

## **Application of Omernik's Ecoregions in Conservation Planning and Application**

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The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has cooperated with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other state and federal agencies to correlate the NRCS's Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA) with Omernik's Level III & IV Ecoregions. The ecoregions add a powerful tool for dealing with soil, water, air, plant and animal concerns. The Level IV Ecoregions have been designated by NRCS in Washington State as common resource areas. Common resource areas have unique environmental characteristics and ecological responses that must be considered in the design and application of conservation practices such as range seeding, brush management, and riparian enhancement. Seeding recommendations and woody species selection can be tailored to the unique characteristics of the ecoregion. The Level IV ecoregions also support the development of range ecological sites and the refinement of rangeland health indicators in Washington State. The unique plant communities, soils and physiography of the ecoregions provide a useful tool for describing and analyzing plant communities and developing state-and-transition models to describe expected responses to stress.