



CONSERVATION

Conservation Planning for Boy Scout Camp Properties

The National Council of the Boy Scouts of America declared its intention to encourage full support of the National Conservation Emphasis—Conservation Good Turn, launched in January 1995. This emphasis is designed to incorporate, throughout the Scouting program, an awareness and understanding of conservation as wise use and intelligent management of natural resources.

Why a Camp Conservation Plan?

The pressures on America's land and water resources have increased tremendously and will continue to do so. By the year 2020 there will be millions more people in the United States. This means increased demands for food, timber products, and outdoor recreation; land for homes, schools, and factories; and millions more acres for transportation. To meet these demands, we must start caring for the land wisely and improving it with use, restoring what has been neglected or abused.

With good conservation planning and resource management, camps with large acreages may find a source of income from this land without interfering with the primary purpose of the camp or property. Income from the sale of pulpwood or lumber; hunting or fishing permits; family camping or other recreational uses; minerals, etc., are possible with the right kind of planning and management.

A camp provides an ideal situation for teaching conservation. Most campers are highly receptive to learning about the outdoors in surroundings where natural resources are cared for properly. At camp, young people learn correct conservation procedures by observing them firsthand and practicing them daily. They develop a strong sense of stewardship for the land and an understanding that carries over through adulthood. This exposure affects their actions and decisions as citizens participating in the development of conservation policy.

A camp conservation plan, carried out in an orderly way, is a promise to the people of America who pay for Scout camps that we are doing our best.

What Is a Conservation Plan?

A conservation plan includes an inventory of the property's soil, water, vegetation, fish, and wildlife resources, with an analysis of their present condition, potential productivity, and potential problems. It records decisions about land use and details a conservation management program designed to improve the physical condition of the property *based on the use specified*.

In brief, conservation of a Scout camp means using a piece of property for Scout camping in such a way that it does not lose its natural appearance and it increases its value through good resource management practices. It means using the land without abusing it.

The written document can take many forms. Basically, a conservation plan is made up of five segments:

1. **Soil survey and interpretation**—Shows the location of different kinds of soils and how they behave when used and treated in different ways.
2. **Inventory of resources**—Outlines the resources available and their condition.
3. **Conservation plan map**—Shows (usually on an aerial photo) the location of property needing priority consideration on use and conservation measures.
4. **Management recommendations**—Explains what should be done to properly use, maintain, restore, improve, and protect resources from abuse.
5. **Schedule for implementation**—Highlights what should be done first, when it should be done, and how much it will cost. A three-year schedule, broken down by years, is revised and adjusted annually.

In summary, a camp conservation is a *maintenance plan* for its natural resources.

Who Can Help Develop a Conservation Plan?

Generally, councils get the most help from the district conservationist of the Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (located in almost every county in the United States). The Natural Resource Conservation Service is equipped to develop conservation plans for Scout property. It can provide specialists in the different disciplines needed. Its staff includes soil conservationists, soil scientists, engineers, biologists, agronomists, economists, range management technicians, recreation specialists, and plan materials specialists. These experts work cooperatively with and may enlist the support of other federal and state resource agencies, if needed, to help develop or implement a camp conservation plan. Some soil conservation districts own

heavy equipment such as bulldozers, graders, etc., that may be available for use by non-profit organizations at no cost. (They may also have heavy-equipment operators available at no cost.)

District offices of the Bureau of Land Management (in the Western states) and local foresters or range management technicians of state conservation, forestry, and fish and game departments can also help.

Councils desiring technical assistance should submit a request either in writing or in person to the Conservation District Board of Supervisors (look in the county section of the blues pages of the local telephone directory). The board will consider your request, generally recognizing it as a high-priority activity. It will advise the district conservationist to contact the BSA local council for an appointment. Soil conservation districts are local, legal subdivisions of the states, roughly comparable to school districts. Local leaders of conservation districts have always been cooperative and helpful, vitally interested in conservation education for young people.

State conservation agencies, through their foresters, fish and game biologists, and other technicians, are also well-equipped to help develop game plans according to their specialty. In some cases, the county agent (local representatives of the Cooperative Extension Service) may be able to help develop a comprehensive conservation plan. Private industry, colleges, and universities are other sources of help.

Six Steps in Developing a Plan

1. The council conservation subcommittee, council staff representative (such as the Scout executive or director of program or camping), and conservation technical experts meet. It is important that the committee meet with the conservationists in a preliminary session to discuss the Scout objectives for the conservation plan and brief them on Scout program features.

2. Representatives of the conservation subcommittee, the council staff representative, and the conservation experts visit the camp and go over some or all of the property. This will help conservationists gain an understanding of future building or development plans and a general view of the conservation problems.
3. Together, conservation experts and representatives of the conservation subcommittee develop inventories, evaluations, and alternatives. Based on these, they develop recommendations for land use and conservation treatment.
4. The conservation subcommittee, council staff, and camping committee consider the plan, make the necessary decisions, and recommend approval by the executive board. This final Scout camp conservation plan is based on local council needs and desires.
5. The conservation subcommittee, camping committee, and conservationists develop, in writing, a year-by-year program or schedule for the next three years. This schedule consists of written projects and cost estimates based on priority, budget, and labor.
6. The camping committee chair secures the necessary approvals each year to have that segment of the scheduled plan carried out by the conservation subcommittee.

How Is the Plan Implemented?

This plan, like any other major council project, should have the support and backing of the council executive board. Following approval, formal adoption of the conservation plan should be the next step.

Some phases of the conservation plan will require the use of heavy equipment and labor. Execution of some phases of the plan will necessitate assistance from older youth and adult volunteers. In fact, many conservation practices may be carried out by Scouts as a part of the summer or year-round camping program that may fulfill Boy Scout advancement requirements.

The camp ranger has a key position in giving year-round attention to projects related to the plan. However, all phases of camp conservation projects are coordinated through the conservation plan. At regular intervals (at least once year), the conservation group will review what has been accomplished on the property and revise the conservation plan and schedule as necessary for three years.

References

- *Camp Program and Property Management*, No. 20-920
- *Camping Committee Guide*, No. 33083B
- National Resident Camp Standards, No. 20-111 (Available from the BSA Health and Safety Service)
- Camp Property and Outdoor Program Analysis, No.20-940
- Site Development and Conservation, No. D20 (Available from the BSA Engineering Service)
- Forest Management, No. D171, (Available from the BSA Engineering Service)