



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 over 20 programs and subprograms that are directly or indirectly available to assist producers and landowners who wish to practice conservation on agricultural lands. The number, scope, and overall funding of these programs has grown in recent years. This growth can cause some confusion over which problems and conditions each program addresses, and specific program characteristics and performance. The programs are as follows:

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- Conservation Operations (CO); Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- CRP—Farmable Wetlands Program
- Conservation Security Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- EQIP—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
- EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Farmland Protection Program (FPP)
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program
- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program
- Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

This tabular presentation provides basic information introducing each of the programs. In each case, a brief program description is followed by information on major amendments in the 2008 farm bill (P.L. 110-246); national scope and availability; states with the greatest participation; the backlog of applications or other measures of continuing interest; program funding authority; FY2011 funding; the FY2012 Administration budget request; statutory authority; the authorization expiration date; and a link to the program's website.

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Introduction

Currently, more than 20 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) agricultural conservation programs exist to assist private landowners with natural resource concerns. Though some similarities among these programs exist, each is administered with slight differences. These differences and the number of programs create some general confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs.

The number of agricultural conservation programs has steadily increased over the past 60 years. Early conservation efforts were focused on reducing high levels of soil erosion and providing water to agriculture in quantities and quality that enhanced farm production. Congress responded to these issues by creating and revising programs designed to reduce resource problems on the farm. 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, and 2008,¹ 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. 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)² 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 largest program, 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), and the Forest Service (FS).³ In addition, the conservation effort involves 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 the conservation effort.

¹ 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), and Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246).

² 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.

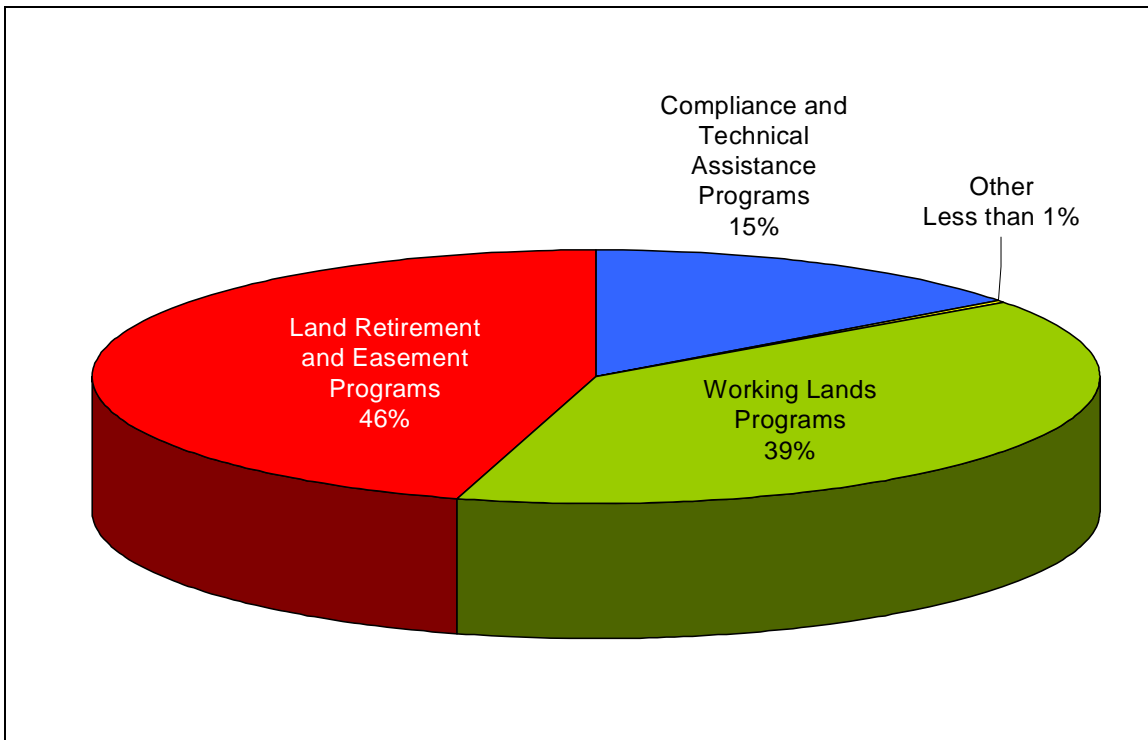
³ For more information on: ARS projects, see <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/Research.htm>; ERS projects, see <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Browse/view.aspx?subject=NaturalResourcesEnvironment>; and FS projects, see <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/>.

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, they can be grouped into the following categories based on similarities: working land programs, land retirement and easement programs, watershed programs, emergency programs, compliance and technical assistance programs, and other. **Figure 1** illustrates the relative size of each group based on the amount of estimated funding available in FY2011.

Figure 1. FY2011 Estimated Funding for Conservation Programs



Source: CRS, Funding estimates compiled from the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-10) and Congressional Budget Office, *CBO March 2011 Baseline for CCC & FCIC*, March 2011.

Notes: Technical assistance includes funding for compliance programs. Funding for extension and research is not included. Total funding for conservation programs is approximately \$5.9 billion.

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 each year (or acreage enrollment levels for the Conservation Reserve, Conservation Stewardship, Wetlands Reserve, and Grasslands Reserve Programs). They 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).⁴ Discretionary programs are funded each year through the annual appropriations process.

Despite a steady increase in mandatory funding authority, many conservation programs have been reduced or capped through annual appropriations acts since FY2003. Many of these spending reductions were at the request of the Bush Administration, though the Obama Administration has repeatedly requested reductions, including in the FY2012 proposal. The mix of programs and amounts of reduction has varied from year to year. Some programs, such as the CRP, have not been reduced by appropriators in recent years, while others, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), have been repeatedly reduced below authorized levels. EQIP's authorized mandatory funding was reduced by over \$1.5 billion from FY2005 through FY2011. Even with these reductions, total mandatory funding for conservation programs has grown from a total of \$3.6 billion in FY2005 to a total of \$5 billion in FY2011.

Conservation Programs

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

- administering agency or agencies within USDA;
- a brief program description;
- major amendments to the program in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), commonly referred to as the 2008 farm bill;
- national scope and availability, including participation levels and acres enrolled where available;
- states with the highest level of funds obligated or acres enrolled (where applicable);
- the volume of application backlog or public interest in each program;
- the authorized funding levels, whether it is mandatory spending or discretionary appropriations, and any funding restrictions where applicable;
- the FY2011 funding level provided by the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-10) or, if applicable, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) authorized level;
- the FY2012 funding level requested by the Administration;
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and U.S. Code reference;
- the expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- a link to the program's website.

⁴ For additional information, see CRS Report R41245, *Reductions in Mandatory Agriculture Program Spending*.

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>.

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)/Conservation Security Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program.

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* 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 Wetlands), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Farmland Protection Program (FPP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), 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 and flood structure rehabilitation.

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (also referred to as the Small Watershed Programs, P.L. 566 and P.L. 534), Watershed Rehabilitation, and Watershed Surveys and Planning.

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

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

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

- Conservation Compliance, Sodbuster, 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, Survey, Soil Survey, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, and Plant Materials Centers), Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program.

Other Conservation Programs and Provisions—Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, Conservation Innovation Grants, Great Lakes Basin Program, Regional Equity, State Technical Committees, Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, and Grassroots Source Water Protection Program.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS (conservation assistance), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS, organic certification), and Risk Management Agency (RMA, production, price, or revenue risk reduction).
Program description	AMA provides cost-sharing assistance under contracts of 1 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.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Adds Hawaii as an eligible state; authorizes funding of \$15 million annually from FY2008 through FY2012, and \$10 million in subsequent years; and designates program funding for USDA agencies: 50% - NRCS, 10% - AMS, and 40% - RMA.
National scope	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 FY2010, 814 contracts are being implemented within these states.
Leading states	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2010 include WY (\$1.2 million), PA (\$1.1 million), and NV (\$0.8 million).
Backlog/Interest	A backlog of 767 applications was pending at the end of FY2010, up from a backlog of 266 applications in FY2009. These applications would enroll more than 9,553 acres at a cost of \$5.1 million.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Permanently authorized at \$10 million for each fiscal year except FY2008-FY2012, which is authorized at \$15 million for each fiscal year. Funding is split by law between the three USDA agencies: 50% - NRCS, 10% - AMS, and 40% - RMA.
FY2011 funding	\$15 million (\$7.5 million for conservation).
FY2012 Administration request	\$10 million (\$2.5 million for conservation).
Statutory authority	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. Amended in §2801 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 7 U.S.C. 1524(b).
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/AMA/index.html

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program provides additional financial assistance through existing conservation programs for areas within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Law requires special consideration for producers in the Susquehanna, Shenandoah, Potomac, and Patuxent river basins. Program rules, contracts, and sign-up depend on the program through which NRCS is providing the funds. In a notice published in the <i>Federal Register</i> on March 12, 2010 (75 FR 11832), NRCS announced that FY2010 funds are provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), which includes EQIP and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). EQIP, CCPI, and WHIP are discussed further below.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Not available nationwide. The program applies to all tributaries, backwaters, and side channels, including watersheds draining into the Chesapeake Bay. This includes areas within DE, MD, NY, PA, VA, and WV. In FY2010, more than 950 applications were approved to treat an estimated 156,000 acres.
Leading states	In FY2010, states with the most funding obligated were PA (\$13.5 million), VA (\$12.8 million), and MD (\$9.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	Nearly 2,900 applications were received in FY2010, of which only 950, or 32%, were approved.
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - \$23 million; FY2010 - \$43 million; FY2011 - \$72 million; and FY2012 - \$50 million.
FY2011 funding	\$72 million.
FY2012 Administration request	\$50 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title II, §2605 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1240Q of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-4.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/chesapeakebay/chesapeakebay.html

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	The Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) enables the use of certain conservation programs along with the resources of eligible partners to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forest land. CCPI applies to all conservation programs under Subtitle D of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, excluding CRP, WRP, FPP, and GRP. Eligible programs include EQIP, CSP, WHIP, Great Lakes Basin Program, Conservation of Private Grazing Land, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, and Grassroots Source Water Protection Program. NRCS enters into multi-year agreements with partners in an approved project area to help enhance conservation outcomes. Six percent of the funds and acres available from eligible conservation programs are reserved for CCPI until April 1 each fiscal year, when unused funds may be reallocated. Locally led projects are encouraged, with 90% of funds available for within-state competitions and 10% of funds available for a national competition.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. State participation varies depending on within-state competition and the selection of projects at the national level. In FY2010, NRCS offered a separate Chesapeake Bay CCPI competition through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program.
Leading states	In FY2010, states receiving the most funding through the national CCPI competition are CA (\$2.5 million), ID (\$250,000), and IL (\$100,000). Information on within-state competitions is not available.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Six percent of the funds and acres available from eligible conservation programs.
FY2011 funding	Up to a total of \$16 million in EQIP, \$1.8 million in WHIP, and \$226,000 in CSP is available for the national competition and \$3.5 million in EQIP and WHIP for the Chesapeake Bay competition. Information on within-state competitions is not available.
FY2012 Administration request	Not applicable.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title II, § 2707 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), as § 1243 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3843.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ccpi/index.html

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

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	Conservation Operations (CO) is the primary account funding technical assistance within NRCS. More than 80% 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 non-federal lands. Other components of CO include the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, soil surveys, snow surveys, and plant material centers.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Amends the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act include a definition of technical assistance and agriculture commodity. Other provisions indirectly affect this program, including allowing NRCS to approve qualified individuals and entities, referred to as third parties, to provide some types of technical assistance and retaining a cap on total funding for technical assistance provided through mandatory programs.
National scope	Available nationwide. CTA was funded at \$772.1 million and 5,274 staff years for FY2010, according to the FY2012 budget notes. Total CO spending for FY2010 was \$945.4 million and 6,191 staff years.
Leading states	No data are available for the CTA subset in FY2010, but the three leading states for total CO funding (estimate) are TX (\$48.4 million), IA (\$23.1 million), and CA (\$22.8 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No amount specified.
FY2011 funding	\$870.5 million for all CO.
FY2012 Administration request	\$782.7 million for CTA out of \$898.6 million for all CO.
Statutory authority	Authorized in the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (P.L. 74-46), as amended. Amended in §2802 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 590a-g, 16 U.S.C. 590q.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/ (CTA); http://www.glti.nrcs.usda.gov/ (grazing); http://soils.usda.gov/ (soil survey); http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ (snow survey); and http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/ (plant materials).

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS
Program description	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. Imbedded in the CRP are several small and more focused programs that bypass the general bidding process, some established in law and others established administratively, to address specific resource topics, including more concentrated resource problems in a portion of a state, protection of small isolated agricultural wetlands, and improvement of habitat for upland game birds. All lands that qualify for these subprograms are automatically accepted.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Reduces enrollment ceiling from 39.2 million acres to 32 million acres; amends haying and grazing conditions; and authorizes incentives to assist socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers.
National scope	Available nationwide. In August 2010, USDA announced the 39 th general sign-up. States with the most offers accepted during the 39 th sign-up were TX (858,436 acres), CO (739,467 acres), and KS (618,905 acres). Nationally there are 749,913 active contracts on 415,953 farms with 31.2 million acres enrolled, according to FSA's April 2011 monthly program summary. The 41 st general sign-up concluded on April 15, 2011.
Leading states	Leading states in terms of acres are TX (3.5 million), MT (2.9 million), and KS (2.7 million). Leading states in terms of number of contracts are IA (106,489), IL (82,044), and MN (63,002).
Backlog/Interest	FSA enrolled 4.3 million acres of 4.8 million acres offered. Over half the acreage enrolled (over 2.7 million acres, or 57%) was set to expire on September 30, 2010, or had expired in 2009.
Funding authority	Mandatory. No more than 32 million acres enrolled at any one time. No funding amount specified.
FY2011 est. funding	\$2.0 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
FY2012 Administration request	\$2.14 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §1231-§1235 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3831(a)-3835a.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp

CRP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS
Program description	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 so that larger payments can be made, in order to encouraging greater participation.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	32 states have active CREP contracts (70,835) on 46,617 farms, enrolling a total of 1.2 million acres, according to FSA's April 2011 monthly program summary.
Leading states	Leading states in terms of acres enrolled are PA (206,395), IL (128,456), and OH (109,100). States leading in number of contracts are OH (12,071), PA (11,232), and IL (6,742).
Backlog/Interest	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. Average rental payments are higher than for acreage under the general CRP sign-up process.
Funding authority	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2011 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2012 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authority derived from CRP statutory authority (see "Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)").
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep

CRP—Farmable Wetlands Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS
Program description	This 1 million acre subprogram of the CRP enrolls small isolated agricultural wetlands. On a single tract of land, enrollment is now set at a maximum of 40 contiguous wetland acres. "Flooded farmland" has a 20-acre limit. Eligible lands include wetlands that were cropped 3 of the preceding 10 years, and buffers sufficient to protect them, on which the hydrology will be restored and a vegetative cover established.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Caps enrollment at 100,000 acres in any state and 1 million acres total. Expands enrollment of wetland and buffer acreage to include land that had been cropped during 3 of 10 crop years prior to 2002 and after 1990 and is subject to a natural overflow of a prairie wetland. Increases the maximum wetland size to 40 contiguous acres and makes all acres eligible for payment.
National scope	Active contracts in 20 participating states, including AL, CO, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MD, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, ND, OH, OK, SD, and WI. According to FSA's April 2011 monthly program summary, 14,355 contracts on 11,248 farms have enrolled a total of 274,243 acres.
Leading states	In terms of acres, the leading states are IA (79,300 acres), SD (74,354 acres), and ND (57,994 acres). The largest number of contracts are in IA (5,050), followed by SD (3,594) and MN (3,181).
Backlog/Interest	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.
Funding authority	Mandatory. No more than 1 million acres enrolled at any one time and no more than 100,000 acres in any state (may be increased to 150,000 acres after three years).
FY2011 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2012 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	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 §2106 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3831b.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=fwp

Conservation Security Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	The 2008 farm bill terminated funding for new contracts under this program. The program was replaced by the “Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP),” discussed below. CSP provided financial and technical assistance for improvements in conserving environmental resources on farmland that meets soil and water quality criteria standards of NRCS. CSP supported producers who are already implementing and maintaining substantial conservation systems to protect soil, water, air, and wildlife, or who adopted more sustainable systems as part of the program. The maximum annual assistance through CSP increased with each of three progressive tiers of participation, each requiring greater conservation. Only producers in specified watersheds could participate each year.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	The program was terminated and replaced with the “Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP),” discussed below. Payments on existing contracts are still authorized.
National scope	Sign-ups were held in FY2004, FY2005, FY2006, and FY2008 in designated watersheds. No new sign-ups are allowed by law.
Leading states	For the FY2008 sign-up, OH had the largest number of contracts (150), and NE had the largest payments approved (\$3,080,807). In FY2010, states with the most funds paid were MO (\$24.7 million), OR (\$21.9 million), and IA (\$18.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Current law only allows payments on contracts entered into before September 30, 2008. No new contracts are allowed.
FY2011 est. funding	\$203.4 million (payment on existing contracts only).
FY2012 Administration request	\$197.1 million (payment on existing contracts only).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2001 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) as §1238-§1238C of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Terminated in §2301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. 16 U.S.C. 3833-3838c.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2008 for new contracts. Payments are still authorized on contracts entered into before September 30, 2008.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	The new CSP replaces the Conservation Security Program and 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 extension) are based on meeting or exceeding a "stewardship threshold." Payments are based on the actual costs of installing conservation measures, any foregone income, and the value of the expected environmental outcomes.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	The new CSP will continue to encourage conservation practices on working lands, but will be different from the former Conservation Security Program. It eliminates the three-tier approach, establishes 5-year rather than 10-year contracts, and requires direct attribution of payments, among other changes, thus requiring that USDA promulgate new rules for the program.
National scope	The first CSP sign-up was held August 10, 2009. Two ranking periods occurred in 2010, which resulted in more than 20,000 contracts on over 25 million acres. The ranking period for FY2011 closed on January 21, 2011.
Leading states	During the first two ranking periods, MO had the most contracts funded (1,939), followed by MN (1,575) and IA (1,480). TX had the most total acres funded (2 million), followed by NE (1.8 million) and MT (1.8 million). The most funding obligated during the first sign-up was in MN (\$21.4 million), IA (\$20.3 million), and ND (\$19.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. 12.769 million acres each fiscal year. No funding amount specified.
FY2011 funding	\$649 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$39 million).
FY2012 Administration request	\$787.6 million (based on a 764,204 acre permanent reduction to enroll a total of 12,004,796 acres in FY2012).
Statutory authority	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). 16 U.S.C. 3838h-3838n.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS
Program description	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.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation varies widely and unpredictably from year to year. An FY2009 consolidated appropriations act (P.L. 110-329) provided \$115 million to be available until expended. An FY2009 supplemental (P.L. 111-32) redesignated prior ECP funding for current use to be available until expended.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No funding amount specified.
FY2011 funding to date	\$0
FY2012 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in §401 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 2201-2205.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=ecp

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS on private lands, U.S. Forest Service on National Forest Systems lands
Program description	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 flood plains that will benefit natural resources such as wetlands, while reducing the risk of exposure to future natural disasters.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation varies widely and unpredictably from year to year. In FY2008 and FY2009, Congress provided two supplemental appropriations totaling almost \$500 million for hurricane, flood, and fire recovery. An additional \$145 million was provided for floodplain easements through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No funding amount specified.
FY2011 funding to date	\$0
FY2012 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in §216 of P.L. 81-516 and §403 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 2203; and 33 U.S.C. 701b-1.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	Recovery: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/ ; Floodplain easements: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/Floodplain/index.html

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 resource concerns on the land. Sixty percent of the funds are targeted to livestock producers. EQIP is the largest working lands program.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Lowers the limitation on payments to a total of \$300,000, down from \$450,000; limits projects with organic production benefits to \$20,000 annually or \$80,000 in any six-year period; authorizes a new water enhancement program (see "EQIP—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.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2010, EQIP allocated \$840 million for 36,500 contracts covering 13 million acres, according to information in the FY2012 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2010, the top three states by contracts signed were TX (9,913), CA (1,974) and MS (1,904). The most funding obligated was in TX (\$96.6 million), CA (\$91.9 million), and MN (\$36.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2010, 36,499 applications were funded and 39,028 applications went unfunded. Only 48% of valid applications were funded in FY2010, according to information in the FY2012 budget notes. The total estimated cost of this backlog is \$901.7 million. The most unfunded applications were submitted in OK (2,560), CA (2,484), and NE (2,286).
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - \$1.377 billion, FY2010 - \$1.45 billion, FY2011 - \$1.588 billion, FY2012 - \$1.75 billion.
FY2011 funding	\$1.238 billion (\$1.59 billion authorized).
FY2012 Administration request	\$1.4 billion (\$1.75 billion authorized).
Statutory authority	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-§1240I of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2501 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-3839aa90.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/

EQIP—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	AWEP is a subprogram of EQIP. The program provides financial and technical assistance to producers and land owners to address water quality and quantity concerns on agricultural land. The program replaces the Ground and Surface Water Conservation program and the Klamath Basin program. AWEP addresses water quality and quantity concerns through eligible partners and established priority areas.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide, although not every state includes an eligible project area. In FY2010, AWEP allocated \$60.8 million to 1,489 new contracts covering 271,000 acres, according to information in the FY2012 budget notes. A total of 28 new project area proposals were approved in the national competition. The 63 project areas approved in FY2009 continued to receive support.
Leading states	In FY2010, the top three states by applications funded were CA (448), TX (148), and NE (130). The most funding obligated was in CA (\$23.9 million), TX (\$5.7 million), and NE (\$5.7 million). States with the most total applications received were CA (1,048), NE (516), and GA (418).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2010, 1,489 contracts were funded (46%) and 1,724 applications went unfunded. The total estimated cost of this backlog is \$105.6 million. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were in CA (412), NE (280), and GA (222).
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - \$73 million, FY2010 - \$73 million, FY2011 - \$74 million, FY2012 and each year thereafter - \$60 million.
FY2011 funding	\$74 million.
FY2012 Administration request	\$60 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle F of Title II (§2510) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1240I of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-9.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep/

EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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. The program was first implemented in FY2004. Annual requests for proposals are published in the <i>Federal Register</i> and include separate funding categories for national, state, Chesapeake Bay, and Mississippi River Basin 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.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Amends the grants to cover air quality concerns associated with agriculture (including greenhouse gas emissions); and expands the CIG objectives to include forest resource management and projects that provide conservation benefits through increased participation by producers of specialty crops.
National scope	Available nationwide with select states offering state competitions. CIG awarded a total of \$18 million (61 projects) in FY2010.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2011 funding	Unspecified subset of EQIP. Announced at \$25 million total available in FY2011.
FY2012 Administration request	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
Statutory authority	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 §2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)⁵

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	FPP provides funds to state, tribal, and local governments, and non-governmental organizations to help them purchase conservation easements from willing sellers to limit conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. The length of time from when a land owner first offers to sell an easement to when it is recorded with the deed to the land can be considerable.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Changes the program's purpose from protecting topsoil to protecting the land's agricultural use by limiting nonagricultural uses. The program is also restructured to emphasize longer term and renewable cooperative agreements.
National scope	Available nationwide; however, some states may not have existing farmland protection programs through which FPP is carried out. From the program's inception in FY1996 through FY2010, \$799.4 million was spent to acquire 2,723 easements on 521,224 acres, according to the FY2012 budget notes. In FY2010, over 170,000 acres were enrolled in 35 states.
Leading states	In FY2010, the largest amount was obligated in NJ (\$6.9 million), followed by MA (\$6.1 million) and WA (\$5.9 million).
Backlog/Interest	The FY2012 budget notes state that "The demand for the program has exceeded available funds by approximately 200 percent."
Funding authority	Mandatory. FY2009 - \$121 million, FY2010 - \$150 million, FY2011 - \$175 million, and FY2012 - \$200 million.
FY2011 funding	\$175 million.
FY2012 Administration request	\$200 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §388 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 as §1238H-§1238I of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2401 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3838h-3838i.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/

⁵ USDA calls this program the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

Administering agency(s)	Easements are administered by NRCS, agreements are administered by FSA, and NRCS provides technical assistance for both.
Program description	GRP uses long-term rental agreements and easements to help land owners and producers restore and protect grasslands while maintaining them in a condition suitable for grazing using common management practices.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Directs 40% of funds to rental contracts (10-, 15-, and 20-year duration) and 60% for permanent easements; authorizes the enrollment of 1.22 million acres between FY2009 and FY2012; gives priority enrollment to certain expiring CRP lands; tribal lands are now eligible for the program.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2010, a total of \$90.3 million was obligated and committed, \$54.2 million to GRP easements and \$36.1 million to rental contracts. In FY2010, 564 new participants enrolled 335,332 acres, according to information in the FY2012 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2010, states with the most funding obligated were CT (\$829,277), TX (\$771,027), and KS (\$501,932).
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Authorized to enroll 1.22 million acres between FY2009-FY2012.
FY2011 est. funding	\$120 million (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled).
FY2012 Administration request	\$67.2 million (based on a 165,684-acre permanent reduction to enroll a total of 203,515 acres in FY2012).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2401 of the of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-171) as §1238N-§1238Q of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3838n-3838q.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/GRP/

Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	Assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Allows permanent easements; directs 40% of funds to cost-share agreements and 60% for 30-year or permanent easements; and authorizes mandatory funding through the CCC.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Limited participation in AR, GA, IN, ME, MN, MS, OK, OR, VA, and WV.
Leading states	The program was initially introduced as a pilot program in AR, ME, and MS. In FY2010, 14 applications were enrolled into easements encompassing 5,583 acres. In FY2010, states with the most funding obligated were OR (\$3 million), OK (\$1.4 million), and IN (\$1.3 million).
Backlog/Interest	During FY2010, a total of 164 applications in 13 states were submitted; 14 applications were enrolled.
Funding authority	Mandatory. \$9.75 million annually for FY2009-FY2012.
FY2011 funding	\$9.75 million.
FY2012 Administration request	\$9.75 million.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title V Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148), as amended. Amended by §8205 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 6572.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/HFRP/ProgInfo/Index.html

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	The RC&D program provides support in the form of NRCS staff coordinators to authorized county and multi-county areas. Coordinators assist state and local units of government and non-profits to develop and carry out programs to conserve and improve natural resources and the use of land, and improve conditions in rural America.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Emphasizes the locally led planning process to provide assistance for implementing area plans.
National scope	375 authorized areas encompass approximately 2,696 counties, more than 85% of the national total, and more than 77% of the U.S. population, according to the FY2012 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2010, states with the most funding obligated and most staff years were TX (\$2.8 million, 22 staff years), IA (\$1.9 million, 16 staff years), and KY (\$1.8 million, 15 staff years).
Backlog/Interest	39 application areas covering 236 additional counties have pending applications for the Secretary's designation.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No amount specified.
FY2011 funding	\$0
FY2012 Administration request	\$0.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §31 and §32 of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (P.L. 89-796), as amended. Amended by §2805 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 3451-3459.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rcd/

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA
Program description	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.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Program created in the 2008 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. According to FSA, 26 states have public access programs for hunting, fishing, and other related activities. An unknown number of tribal governments have similar public access programs.
Leading states	None identified.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory. \$50 million for FY2009-FY2012.
FY2011 est. funding	\$33.3 million (based on estimated outlays).
FY2012 Administration request	\$16.7 million (based on estimated outlays).
Statutory authority	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). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=pahp

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 in more than 1,700 active and completed projects. The P.L. 78-534 Flood Prevention Operations Program authorizes 11 projects, while the P.L. 83-566 Small Watershed Operations Program authorizes watershed projects generally. Projects may be authorized for any of 8 purposes; almost all projects have flood control as an authorized purpose. Under P.L. 566, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to plan and install projects on private lands, in cooperation with local sponsors, states, and other public agencies. The small watershed project costs are shared with local partners. Projects are limited to a maximum size, including 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity and 250,000 acres in extent. Projects above a specified size require congressional committee authorization.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. A total of 439 work plans are complete under P.L. 534, and 1,757 are active or completed under P.L. 566, according to the FY2012 budget notes. Three new P.L. 566 projects were authorized for FY2010 in NE, MA, and WV.
Leading states	In FY2010, the state with the most obligations was IA (\$48.2 million), followed by UT (\$37 million) and MO (\$26.1 million).
Backlog/Interest	NRCS identifies a total of \$921.1 million in active unfunded federal commitments for approximately 300 active authorized projects. The complete authorized unfunded federal commitment totals \$1.7 billion, with the greatest value of unfunded commitments is in OK (\$273 million) and TX (\$245 million), according to the FY2012 budget notes.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No amount specified.
FY2011 funding	\$0
FY2012 Administration request	\$0.
Statutory authority	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. 1000, <i>et. seq.</i>
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/watershed/index.html

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 (see “Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations” above) are eligible. Small watershed project dams have a 50-year design life, and 1,808 reached or exceeded that time span by the end of 2010. By the end of 2015, this number will exceed 4,300, according to the FY2012 budget notes.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Reauthorizes both mandatory and discretionary funding.
National scope	Only available for dams built through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program and the RC&D program (see discussions above). In FY2010, a total of 95 projects were funded in 24 states, as well as 650 ongoing dam assessments, according to the FY2012 budget notes.
Leading states	The largest number of funded dam projects (2000-2010) are in OK (46), MS (23), and TX (22); states with the most obligations in FY2010 were AZ (\$17.1 million), OK (\$13.1 million), and WV (\$2.5 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2010, over \$37.5 million in requests were received from public sponsors of 90 high-priority dams to have the condition of their dams assessed in consideration for rehabilitation.
Funding authority	Mandatory: FY2009, \$100 million. Discretionary: \$85 million annually, FY2008-FY2012.
FY2011 funding	\$17.9 million in discretionary funding and \$0 in mandatory funding.
FY2012 Administration request	\$0.
Statutory authority	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 §2803 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). 16 U.S.C. 1012
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WVSRehab/

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	WRP funds the purchase of easements (30 years or permanent), restoration agreements (usually 10 years in length), and 30-year contracts to assist land owners in protecting and restoring wetlands. It provides technical and financial assistance, and emphasizes restoration to original natural conditions where possible.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Increases the WRP maximum enrollment cap to over 3.014 million acres (up from a previous cap of 2.275 million acres); expands eligible lands to include certain types of private and tribal wetlands, croplands, and grasslands, as well as lands that meet the habitat needs of specific wildlife species; changes the payment schedule for easements; limits wetland restoration payments; specifies criteria for ranking program applications; requires USDA conduct an annual survey of the Prairie Pothole Region starting with FY2008; and requires USDA to submit a report to Congress on long-term conservation easements under the program.
National scope	Available nationwide. Through FY2010, 2.35 million acres have been enrolled, with easements closed and restored on 1.8 million acres. In 2010, more than 272,000 acres were enrolled in over 1,400 projects, according to the FY2012 budget notes.
Leading states	In FY2010, the largest number of agreements (including contracts and 30-year and permanent easements) was in ND (205), followed by LA (124) and SD (96). The largest numbers of enrolled acres were in FL (36,461 acres), ND (33,625 acres), and TX (22,587 acres). The greatest obligation of funding was in FL (\$148 million), TX (\$38.7 million), and LA (\$38.4 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory. Maximum enrollment of 3.014 million acres at any one time. No funding amount specified.
FY2011 est. funding	\$425 million (based on a permanent reduction to enroll not more than 202,218 acres in FY2011).
FY2012 Administration request (est.)	\$784.8 million (based on a 158,895-acre permanent reduction to enroll a total of 271,158 acres in FY2012).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §1438 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-624) as §1237-§1237F of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2201-2208 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). (16 U.S.C. 3837-3837f)
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	WHIP provides technical and financial assistance to eligible participants to develop upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish and other types of wildlife habitat. Participants enter into contracts, usually 5 to 10 years in duration, which pays up to 75% of the contract implementation cost.
Major 2008 farm bill amendments	Limits program eligibility to focus on "the development of wildlife habitat on private agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and tribal lands," thus potentially excluding some previously covered areas (i.e., non-agricultural lands). It also allows USDA to provide priority to projects that address issues raised by state, regional, and national conservation initiatives.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2010, over 4,700 agreements were enrolled on over 1 million acres.
Leading states	In FY2010, the largest number of contracts was in MS (399), followed by LA (372) and AL (347). The largest number of enrolled acres was in TX (225,166 acres), followed by WA (104,093 acres) and LA (99,928 acres). The greatest obligation of funding was in TX (\$8.8 million), followed by LA (\$4.2 million) and AR (\$4.1 million).
Backlog/Interest	NA.
Funding authority	Mandatory. \$85 million annually FY2009-FY2012.
FY2011 funding	\$85 million.
FY2012 Administration request	\$73 million (\$85 million authorized).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §387 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127) as §1240N of the 1985 Food Security Act (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2602 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246). (16 U.S.C. 3839bb-1)
Authorization expires	September 30, 2012.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/

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