

# USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service “Land Use” and “Modifier” Definitions

Excerpted from the USDA NRCS *National Planning Procedures Handbook*:

## Land Uses

- **Crop** - Land used primarily for the production and harvest of annual or perennial field, forage, food, fiber, horticultural, orchard, vineyard, or energy crops.
- **Forest** - Land on which the historic and/or introduced vegetation is predominantly tree cover managed for the production of wood products or non-timber forest products.
- **Range** - Land on which the historic and/or introduced vegetation is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs or shrubs managed as natural ecosystem. Range land may include natural grasslands, savannas, shrublands, tundra, alpine communities, marshes and meadows.
- **Pasture** - Land composed of introduced or domesticated native forage species that is used primarily for the production of livestock. Pastures receive periodic renovation and cultural treatments, such as tillage, fertilization, mowing, weed control, and may be irrigated. Pastures are not in rotation with crops.
- **Farmstead** - Land used for facilities and supporting infrastructure where farming, forestry, animal husbandry, and ranching activities are often initiated. This may include dwellings, equipment storage, plus farm input and output storage and handling facilities. Also includes land dedicated to the facilitation and production of high-intensity animal agriculture in a containment facility where daily nutritional requirements are obtained from other lands or feed sources.
- **Developed Land** - Land occupied by buildings and related facilities used for residences, commercial sites, public highways, airports, and open space associated with towns and cities.
- **Water** - Geographic area whose dominant characteristic is open water or permanent ice or snow. May include intermingled land, including tidal-influenced coastal marsh lands.
- **Associated Agriculture Lands** - Land associated with farms and ranches that are not purposefully managed for food, forage, or fiber and are typically associated with nearby production or conservation lands. This could include incidental areas, such as idle center pivot corners, odd areas, ditches and watercourses, riparian areas, field edges, seasonal and permanent wetlands, and other similar areas.
- **Other** - Land that is barren, sandy, rocky, or that is impacted by the extraction of natural resources, such as minerals, gravel or sand, coal, shale, rock, oil, or natural gas.

## Land Use Modifier

Modifiers provide another level of specificity and help denote what the land is managed for. The modifiers are:

- **Irrigated** - Used when an operational system is present and managed to supply water.
- **Wildlife** - Used when the client is actively managing for wildlife.
- **Grazed** - Used when grazing animals impact how land is managed.
- **Drained** - Used when artificial drainage exists that has an impact on how the land is managed.
- **Organic** - Used on field which has met the organic or transitioning to organic criteria.
- **Water Feature** - Used to identify that the planned land unit contains or is adjacent to a water feature, such as a stream, lake, river, etc.
- **Protected** - The land unit is under a conservation easement or similar protection.
- **Hayed** - Used when hay production is the primary activity.
- **Urban** - Used when land is located in a landscape predominated by residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation uses.