§ 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 threat to human life, health, and property in ways that are environmentally sensitive. Most flood plains are valuable for maintaining agricultural and forest products for food and fiber, fish and wildlife habitat, temporary flood-water storage, park and recreation areas, and for maintaining and improving environmental values. NRCS technical and financial assistance is provided to land users primarily on non-Federal land through local conservation districts and other State and local agencies. Through its programs, NRCS encourages sound flood-plain management decisions by land users.

(a) Policy—(1) General. NRCS provides leadership and takes action, where practicable, to conserve, preserve, and restore existing natural and beneficial values in base (100-year) flood plains as part of technical and financial assistance in the programs it administers. In addition, 500-year flood plains are taken into account where there are “critical actions” such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, utilities, and facilities producing or storing volatile, toxic, or water-reactive materials.
   (2) Technical assistance. NRCS provides leadership, through consultation and advice to conservation districts and land users, in the wise use, conservation, and preservation of all land, including flood plains. Handbooks, manuals, and internal memoranda set forth specific planning criteria for addressing flood-plain management in NRCS-assisted programs. The general procedures and guidelines in this part