

Backout of Low Vegetation BMPs and Septic Connections, WTWG October 2021

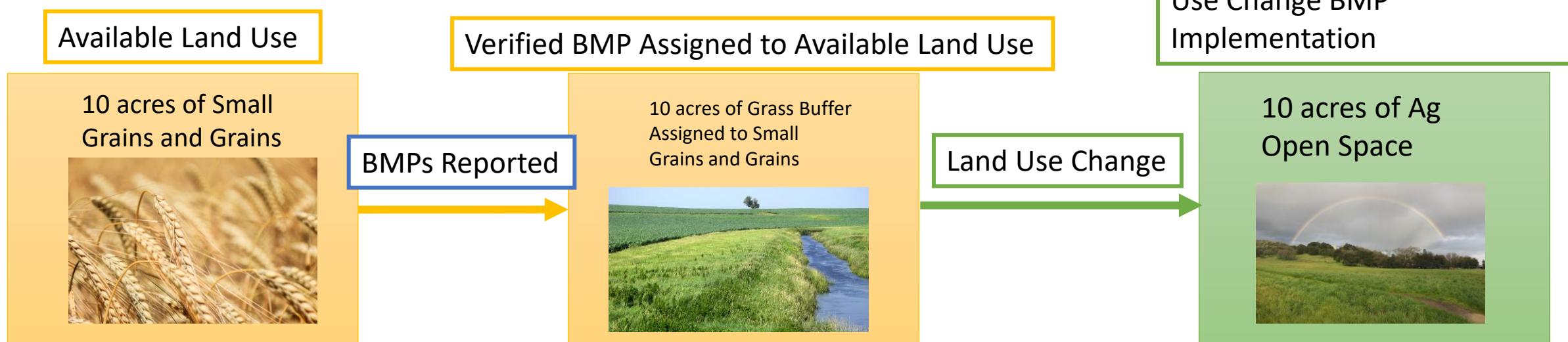
Presented by: Vanessa Van Note, Coordinator, 10/7/21

Backout Refresher

Backout **only** applies to **land use change/load source change/land conversion** BMPs that alter a previously-projected load source to a new load source.

- Backout was designed **to prevent double counting**.
- For efficiency BMPs, **backout only affects the land use/load source change credit**.

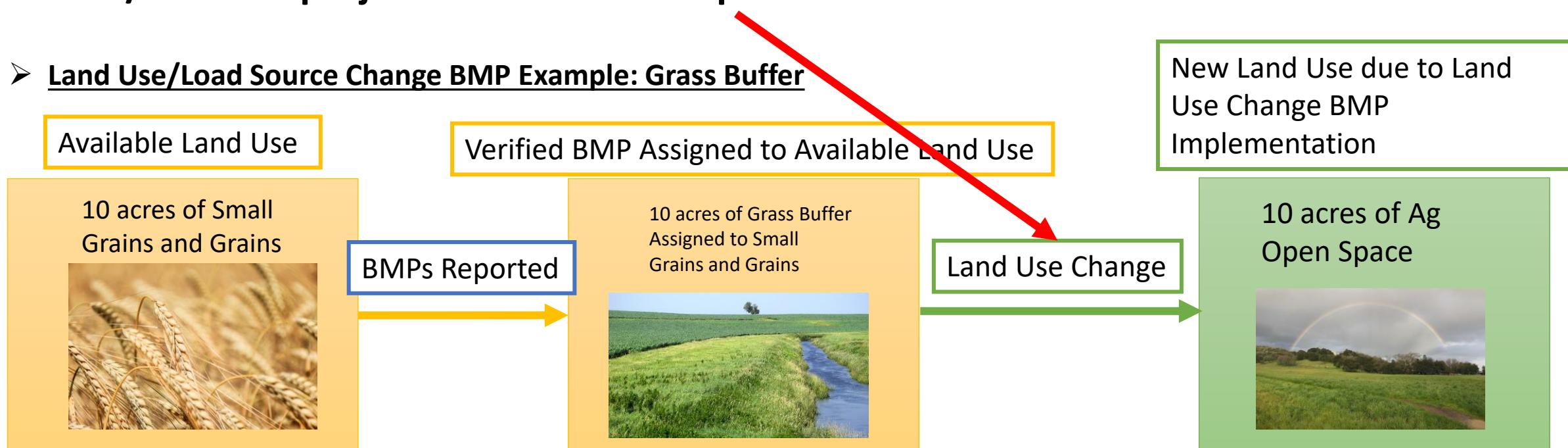
➤ Land Use/Load Source Change BMP Example: Grass Buffer



Backout Refresher

- The purpose of the land use change BMP is to **convert the land use from a higher loading source to a lower loading source.**
- These **land use changes should eventually be accounted for in the base conditions data/land use projection data as it is updated.**

➤ Land Use/Load Source Change BMP Example: Grass Buffer



How Backout and Verification Differ

- Two different concepts with two different functions applied differently in the model.
- **Backout's Purpose:**
 - To prevent double counting acres.

Where is it applied?

- A calculation within CAST.
- **Verification's Purpose:**
 - To ensure reported practices are on the ground and operating correctly.

Where is it applied?

- Credit Durations are applied in NEIEN.

Important Takeaways on Backout

- Backout aims to model the **real land use change** that occurred from implementing a LU change BMP on the ground.
 - The modeled LU change is typically from a higher (crop) to a lower (forest) loading source.
- Backout **does not** capture specific BMPs with point locations. (Spatial data for BMPs is not available.)
 - Backout is applied at the lrseg-agency-loadsouce scale.
- **For Example:** A forest buffer BMP will **convert a cropland land use to a forested land use.**
 - This change is assumed to be **captured as an increase in forested land/tree canopy** in the high-resolution land cover imagery.
 - With the land use change captured in the base conditions of the model, **the land use change BMP should no longer be credited in addition to the base condition land use data** as this may lead to double counting the land use change.



LOW VEGETATION BMPs

Grass Buffers

Wetland Creation and Restoration

Land Retirement

Alternative Crops

BMP	From Land Cover	To Land Cover	Current Backout Method	VA Suggestions to the Workgroup for Backout
Abandoned Mine Reclamation	Barren	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	n/a
Impervious Surface Reduction	Impervious	To Note on the Proposal: If backout was discontinued, we would need another process in place to prevent double-counting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We should approach this from an angle of how can we improve upon backout for accuracy for each BMP. 	VA Proposal: Discontinue the backout of land use change practices that involve a conversion from one low vegetation class to another.
Septic Connections	n/a	To Note on the Argument: The Ag Census is used to estimate agricultural land uses; wetland land uses are informed by ancillary datasets.		VA Argument: Ancillary datasets (wetlands, NLCD, USDA Cropland Data Layer), parcel boundaries, local zoning and use maps, and geographic cues (proximity of impervious surface, size of vegetated area, etc) do not have the resolution to differentiate between a change from one low vegetation land use to the other.
Alternative Crops Grass Buffers Land Retirement Wetland Creation Wetland Restoration	Low Vegetation			

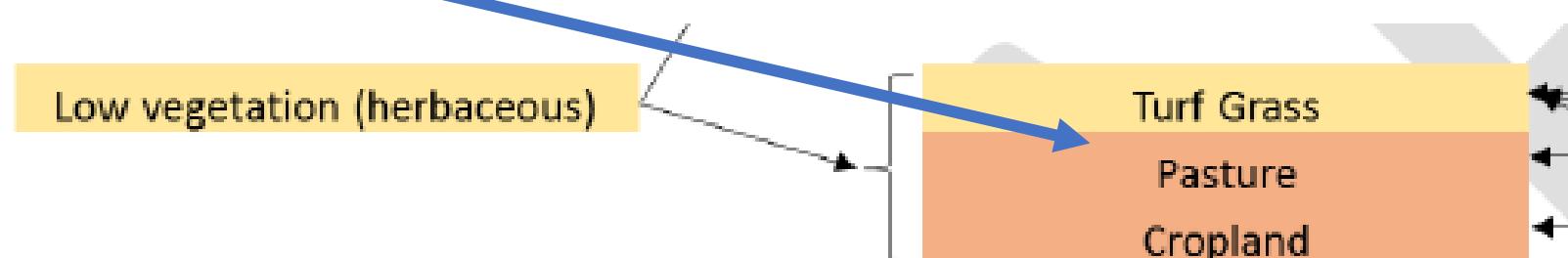
*The following table is for informational purposes only.
 natural resources, such as soil, water, air, and minerals, are finite and non-renewable. They are essential for the survival and well-being of all living beings. The wise management of natural resources is crucial for sustainable development and environmental protection.

Low Vegetation: Plant material

nursery plantings with or without tarp cover and natural ground cover.

How is low vegetation classified in CAST?

- Low vegetation is a land cover designation, not land use.
- Difference between land cover and land use?
 - Land Cover represents observable characteristics of the land surface. (USDA NAIP Imagery for Agriculture)
 - Land Use (e.g., residential, commercial, agriculture, mining). represents how humans use the land
- Nutrient and sediment sources are related to land cover, land use, and land management.
- Classified in Phase 6 as:



**Can also include “Mixed Open”

How is low vegetation classified in CAST?

- **Turfgrass:** Herbaceous and barren lands that have been altered through compaction, removal of organic material, and/or fertilization (within road rights-of-way and residential, commercial, recreational, and other turf-dominated land uses (e.g., cemeteries, shopping centers) and a portion of herbaceous and barren lands within federal facilities, parks, institutional campuses)
- **Mixed Open:** Small patches of trees (< 1 acre) outside developed areas, and all scrub-shrub, herbaceous, and barren lands that have been minimally disturbed (e.g., periodically bush hogged, meadows, etc.), reclaimed, or that have internal and/or regulated drainage. These include active, abandoned and reclaimed mines, landfills, Unconventional Oil & Gas, beaches, waterbody margins, natural grasslands, and utility rights-of-way.

****County Planning and GIS Office County Land Use data can be used to further distinguish these classifications.**

- **Cropland:** Herbaceous and barren lands that are not classed as turf grass or mixed open. The portion of such lands that are crops is determined by the frequency at which the lands are classified as crops in the **NASS Cropland Data Layers (2008 through 2015)**.
 - The Cropland Data Layers is an ancillary dataset.
 - Ancillary data combined with contextual information derived from the high-resolution land cover were used to differentiate among the potential herbaceous land uses and to make help define all other land use classes.
- **Pasture/Hay:** Same as cropland.

Backout of Land Retirement, Alternative Crops and Grass Buffer BMPs

Ex. Grass Buffers

Grass Buffers Convert Land Use From:

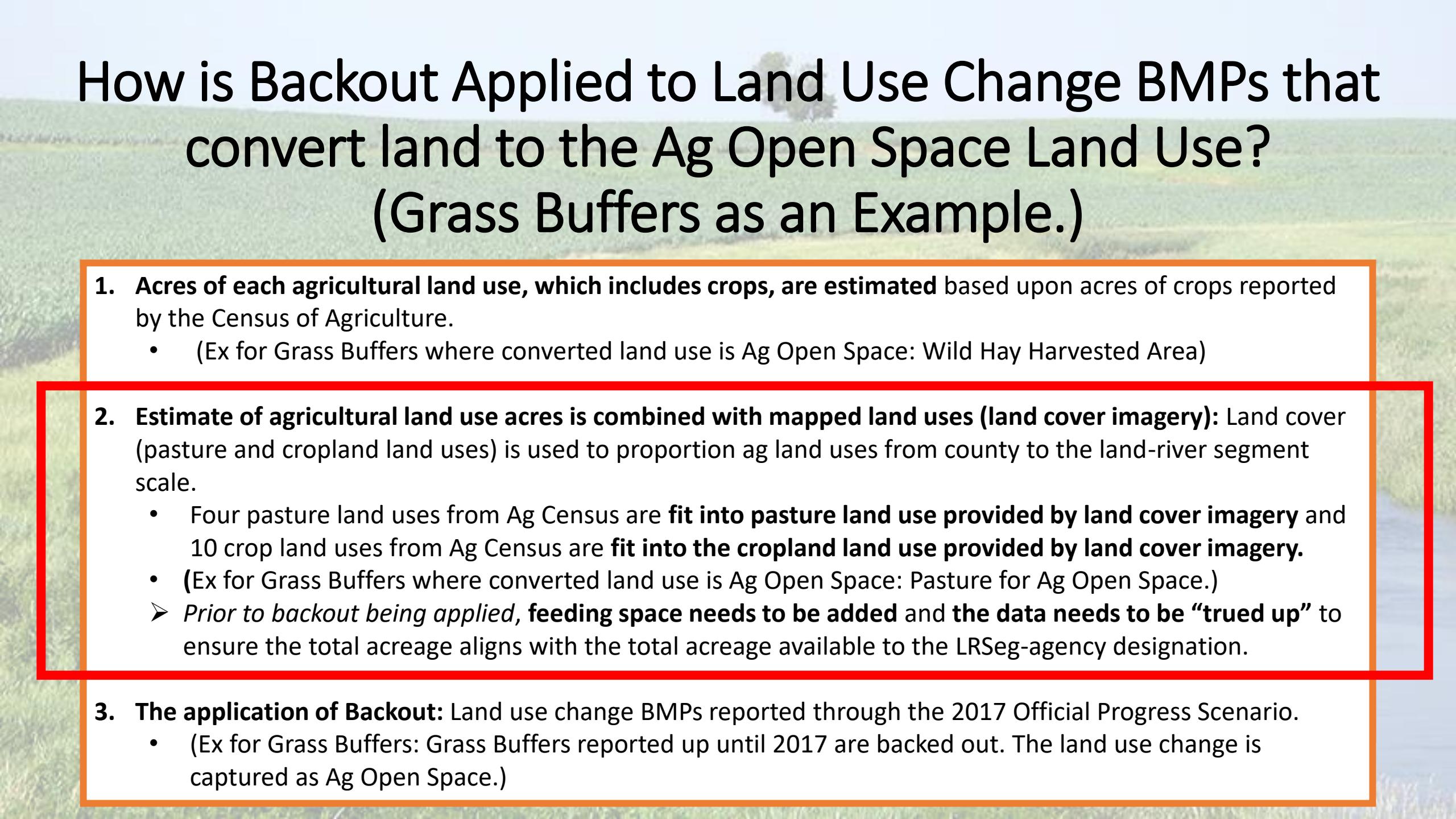
- Double Cropped Land
- Full Season Soybeans
- Grain with/without Manure
- Leguminous Hay
- Other Agronomic Crops
- Other Hay, Silage with/without Manure
- Small Grains and Grains
- Specialty Crop High/Low

To:

Ag Open Space (Unmanaged agricultural land that receives no manure, biosolids, fertilizer or other nutrient applications.)

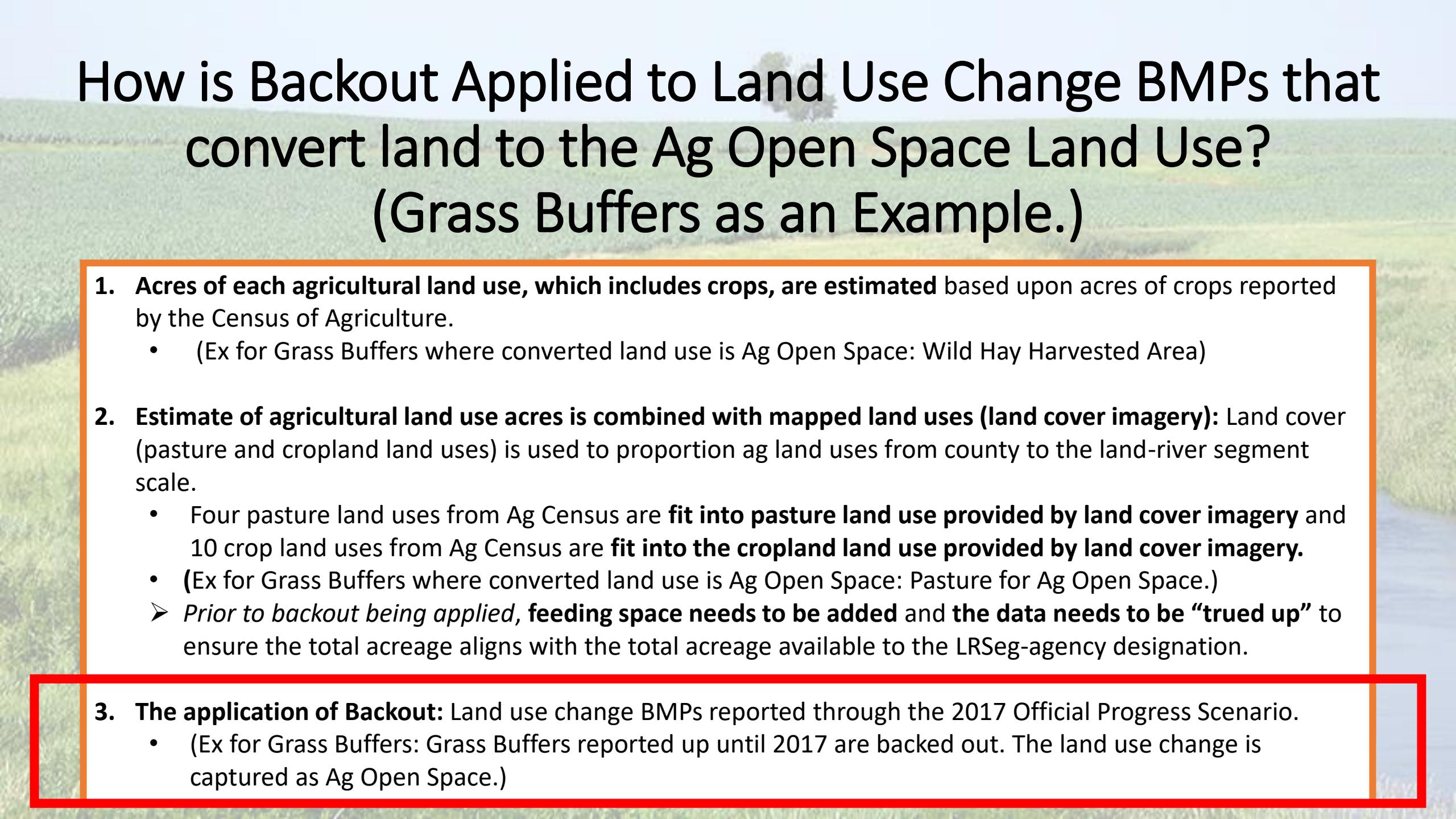
How is Backout Applied to Land Use Change BMPs that convert land to the Ag Open Space Land Use? (Grass Buffers as an Example.)

1. **Acres of each agricultural land use, which includes crops, are estimated** based upon acres of crops reported by the Census of Agriculture.
 - (Ex for Grass Buffers where converted land use is Ag Open Space: Wild Hay Harvested Area)
2. **Estimate of agricultural land use acres is combined with mapped land uses (land cover imagery):** Land cover (pasture and cropland land uses) is used to proportion ag land uses from county to the land-river segment scale.
 - Four pasture land uses from Ag Census are **fit into pasture land use provided by land cover imagery** and 10 crop land uses from Ag Census are **fit into the cropland land use provided by land cover imagery**.
 - (Ex for Grass Buffers where converted land use is Ag Open Space: Pasture for Ag Open Space.)
 - *Prior to backout being applied, feeding space needs to be added and the data needs to be “trued up” to ensure the total acreage aligns with the total acreage available to the LRSeg-agency designation.*
3. **The application of Backout:** Land use change BMPs reported through the 2017 Official Progress Scenario.
 - (Ex for Grass Buffers: Grass Buffers reported up until 2017 are backed out. The land use change is captured as Ag Open Space.)



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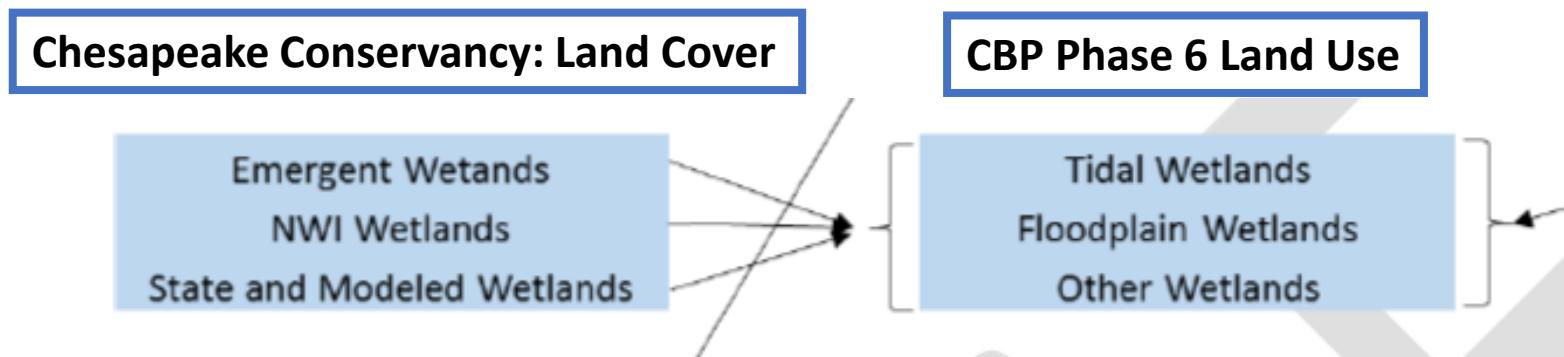


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Are Wetlands Low Vegetation Land Cover?

- Wetlands have been separated out into the following land use classes:



Are Wetlands Low Vegetation Land Cover?

Wetlands have been separated out into the following land use classes:

- **Floodplain Wetlands** = National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and state designated wetlands located within the FEMA designated 100-year floodplain or on soils with flooding characteristics.
- **Other Wetlands** = National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) non-pond, non-lake wetlands, emergent wetlands mapped from high-resolution imagery outside Virginia, state designated wetlands, and state identified potential non-tidal, non-floodplain wetlands. These are typically headwater wetlands or isolated wetlands.
- **Tidal Wetlands** = National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) and state designated wetlands classified as marine and estuarine wetland systems, palustrine wetlands with water regime modifiers associated with tidal hydrological conditions (e.g., saltwater tidal or freshwater tidal), and all wetlands mapped from imagery that could be influenced by tidal characteristics/processes by having an elevation less than or equal to 2 meters above sea level.
 - Note: Tidal Wetlands are excluded from the watershed model but are being mapped for input to the hydrodynamic water quality model.

Backout of Wetland BMPs

Wetlands Convert Land Use From:

- Ag Open Space
- Double Cropped Land
- Full Season Soybeans
- Grain with/without Manure
- Leguminous Hay
- Other Agronomic Crops
- Other Hay,
- Silage with/without Manure
- Small Grains and Grains
- Pasture
- Specialty Crop High/Low

To:

- Non-tidal Floodplain Wetland
- Headwater or Isolated Wetland

Some things to note:

The wetland product
deliverable is due December
31, 2021.

31 Dec. 2021

June 2022

The accuracy assessment on
the updated land use/land
cover product is due by June
2022.

Discussion

Can we develop a model procedure for utilizing BMP acres to inform our base land use to ensure land use changes are being captured? Why and why not?

If we continue applying backout, how do we make it more accurate?

Do you agree with discontinuing backout for the following? (If Yes, how do we prevent double counting? If No, how do we ensure the land use change is being captured?):

Grass Buffers

Wetland Restoration and Creation

Land Retirement

Alternative Crops

SEPTIC CONNECTION BMP

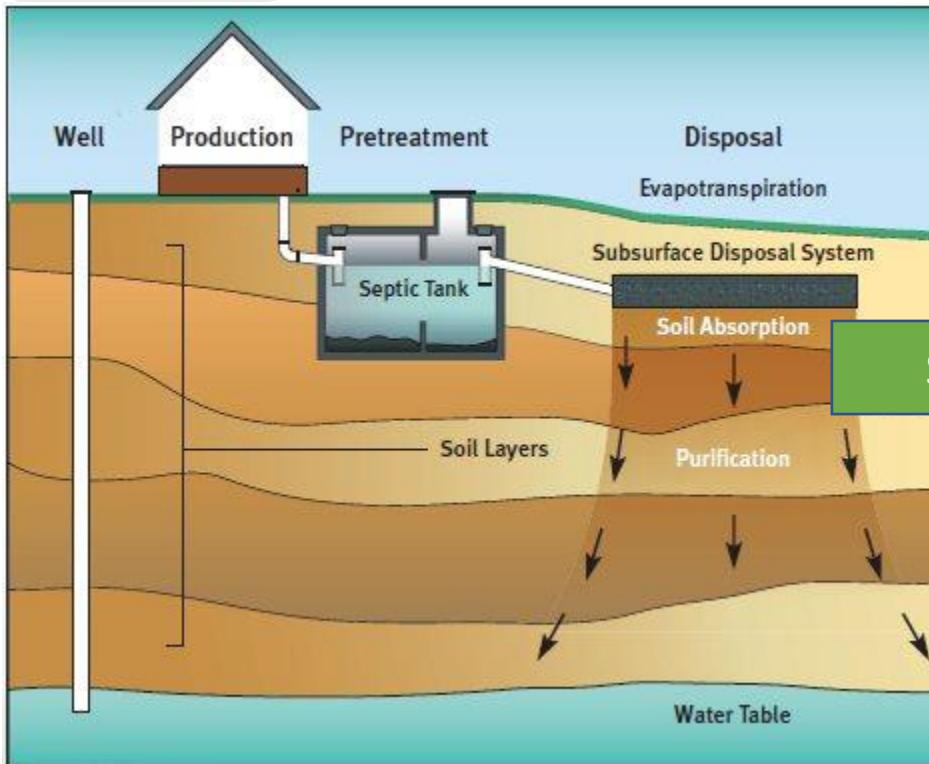
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Impervious Surface Reduction	Impervious	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	<p>Proposal: VA proposes backout of septic connections be constrained to only the BMPs encompassed by the service areas for which mapped changes are incorporated.</p>
Septic Connections	n/a	n/a	Backout is determined using census data	<p>Argument: Septic connections in one county may be impacting the septic connections in another county.</p>
Alternative Crops Grass Buffers Land Retirement Wetland Creation Wetland Restoration	Low Vegetation	Low Vegetation	The backout for land use change BMPs from 2017-2025 is 2017 progress.	VA proposes discontinuing all backout of herbaceous BMPs as they are highly unlikely to be properly classified as a land use change when the change is low vegetation to low vegetation.

*The land cover product from Chesapeake Conservancy does not include a True Forest Category. Tree Canopy is defined as deciduous and evergreen woody vegetation of either natural succession or human planting that is over approximately 3-5 meters in height. Land cover was used for this table instead of land use because it does not incorporate the agricultural census.

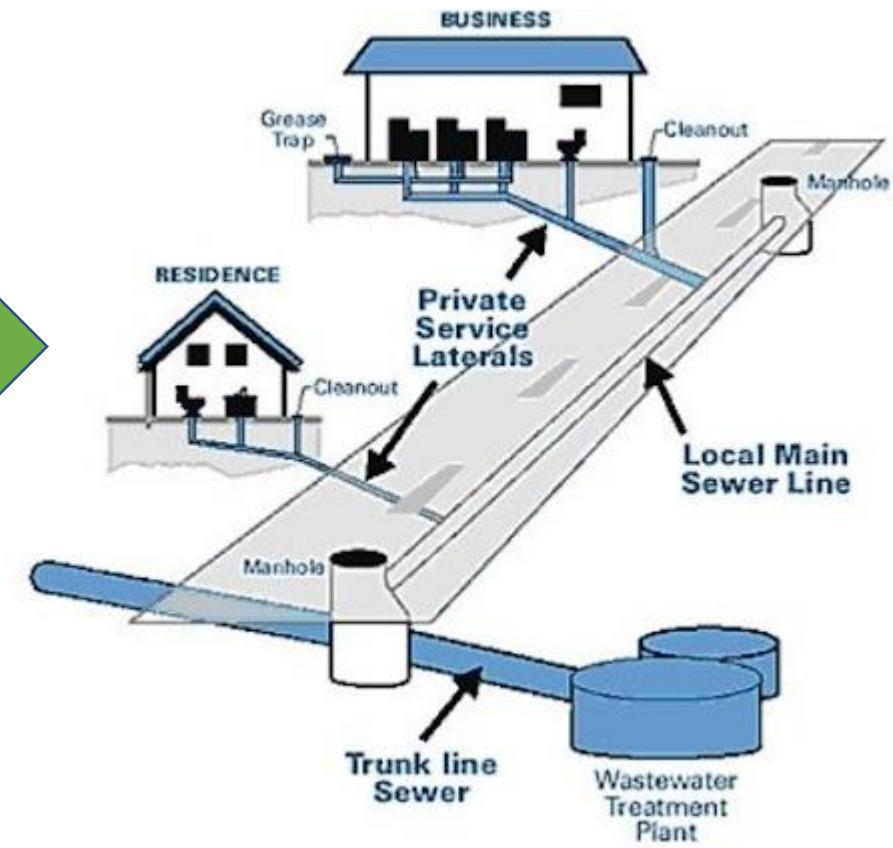
What are Septic Connections?

- **Septic connections convert from private septic tanks to a municipal sewer system.**
- *How does this work in CAST?*
- The septic connection BMP eliminates the septic load for the number of systems selected. The load is assumed to be captured in the wastewater data. Wastewater loads are measured, and the measured load is reported. This measured load will include the loads from the newly-connected septic areas.
- *What is the load source change that occurs?*
 - The septic connection BMP **removes the septic load source** once implemented.
 - Septic load goes to 0 lbs and the load is captured in the wastewater data.

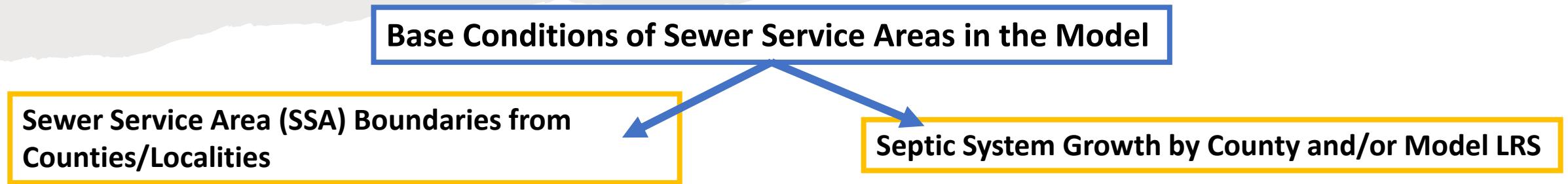
The Load Source Conversion that Occurs through Implementing Septic Connections



Septic Connection BMP



What informs the Septic Load Source in the Base Conditions?



How?

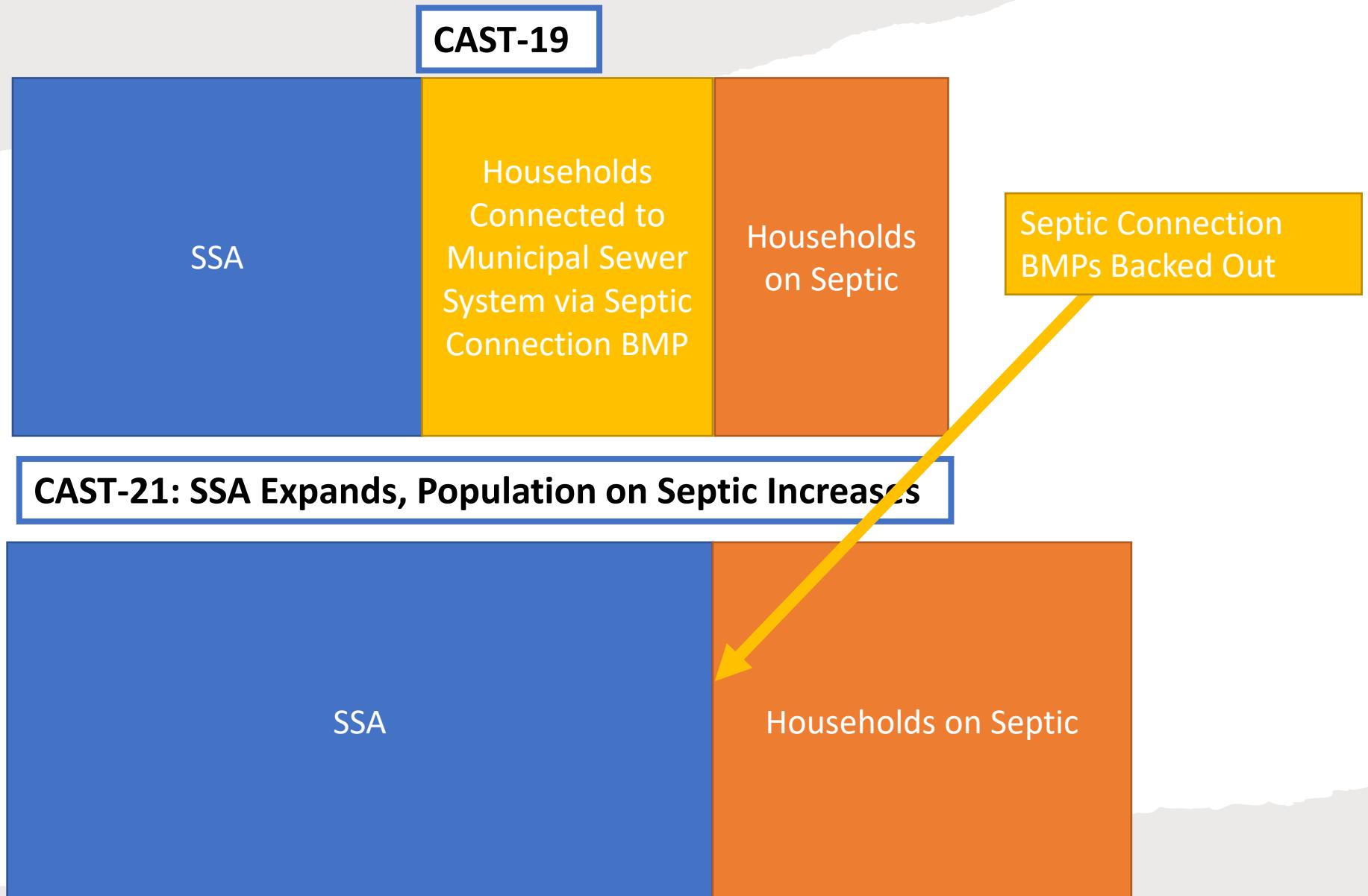
SSAs originally collected by Tetra Tech in 2009.

- Data received for 60% of WWTPs.
- Outside of the SSAs provided, SSAs were modeled using population density, populated place, and the 1990 Census (last year census collected WW info).

How?

When the sewer model is updated for each milestone, Census County-level population is used to control total estimated population on sewer and septic. The future population for 2025 is forecasted.

Backout of Septic Connections (SSAs updated biannually)



How is backout applied to Septic Connections?

- Only estimate septic connections within the mapped sewer service areas provided to us by states or localities for the Milestone updates.
 - Therefore, there is no duplication of data for connections outside the mapped sewer service areas provided to us.
- Count all households within mapped sewer service areas as being on sewer and all single-family detached households outside sewer service areas as on septic.

Without Backout, How would double counting of Septic Connections occur?

- Example 1: If our mapped sewer service areas for CAST-21 show an expansion of sewer service areas but the additional households on sewer are also reported as a septic connection BMP, they will be double counted.
- Example 2: Sometimes septic systems are included within mapped SSAs. If these septic systems are later connected to sewer and reported as a septic connection BMP, we will be double counting those connections.

What informs the Septic Load Source in the Base Conditions?

- For CAST-21, the Chesapeake Conservancy requested SSA data from localities throughout the watershed in 2019 and 2020.
 - *This data is being assembled and compared to the current data to determine which dataset is more detailed/covers a larger area.*

Questions on Backout of Septic Connections?

Is the Backout of Septic Connections currently constrained to only mapped areas?

Should we wait for an accuracy assessment to be completed on the new land use change product for CAST-21 before making decisions on backout?