

PRO 450–a: NRCS Farmland Assessment Procedure

See also: [NRCS web site](#), [EM Section 455.06](#)

Effective: March 2022

Start task: Project Engineer’s Office (PEO) determines that a project with Federal funding needs additional right of way which could potentially convert farmlands.

End task: Farmland Conversion Impact Rating (FCIR) score received from Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and incorporation into final environmental document.

Actor:	Action:												
PEO	1. Collects design drawings. The drawing must identify existing and proposed ROW lines for all alternatives, jurisdictional boundaries, and topographic features, as well as appropriate Public Land Survey System labels (i.e., township, section and range).												
PEO	2. Determines whether land designated as 'prime', 'unique', or 'of state or local significance' will be impacted by the project. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If the potential farmland conversion area is within an Urban Growth Area (UGA) or an NRCS Urban Area as depicted by the corresponding WSDOT GIS Environmental Workbench layers, <u>the FPPA does not apply and the following NRCS process does not need to be followed.</u> b. If outside an urban area and soils categorized by the GIS Workbench “farmland soils” layer, follow the guidance in this procedure document for a farmland conversion. See 7 CFR 658.2 for additional information on determining urban areas. c. The NRCS Web Soil Survey website via the Web Soil Survey portal provides specific soil types. d. Create a map showing areas of prime, unique, or of state or local significance soils from the GIS Workbench and all soil types from the NRCS Web Soil Survey (including labels and descriptions in the legend). Providing the soil layer data and table is not a requirement, but it will speed up the analysis. e. Include a table listing the total number of acres of each soil type within the proposed right of way take for each project alternative from the GIS data. Example: <table border="1" data-bbox="534 1707 1383 1818"> <thead> <tr> <th>Soil Type</th> <th>Alternative A</th> <th>Alternative B</th> <th>Alternative C</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hoquiam Loam</td> <td>1 acre</td> <td>0 acres</td> <td>0.25 acres</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Centralia Muck</td> <td>0 acres</td> <td>0 acres</td> <td>2.5 acres</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Soil Type	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Hoquiam Loam	1 acre	0 acres	0.25 acres	Centralia Muck	0 acres	0 acres	2.5 acres
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Actor:	Action:
PEO	<p>3. Downloads appropriate NRCS form. Forms are available on the left sidebar of the NRCS webpage, and each form includes additional instructions. If unsure of which form to use, contact the NRCS State Soil Scientist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. For linear projects (all rail and highway corridor-type projects) use Form NRCS-CPA-106. b. For non-linear projects (e.g., single or smaller locations or mitigation sites) use NRCS Form AD-1006.
PEO	<p>4. Follows instructions in the form and below to complete all required sections (labeled “To be completed by Federal Agency” - Parts I, III, and later Parts VI, and VII) and communicates with NRCS as the project sponsor for the lead Federal Agency. The form may need to be submitted to NRCS twice – see Step 9 below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Part I: Provide a simple explanation of the project such as: highway widening, new highway corridor, or new sidewalk. Federal Agency Involved: Usually FHWA for highway projects, but include all federal agencies providing funding for your project (FTA, FRA, FAA) b. Part III: Estimate the acreage to be converted for each alternative. Although the form labels the columns as “Corridor A”, “Corridor B”, you can use these columns to show the acreages for each alternative. If you have more than 4 alternatives, you will need to use a second form. Be sure to provide a vicinity map that shows the location of each alternative and how they relate to each other.
PEO	<p>5. Submits the form to the NRCS local office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. See web page for location and address b. Contacts NRCS State Soil Scientist to determine if electronic submission is acceptable and get current email address.
NRCS	<p>6. Determines which soil units in the project area are Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of State and Local Importance.</p> <p>7. Completes Parts II, IV, and V of the form.</p> <p>8. Returns the completed form to PEO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. NRCS has 45 days to complete the rating. b. CFR 658.4(a) states that if 45 days have passed without an evaluation and this may hold up the project, the applicant may proceed as if no farmland is being converted.

Actor:	Action:
PEO	<p>9. Based on the NRCS determination, may need to complete Parts VI and VII of the form(s). The values in this section are calculations based on the farmland ratings given by NRCS in other sections of the form.</p> <p>a. Part VI (this part of the form is filled out using the criteria on the back of the form): Score each alternative based on professional judgment. Use the maps created in Step 2 and make your best estimate. Apply the criteria consistently to all alternatives.</p> <p>b. Part VII: Use the score received from NRCS and instruction on the NRCS form to complete this section for a final score, which will be used to determine and incorporate relevant information into the final environmental document based on the outcome.</p>
PEO	<p>10. Sends the completed form to FHWA.</p> <p>11. For Local Agency projects: send a copy of the completed form to the appropriate WSDOT Local Programs Environmental Engineer.</p>
FHWA	<p>12. Signs the form and sends a copy of the signed form to NRCS and the original to the PEO.</p>
PEO	<p>13. Incorporates discussion of the Farmland Conversion evaluation into the environmental document or shares with the project's Environmental Lead to incorporate into the document.</p> <p>a. Refer to WSDOT Environmental Manual Chapter 455.04(2) and the WSDOT Land Use webpage for more information on the farmland conversion requirements and how to incorporate into the environmental documentation.</p> <p>b. The discussion should include the Farmland Conversion Impact Rating (FCIR) score received from NRCS. A score of 160 points or greater is considered a substantial impact, therefore avoidance alternatives should be considered to avoid farmland impacts. If avoidance is not possible, measures to minimize or reduce impacts should be evaluated and, where appropriate, included in the proposed action.</p> <p>c. Includes a copy of the final form in the environmental document appendix, and files the form in the Project File.</p>