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# **Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs**

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## Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently administer close to 20 programs and subprograms that are directly or indirectly available to assist producers and landowners who wish to practice conservation on agricultural lands. The differences and number of these programs have created general confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs. While recent consolidation efforts removed some duplication, a large number of programs remain. The programs discussed in this report are as follows:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Operations (CO); Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- CRP—Farmable Wetland Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Grassroots Source Water Protection Program
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP)
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program
- Water Bank Program
- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program

This tabular presentation provides basic information covering each of the programs. In each case, a brief program description is followed by information on major amendments in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, 2014 farm bill), national scope and availability, states with the greatest participation, the backlog of applications or other measures of continuing interest, program funding authority, FY2017 funding, FY2018 Administration budget request, statutory authority, the authorization expiration date, and a link to the program's website.

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## Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers a number of agricultural conservation programs that assist private landowners with natural resource concerns. These include working land programs, land retirement and easement programs, watershed programs, emergency programs, technical assistance, and other programs. The number and funding levels for agricultural conservation programs have steadily increased over the past 60 years. Early conservation efforts undertaken by Congress were focused on reducing high levels of soil erosion and providing water to agriculture in quantities and quality that enhanced farm production. By the early 1980s, however, concern was growing that these programs were not adequately dealing with environmental problems resulting from agricultural activities (especially off the farm). In 1985, conservation policy took a new direction when Congress passed the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 farm bill, P.L. 99-198), which established the first conservation programs designed to deal with environmental issues resulting from agricultural activities.

Provisions enacted in subsequent farm bills, including in 1990, 1996, 2002, 2008, and 2014,<sup>1</sup> reflect a rapid evolution of the conservation agenda, including the growing influence of environmentalists and other non-agricultural interests in the formulation of conservation policy, and a recognition that agriculture was not treated like other business sectors in many environmental laws.<sup>2</sup> Congress also began funding many of these new programs through mandatory spending for the first time, using the borrowing authority of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)<sup>3</sup> as the funding mechanism instead of annual appropriations. In addition to the original soil erosion and water quality and quantity issues, the conservation agenda has continued to expand to address other natural resource concerns, such as wildlife habitat, air quality, wetlands restoration and protection, energy efficiency, and sustainable agriculture.

Lead agricultural conservation agencies within USDA are the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which provides technical assistance and administers most conservation programs, and the Farm Service Agency (FSA), which administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). These agencies are supported by others in USDA that supply research and educational assistance, including the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the Economic Research Service (ERS), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and the Forest Service (FS).<sup>4</sup> In addition, agricultural conservation programs involve a large array of partners, including other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private organizations, among others, who provide funds, expertise, and other forms of assistance to further agricultural conservation efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624), Federal Agricultural Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127), Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171), Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), and Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79).

<sup>2</sup> For additional discussion on conservation in the farm bill, see CRS Report R43504, *Conservation Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*.

<sup>3</sup> The CCC is the funding mechanism for the mandatory payments that are administered by various agencies of USDA, including all of the farm commodity price and income support programs. For more information on the CCC, see CRS Report R44606, *The Commodity Credit Corporation: In Brief*.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on ARS projects, see <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/Research.htm>; ERS projects, see <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/natural-resources-environment/conservation-programs.aspx>; NIFA programs, see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/nre/nre.cfm>; and FS projects, see <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/>.

## Overview

USDA provides technical and financial assistance to attract interest and encourage participation in conservation programs. Participation in all USDA conservation programs is voluntary. These programs protect soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources on privately owned agricultural lands to limit environmental impacts of production activities both on and off the farm, while maintaining or improving production of food and fiber. Some of these programs center on improving or restoring resources that have been degraded, while others create conditions to limit degradation in the future.

Though programs in this report are listed alphabetically, agricultural conservation programs can be grouped into the following categories based on similarities: working land programs, land retirement and easement programs, watershed programs, emergency programs,<sup>5</sup> compliance,<sup>6</sup> technical assistance, and other programs and overarching provisions.

### USDA Agricultural Conservation Programs

**Working Lands Programs**—typically classified as programs that allow private land to remain in production, while implementing various conservation practices to address natural resource concerns specific to the area.

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA).

**Land Retirement and Easement Programs**—land retirement programs provide federal payments to private agricultural landowners for *temporary* changes in land use or management to achieve environmental benefits. Conversely, conservation easements impose a *permanent* or *long-term* land-use restriction that is voluntarily placed on the land in exchange for a government payment.

- Conservation Reserve Program (includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Farmable Wetland Program), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (including agricultural land easements and wetland reserve easements), and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP).

**Watershed Programs**—NRCS partners with local sponsors to carry out activities for soil conservation; flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; watershed surveys; and dam rehabilitation.

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (also referred to as the Small Watershed Program or P.L. 566 and P.L. 534) and Watershed Rehabilitation program.

**Emergency Programs**—provide disaster assistance for farmland rehabilitation and impairments to watersheds. Programs are usually funded through supplemental appropriation acts.

- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), and Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (includes floodplain easements).

**Compliance**—provisions that prohibit a producer from receiving many federal farm program benefits (including conservation assistance and crop insurance) when conservation program requirements for highly erodible lands and wetlands are not met.

- Highly erodible land conservation (Sodbuster), wetland conservation (Swampbuster), and Sodsaver.

**Technical Assistance Programs**—provides landowners with science-based conservation information and technical expertise (e.g., engineering and biological) unique to the region and land use type. Usually does not include financial assistance.

- Conservation Operations (includes Conservation Technical Assistance, Soil Survey, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting, and Plant Materials Centers).

**Other Conservation Programs and Provisions**—Conservation Innovation Grants, Grassroots Source Water Protection Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, and Water Bank Program.

<sup>5</sup> Additional information on emergency land rehabilitation programs may be found in CRS Report R42854, *Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation*.

<sup>6</sup> Compliance refers to a series of farm bill provisions that require a minimum level of conservation on environmentally sensitive land in exchange for access to other USDA program benefits. Compliance provisions are not discussed in this report. Additional analysis may be found in CRS Report R42459, *Conservation Compliance and U.S. Farm Policy*.

The majority of conservation programs are funded through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) as mandatory spending. Congress authorizes mandatory programs at specified funding levels (or acreage enrollment levels for CRP and CSP) for multiple years, typically through omnibus legislation such as the farm bill. Mandatory programs are funded at these levels unless Congress limits funding to a lower amount through the appropriations or legislative process (or puts a ceiling on acreage that can be enrolled).<sup>7</sup> Discretionary programs are funded each year through the annual appropriations process.<sup>8</sup>

Despite a steady increase in mandatory funding authority, many conservation programs have been reduced or capped through annual appropriation acts since FY2003. Many of these spending reductions were at the request of the Administration.<sup>9</sup> The mix of programs and amounts of reduction have varied from year to year. Some programs, such as the CRP, have not been reduced by appropriators in recent years, while others, such as EQIP, have been repeatedly reduced below authorized levels. Authorized mandatory funding for conservation programs has been reduced by a total of more than \$6 billion over 10 years.

Sequestration has also had an effect on conservation programs. Sequestration is a process of automatic, largely across-the-board reductions that permanently cancel mandatory and/or discretionary budget authority to enforce statutory budget goals.<sup>10</sup> Discretionary accounts have avoided sequestration in recent years through adjustments to spending limits, however, sequestration continues on mandatory accounts. Most all mandatory conservation programs were subject to sequestration in FY2014 through FY2017 and likely will be again in FY2018.<sup>11</sup> Even with sequestration and appropriations act reductions, total annual mandatory funding for conservation programs has grown from a total of \$3.6 billion in FY2006 to over \$5 billion in FY2017.

## 2014 Farm Bill

Before the 1985 farm bill, few conservation programs existed, and only two would be considered large by today's standards. In contrast, leading up to the debate on the 2014 farm bill, there were over 20 distinct conservation programs with total annual spending greater than \$5 billion. The differences and number of these programs created general confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs. Discussion about simplifying or consolidating conservation programs to reduce overlap and duplication, and to generate savings, continued for a number of years. The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, 2014 farm bill), contained several

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<sup>7</sup> For additional discussion on these reductions, see CRS In Focus IF10041, *Reductions to Mandatory Agricultural Conservation Programs in Appropriations Law*.

<sup>8</sup> For additional information on the FY2016 appropriation, see CRS Report R44240, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2016 Appropriations*.

<sup>9</sup> The FY2017 Administration's request is the first since FY2003 to not include a reduction of mandatory funding for conservation programs.

<sup>10</sup> For additional information on sequestration and the budget process, see CRS Report R42972, *Sequestration as a Budget Enforcement Process: Frequently Asked Questions*.

<sup>11</sup> The Conservation Reserve Program is statutorily exempt from sequestration (2 U.S.C. 905 (g)(1)(A)). Sequestration reductions in FY2014 were reflected in the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) baseline that was used to write the 2014 farm bill. For more information, see CRS Report R42484, *Budget Issues That Shaped the 2014 Farm Bill*. Sequestration estimates for FY2015, FY2016, and FY2017 may be found in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Reports to the Congress on the Joint Committee Reductions can be found at [https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative\\_reports](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative_reports).

program consolidation measures, including the repeal of 12 active and inactive programs, the creation of two new programs, and the merging of two programs into existing ones.<sup>12</sup>

## Unfunded and Repealed Programs

A number of conservation programs were repealed by the 2014 farm bill or have gone unfunded by Congress in recent years. **Table 1** lists these programs and the most recent congressional action taken.

**Table 1. Unfunded and Repealed Programs**

Program Name	Action-Year	Description
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)	Repealed-2014	A sub-program of EQIP that provided funding for water quality and quantity projects. Repealed in the 2014 farm bill and incorporated into RCPP.
Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program	Repealed-2014	Provided additional funding through existing programs to conservation projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Repealed in the 2014 farm bill and incorporated into RCPP.
Conservation Security Program	New enrollment unauthorized-2008	Replaced by the Conservation Stewardship Program in the 2008 farm bill, the program enrolled acres in 5- to 10-year stewardship contracts, the last of which will expire in FY2018.
Farmland Protection Program (FPP)	Repealed-2014	An agricultural land easement program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Program components were incorporated into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)	Repealed-2014	A grassland easement and contract program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Easement provisions were incorporated into ACEP and rental contracts were incorporated into CRP.
Resource Conservation and Program (RC&D) Development	Unfunded since-FY2011	Funded local RC&D coordinator positions. Funding terminated in FY2011 and program close-out complete in FY2012. FY2014 appropriations act permanently cancelled any remaining funds.
Watershed Surveys and Planning	Unfunded since-FY2007	Funded investigations and surveys of river basins to respond to water quality, flooding, water and land management, and sedimentation problems.
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)	Repealed-2014	A wetland easement program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Program components were incorporated into ACEP.
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	Repealed-2014	A wildlife habitat cost-share assistance program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Program components were incorporated into EQIP.

**Source:** CRS.

<sup>12</sup> For additional information on the amendments to conservation programs in the 2014 farm bill, see CRS Report R43504, *Conservation Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*.

## Conservation Programs

The tabular presentation that follows provides basic information covering each of the USDA agricultural conservation programs, including

- administering agency or agencies within USDA;
- brief program description;
- major amendments to the program in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79), commonly referred to as the 2014 farm bill;
- national scope and availability, including participation levels and acres enrolled;
- states with the highest level of funds obligated or acres enrolled;
- volume of application backlog or public interest in each program;
- authorized funding levels, whether mandatory spending or discretionary appropriations, and any funding restrictions;
- FY2017 funding level in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 (P.L. 115-31), or, if applicable, the authorized level in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (sequestration and carryover not included);
- FY2018 funding level requested by the Administration (sequestration and carryover not included);<sup>13</sup>
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and U.S. Code reference;
- expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- program’s website link.

Information for the following tables is drawn from agency budget presentations, explanatory notes, and websites; written responses to questions published each year in hearing records of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees; and spending estimates from the Congressional Budget Office. Further information about these programs may be found on the NRCS website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> and on the “conservation programs” page of the FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

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<sup>13</sup> The Trump Administration released its full budget request on May 23, 2017. This proposal included specific amounts for FY2018 agricultural appropriations as well as legislative changes to mandatory spending programs, including those authorized in farm bills. In some cases the levels requested as part of the FY2018 agricultural appropriations did not align with the proposed legislative changes. Where possible, these conflicting areas are highlighted in this report. The requested FY2018 agricultural appropriation amount is listed as [USDA Budget](#) and comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, *2018 Budget Explanatory Notes for Committee on Appropriations*, May 2017. The President’s request for legislative changes to mandatory spending programs is listed as [OMB Reforms](#) and comes from the Office of Management and Budget, *President’s Budget for FY2018: Major Savings and Reforms*, May 2017.

## Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	<p>ACEP provides financial and technical assistance through two types of easements: agricultural land easements that limit non-agricultural uses on productive farm or grass lands, and wetland reserve easements that protect and restore wetlands.</p> <p><i>Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)</i>—Enrollment is through eligible entities that enter into cooperative agreement to obligate ACEP funds. The entities acquire easements and hold, monitor, manage, and enforce the easements. The federal share of easement acquisition cannot exceed 50% of the appraised fair market value or 75% if it is determined to be a grassland of special environmental significance.</p> <p><i>Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)</i>—Enrollment options (federal share) include permanent easements (100% easement value and 75%-100% restoration cost), 30-year easements (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost), term easements or the maximum duration under state law (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost), and 30-year contracts only available to Indian tribes (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost). NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement.</p>
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Created in the 2014 farm bill from three repealed programs—Farmland Protection Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and Wetlands Reserve Program. General program provisions are the same across both easement types, including ineligible land; subordination, exchange, modification, and termination procedures; and compliance requirements.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. In FY2016, \$188 million in ACEP funding was used to enroll an estimated total of 170,785 acres of farmland, grassland, and wetlands through 373 new ACEP easements. This includes ALE (easements)—82 on 74,284 acres; ALE (grassland easements)—12 on 56,897 acres; WRE (permanent easements)—250 on 35,005 acres; and WRE (30-year easements)—29 on 4,598 acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	The most funding obligated in FY2016 was in CA (\$23.1 million), AR (\$19.1 million), and MT (\$17.7 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	<p><i>Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)</i>—In FY2016, 648 ALE applications were received for over 251,000 acres, including 72 applications for over 89,262 acres of grasslands of special environmental significance. Approximately 14% of applications were enrolled.</p> <p><i>Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)</i>—In FY2016, 1,701 WRE applications were for over 228,000 acres. Approximately 16% of applications were funded.</p>
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. FY2014—\$400 million, FY2015—\$425 million, FY2016—\$450 million, FY2017—\$500 million, and FY2018—\$250 million.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$465.5 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$34.5 million from sequestration).
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	Conflicting request. <u>USDA Budget</u> requests full authorized level of \$250 million. <u>OMB Reforms</u> proposes \$450 million in additional budget authority for FY2018 (estimated cost of \$3 billion over 10 years).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in subtitle D of Title II (§2301) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) as §1265 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 3865-3865d.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/</a>

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## Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS (conservation assistance), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS, organic certification), and Risk Management Agency (RMA, production, price, or revenue risk reduction).
<b>Program description</b>	AMA provides cost-sharing assistance under contracts of one to 10 years to producers in 16 specified states where participation in the federal crop insurance program has been historically low. Producers use this assistance to construct or improve water management and irrigation structures, plant trees, control soil erosion, practice integrated pest management, practice organic farming, develop value-added processing, and enter into futures, hedging, or options contracts to reduce production, price, or revenue risk.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Both the House- and Senate-passed farm bills (H.R. 2642 and S. 954) included amendments to AMA, but none were adopted in the conference agreement.
<b>National scope</b>	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include CT, DE, HI, MD, MA, ME, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, and WY. As of the end of FY2016, 549 contracts were being implemented within these states.
<b>Leading states</b>	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2016 include ME (\$1.2 million), WV (\$409,000), and PA (\$408,000).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	A backlog of 448 applications was pending at the end of FY2016. The FY2016 backlog would enroll more than 3,659 acres at a cost of \$3.9 million.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. Permanently authorized at \$10 million for each fiscal year. Funding is split by law among the three USDA agencies: 50%—NRCS, 10%—AMS, and 40%—RMA.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$9.3 million (\$4.6 million for conservation; total authorization reduced by approximately \$680,000 from sequestration).
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0. Requests a rescission of the reduction (\$10 million minus sequestration).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in Title I, §133 of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-224) as §524(b) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act, as amended. 7 U.S.C. 1524(b).
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program websites</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama</a> (NRCS); <a href="http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occp">http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occp</a> (AMS).

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## Conservation Operations (CO)— Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	Conservation Operations (CO) is the primary account funding technical assistance within NRCS. More than 88% of CO funding is for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), which provides conservation planning and implementation assistance through field staff placed in almost all counties within the United States and territories. This assistance is provided to producers and land owners who voluntarily apply natural resource conservation systems, consisting of one or more practices, on private and other nonfederal lands. Other components of CO include the Soil Surveys, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting, and Plant Materials Centers.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. CTA was funded at \$759 million and estimated 5,390 staff years for FY2017. Total CO spending for FY2017 is \$864 million and estimated 5,920 staff years.
<b>Leading states</b>	No data are available for the CTA subset in FY2017, but the three leading states for total estimated CO funding are TX (\$36.3 million), IA (\$21.6 million), and MO (\$21.4 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not available.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$759 million for CTA out of \$864 million appropriated for all CO.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$668 million for CTA out of \$766 million for all CO.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (P.L. 74-46), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 590a-g, 16 U.S.C. 590q.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/</a> (CTA); <a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/</a> (soil survey); <a href="http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/">http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/</a> (snow survey and water supply forecasting); and <a href="http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/">http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/</a> (plant materials centers).

## Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	CRP provides annual rental payments, usually over 10 years, to producers to replace crops on highly erodible and environmentally sensitive land with long-term resource-conserving plantings. Bids to enroll land are solicited during a limited time period, then compared using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Those with the highest EBI scores are accepted. This is referred to as general sign-up. Embedded in the CRP are several small and more focused subprograms and initiatives—some established in law and others established administratively—that bypass the general bidding process and address specific resource topics. Examples of these focus on concentrated resource problems in a portion of a state, protection of small isolated agricultural wetlands, or improvement of habitat for upland game birds. All lands that qualify for these subprograms and initiatives are automatically accepted and enrolled on a continuous basis. This is referred to as continuous sign-up.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reduces enrollment ceiling from 32 million acres to 24 million acres by FY2018; amends emergency harvesting, grazing, and permits other use of forage, in some cases, without a reduction in rental rate; allows a one-time, penalty-free, early out in FY2015 for contracts enrolled longer than five years and containing no environmentally sensitive practices; and incorporates grassland contracts, similar to what was repealed under the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP). These grassland contracts are referred to as grassland sign-up.
<b>National scope</b>	As of May 2017, there are 638,130 active contracts on 358,589 farms with 23.5 million acres enrolled. Of this total, 16.0 million acres are enrolled under general sign-up, 1.1 million acres under Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program sign-up (CREP), 5.9 million under non-CREP sign-up, 393,902 under Farmable Wetland sign-up, and 86,569 under grasslands sign-up. In May 2017, FSA announced a freeze on all non-CREP continuous sign-up due to the 24 million acreage enrollment limit. No general sign-up is expected in FY2017.
<b>Leading states</b>	Leading states in terms of total acres are TX (2.9 million), KS (2.1 million), and IA (1.8 million). Leading states in terms of total number of contracts are IA (108,869), IL (78,748), and MN (55,003).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Interest in the most recent general sign-up (#49) was high, with a 22% acreage offer acceptance rate (1.9 million acres offered and 407,416 acres accepted). Interest in the CRP grasslands sign-up (#200) has also been high, with an acreage acceptance rate of 10% (1.0 million acres offered and 101,293 acres accepted). Approximately 800,000 acres of grassland sign-up have been approved for contracts beginning in FY2018, with only 11,000 acres completely enrolled as of May 2017. An estimated 2.51 million acres are expected to expire from the program at the end of FY2017 (including 540,000 continuous and 1.97 million general sign-up).
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, statutorily exempt from sequestration. At any one time, CRP can enroll no more than: 27.5 million acres in FY2014; 26 million acres in FY2015; 25 million acres in FY2016; and 24 million acres in FY2017 and FY2018. No funding amount specified.
<b>FY2017 est. funding</b>	\$2.0 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
<b>FY2018 est. Administration request</b>	\$1.7 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance). Request also proposes eliminating select incentive payments and limiting enrollment to continuous and grassland sign-ups.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §1231-§1235 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2001-§2008 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3831(a)-3835a.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/</a>

## CRP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	This subprogram of CRP partners with states at their request. States propose sub-state areas, such as a watershed, where environmental or resource concerns are more concentrated and can be addressed by enrolling up to 100,000 acres per project. States contribute 20% of the funding to allow for larger payments, in order to encourage greater participation. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	There are 47 CREP agreements in 34 states, including 64,074 contracts on 43,109 farms, enrolling a total of 1.1 million acres, as of May 2017.
<b>Leading states</b>	Leading states in terms of acres enrolled are PA (143,275), OH (120,219), and KY (97,614). States leading in number of contracts are OH (15,386), PA (8,756), and MD (4,724).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable since any eligible land can be enrolled at any time; participation has been much higher in some states than in others, but that is due, reportedly, to how the program is promoted and where eligible projects are located. Average rental payments are higher than for acreage under the general CRP sign-up process.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authority derived from CRP statutory authority (see “Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)”).
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement/index</a>

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## CRP—Farmable Wetland Program

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	This 750,000 acre subprogram of the CRP enrolls small isolated agricultural wetlands. On a single tract of land, enrollment is set at a maximum of 40 contiguous wetland acres. “Flooded farmland” has a 20-acre limit. Eligible lands include wetlands that were cropped in three of the preceding 10 years (and include buffers sufficient to protect them), on which the hydrology will be restored and a vegetative cover established. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Renames the pilot program “Farmable Wetland Program.” Reauthorizes the program through FY2018, and clarifies language related to constructed wetlands receiving water from agricultural drainage. Reduces acreage limitation from 1 million acres to 750,000 acres.
<b>National scope</b>	Active contracts in 22 participating states, including AL, AR, CO, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NC, ND, OH, OK, SD, WA and WI. As of May 2017, there are 15,775 contracts on 12,094 farms for a total of 393,902 enrolled acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	In terms of acres, the leading states are ND (130,410 acres), SD (100,679 acres), and IA (89,504 acres). The largest number of contracts are in IA (5,058), followed by SD (4,168) and ND (2,878).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable since any eligible land can be enrolled at any time; participation has been much higher in some states than in others, but that is due, reportedly, to how the program is promoted and the amount of eligible land within a state.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, statutorily exempt from sequestration. No more than 750,000 acres enrolled at any one time and no more than 100,000 acres in any state (may be increased to 200,000 acres after agency review).
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in Title XI of Agriculture and Related Agency appropriations, 2001 (P.L. 106-387) as §1231B of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2002 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3831b.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/farmable-wetlands/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/farmable-wetlands/index</a>

## Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	CSP provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on tribal and private working lands. Contracts (five years in length with the option of renewal) are based on meeting or exceeding a “stewardship threshold.” CSP provides two possible payments: (1) an annual payment for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing activities and (2) a supplemental payment for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation. Enrollment is offered through a continuous sign-up and applications are accepted year-round.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reduces the enrollment cap from 12.769 million acres annually to 10 million acres annually. Reorganizes the statutory language and refocuses the program on generating additional conservation benefits. Raises the entry bar for participants to two priority resource concerns upon entry and requires the participant to meet or exceed one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract. Contract renewal participants must meet the threshold for two additional priority resources concerns, or exceed the threshold for two existing priority resource concerns. Removes the 10% limitation on nonindustrial private forest land and provides flexible transition options for land coming out of CRP.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. The program held its first sign-up in 2009, and at the end of FY2016, nearly 81 million acres were enrolled. Of the expiring FY2011 contracts, 47% were renewed in FY2016 for an additional five years.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2016, SD had the most total acres funded (881,140), followed by NM (566,974) and MT (553,950). The most funding obligated in FY2016 was in AR (\$12.9 million), MN (\$11.6 million), and SD (\$11.5 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2016, CSP provided \$113 million in funding to enroll 8.1 million new acres. Over 19,000 applications are expected in FY2017, and only about 6,500 applications (34%) are expected to be funded.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. CSP can enroll up to 10 million acres each fiscal year. No funding amount specified.
<b>FY2017 est. funding</b>	\$1.29 billion; 10 million acres (authorization reduced by sequestration; unknown effect on acres).
<b>FY2018 est. Administration request</b>	Conflicting request. <u>USDA Budget</u> requests full authorized level estimated at \$1.4 billion (based on the estimated number of acres currently enrolled, including technical assistance). <u>OMB Reforms</u> proposes to eliminate new enrollment for FY2018 (estimated savings of \$7.9 billion over 10 years).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §2301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1238D-§1238G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2101 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3838d-3838g.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp</a>

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## Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance to producers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, wind, and erosion) through activities such as removing debris, and implementing emergency water conservation measures in response to severe droughts.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely from year to year.
<b>Leading states</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2017 funding to date</b>	The FY2017 Continuing Appropriations Resolution (P.L. 114-223) provided \$103 million to remain available until expended. The enacted FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31) provides an additional \$28.7 million for non-major disasters.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §401 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 2201-2205.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index</a>

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## Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	EFRP provides cost-share assistance to private forestland owners to repair and rehabilitate damage caused by a natural disaster on nonindustrial private forest land. Natural disasters include wildfires, hurricanes or excessive winds, drought, ice storms or blizzards, floods, or other resource-impacting events, as determined by USDA.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely from year to year.
<b>Leading states</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2017 funding to date</b>	\$0
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §8203 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §407 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334). 16 U.S.C. 2206.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index</a>

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## Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS on private lands and U.S. Forest Service on National Forest Systems lands.
<b>Program description</b>	EWP provides technical and financial assistance to reduce hazards to life and property in watersheds that have been damaged by natural disasters. Assistance includes disaster cleanup and recovery activities, and purchasing easements in floodplains that will benefit natural resources such as wetlands, while reducing the risk of exposure to future natural disasters.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Authorizes USDA to modify and terminate floodplain easements provided the current landowner agrees, and the modification or termination addresses a compelling public need for which there is no practical alternative, and is in the public interest.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely from year to year.
<b>Leading states</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2017 funding to date</b>	The FY2017 Continuing Appropriations Resolution (P.L. 114-223) provided \$103 million to remain available until expended.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §216 of P.L. 81-516 and §403 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. Amended in §2506 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 2203; and 33 U.S.C. 701b-1.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp</a>

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## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to producers and land owners to plan and install structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible lands to alleviate natural resource problems. Eligible producers enter into contracts to receive payment for implementing conservation practices. Approved activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice(s) to address specific land resource concerns. Sixty percent of the funds are targeted to conservation practices benefiting livestock.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Incorporates the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) into EQIP with a 5% allocation to wildlife habitat practices; removes the minimum one-year contract length requirement; adds veteran farmer or rancher to the list of certain producers eligible for cost-share rates up to 90% and advanced payments; raises the payment limit to an aggregate of \$450,000 between FY2014-FY2018 and eliminates the waiver authority for contracts of environmental significance; repeals the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP); reauthorizes the innovative grants program (see “EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)”); retains the allocation of 60% of funding each year to practices related to livestock production; and reauthorizes and reduces the air quality funding carve-out from \$37.5 million to \$25 million annually.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. In FY2016, EQIP obligated over \$1 billion across 36,395 contracts covering 10.6 million acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2016, the top three states by contracts signed were TX (3,224), MS (2,712), and CA (1,913). The most funding obligated was in CA (\$109 million), TX (\$109 million), and AR (\$56 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2016, 36,395 applications were funded (26.6%), and 61,809 applications went unfunded. The total estimated cost of this backlog is \$1.7 billion. The highest number of unfunded applications were submitted in MS (5,841), AR (4,713), and TX (3,734).
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. FY2014—\$1.35 billion, FY2015—\$1.6 billion, FY2016—\$1.65 billion, FY2017—\$1.65 billion, and FY2018—\$1.75 billion.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$1.357 billion (authorization reduced by approximately \$114 million from sequestration and \$179 million from P.L. 115-31).
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	Conflicting request. <u>USDA Budget</u> requests \$1.426 billion (authorization reduced by \$324 million and proposes rescinding \$209 million of FY2018 funds). <u>OMB Reforms</u> proposes \$250 million in additional budget authority for FY2018 (estimated cost of \$1.9 billion over 10 years).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in subtitle D of Title III (§331-336) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127) as §1240-§1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2201-§2206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-3839aa-7.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip</a>

## EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	CIG is a subprogram of EQIP that awards competitive grants to state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribes, and individuals to implement innovative conservation techniques and practices. Annual requests for proposals are posted on <a href="http://www.grants.gov">http://www.grants.gov</a> and include separate funding categories for national and state level competitions. Examples of eligible projects include market systems for pollution reduction, demonstrating precision agriculture, capturing nutrients through a community anaerobic digester, and establishing a tribal partnership for regional habitat conservation.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Adds research and demonstration activities, and new technology pilot testing as eligible projects; reauthorizes but reduces the air quality funding carve-out to \$25 million of EQIP annually through FY2018; and adds a reporting requirement that no later than December 31, 2014, and every two years thereafter, a report must be submitted to Congress regarding CIG funding, project results, and technology transfer efforts.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide with select states offering state competitions. In FY2017, CIG awarded a total of \$22.6 million to 33 projects through the national CIG competition. CIG funding since 2004, when the program began, totals \$286.7 million for 711 projects.
<b>Leading states</b>	None identified.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	None identified.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §2301 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) as §1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2207 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig</a>

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## Grassroots Source Water Protection Program

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA
<b>Program description</b>	Grassroots Source Water Protection Program provides funding to the National Rural Water Association for technical assistance to operate state's source water protection program. Local programs encourage the voluntary adoption of practices that prevent drinking water pollution.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reauthorizes discretionary funding authority and authorizes \$5 million in mandatory funding to remain available until expended.
<b>National scope</b>	In September 2013, the program was expanded to all 50 states.
<b>Leading states</b>	Annual appropriations are divided equally among all states.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	None identified.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration: FY2014—\$5 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: \$20 million annually.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$6.5 million.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §2502 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) as §1240O of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2502 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-2
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September, 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/source-water-protection/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/source-water-protection/index</a>

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## Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	HFRP assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year contracts, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Eliminates mandatory funding authority and replaces it with an authorization to receive appropriations. Adds a definition of “acreage owned by Indian tribes.” Provides flexibility for funding technical assistance.
<b>National scope</b>	Not available nationwide. Limited participation in select states. As of the end of FY2016, 93 agreements covering 673,592 acres have been enrolled in the program.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2016, states with the most funding obligated were GA (\$437,000), PA (\$163,000), and OR (\$38,000). There was no new enrollment in FY2015.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not available.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. \$12 million annually.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$0
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in Title V Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148), as amended. Amended by §8203 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 6572.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests</a>

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## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	RCPP provides financial and technical assistance for multi-state or watershed-scale projects. The program creates partnership opportunities to target and leverage federal conservation funding for specific areas and resource concerns. Project areas are defined by eligible partners and are selected through a competitive state or national competition. Partnership agreements are for five years with a possible one-year extension. In addition to defining the project area, providing assistance, and possibly acting on behalf of the producers within the project area, partners must also provide a “significant portion” of the overall cost of the project. Funds are also directed through “critical conservation areas” (CCA) selected by NRCS. Current CCAs include Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Great Lakes Region, Mississippi River Basin, Colorado River Basin, Longleaf Pine Range, Columbia River Basin, Prairie Grasslands Region, and California Bay Delta. Funding is statutorily divided as: critical conservation areas—35%, national projects—40%, and state projects—25%.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Created in the 2014 farm bill from four repealed programs—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, and the Great Lakes Basin Program for soil erosion and sediment control. RCPP contracts follow the existing rules and requirements of the covered programs.
<b>National scope</b>	To be eligible for an RCPP contract, a producer must be located in either a CCA or a selected partnership area, but is not required to work with the sponsoring project partner and may choose to work directly with NRCS. Partnership applications are accepted in two phases: pre-proposal and full proposal. In FY2017, 88 projects were selected totaling over \$225 million in federal spending that leveraged an estimated \$500 million in partner contributions.
<b>Leading states</b>	Following the final selection in FY2017, the three funding categories received the following (most total partners; most offers): state—53 projects (KY—22 partners; CA—\$3.9 million), CCA—17 projects (Prairie Grasslands Region—63 partners; Prairie Grasslands Region—\$25.1 million), and national—18 projects.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2017, the total amount of funding requested was double the amount available. During the pre-proposal round, 147 proposals were received requesting about \$400 million with a partner match of \$800 million.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. RCPP receives 7% of available covered conservation program funds (EQIP, CSP, ACEP, and HFRP) plus an additional \$100 million annually.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$93.2 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$6.8 million from sequestration), plus 7% of available covered conservation program funds (minus sequestration).
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	Conflicting request. <u>USDA Budget</u> requests full authorized level of \$100 million, plus 7% of available covered conservation program funds. <u>OMB Reforms</u> proposes to eliminate the program (estimated savings of \$755 million over 10 years).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in subtitle E of Title II (§2401) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) as §1271 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 3871-3871f.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/</a>

## Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program encourages owners and operators of privately held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by state or tribal governments. Competitive grants are offered to states and tribal governments for expanding existing access programs or creating new programs. Grants are reduced by 25% if opening dates for migratory bird hunting in a state are not consistent for residents and nonresidents.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reduces and extends authorization of mandatory funding. Requires USDA to submit a report to Congress no later than 2016 on the effectiveness of the program.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. In FY2014 and FY2015, \$20 million was made available each year. To date, 21 states and one tribal government have been awarded agreements. In FY2016, all formal grant agreements were complete.
<b>Leading states</b>	Of the FY2014 and FY2015 selected proposals, states receiving the most funding were PA (\$6 million), IL (\$3.5 million), and IA (\$3 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2014, 28 state wildlife agencies and two tribal governments submitted proposals requesting funding in excess of \$62 million. Nine state agencies and one tribal government received \$19.7 million. In FY2015, 25 state wildlife agencies submitted proposals requesting funding of over \$33 million. Fifteen state agencies received \$19.7 million.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. \$40 million in total for the period of FY2014-FY2018.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$0
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in Title II, §2606 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1240R of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2503 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmland/cid=stelpdb1242739">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmland/cid=stelpdb1242739</a>

## Water Bank Program

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	The Water Bank Program offers 10-year, non-renewable rental agreements to landowners to maintain wetlands in lieu of draining the land for agricultural production. No financial assistance is offered for conservation practices. Applications are ranked based on land use type and flooding impact. Payment rates are as follows: \$50/acre/year for cropland, \$35/acre/year for pasture and range land (grazing lands), and \$20/acre/year for forestland. The program was authorized in 1970 and operated until funding was eliminated in 1994 in favor of longer-term conservation programs. After 17 years of no funding, the program was appropriated \$7.5 million in FY2012. These funds were obligated exclusively for agreements in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota and were focused on flood reduction.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include MN, ND, and SD. In FY2016, \$3.5 million was obligated to 73 agreements covering 9,365 acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2016, eligible states receiving the most funding were ND (\$3.2 million), SD (\$835,000), and MN (\$104,000).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2016, there was a backlog of 433 applications with an estimated value of \$16.8 million covering 42,476 acres in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$4 million.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the Water Bank Act (P.L. 91-559), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 1301-1311.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?&amp;cid=stelprdb1047790">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?&amp;cid=stelprdb1047790</a>

## Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	Also referred to as the Small Watershed Program, Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations are two separate authorizations under which more than 11,000 structures have been built under more than 1,700 active and completed projects. The P.L. 78-534 Flood Prevention Operations Program authorizes 11 specific projects, while the P.L. 83-566 Small Watershed Operations Program authorizes watershed projects generally. Under P.L. 566, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to state and local organizations to plan and install measures to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and flood damage and to conserve, develop, and utilize land and water resources. The small watershed project costs are shared with local partners. No project may exceed 250,000 acres, and no structure may exceed more than 12,500 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity, or 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity. The Senate and House Agriculture Committees must approve projects that need an estimated federal contribution of more than \$5 million for construction or include a storage structure with a capacity in excess of 2,500 acre-feet. If the storage structure will have a capacity in excess of 4,000 acre-feet, approval is also required from the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. No new projects were authorized in FY2016.
<b>Leading states</b>	None identified.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	An estimated \$921 million is needed to install the remaining measures in the 302 active watershed projects. States with the greatest dollar value of unfunded federal commitments are TX (\$245 million), OK (\$126 million), and MO (\$111 million).
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$150 million appropriated, plus \$5.6 million congressionally directed from Conservation Operations.
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534), as amended, and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (P.L. 83-566), as amended. 33 U.S.C. 701b-1 and 16 U.S.C. 1001 et. seq.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&amp;cid=nrcs143_008271">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&amp;cid=nrcs143_008271</a>

## Watershed Rehabilitation Program

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	The Watershed Rehabilitation Program provides technical and financial assistance for planning, design, and implementation to rehabilitate aging watershed dam projects (including upgrading or removing dams) in communities to address health and safety concerns. Only dams constructed under the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program are eligible. Small watershed project dams have a 50-year design life. As of the end of 2016, 4,950 of these dams have reached or exceeded that time span. By the end of 2017, this number is expected to rise to 5,450.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reauthorizes both mandatory and discretionary funding authority.
<b>National scope</b>	Only available for dams built through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program and the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program. A total of 269 rehabilitation projects have been authorized in 31 states between FY2000 and FY2016. Of these, a total of 135 projects are complete, and 134 projects are being implemented (either in planning, design, or construction phase).
<b>Leading states</b>	States with the largest number of dam projects funded over the life of the program (2000-2016) are OK (53), TX (34), UT (22), and MS (22). States receiving the most funds in FY2016 were UT (\$7.0 million), TX (\$4.9 million), and OK (\$1.9 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2015, over \$502 million in requests were received from public sponsors to rehabilitate 393 dams. In FY2016, funding was provided for 14 dams in three states. The remaining projects are unfunded.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration: FY2014—\$250 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: FY2008-FY2018—\$85 million annually.
<b>FY2017 funding</b>	\$12 million in discretionary funding and \$9 million in mandatory funding (authorization reduced by \$4 million from sequestration and \$54 million in P.L. 115-31).
<b>FY2018 Administration request</b>	\$0 in discretionary funding and \$0 million in mandatory funding (authorization requested to be reduced by \$61 million, not including sequestration). Requests a rescission of the proposed reduction (\$61 million, minus sequestration).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §313 of the Grain Standards and Warehouse Improvement Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-472) as §14 of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended. Amended by §2505 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 1012.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr</a>

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