



United States Department of Agriculture

FY 2021 Conservation Planning Certification Overview



Feb 2021



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/



FY 21 Policy Updates

We will be revising the conservation planning policy to make changes to the conservation planner designations section GM 180, Part 409, 409.9.



Policy Updates

- **Changed Certification Naming and Organization**
- **Clarified Training Requirements**
- **Proficiency Exams**
- **Job Approval Authority**
- **Training and Guidance**
- **Aligning TSP requirement**



What's in a Name

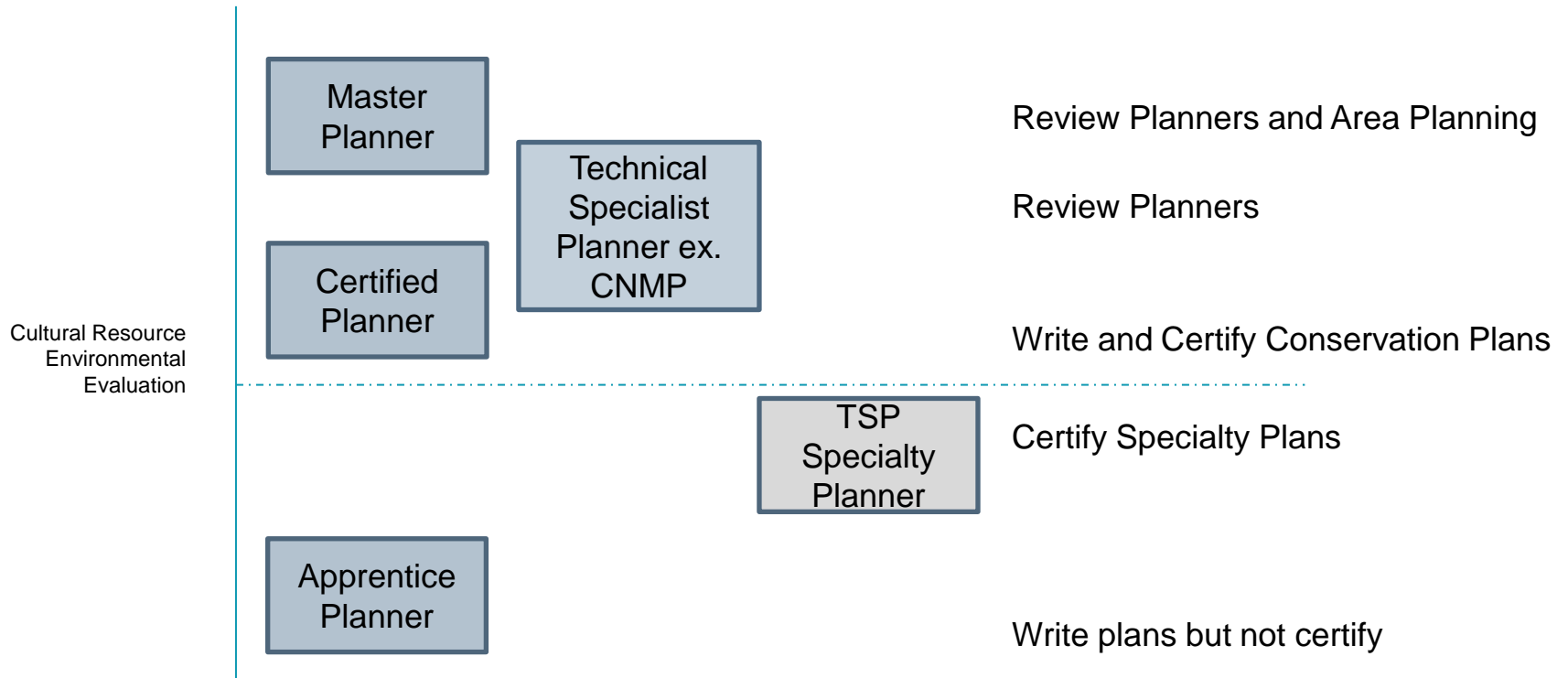
We are changing the designations from:

- **Apprentice Conservation Planner = Level I,**
- **Technical Specialist Planner = Level II**
- **Certified Conservation Planner = Level III,**
- **Master Conservation Planner = Level IV**

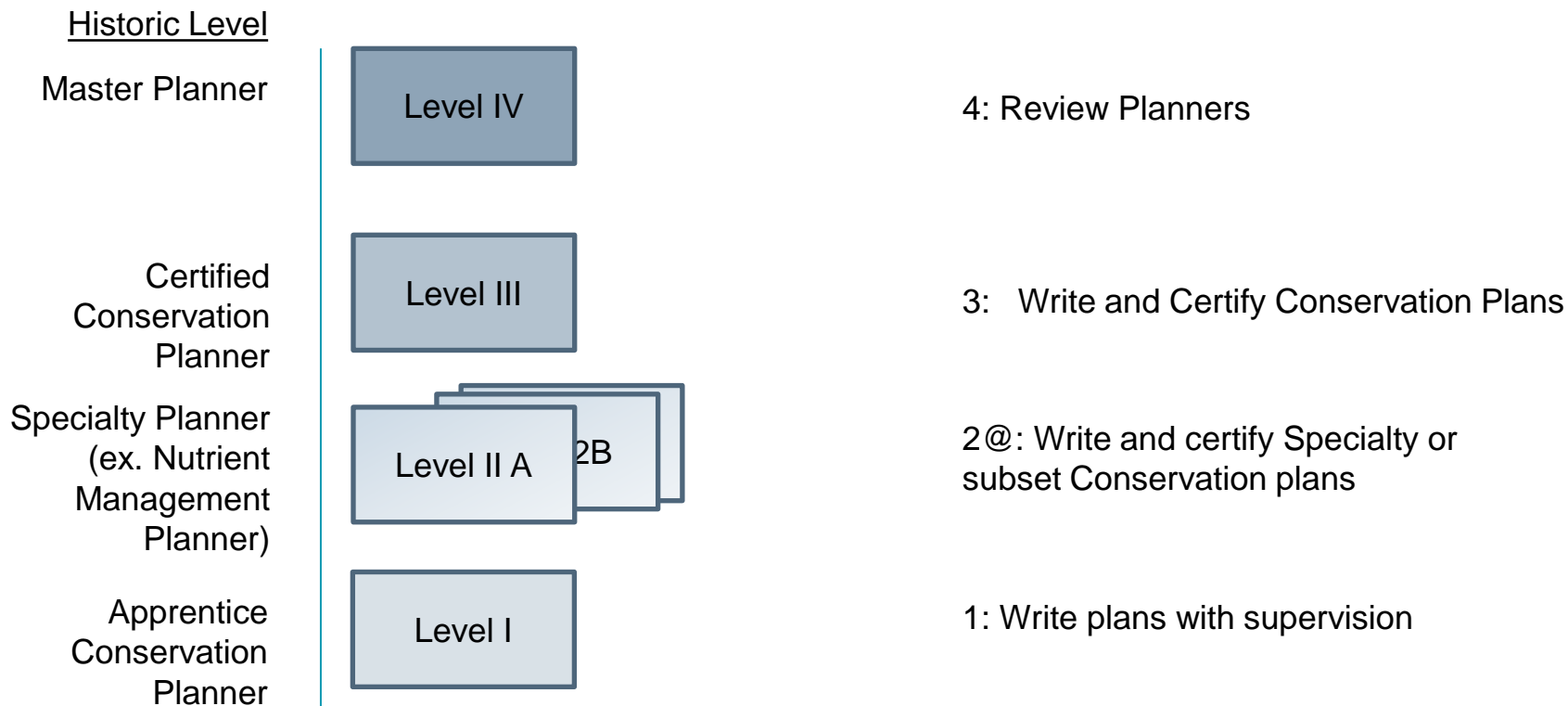
We will add the levels to the existing titles for now to help with the transition.



Conservation Planning Certification Former State



Conservation Planning Certification Future State



Competency Requirements

Competency	Level 1	Level 2A Subset Plan	Level 2B Specialty	Level 3	Level 4
Conservation Planning & FOTG	Basic	Fundamental	Basic	Fundamental	Fundamental
Cultural Resource	Basic	Fundamental	Basic	Fundamental	Fundamental
Environmental Evaluations	Basic	Fundamental	Basic	Fundamental	Fundamental
Conservation Compliance		Fundamental		Fundamental	Fundamental
Conservation Economics				Fundamental	Advanced
Conservation Communication				Fundamental	Advanced
Soils	Basic	Basic	#	Fundamental	Fundamental
Water Quality	Basic	Basic	#	Fundamental	Fundamental
Air Quality			#	Fundamental	Fundamental
Specialty Training			Fundamental		
State Specific Requirements	*	*	*	*	*
Demonstrated Competence	Basic	Subset Fundamental	Specialty Fundamental	Fundamental	Advanced

Examples

* State specific requirements

Additional knowledge may be needed relative to specialty



Proficiency Exams



- **Clarifying the intent and use of proficiency exams for meeting Conservation Planning Designation**

Exam Title	Complete	In progress	Total
Proficiency Exam - Environmental Evaluation 1	1	4	5
Proficiency Exam - Air Quality Conservation Basics	26	71	98
Proficiency Exam - Areawide Conservation		6	12
Proficiency Exam - Conservation Communications	52	258	323
Proficiency Exam - Conservation Economics	67	194	262
Proficiency Exam - Cultural Resources	31	136	168
Proficiency Exam - Environmental Evaluation 2		5	5
Proficiency Exam - Field Office Technical Guide	3	3	6
Proficiency Exam - (HELC/WC) Compliance Provisions	24	50	75
Proficiency Exam - Soil Health and Sustainability	58	262	322
Proficiency Exam - Soil Interpretation	14	56	70
Proficiency Exam - Water Quality 1	2	3	6
Proficiency Exam - Water Quality 2		3	3
Total	278	1051	1355

Job Approval Authority

- **The specific call out for Job Approval Authority (JAA) has been removed from the planner requirements.**
- **Supervisors will certify that the planner has an appropriate understanding of the practices and specifications.**
- **This may be measured by JAA and States can continue to utilize JAA for this purpose if they choose.**



Training Requirements

Competency Based to allow more flexibility in meeting competency

Developing new basic level courses:

- **Conservation Communication**
- **Farm Economics**

TSP Alignment



Implementing NRCS Registry with updated requirements for TSPs

Planning Certification will move to the NRCS Registry system



Next Opportunities



Level II Certification



- **State Conservationists may request approval for new Level II designations**
- **Establish National Workgroup to review National Level II opportunities and requirements**



Level IV and Area Wide Planning

- **Establish National Workgroup to review National Level 4 requirements**
- **Break out Area Wide Planning Certification**



Training, Guidance, and Quality



- **Planning Spring Planning Training/Retreat**
- **BMP Guidance for running Planning Program**
- **Improving Quality Assurance Guidance**

