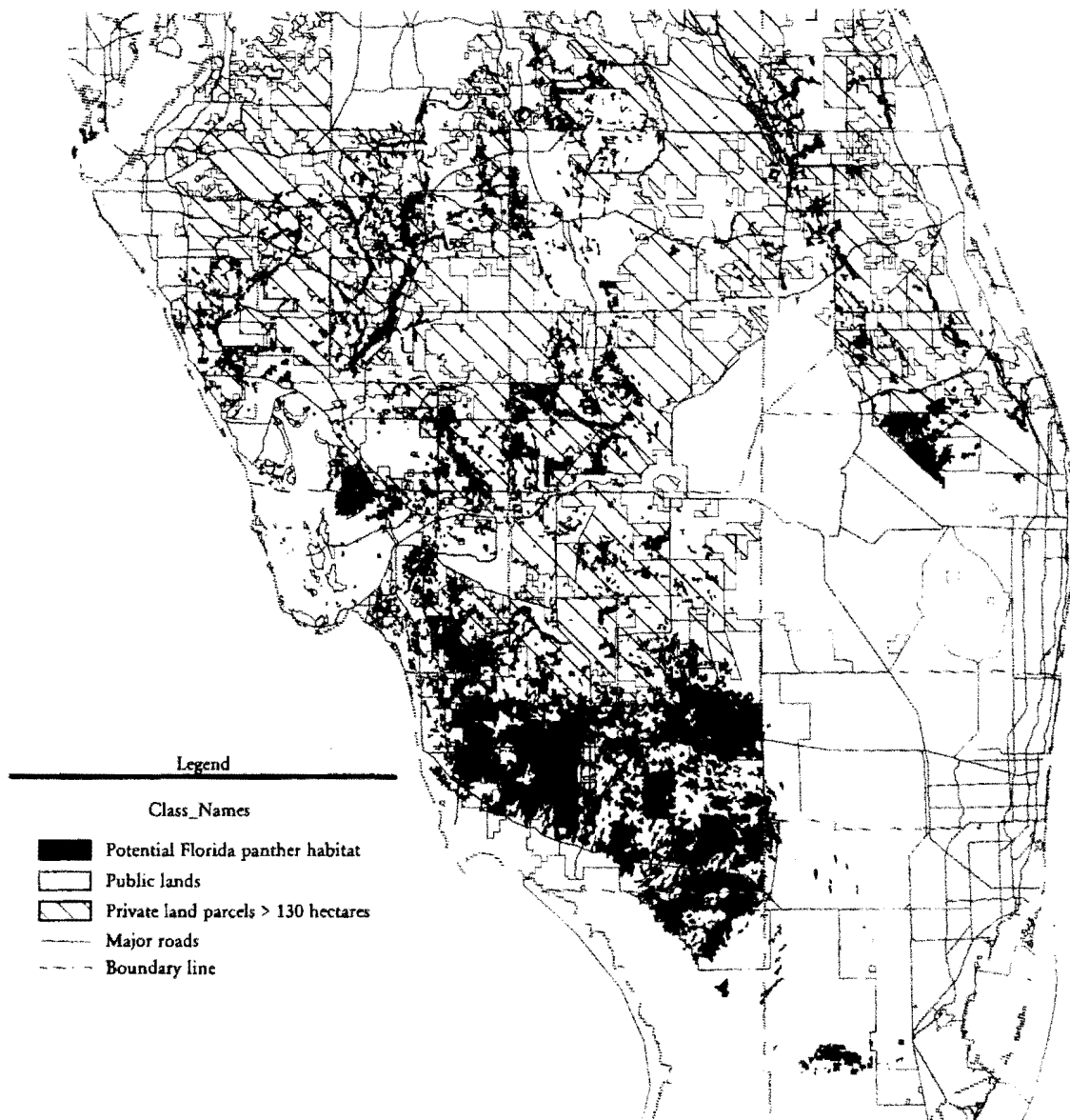
Meetings were held with representatives of participating agencies to determine how to best protect panther habitat in the demonstration project area using a voluntary, incentive-based program. Consensus recommendations from the group were sought.

Review of Existing Partnerships

The Forest Stewardship program in Florida is administered by the Division of Forestry of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services as the lead agency. The GFC has manpower resources assigned to the program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, and the Florida Forestry Association also participate.

GFC personnel assigned full-time to the Forest Stewardship Program were asked to identify private lands in the demonstration project area for which Forest Stewardship plans had previously been developed. Stewardship plans for parcels so identified, were reviewed for comparison purposes.

Potential Florida panther habitat in Southwest Florida



On-Site Panther Habitat Demonstration Project Alico, Inc.

At the time of this writing, a detailed whole-farm, stewardship plan is being developed for a 120,000-acre tract of land owned by Alico, Inc. and located in Hendry and Collier counties. The landowner identified the issuance of a water-use permit as the incentive which would guarantee his participation in the planning process. In the plan, a mosaic of land uses on the property are described in detail. The final result will be a protection of the natural areas on the property and only such agricultural escalation as is determined to be compatible with panther survival. In return for these concessions, the landowner will receive a water-use permit which will allow his proposed agricultural practices.

RESULTS

It was discovered during the joint project between the GFC and AFT that the best guidance for a governmental program to protect wildlife values on private lands would come from private landowners themselves. We knew that if this project was to be successful, we needed the benefit of the wisdom, experience, and guidance of the private landowner.

There were two distinct aspects of this project. First, we needed an on-site demonstration of protected panther habitat in the demonstration project area. Secondly, and more importantly, we needed to develop a land-management planning process that would result in partnerships between government and private landowners and, ultimately, protect panther habitat on private lands. Private landowner input on both aspects of the project proved invaluable and was largely responsible for successes we experienced.

Private Landowner's Working Group

Four major landowners agreed to participate on the working group by responding to the initial invitation. They were Dale Albritton of Albritton Ranch, Boyce Dixon of Babcock Ranches, Fred Barfield of Barfield Farms, and Ernie Caldwell of Berry Holding Corporation. In late November, Michael Ramsey of Collier Enterprises expressed his desire to participate on the project in the future. While these five landowners represent the private ownership of hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the demonstration project area, it should be understood that their commitment to participate on the working group did not automatically commit their holdings to an on-site demonstration. It certainly does illustrate, however, that landowners willing to work with government on joint ventures could result in significant wildlife habitat protection.

Face to face meetings with these cooperating landowners provided valuable guidance to the development of the land-management planning process which was developed and the consensus recommendations of the Inter-Agency Working Group. In fact, nearly all the substantive recommendations from this project originated as thoughts expressed by participating private landowners.

It was the expressed frustrations of private landowners that made us realize the current regulatory approach to dealing with private landowners serves as a disincentive to wildlife habitat protection. To the credit of the landowners who participated in the project, their prior frustrations did not prevent them from cooperating with government to produce a potential solution.

Inter-Agency Working Group

Four federal, five state, and two county governmental agencies agreed to participate on the Inter-Agency Working Group. They were as follows:

Federal:	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers U.S. Environmental Protection Agency U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Natural Resources Conservation Service
State:	Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - Division of Forestry Department of Community Affairs Department of Environmental Protection Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission South Florida Water Management District
County:	Collier County Hendry County

Two of the federal agencies who had agreed to participate did not. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency representative did not have a travel budget to allow his participation and meeting conflicts prevented participation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representative. Both agencies, however, expressed their support for the conceptual proposal of the Inter-Agency Working Group.

Designated agency representatives to the Inter-Agency Working Group were:

Federal:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Bob Barron
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Duncan Powell
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Andrew Eller
Natural Resources Conservation Service - Greg Hendricks

State:

Division of Forestry - Charles Marcus, Dennis Hardin, and
Sonja Durrwachter
Department of Community Affairs - Henry Bittaker
Department of Environmental Protection - Paul J. (Jay) Garner
Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission - Dennis E. (Duke) Hammond
South Florida Water Management District - Karen Johnson

County:

Collier County - Kimberly Polen, Bob Salvaggio
Hendry County - Dallas Townsend

The culmination of correspondence, discussions and meetings of the Inter-Agency Working Group occurred at a two-day workshop in Immokalee, Florida on November 28, 1995. This meeting was facilitated by Mr. James D. "Dave" McElveen, a Program Development Administrator with the GFC and a trained meeting facilitator (See Appendix A). While meeting at the IFAS Center, the Inter-Agency Working Group developed a proposed voluntary, incentive-based land-management planning process to protect panther habitat on private lands in the demonstration project area (Figure 1). During the development of the proposed land-management planning process, participating agency representatives were requested to reach consensus recommendations. Consensus was defined as 100% concurrence of all agency representatives participating.

It should be noted that consensus of participating agency representatives is not to be construed as agency endorsement. In fact, one of the issues on which consensus was reached was that this report should be returned to participating agencies for endorsements by their Executive Staffs, Boards and Commissions.

The consensus of the agency representatives, however, was that regional, inter-agency planning teams should be established. It would be the purpose of these teams to develop whole-farm plans with the volunteering landowners in the region covered by the planning team. State and county agency participation on these teams would be mandated by legislation. Federal agency participation would be assured by Memoranda of Understanding. The planning teams would meet monthly and use the nine-step planning process currently in use by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (Appendix B). It was the consensus of the Inter-Agency Working Group that the GFC would be the convening agency. Although no consensus was reached due to the issue not being thoroughly discussed, it might make sense to use water management district boundaries to define regions. The districts would be represented on the regional teams and other team members would represent agencies with statewide jurisdiction. Appropriate county participation in the development of a particular plan would be at the invitation of the convening agency.

An important part of the planning process would include the development of permits required by government for all aspects of a volunteer landowner's operation. Herein lies the most immediately deliverable incentive of this new process . . . true one-stop permitting. A landowner will be dealing with all permitting authorities under one roof at one time. Landowners who have participated on this project have suggested that such a process would be a true incentive for landowners.

Once a landowner is participating in a habitat conservation program covered by an approved whole-farm plan, he would become eligible to receive any incentives which might be forthcoming from the federal government.

Consensus Recommendations and Observations from the Inter-Agency Working Group

1. Regional teams should be established consisting of representatives of appropriate federal, state, and county governmental agencies.
2. The purpose of these regional, inter-agency teams is to conduct whole-farm planning for private landowners.
3. The regional, inter-agency teams should have a facilitating or convening agency to coordinate meeting times and locations.
4. The regional, inter-agency teams should meet at least monthly to provide a forum whereby private landowners can address all agencies at once.
5. This new process is voluntary on the part of private landowners and non-regulatory on the part of government.
6. This process will consist of two segments. First, a whole-farm plan will be developed for the participating landowner. Secondly, true, one-stop permitting will be conducted for that landowner.
7. The entire process should require no longer than one year for each participating landowner.
8. Regional, inter-agency teams shall use the 9-Step Planning Process the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly SCS) uses to deliver voluntary technical assistance to landowners (See Appendix B).
9. The way the process works:
 - A. A landowner who learns of the program contacts the convening agency and expresses his desire to voluntarily participate.
 - B. The convening agency convenes the regional, inter-agency team.

- C. The regional, inter-agency team performs the 9-Step Planning Process to develop a whole-farm plan with the participating landowner.
 - D. The landowner is ready to commence one-stop permitting when his whole-farm plan is developed to his satisfaction. The regional, inter-agency team guides the landowner through this process.
10. A volunteer landowner can contact any participating agency to express his desire to participate. All agencies will "steer" volunteer landowners toward the regional, inter-agency team for that landowner's location.
 11. The Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission should be the convening agency for the regional, inter-agency teams.
 12. Whole-farm plans must include conditions describing how the partnership between the landowner and government will work, In particular, the manner in which agency personnel can come on the farm will be clearly defined.
 13. Whole-farm plans will be evaluated by on-site visits by the regional, inter-agency team members. Evaluations should be annual and stipulated in the whole-farm plan.
 14. Resolution methods and possible corrective actions shall be well defined in the whole-farm plan to cover those instances where plan provisions are not being followed.
 15. State and county governmental agency participation on regional, inter-agency teams should be mandated by legislation.
 16. Federal agency participation on regional, inter-agency teams should be secured by Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with state agencies. Consideration should be given to legislatively requiring such MOU's to be developed by state agencies.
 17. Which agencies participate?
 - Federal:
 - Consolidated Farm Services Agency
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State:

Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation
 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Division of Forestry)
 Department of Community Affairs
 Department of Environmental Protection
 Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission
 Water Management Districts

Counties:

Counties should be allowed to designate appropriate staff participation

18. The availability of this process should, initially, be limited to volunteer landowners who are agriculturalists in that part of southwest Florida where priority panther habitat has been identified.
19. Volunteer landowners should begin the process early, certainly prior to large capital investment.
20. Best management practices for agricultural operations which have already been developed and are compatible with or contribute toward panther survival should be identified by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission working in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
21. An evaluation method which identifies the panther habitat values of alternative cover types and establishes a qualitative priority list of habitat types needs to be developed by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission working in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
22. During whole-farm planning, landowners should be provided information about the availability of other "free" land management planning programs such as the Division of Forestry's Forest Stewardship Program.
23. Whole-farm plans should be flexible enough to allow alternative agricultural uses on described property portions and also allow for future agricultural development on described property portions. Such land uses must be compatible with panther survival.
24. Criteria need to be developed to determine which farms are eligible to participate in the program.
25. Grandfathering
 - A. A farm operating on previously issued permits would be "grandfathered." That is, incentives could be delivered without further planning.

- B. Landowners in the process of procuring permits can volunteer to "opt-out" of the current process and into whole-farm planning.
 - C. In the future, a landowner can choose to participate in whole-farm planning or use the existing permitting process.
26. Permits issued under whole-farm planning should be long-term permits (25-year to perpetual).
 27. Initially, the primary deliverable incentives will be the simplified, more timely permitting process, and long-term permits.
 28. Current federal estate tax law has resulted in unintended, adverse impacts on natural resources. Federal estate tax law should be reformed in a way that reduces these impacts and should not necessarily be used as an incentive for "good performance." In other words, federal estate tax law should be reformed for all landowners regardless of their voluntary participation in habitat protection programs.
 29. An economic analysis of the costs and cost savings of this approach should be conducted prior to contacting Florida's Congressional Delegation.
 30. Florida's Congressional Delegation should be asked to introduce legislation which authorizes the use of income tax credits as incentives for voluntary habitat conservation by private landowners.
 31. If a private landowner is participating in a habitat protection program covered by an approved whole-farm plan, his natural areas should qualify for the lowest "Greenbelt Law" taxation rate available.
 32. The current permitting process is inefficient, prolonged, and frustrating to participating landowners.
 33. The regional, inter-agency team development of whole-farm plans is designed for panther habitat but has application for other lands and wildlife values both statewide and nationally.
 34. The private landowners who participated in the development of "The Landowners Conceptual Plan to Protect Panther Habitat on Private Lands in South Florida" should review this report and comment on the planning process the agencies have developed.
 35. The Executive Staffs, Boards of Directors, Commissions, etc. of participating agencies should review this report and comment on and/or endorse the planning process the agencies have developed.

36. Landowner and agency endorsement should occur prior to legislative action being taken.
37. The participants on the original Inter-Agency Working Group should be reconvened at an appropriate time to conduct an educational workshop for designated agency representatives on legislatively mandated regional, inter-agency teams.

Review of Existing Partnerships

One job in the Study Narrative for this project described a comparison which would be made between the conservation values of previously completed Forest Stewardship Plans in the vicinity of the Panther Habitat Demonstration Project area and those of completed whole-farm plans for this project. No such comparison could be made because, at the time of this writing, there are no completed plans for the Panther Habitat Demonstration Project.

Personnel employed by the GFC and assigned to the Forest Stewardship Program identified three Forest Stewardship Plans previously completed in the Panther Habitat Demonstration Project area. They include lands owned by the Albrittons in Hendry County, Dr. Robert Gore and Mr. Cliff Fort in Collier County, and encompass approximately 8,542 acres.

It is safe to assume that the same landowners would be interested in whole-farm plans for the same properties, especially given the possibility of the delivery of incentives previously discussed. In that regard, the identified Forest Stewardship Plans represent potential panther habitat values which would be protected by the land-management planning process described in this report.

On-Site Panther Habitat Demonstration Project Alico, Inc.

At the time the enacting legislation establishing this project became effective, there was a coincidental initiation of a stewardship planning effort between GFC personnel and Alico, Inc. It was proposed, that a whole-farm, stewardship type plan would be developed for a 120,000 acre tract of land owned by Alico, Inc. and located in Hendry and Collier counties. It was decided that this parcel and the associated whole-farm plan would be used as the on-site demonstration portion of this project.

DISCUSSION

What remains to be discussed is, "Where do we go from here?" We, of course, need to complete the planning for the Alico property. But, for true partnerships to develop between private landowners and government, a land management planning process needs to be established similar to the one proposed in this report. Federal, state, and county governments are genuinely enthusiastic about this non-regulatory, voluntary, incentive-based approach to habitat protection. The suggested state legislation would establish such a planning process. Private landowners have made it

clear that they would welcome a more efficient and timely process which delivers true one-stop permitting. An economic analysis of the costs and savings of an incentive program which includes income tax credits for habitat protection on private lands needs to be encouraged by the state.

Most importantly, any process that is adopted will be successful only if it is endorsed by implementing agencies and affected private landowners. For the purpose of accomplishing that endorsement, this report should be sent to the participating agencies and the Private Landowner's Working Group that worked on the joint project between the GFC and the AFT. The comments and recommendations resulting from these reviews should be considered before planning additional "next steps."

A recent report entitled, "Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System" (Cox et. al., 1994) used a computerized Geographic Information System to identify lands in Florida which need additional protection. Such lands are referred to in that report as Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. Private lands which undergo whole-farm planning in the future would be afforded adequate protection for wildlife values in Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas. This would preclude the need for fee-simple acquisition by the State.

In conclusion, it should be observed that many of the recommendations in this report are restatements of recommendations from private landowners, and/or descriptions of operational policies already in-use by participating agencies. What now seems appropriate is formalizing these recommendations and policies into a single, multi-agency, land-management planning process. The consensus of agency representatives on the Inter-Agency Working Group is that such formalization should be accomplished by legislative action.

References:

- Cox, J., R. Kautz, M. MacLaughlin and T. Gilbert. 1994. Closing the Gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Office of Environmental Services, Tallahassee. 239pp.
- Evans, C. 1995. A Landowners' Strategy for Protecting Florida Panther Habitat on Private Lands in South Florida. Joint Project of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and the American Farmland Trust. Project Rep., 63pp.
- Logan, T., A.C. Eller, Jr., R. Morrell, D. Ruffner, J. Sewell. 1993. Florida Panther Habitat Preservation Plan, South Florida Population. Prepared for the Florida Panther Interagency Committee. 44pp.

APPENDIX A

MEMORANDUM

November 14, 1995

TO: Panther Demonstration Project Inter-Agency Working Group Members

FROM: *Duke* Duke Hammond, Biological Scientist IV, Division of Wildlife

SUBJECT: Agenda for November 28, 1995 Meeting

The inter-agency working group will be meeting in the IFAS Center on SR 29, north of Immokalee, Florida at 0800 on November 28, 1995.

The meeting will be facilitated by Mr. James D. "Dave" McElveen, a Program Development Administrator with the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Dave is a trained facilitator who will remain "content neutral" throughout the meeting. His role will be to help our group come to a consensus on the following issues:

1. Is an inter-agency team approach to developing whole-farm plans possible?
2. What will be the mechanics of such an approach?
 - A. Must it be a new process?
 - B. Can we use an existing process?
3. Are there advantages to having a new, separate and identifiable process for conserving panther habitat which are lost if an existing planning process is used?
4. Can the provisions of currently issued permits be included in whole farm plans?
5. Should state and county agency participation be mandated by legislation?
6. Should federal agency participation be "guaranteed" by MOU's with state agencies?

Time permitting, I would like to discuss the following, secondary level of issues:

7. Can non-regulatory, non-penalty methods of evaluating compliance be developed?
 - A. No penalty audits.
8. Can agencies who need compliance perform all monitoring and compliance inspections without burdening the land owner?
9. Must the delivery of incentives be tied to compliance?

It would be helpful if you would come to the meeting prepared to discuss the issues above and any other related topics you consider important. Because of my rather poor, over age 50, memory, I have written thoughts I will be prepared to verbally share with the group.

The meeting will be scheduled from 0800 till 1700 on November 28, 1995, with a break for lunch. We will reconvene for a wrap-up at 0800 on November 29, 1995 at the same location.

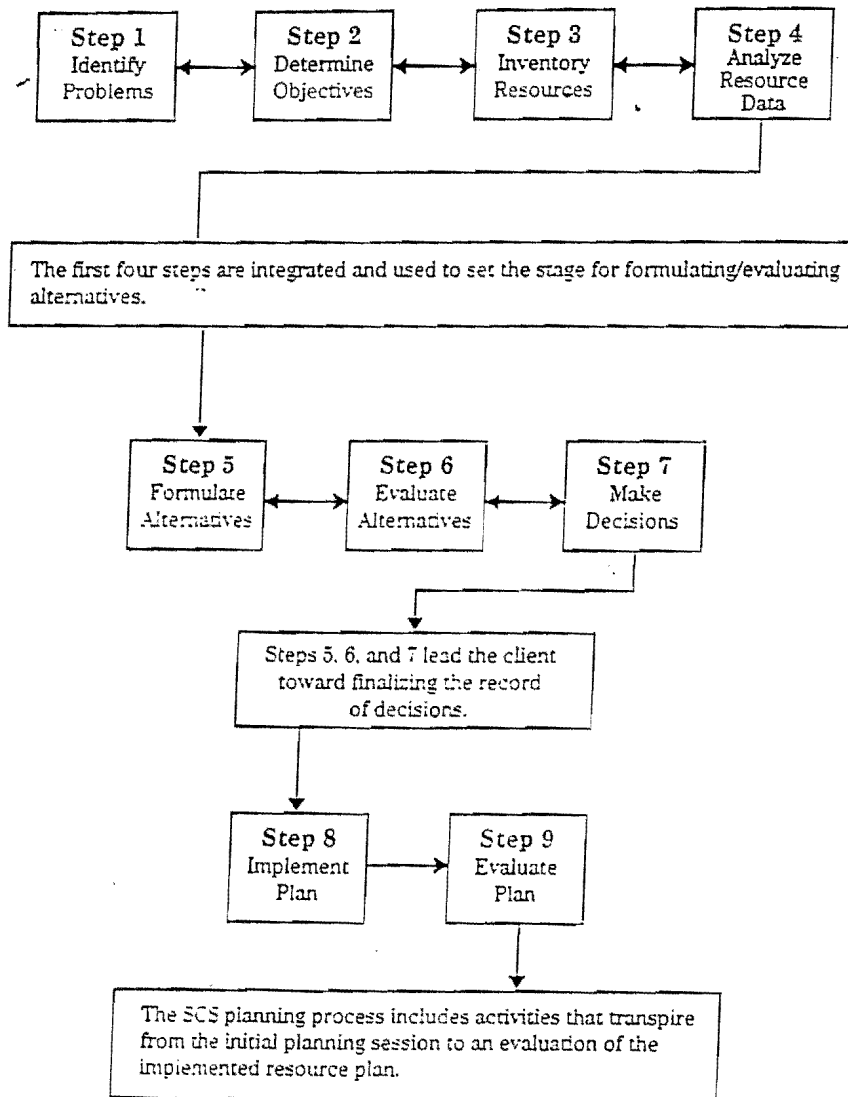
See you at the meeting, and thank you for your great cooperation.

DH/pw

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Issued September 1993

The Planning Process

600.20 Preview of planning steps

This handbook describes the SCS planning process in great detail and provides guidance on carrying out each step. However, the process itself must be preceded by preplanning activities (see section 600.16), which can play a critical role in the outcome and effectiveness of plan development. More detailed information on the planning process is provided in Section 600.6, Planning Fundamentals.

The nine steps in the planning process involve development, implementation, and evaluation of a resource plan. Steps 1 through 7 are used to develop the plan. Step 8 is implementation of the plan, and step 9 is evaluation of the plan.

(a) Step 1—Identify problems

This step in the planning process is the identification of the resource problems in the planning area. It may include the recognition of resource enhancement opportunities.

(b) Step 2—Determine objectives

Step 2 is used to identify and agree on what the client(s) wants to achieve through the planning and implementation process.

(c) Step 3—Inventory resources

In this step, the resources in the planning area are inventoried so that the problems and opportunities are defined and current resource conditions are established. Onsite and related offsite conditions are both inventoried.

(d) Step 4—Analyze resource data

In this step, the information gathered in step 3 is analyzed to clearly define the resource conditions, including any problems associated with their use.

(e) Step 5—Formulate alternatives

Alternatives that will achieve the client(s) objectives, solve resource problems, and take advantage of opportunities to improve or protect resource conditions are formulated in this step.

(f) Step 6—Evaluate alternatives

This step is evaluation of the alternatives to determine their effect in addressing the client's objectives and the resource problems. This step also includes an evaluation of the potential effects on social, economic, and environmental concerns. Special attention must be placed on those environmental values protected by law or Executive order.

(g) Step 7—Make decisions

In this step, the client selects which alternative(s) to implement and the planner prepares the necessary documentation of the client's decisions.

(h) Step 8—Implement plan

The selected alternative(s) is implemented in this step.

(i) Step 9—Evaluate plan

Step 9 is commonly referred to as "follow-up assistance." In this step, the effectiveness of the implemented plan is evaluated to

- assure that it is functioning as projected and achieving the client's objectives;
- identify maintenance needs;
- identify needs for modifications in the plan, practice, specification, or a combination of these; and
- provide necessary encouragement to the client to continue implementation of planned practices not yet implemented.

600.21 Step 1—Identify problems

(a) Description

Step 1, Identify problems, is the identification of the resource problems in the planning area and associated problems of interrelated ecosystems. This step includes identifying the conditions that are impairing or degrading one or more of the five resources. It also includes identifying the opportunities to enhance the resources. The identified problems and opportunities guide the remainder of the planning process. Initially, the planner and client may only identify one or two problems. As planning progresses and additional information is developed, other problems and opportunities are identified.

(b) General

Problem identification frequently begins the planning process and continues through the resource inventory and data analysis steps. Initial problems are identified based on readily available information and discussion

with the client. As planning proceeds, problems are identified and documented as a basis for decision-making. This generally is completed after step 4 is concluded.

(c) Planning standard

The client's problems, concerns, and opportunities are identified and documented.

(d) Inputs

Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)
Conservation district long-range plan and priorities
Soil survey
Client input
Discipline manuals and handbooks
Watershed plans
Information available from other agencies

(e) Outputs

Problems, concerns, and opportunities are identified and documented in the case file.



Step 1 activities — Project plan

What	How
1. Make an initial identification of problems and opportunities. (These problems and opportunities will be substantiated and further defined as planning intensifies.)	This is the beginning of the scoping process. You should: • Review the client's application. • Gather and review existing information about planning area and the ecosystem. – • Request environmental, social, economic, and cultural resources information from other agencies and specific interest groups. • Meet with client and make a field reconnaissance of planning area. This should be done by the interdisciplinary team. The client and representatives of other agencies should be encouraged to participate. • Obtain input from the public, other agencies, and special interest groups. This is best done through one or more public meetings. • Meet with client and reach agreement on the initial identification of problems.
2. Make a final identification of the problems and opportunities.	The interdisciplinary team will evaluate the outputs of planning elements 2, 3, and 4 to determine the resource problems and opportunities in the planning area that need to be addressed to accomplish the client's objectives.

600.22 Step 2—Determine objectives

(a) Description

Step 2, Determine objectives, is developing an understanding with the client of the desired conditions for the planning area as compared to the existing conditions. This includes the desired resource uses, resource problem reductions, and on- and off-site environmental protection. As resources are inventoried and analyzed and alternatives are formulated, objectives may need to be reviewed and modified.

(b) General

The purpose of step 2 is to determine planning objectives based on the needs and values of the client and interested publics regarding the use, treatment, and management of the resources. Objectives, as used in this handbook, mean the goal or desired future condition that the client and Soil Conservation Service (SCS) are working toward.

SCS employees should use this opportunity to help the client think more broadly about the problems and opportunities for resource protection or enhancement.

The SCS objective in ecosystem-based planning is to assist the client in making informed decisions that result in wise use and conservation of resources. SCS objectives are directed at restoring or maintaining the five resources at a sustainable level.

(c) Planning standard

The client's and SCS resource-related objectives are clearly stated and documented. The objectives support proposed land uses and SCS policy and technical requirements.

(d) Inputs

- Identified problems (step 1)
- Records from previous planning events
- Resource data
- District long range plan
- Client input
- Documentation of public concerns

(e) Outputs

A list of resource objectives to be addressed by the plan.



Step 2 activities — Project plan

What

How

1. Assist client in determining the objectives for the planning effort.

Determine the planned use of the resources and the problems that will be addressed by the planning effort. This can be done by:

- Reviewing available resource information and the client's application with the client. This includes information developed through the following steps of the planning process.
- Soliciting input on desires for the use of the resources and environmental concerns from the public, special interest groups, and local, State, and Federal agencies at a scoping meeting. (This could be the same meeting described in step 1 of the planning process.)
- Reviewing with the client the potential uses of the planning area resources including possible programs for protecting or enhancing these resources.
- Reviewing results of the above steps with the client. (The decisions will be recorded in the case file.)

Note: The client's objectives generally are not finalized until after alternatives are developed and evaluated.

600.23 Step 3—Inventory resources

(a) Description

Step 3, Inventory resources, is the collection of information about the planning area's resources. This information is used to define the problems and opportunities and to formulate and evaluate alternatives. Information concerning the five resources and farm or ranch operation and management is gathered as needed.

(b) General

A resource inventory is the vehicle that moves the planner to a position of knowledge. Information is needed to understand the present conditions and potentials of the five resources and human interaction with the environment. A complete resource inventory provides benchmark condition that will be used in determining effects and identifying impacts. Support guidance for inventory resources is in section 600.60, Planning Fundamentals.

Each of the five resources has particular considerations that constitute the potential basic problems to be evaluated as a part of developing a resource management plan. These considerations are identified in section V of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) as column headings in the Conservation Practices Physical Effects (CPPE) matrix. They are also listed in the Resource Quality Criteria document in Section III of the FOTG. Many states also list the considerations on a field checklist used for problem identification during planning (see exhibits 1 and 5).

Proper identification of resource problems and their causes is essential for resource planning. Sufficient information must be gathered during the inventory phase to determine the status of the resources. The actual determination as to whether or not current conditions are acceptable is normally part of Step 4, Analyze Resource Data.

Information needed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act and other environmental laws, as well as to satisfy specific program requirements, needs to be obtained.

(c) Planning standard

Sufficient data and information are collected and available to analyze and understand resource conditions, develop sound alternatives, and meet specific program requirements.

(d) Inputs

Maps
Aerial photography
Inventory tools (see Planning Fundamentals)
State and Federal reports and evaluations, such as soil surveys and HEL determinations
Previous resource inventories
FOTG

(e) Outputs

- Detailed inventories of the five resources (SWAPA)
- Identification of other environmental concerns, such as threatened and endangered species and cultural resources
- Identification of infrastructure physical features, such as roads, houses, fences, power lines, and other utilities
- Identification of how the client manages resources, including kinds, amounts, and timing of management activities
- Benchmark condition of the planning area



Step 3 activities — Conservation plan (*continued*)

What	How
5. Ensure that all appropriate resource concerns are addressed including environmental and cultural resource issues.	Use state-developed checklists (exhibits 1 and 5). See section 600.60, Planning Fundamentals.
6. Use natural resources as teaching aids while in field with client.	Encourage the client to experience a "hands-on" participation in the inventory process by helping with data collection to learn ecosystem/conservation principles. Offer the client the opportunity to conduct actual measurements, such as clipping of vegetation, checking soil conditions, boring trees, and recording information. Make a record of the resource inventory data to facilitate analysis in step 4.

600.24 Step 4—Analyze resource data

(a) Description

Step 4, Analyze resource data, is the study of the resource data to clearly define the resource conditions, including limitations to their use and potentials. Benchmark conditions are determined. The process provides the information needed to formulate and evaluate alternatives. The analyses should clearly establish the cause and effect relationships among resources and the ecosystem that provide information about existing and future conditions.

(b) General

To use the information gathered in step 3 of the planning process to full advantage, the planner must interpret the inventory data. This is the analysis part of planning.

Analysis should be done with a dual purpose in mind—to provide insight to resource information for the planner and to present that information in a meaningful and understandable form to the client. The format in which information is presented to the client has a significant influence on the decisionmaking process. These principles are applicable to all forms of Soil Conservation Service (SCS) planning.

As with inventory methods, analysis methods vary with the resource being considered. For some resources, analysis methods are well established. They are described in corresponding discipline handbooks and manuals. Section I of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) provides a list of technical references that relate to resource analysis. Forms are normally available for those resources that have prescribed methods of analysis (see exhibit 9). State discipline specialists are responsible for developing and distributing these materials. Automated reports generated through FOCS can provide basic inventory analysis data.

(c) Planning standard

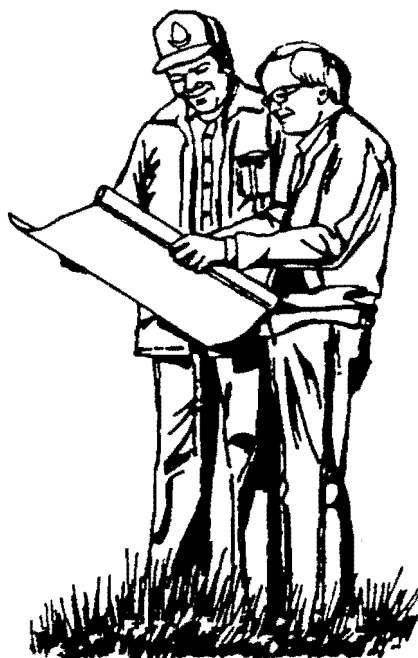
Status of resource conditions in terms of location, extent, relationship of past and present management to current conditions, and inherent potentials and resource limitations are documented. The benchmark condition is documented. Results are displayed in easily understood formats that depict current resource conditions, physical characteristics of the planning unit, and comparisons between existing and potential conditions. An environmental evaluation is documented.

(d) Inputs

Identified problems
Client's objectives
Resource inventory data
FOTG
Environmental, social, cultural resource, and economic inventory data

(e) Outputs

Clear statement of the benchmark condition of the five resources
Complete definition of problems and opportunities
Environmental evaluation



Step 4 activities — Project plan

What	How
1. Establish types of analyses to be made of resource data.	Use scoping to determine the types of analyses needed. The identified problems, client's objectives, program criteria, and environmental values need to be considered. Input from the client, interdisciplinary team, special interest groups, public, and other agencies is needed. Input from state office and National Technical Center specialists should be obtained as appropriate.
2. Establish scope and intensity, needed degree of accuracy, and procedures to be used.	The same procedure used in the activities for a conservation plan needs to be used. The type of planning (river basin planning or implementation planning), size, cost, potential for adverse environmental or social impact, and controversy need to be considered. Agreement by the client and State and Federal agencies is essential.
3. Conduct the analyses.	The specialist(s) assigned to perform the analyses will conduct the analyses. Interdisciplinary and interagency input should be obtained as needed. Complete environmental evaluation and document findings.
4. Define the existing and future resource conditions in the project area. This helps to clearly define the conditions that prevent clients from realizing their objectives.	Compare the results of the analyses with the problems, objectives, and quality criteria. Review the results with the client, concerned State and Federal agencies, special interest groups, and the public.
5. Assemble the information in a usable and understandable form.	Use tables, maps, photographs, charts, and narrative, as appropriate, to present the information in a usable form. This is based on how the information will be used.

600.25 Step 5—Formulate alternatives

(a) Description

Step 5, Formulate alternatives, is developing alternatives that will achieve the objectives of the client and interested public by solving resource problems and taking advantage of opportunities to improve the resource base. All reasonable alternatives should be considered, including those that will prevent a problem from occurring as well as those that address an existing problem. Measures that mitigate potential adverse impacts should also be included as appropriate.

(b) General

Step 5 describes the thought process a planner uses in formulating alternatives. The purpose of formulating alternatives is to determine which conservation treatments are most effective, efficient, and acceptable to the client in solving problems and meeting objectives. These alternatives relate to identified problems and are developed in view of the cultural resource, social, environmental, and economic conditions of the planning area.

The client should participate in the formulation of alternatives. This allows more practical alternative formulation and improves the chances of successful implementation of the plan. For project plans and coordinated resource plans, it is essential that the public, special interest groups, and State and Federal agencies participate in the development of alternatives.

The planner should develop enough alternatives to provide an opportunity for the client to consider several possibilities.

The planner is responsible for assembling accurate resource data and using data analysis in formulating technically feasible alternative solutions. During the formulating process, the planner may notice that incorrect or insufficient data have been assembled. When deficiencies are noticed, the planner needs to return to the collection and analysis of data before proceeding.

The planner needs to have a clear understanding of the problems or concerns, including cause and effect relationships. If it is noted that the problem is not clearly defined or identified, the planner should return to step 4 of the planning process and go over the concerns with the client to make an accurate evaluation of the situation.

(c) Planning standard

Alternative treatments are developed that produce the effects of solving identified problems and meeting the objectives of the client and interested publics.

(d) Inputs

Formulating alternatives requires physical, cultural resource, social, economic, and environmental information pertaining to the planning area, always being aware of ecosystem interrelationships. Other inputs include:

- List of resource problems from steps 1 and 4
- Objectives from step 2 of the planning process
- Resource data and analysis from steps 3 and 4
- Information concerning specific program criteria
- FOTG/Quality Criteria

(e) Outputs

- Set of conservation management system alternatives available to the client (see exhibits 3 and 4)
- Sufficient descriptive information so that the client understands the alternatives



Step 5 activities — Project plan

What	How
1. Identify practices and other treatments that will address the sponsor's objectives and problems identified. Land treatment (nonstructural and structural) as well as preventive measures should be considered.	Develop a list of possible practices using the CPPE matrix in the FOTG. Use information from the previous planning process steps, and involve the client. Obtain input from the public, special interest groups, and local, State, and Federal agencies. The information can be obtained from: • Public meetings, Federal Register Notices, and personal contacts with colleagues in other agencies. • Input from other agencies and interested people. Many times, others have had similar experiences or situations. In addition, other agencies may be able to provide any technical assistance the planner may need and not have available internally.
2. Develop alternative plans.	Make a preliminary evaluation of the effects of each practice on the problems and objectives and the environmental values. Group complementary measures that have a positive effect into alternatives. Incorporate specific program criteria into the formulation process.
3. Estimate costs and effects of each alternative.	Develop preliminary designs and cost estimates. Estimate environmental, social, economic, and human effects. The acceptability of the alternative by the client, the public, and State and Federal agencies should be established. Check to determine that the alternative is complete (contains all components including operation and maintenance) to assure that it will function as planned and will produce the projected effects. Needed measures to mitigate any potential environmental damages need to be included. Refer to GM 190-410 for guidance. Analyze the risk and uncertainty associated with each alternative.
4. Get client input.	The planner needs to keep the client involved in the process of developing alternatives. The planner should contact the client, in person, to discuss progress made toward alternative development. Involve the public in identifying and formulating alternatives.

600.26 Step 6—Evaluate alternatives

(a) Description

Step 6, Evaluate alternatives, is the evaluation of the alternatives to determine their effect in addressing the objectives and problems. This step also includes an evaluation of the potential effects on social, cultural resource, economic, and environmental concerns. Special attention must be placed on those environmental values protected by law or Executive order.

(b) General

The purpose of step 6 is to provide the client with the information needed to make firm decisions. This provides the client further opportunity to be involved in the planning process and maximizes the likelihood of full implementation and proper operation and maintenance. Refer to Section 600.62, Planning fundamentals, for additional guidance.

During the evaluation of alternatives, careful consideration must be given to social, economic, environmental, and cultural resource factors that influence planning. The planner may discover a need to revisit any or all of the previous steps during discussions with the client or during any part of the evaluation.

(c) Planning standard

Effects of alternatives are evaluated individually. The alternatives are compared to benchmark conditions to evaluate their ability to solve problems, achieve resource use or condition enhancement, and meet the client's objectives.

(d) Inputs

List of alternatives from step 5 of the planning process
List of problems from steps 1 and 4
Environmental evaluation
Client's objectives, needs, and values from steps 2 and 4
Benchmark data from steps 3 and 4
Financial data from section I of the FOTG and supplementary state guidance
FOTG/section V (CED)

(e) Outputs

- A display of impacts showing the alternatives for the client to consider and to use as a basis for decisionmaking
- A set of sound alternative systems that are compatible with client and SCS objectives
- Record of public participation for project planning



Step 6 activities — Conservation plan (*continued*)

What

How

5. Where alternatives have a life expectancy of more than 1 year, estimate the effects over the appropriate time period.

The planner and client jointly choose the time period. The expected service life of practices and components may be available in Section I, FOTG, Flat rate schedule of costs. The planning horizon of the client or number of years the client expects to use the practice may also be used in the evaluation.

Considering the time period chosen, calculate average annual values for each practice. Consider physical effects as well as social, cultural, and economic effects. Refer to Section 600.62, Planning fundamentals, for detailed guidance.

6. Convert impacts to monetary terms where possible and as desired by the client.

Section I of the FOTG contains commonly used financial information. One typical data base from that source is the "Flat Rate Schedule or Costs." This schedule shows the installation, operation and maintenance, and average annual costs over the expected life of common practices.

Other effects may require that costs be estimated. The kind, amount, and timing of actions included in the alternative can be priced. Basic input prices are also stored in section I of the FOTG and can be used in these estimates.

7. Alternatives should be analyzed for both short- and long-term impacts.

The definition of short- and long-term is up to the client and planner. The short-term generally displays a cash flow analysis of expected installation and operation and maintenance costs as they are expected to occur. The long-term involves estimated average annual costs and may be used to calculate an expected return on investment or break-even point.

Alternatives that will be installed over several years should be amortized so that comparison of financial impacts is on a common basis.

Step 6 activities — Project plan

What	How
1. Quantify effects on physical resources, where possible, both for the benchmark and each alternative.	Quantification of effects should be done according to the Plan of Work or as agreed to by an interdisciplinary team. Detail of evaluation of effects of each alternative will vary and become more refined as needed in the selection process. The public, the client, other agencies, and interest groups should be included in the quantification process. The following information will also help in the process: • Effects are in the FOTG, Section V, Effects for Decisionmaking, and associated materials, such as references and technical notes. CPPE, site specific worksheets, and case studies are common sources of information. • Research publications, Experiment Station reports, water resource documents, and other materials also have data. • Estimating models are typically used and are also incorporated into FOCS. • Effect quantities should be shown in standard units. For example, the soil erosion rate is measured in tons per acre per year. Water quality pollutants may be measured in parts per volume of water or concentrations. Air quality pollutants may be measured by a visibility index. Plant vigor may be measured by yield per acre. Animal populations are measured by number per acre.
2. Quantify effects of each alternative on social and economic considerations. Describe, in qualitative terms, effects that cannot be quantified.	Interviews with the client provide insight into the specific effects of the benchmark and proposed alternatives on human considerations. As a minimum, the human considerations in section III of the FOTG should be reviewed, or refer to GM 450, Part 401. If cultural resources are present, an evaluation is developed according to policy established in General Manual 420, Part 401. Evaluation of cultural resources must be done by a qualified cultural resource specialist.
3. Convert effects to monetary terms. Detail is determined by the client's desires.	Section I of the FOTG has data on costs of commonly used financial information. One typical data base from that source is the "Flat Rate Schedule of Costs." This schedule shows installation, operation and maintenance, and average annual costs over the expected life of common practices. The costs of other effects must be estimated. The kind, amount, and timing of actions included in the alternative can be priced. Basic input prices are also in section I of the FOTG and can be used in these estimates.

600.27 Step 7—Make decisions

(a) Description

Step 7, Make decisions, is determining which alternative(s) to implement and includes preparing the necessary documentation of the decision. If needed, public review and comment are obtained before a decision is reached. Documentation includes recording the decision and preparing the conservation plan, project plan, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents (Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement).

(b) General

The purpose of step 7 is to aid the client in choosing among conservation treatment alternatives. Decisions made for a resource management system or for other conservation systems depend on the program or level of treatment required or the objectives of the client. This step involves comparing the alternatives and selecting one for implementation.

(c) Planning standard

The alternative selected for each Conservation Treatment Unit (CTU) is based on the client's clear understanding of the impacts of each alternative. The selected alternative is recorded in the proper plan format.

(d) Inputs

A set of evaluated alternatives from step 6 of the planning process.

(e) Outputs

- Record of decision
- The plan document with selected alternative, implementation schedule, and operation and maintenance plan
- Record of public participation



Step 7 activities — Project plan

What	How
1. Present alternatives and evaluations.	Meet with client. Assist client in reviewing the information.
2. Provide opportunity for public response.	Use public meetings, mailings, review of NEPA documents, Federal Register, required notices, and brochures.
3. Client reviews the plan, public input, obligations, and responsibilities.	Present the alternatives to the client. Establish a time to make the decision, if not made while the planner is present. Provide information on available programs that can be used to implement the plan. Return to one or more previous steps if a decision is not made.
4. Prepare the plan document. See Section 600.3, Plan Format and Content for guidance.	Prepare the plan document for signature. The content of the plan document is determined by program requirements, client's needs, and environmental laws and regulations. Exhibit 5 is an example form to document the environmental evaluation. Obtain needed review from the public, other agencies, and special interest groups. Obtain needed approvals.

600.28 Step 8—Implement plan

(a) Description

Step 8, Implement plan, is implementing the selected alternatives. This includes technical assistance for installing conservation practices and obtaining needed permits, land rights, surveys, final designs, and inspections for structural practices. In addition, it includes the operation and maintenance needed to assure proper functioning after the initial installation is completed.

(b) General

Implementing a plan is the process of installing the conservation treatments that make up the planned management system. Well documented and understood decisions are a prerequisite to application of the plan. When the planner has effectively taught ecosystem and conservation principles, the client may be able to implement the plan without additional technical assistance. However, additional technical assistance is generally necessary, and plan revisions are occasionally warranted. Thorough planning reduces requirements for additional technical assistance.

Implementation includes the design, layout, construction, inspection, and operation and maintenance of the planned practices. Specific program requirements and deadlines may also be involved and need to be considered when scheduling follow-up with the client.

The implementation of project plans generally follows the same process as that of individual conservation plans. Most project plans require the involvement of numerous disciplines, the field office, area office, state office, and national technical center, as well as numerous sponsoring agencies and other local, State, and Federal agencies.

A check must be made to assure the plan for the individual is in compliance with any special provisions applicable to a project plan.

(c) Planning standard

The client has adequate information and understanding to implement, operate, and maintain the planned treatments. Practices are implemented according to Soil Conservation Service standards and specifications.

(d) Inputs

Conservation or project plan
Standards and specifications
Case file data
Technical studies
Environmental evaluations and documents
All necessary permits
Job sheets
Engineering designs

(e) Outputs

Conservation practices, conservation management systems, or project plans applied.



Step 8 activities — Conservation plan (*continued*)

What	How
6. Review designs, job sheets, practice specifications, and estimated costs with the client. Provide client a list of contractors and suppliers, if needed.	Schedule a time to meet with the client and contractor, if applicable. Discuss practice specifications and job sheets in detail. Be prepared to answer any questions. Discuss permits, easements, or land rights, if needed.
7. Stake treatment area as needed to define location and extent of practice or structure.	Refer to discipline handbooks and manuals for procedures. Involve the client and contractor in practice layout where possible. Remember that a contractor is not the client. The contractor has responsibility to the client, not to SCS. Make any needed adjustments in practice location, lengths of waterways, and other specifications.
8. Provide construction checks to client/contractor, if needed.	Some clients may do their own construction work and may need closer construction supervision than an experienced contractor. Construction checks are needed during practice installation. If at any time during practice installation it is determined that SCS specifications are not being followed, notify the client what corrective action is needed. If corrective action is not taken, SCS assistance may be withdrawn.
9. Final checkout of practice(s).	Make final checks and record data. Use data to assure that each practice meets standards and specifications. Do needed measurements to determine the extent of the practices applied. Example: Feet of terraces or acres seeded or planted.
10. Document completed practices.	Sign and date the appropriate form certifying that the practice meets standards and specifications. For management practices, certify in the conservation plan of operations the extent of the practice certified and the date the practice was certified. Record certification in the case file for all types of practices. Include in the assistance notes any information pertinent to practice implementation, maintenance, and follow-up.

Step 8 activities — Project plan

What	How
1. Review the plan and/or case file with the client and update to meet current conditions.	Meet with the client to assure that the plan continues to represent current conditions and will achieve the client's objectives. For complex projects, this can require establishing an interdisciplinary team to work with the client and may result in making a modification to the plan.
2. Develop a Plan of Work (POW) for implementation.	Include a list of jobs, disciplines involved, time required, cost estimates, and a schedule to guide the implementation of the plan. This needs to be done for the entire project as well as individual steps. Develop by project and individual steps the work that needs to be accomplished to implement the plan. This should include work to be performed by the client, SCS, and other agencies. The POW will vary by project and step, but normally includes: • Development of final plans and specifications. (Note: Includes needed mitigation work for environmental values.) • Development of real property acquisition maps. • Development of data needed for local, State, and Federal permits. Identify the personnel (SCS and others) that will be involved in the work steps, and develop estimates of time and cost required to perform the jobs. The sequence in which the jobs are performed should be established. Develop a schedule of who and when the jobs are to be accomplished. The personnel who will be doing the work must participate in this step. Obtain concurrence and needed approvals of the POW.
3. Gather the detailed information to finalize the environmental evaluation and prepare final plans and specifications.	Include the detailed engineering, geologic, and environmental information. Particular attention should be paid to all special environmental concerns, such as threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, and wetlands. The personnel assigned to accomplish specific tasks need to follow established procedures outlined in the General Manual, program manuals, and technical manuals.
4. Develop final plans and specifications, real property acquisition maps, and cost estimates.	The personnel assigned to accomplish specific tasks need to follow established procedures outlined in the General Manual, program manuals, and technical manuals.

600.29 Step 9—Evaluate plan

(a) Description

Step 9, Evaluate plan, is evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented plan to:

- Assure that it is functioning as planned and achieving the objectives,
- Identify maintenance needs,
- Identify needs for modifications in the plan, practice, or specification, or a combination of these,
- Identify reasons for lack of progress in plan implementation, and
- Obtain information on actual outcome of treatment applied.

(b) General

Resource planning is an ongoing process that continues after the plan has been implemented. Follow-up with the client is needed to determine operation and maintenance needs and if the management systems and practices are performing properly and meeting the client's objectives. It also provides the opportunity to encourage plan implementation.

Technology may be developed through field observation of practices that have been implemented. Every farm or project area is a potential laboratory to help in the continuous process of improving our alternative treatments for natural resource problems and opportunities.

The key to successfully evaluating the results of a plan is to take advantage of the synergistic effect of the client and SCS working together as they make observations and record the data. SCS will use technical specialists and nonagency people as needed.

(c) Planning standard

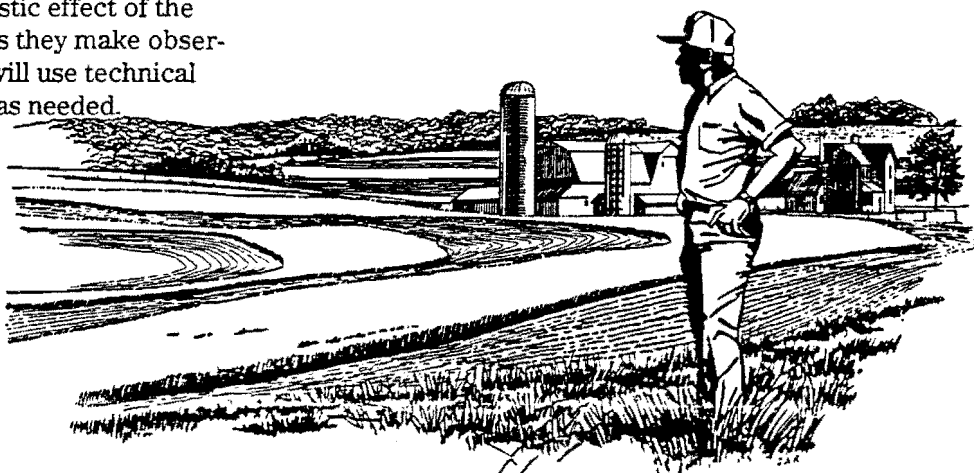
Contact is maintained with the client as to whether the post-implementation condition meets objectives and solves conservation problems in a manner satisfactory to the client and SCS resource quality criteria.

(d) Inputs

- Case file and client copy of plan document
- Results of previous evaluations
- Observation and data available from client
- New or modified objectives or needs of the client
- Appropriate new technology
- Conservation Effects—Section V, Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)
- Resource quality criteria—Section III, FOTG
- Practice standard and specifications—Section IV, FOTG

(e) Outputs

- Revised conservation practice effects information for use in the FOTG
- Operation and maintenance inspection reports outlining maintenance needs or other changes
- A decision to update or revise the plan, if needed
- A measurement or indication of the effectiveness of the plan
- A case study may be appropriate in accordance with guidance provided in section V of the FOTG
- An indication of the effectiveness of the planning process.
- Recommendations for changes in practice design or specification



Step 9 activities — Conservation plan (*continued*)

What	How
5. Evaluate the status of district cooperator working arrangements.	Inform the conservation district governing body if it is learned that the client is not presently carrying out planning and implementation consistent with district or SCS program objectives, or both.
6. Determine the need for a plan revision, development of a new plan, or cancellation of the plan. If the conservation plan is revised or a new plan is needed, steps 1 through 7 of the planning process must be repeated.	Cancel if client no longer owns or operates the land included in the conservation plan. Revise if client acquires additional land that needs to be included in the conservation plan. Revise if a significant change in objectives or land use occurs.
7. A case study may be developed to benefit the district, SCS, and our clients.	Follow the procedures in section V of the FOTG. Develop case studies using assistance from other agencies.

