**SWCS 2020 Abstract**

**Title:** Leveraging geospatial data to support conservation planning through CART: Initial observations and next steps

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**Abstract:**

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to support the implementation of conservation activities on private lands. The Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART), released in January 2020, modernizes and streamlines NRCS’ conservation planning and program delivery, reduces workload on field staff, and improves the customer experience by creating an efficient application process. The tool combines and analyzes geospatially-referenced data and site-specific information provided by the landowner within a decision support system (DSS) framework. CART will assist NRCS conservation planners to identify the most likely resource concerns associated with the landscape and farm operation and the suite of potentially applicable conservation practices and will provide them with a robust context within which they can identify the most appropriate mix of conservation activities that will meet landowner objectives while addressing the relevant natural resource concerns. This informed conversation will lead to wider acceptance of conservation planning recommendations and increased adoption of conservation management practices on the ground. In this poster we will present initial observations and lessons learned from the deployment of CART v1.0 with a specific focus on the underlying geospatial data and information services. We will also discuss proposed updates and improvements that will be incorporated into CART v2.0 and future versions of the decision support tool. We will also summarize the iterative development and evaluation process being used for CART. We are confident that this process will allow us to continue to better leverage digital capabilities now and in the future to address the resource management challenges faced by private landowners.