



Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity

Feral Swine Damage Assessment

CEMA 297

Definition

Feral swine damage assessment is an effort to assess, scout, and monitor feral swine to document their presence and the damage they cause to natural resources. This is to determine when feral swine populations have been reduced to a level that conservation practice standards can be implemented as part of a broader area-wide effort.

Applicability

This conservation activity only applies where the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has collaborated with APHIS and where appropriate State Wildlife agencies and other partners are involved to establish an overarching strategy for feral swine management in a specific geographic area with a high likelihood of success in managing feral swine populations and address significant natural resource concerns on all land types except water.

Qualified Individual Requirements

The NRCS strongly encourages participants to be familiar with the following Qualified Individual (QI) Requirements to ensure the person hired is a good match for the needs and objectives.

A QI for this CEMA has:

- Bachelor of Science degree in wildlife biology, zoology, wildlife management, wildlife conservation, or environmental science.
- Documentation of the degree from an accredited educational institution may be required.

REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements

- 1) This CEMA includes the performance of work and documentation of the tasks, results, interpretations, and other activities described herein by a QI.
- 2) Prior to initiation of the CEMA, arrange a pre-work conference to ensure all parties understand the participant's objectives, required deliverables, and characteristics of the CEMA tasks.
 - a) The parties in the pre-work conference must include the participant, the QI, and the NRCS field office staff. The parties should establish an agreed-upon mechanism for in-person or virtual participation.
 - b) If the participant will employ a Technical Service Provider (TSP) to implement a Conservation Planning Activity (CPA) or Design and Implementation Activity (DIA) that will be supported by results of this CEMA, the TSP should be invited to the pre-work conference. Refer to Conservation Plan CPA 199.

- 3) A QI may use reference information, resource concerns, conservation practice standards and related documents in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) for the state where the CEMA is performed. The FOTG home page hyperlink is: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>

Technical Requirements

1) General Criteria:

- a) Evaluation and monitoring must be developed that explicitly links and contributes to a broader APHIS feral swine management strategy.
- b) All methods proposed for feral swine monitoring and evaluation must comply with Federal, State, and local regulations.
- c) All activities directly involving feral swine, such as trapping, transport, dispatching, and disposal of carcasses will be the responsibility of the participant, APHIS, or other partner(s).
- d) *NRCS will have no technical or financial role in the activities listed in (c) above.*

2) Assessment and Evaluation:

a) Monitoring and Evaluation

- i) Monitoring is required to determine existence of feral swine populations, concentrated area, regularity of monitoring station visits, and number of individuals visiting each station.
- ii) Evaluation is required to determine when feral swine populations have been reduced to a level that CPA 199 can be considered, and conservation practice standards implemented.
- iii) Data collection, monitoring, and evaluation methods should remain consistent throughout this activity to allow comparison of pre and post conditions.

b) Methods:

- i) Use monitors and cameras to identify key areas used by feral swine. Feral swine tagged with GPS transmitters installed by partners are an excellent way to identify key target areas.
- ii) Record the extent of damage caused by feral swine before and after management strategies are installed.
 - (1) Use the appropriate Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) to document habitat degradation caused by feral swine.
 - (2) Document competition for browse and mast resources.
 - (3) If applicable, document current ecological "state" using the relevant state and transition model.
- iii) Other (e.g., photographs, written descriptions of damage).

Deliverables

The QI must provide documentation showing all the tasks indicated in the **General Requirements** section, the **Technical Requirements** section, and the following sections:

Cover Page

Cover page reporting the technical services provided by the QI. Cover page(s) must include the following:

- 1) CEMA name and number.
- 2) Participant information: Name, farm bill program name, contract number (QI obtains contract number from participant), land identification (e.g., state, county, farm, and tract number).
- 3) QI name, address, phone number, email.
- 4) A statement by the QI explaining how they currently meet the Qualified Individual Requirements for this CEMA. Attaching or enclosing a copy of documentation for how the QI requirements are met is encouraged. Examples include:
 - Certification Name and Number,
 - License Name and Number,
 - Agricultural Retailer Business Name, or
 - Other brief written statement indicating how the requirements of a QI for this CEMA are met.
- 5) A statement by the QI that services provided meet NRCS requirements, such as:

I certify the work completed and delivered for this CEMA:

 - *Complies with all applicable Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws and regulations.*
 - *Meets the general requirements, technical requirements and deliverables for this CEMA.*
 - *Is consistent with and meets the conservation objectives for which the program contract was entered into by the participant.*
 - *Addresses the participant's conservation objectives for this CEMA.*

QI Signature: _____ Date: _____

- 6) A Participant's acceptance statement, such as:

I accept the completed CEMA deliverables as thorough and satisfying my objectives.

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

- 7) A space for an NRCS reviewer to certify the agency's acceptance of the completed CEMA and, such as:

NRCS administrative review completion by:

Signature: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____

State-Specific Documents

Examples may include habitat damage evaluation, camera data sheet, post-control habitat damage evaluation, etc.

Notes and Correspondence

- 1) Document each site visit, its participants, the activity completed in the field, and results of each site visit.

- 2) Copies of correspondence between the QI and the participant relating to decision-making and completion of this CEMA.
- 3) Copies of observations, data, technology tool output, or test results prepared during completion of this CEMA.

Maps, Diagrams, Plan Views

- 1) Refer to state-specific documents.
 - a) These items might include habitat evaluations, location, GPS coordinates, among others.

Evaluation or Monitoring Results

- 1) A report of the results of the evaluation or monitoring activity that must include a statement by the QI indicating one of the following feral swine damage assessment conclusions:
 - a) habitat degradation has plateaued or diminished and control is sufficient to move forward with implementing conservation practices, or
 - b) habitat degradation has not improved or has worsened and further evaluation and monitoring is needed, or
 - c) evaluation and monitoring is not effective and a different approach is needed.
- 2) Refer to state-specific documents for additional materials to include in the report.

Deliver Completed Work

- 1) The QI must prepare and provide the participant two sets of all of the items listed in the **General Requirements**, the **Technical Requirements** and the **Deliverables** sections of this document.
- 2) One set is for the participant to keep.
- 3) The other set is for the local NRCS Office.
- 4) The TSP may transmit a set of the completed work to the local NRCS Office, if their participant has authorized it.

It is recommended to provide the NRCS field office an opportunity to review the CEMA deliverables, prior to asking for their acceptance.

REFERENCES

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Field Office Technical Guide.
<https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Planning Procedures Handbook.
<https://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=44407>