

Overview of USDA – NRCS Conservation Programs

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NRCS- Born in response to a National Tragedy



“Soil Conservation Act” of 1935
created Soil Conservation Service

Who is NRCS Now?

- 11,000 employees, 92% in county/field offices
- Most staff trained in soils, agronomy, range, engineering, biologists (including partners)
- Private lands focus (70% of U.S.)
- Voluntary programs
- Science based conservation planning



Conservation Operations

- Conservation Technical Assistance
- Soil Survey
- Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasts
- Plant Material Centers
- National Resources Inventory (NRI) and Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)



Conservation Technical Assistance CTA

- CTA is the help NRCS and its partners provide to land users to address opportunities, concerns, and problems related to the use of natural resources and to help land users make sound natural resource management decisions on private, tribal, and other non-federal lands.
- First 7 steps of planning process

NRCS Farm Bill Program Delivery

Working Lands Programs

- **Conservation practices on ground – cost-share and planning**



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices that optimize environmental benefit while promoting agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals.
- FY 2010 Authorized \$1,450,000,000

EQIP National Priorities

- Reduction of nonpoint source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity in impaired watersheds
- Conservation of ground and surface water resources
- Reduction of emissions that contribute to air quality impairment
- Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation
- Promotion of at-risk species habitat

National EQIP Initiatives and Statute Supported Programs

- Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
- EQIP Conservation Activity Plans (CAP)
- Colorado River Basin Salinity Project
- Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- Klamath Basin River Activities
- Organic Program Initiative

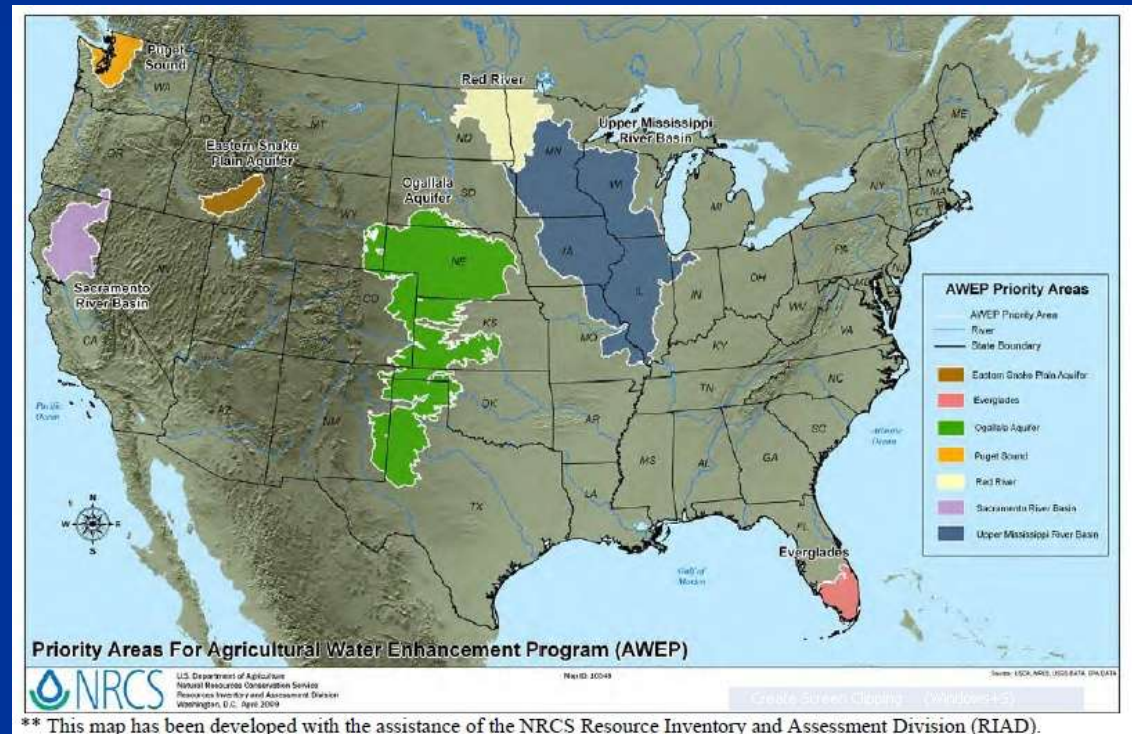
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

- NRCS enters into partnership agreements with eligible entities and organizations that want to promote ground and surface water conservation or improve water quality on agricultural lands.
- FY 2010 Authorized \$73 million
- Focus on water quantity and quality.
- Leverage partner abilities

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

AWEP Priority Areas

- Eastern Snake Plains Aquifer
- Everglades
- Ogallala Aquifer
- Puget Sound
- Sacramento
- River Basin Red River
- Upper Mississippi River Basin



Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

- Under CIG, EQIP funds are used to award competitive grants to non-Federal governmental or non-governmental organizations, Tribes, or individuals.
- Accelerate technology transfer and adoption of promising technologies and approaches to address some of the Nation's most pressing natural resource concerns.

CIG

- National
- Chesapeake and Mississippi River Basin
- State Specific
- FY 2010 \$25 million available

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

- The Farm Bill requires that 6 percent of the funds for EQIP and WHIP and 6 percent of the allowed acres for the CSP programs be reserved for support of producer contracts approved under this authority.

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

CCPI is a voluntary conservation initiative that enables the use of certain conservation programs (EQIP, WHIP, and CSP) along with resource of eligible partners to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forest lands.

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

An eligible entity may apply for and be granted a CCPI project on behalf of a group of agricultural producers. An eligible entity may be a Federally-recognized Tribe, State, unit of local government, agricultural or silvicultural association, or other such group of agricultural producers.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

AMA provides financial assistance through long term contracts to agricultural producers on private lands to:

- Construct or improve water management or irrigation structures
- Plant trees to form windbreaks or to improve water quality
- Mitigate financial risks through the implementation of resource conservation practices including soil erosion control, integrated pest management or the transition to organic farming

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

- AMA is available in 16 states:
 - Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine
 - Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire
 - New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island
 - Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming
 - FY 2010, apportionment \$7.5 million

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

- The purpose of WHIP is to help participants develop fish and wildlife habitat on private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and Tribal lands.
- FY10 Authorized \$85 million

WHIP National Priorities

- Promote the restoration of declining or important native fish and wildlife habitats.
- Protect, restore, develop, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat to benefit at-risk species.
- Reduce the impacts of invasive species on fish and wildlife habitats.
- Protect, restore, develop, or enhance declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitats.
- Protect, restore, develop, or enhance important migration and other movement corridors for wildlife.

NRCS Farm Bill Program Delivery Working Lands Programs

Natural Resource Protection with Agricultural use retention (FRPP, GRP, HFRP)



Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)

- FRPP: established to help farmers and ranchers keep their land in ag production.
- Provides matching funds to State, Tribal, or local governments and nongovernmental organizations with existing farm and ranch land protection programs to purchase permanent conservation easements.

FRPP

- Participating landowners agree to keep their land in ag uses and to develop and implement a conservation plan for any highly erodible land.
- 2008 FB revised the program authority from purchasing conservation easements to facilitating the purchase of conservation

FRPP

- NRCS has enrolled a total of 809,098 acres on 3,495 farms.
- For every Federal dollar expended, cooperating entities and landowners contributed an additional \$1.88

Grassland Reserve Program

- Voluntary program that places an emphasis on supporting grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs or forbs under the greatest threat of conversion.
- Provides financial assistance in the form of easement, rental contract, and cost-share payments for restoration.

GRP

- 10, 15, 20 year rental contracts – and permanent easements through cooperative agreements with eligible entities
- At the end of FY 2010 627,870 acres were enrolled toward the 1.22 million cap.
- Priority given to acres coming out of CRP

Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)

- HFRP: Purpose- to restore and enhance forest ecosystems to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, improve biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.
- Provides financial assistance in the form of easement, contract, and cost-share payments for specific conservation actions completed by the landowner.

HFRP

- Arkansas
- Mississippi
- Oklahoma
- Maine
- Oregon

NRCS Farm Bill Program Delivery

Natural Resource Protection & Restoration Programs

- Easements and long-term contracts (WRP)



NRCS Farm Bill Program Delivery

Land Stewardship (CSP)

- CSP encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by:
 - Improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities; and
 - Undertaking additional conservation activities



NRCS Program Delivery

| 4. NRCS Landscape Initiatives FY2011 | Programs |
|--|----------------------------|
| Bay Delta | various |
| Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative | EQIP-CCPI, WHIP-CCPI |
| Great Lakes Restoration Initiative | EQIP, CTA, WHIP |
| Illinois River and Eucha-Spavinaw Lake Initiative | EQIP |
| Lesser Prairie Chicken | EQIP, WHIP |
| Longleaf Pine Initiative | WHIP |
| Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative | EQIP, WRP, WHIP |
| Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative | CCPI-EQIP, WHIP, CSP, WREP |
| New England Forestry Initiative | WHIP |
| Sage-Grouse Initiative | EQIP, WHIP, WRP |

* Programs may change

NRCS Landscape Initiatives Chesapeake Bay Watershed

- Executive order directs USDA to “target resources to better protect the Bay and its rivers, particularly in agricultural conservation practices”
- CBWI \$34 million in FA obligated in FY2010



NRCS Landscape Initiatives

Protecting Sage Grouse

- Populations and habitat declining in 11 Western states
- Provide certainty to participants if sage grouse is ESA listed
- Over \$18 million in FA obligated in FY10 (EQIP, WHIP)



NRCS Landscape Initiatives

Migratory Bird Habitat

- Goal is to help 50 million birds coming down the Mississippi alluvial every year
- 471,000 acres enrolled in FY2010
- \$40 million (EQIP, WHIP, WRP)



South central Louisiana lands before flooding



After flooding

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

