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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 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 of these programs and the differences among them have created some confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs. While some effort has been made to remove duplication, a large number of programs remain. The programs discussed in this report in tabular form 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
- CRP—Grasslands
- 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)
- EQIP, CIG—On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials
- Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program
- Grassroots Source Water Protection Program
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- 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 Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334, 2018 farm bill), national scope and availability, states with the greatest participation, the backlog of applications and other measures of continuing interest, program funding authority, FY2019 funding, FY2020 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. The number and funding levels for agricultural conservation programs have steadily increased over the past 60 years. Early conservation efforts undertaken by Congress 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—especially those occurring off the farm—resulting from agricultural activities. 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 in 1990, 1996, 2002, 2008, 2014, and 2018[1] reflect a rapid evolution of the conservation agenda, including the growing influence of environmentalists and other nonagricultural interests in the formulation of conservation policy, and a recognition that agriculture was not treated like other business sectors in many environmental laws.[2] 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)[3] 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).[4] 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.

[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), Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79), and Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334).

[2] For additional discussion on conservation in the farm bill, see CRS Report R45698, *Agricultural Conservation in the 2018 Farm Bill*.

[3] 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*.

[4] 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 endeavor to 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 seek to create conditions with the objective of limiting degradation in the future.

Although programs in this report are listed alphabetically, agricultural conservation programs can be grouped into the following categories based on similarities: working lands, land retirement, easement, partnership and grants, compliance,[5] technical assistance, emergency assistance,[6] watershed, and other programs and provisions (Figure 1).

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) 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.[7] Discretionary programs are funded each year through the annual appropriations process.[8]

Sequestration continues to have 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.[9] Discretionary accounts have avoided sequestration in recent years through adjustments to spending limits, although sequestration continues on mandatory accounts. Most mandatory conservation programs were subject to sequestration in FY2014 through FY2019.[10] Even with sequestration and appropriations act reductions, total annual mandatory budget authority for conservation programs has grown from a total of $3.9 billion in FY2008 to over $6.7 billion in FY2019.[11]

[5] 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*.

[6] Additional information on emergency land rehabilitation programs may be found in CRS Report R42854, *Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation*.

[7] Reduction to mandatory funding authority for agricultural conservation programs occurred annually through appropriations acts from FY2003 through FY2017. FY2018 was the first appropriations act that did not reduce mandatory conservation program funding. For additional discussion on these reductions, see CRS In Focus IF10041, *Reductions to Mandatory Agricultural Conservation Programs in Appropriations Law*.

[8] For additional information on the FY2018 and FY2019 conservation appropriation, see CRS Report R45406, *FY2018 and FY2019 Appropriations for Agricultural Conservation*.

[9] For additional information on sequestration and the budget process, see CRS Report R42972, *Sequestration as a Budget Enforcement Process: Frequently Asked Questions*.

[10] The Conservation Reserve Program is statutorily exempt from sequestration (2 U.S.C. 905 (g)(1)(A)). Sequestration reductions announced for FY2019 were reflected in the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) baseline that was used to write the 2018 farm bill. For more information, see CRS Report R45425, *Budget Issues That Shaped the 2018 Farm Bill.* Sequestration estimates may be found in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Reports to the Congress on the Joint Committee Reductions, at https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sequestration-reports-orders/.

[11] CRS using CBO baseline dates, FY2008-FY2019.

Figure 1. USDA Agricultural Conservation Programs by Type

Type	Program(s)
Farm Bill Agricultural Conservation Programs	
Working Lands—programs 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)
Land Retirement—programs provide federal payments to agricultural landowners for temporary changes in land use or management to achieve environmental benefits.	• Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) • Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) • Farmable Wetlands (FW) program • CLEAR30 • Soil Health Income Protection Pilot (SHIPP)
Easement—programs impose a permanent land-use restriction that is voluntarily placed on the land in exchange for a government payment.	• Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) • Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
Compliance—prohibits a producer from receiving most federal farm program benefits (including conservation assistance) when conservation requirements for highly erodible lands and wetlands are not met.	• Highly erodible land conservation (sodbuster) • Wetland conservation (swampbuster) • Sodsaver
Partnership and Grants—programs that use partnership agreements to leverage program funding with non-federal funding or provide grants to states or research organizations.	• Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) • Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) • Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPAHIP)
Other—programs and provisions that do not fit easily into the above categories. Authority is generally derived from farm bill legislation	• Grassroots Source Water Protection (GSWC) • Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI) • Desert terminal lakes • State technical committees
Non-Farm Bill Conservation Programs	
Technical Assistance—programs provide landowners with science-based conservation information and technical (e.g., engineering and biological) expertise unique to the region and land use type. Usually does not include financial assistance.	• Conservation Operations (includes Conservation Technical Assistance, Snow Survey, Soil Survey, and Plant Materials Centers)
Emergency Assistance—programs provide disaster assistance for private farm and forest land rehabilitation and impairments to watersheds. Programs are usually funded through supplemental appropriations acts.	• Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) • Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (includes floodplain easements) • Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
Other—programs that do not fit easily into the above categories. Authority is generally derived from non-farm bill legislation.	• Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) • Water Bank program • Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA) • Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D)

Source: CRS.

2018 Farm Bill

The conservation title of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 farm bill; P.L. 115-334, Title II) reauthorized and amended many of the largest conservation programs and created a number of new pilot programs, carve-outs, and initiatives. The House- and Senate-passed farm bills (H.R. 2) each included a number of amendments to existing conservation programs, many of which did not overlap. This generally resulted in the inclusion of a mix of amendments from each chamber in the enacted bill and an overall expansion in the number of conservation programs and

initiatives. For additional information on conservation programs in the 2018 farm bill, see CRS Report R45698, *Agricultural Conservation in the 2018 Farm Bill*.

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;
- summary of major amendments to the program in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), commonly referred to as the 2018 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;
- FY2019 funding level in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-6), or, if applicable, the authorized level in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (sequestration, transfers, and carryover are included and noted where known);
- FY2020 funding level requested by the Administration (sequestration and carryover is not included unless noted);
- 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.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	ACEP provides financial and technical assistance through two types of easements: agricultural land easements that limit nonagricultural uses on productive farm or grass lands, and wetland reserve easements that protect and restore wetlands. *Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)*—Enrollment is through eligible entities that enter into cooperative agreements 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. *Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)*—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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	ACEP was reauthorized and amended with most changes affecting ALE. Amendments to ALE include providing additional flexibilities to ACEP-eligible entities; creating a new "buy-protect-sell" transaction; reducing the eligible entity's nonfederal contribution; changing USDA's administrative role; and clarifying requirements for subordination, exchange, modification, and termination of easements. Amendments to WRE center on changes to compatible use and vegetative cover requirements. Funding for ACEP was also increased.
National scope	Available nationwide. Easements are considered enrolled when the landowner and NRCS enter into the agreement authorizing NRCS to proceed with the purchase of the easement. The easement is closed when the purchase is complete and formally recorded. In FY2018, $245 million in ACEP funding was used to enroll an estimated total of 117,700 acres of farmland, grassland, and wetlands through 353 new ACEP enrollments, as well as closing over 440 easements on 141,000 acres. This includes ALE (easements)—137 on 36,842 acres; ALE (grassland easements)—21 on 46,266 acres; WRE (permanent easements)—179 on 32,522 acres; WRE (30-year easements)—15 on 1,849 acres; and WRE (30-year contracts, Tribes)—1 on 222 acres.
Leading states	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2018 were in FL ($24.7 million), LA ($22.0 million), and MS ($21.0 million).
Backlog/Interest	*Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)*—In FY2018, ALE applications were received for over 133,246 acres, including applications for grasslands of special environmental significance. Approximately 62% of applications were enrolled. *Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)*—In FY2018, WRE applications were received for over 235,530 acres. Approximately 13% of applications were funded.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. $450 million annually for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2019 funding est.	$402 million (authorized $450 million is reduced by sequestration and by a transfer to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center).
FY2020 Administration request	$450 million (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration). Requests an annual funding reduction of $40 million beginning in FY2020.
Statutory authority	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. Amended in §§2601-2605 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§3865-3865d.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS (conservation assistance), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS, organic certification), and Risk Management Agency (RMA, production, price, or revenue risk reduction). Beginning in 2017, AMS transferred organic certification cost-share functions under AMA to FSA.
Program description	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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Eligible states are CT, DE, HI, ME, MD, MA, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, and WY. In FY2018, over $3.4 million in AMA funding (for conservation only) was used to enroll 168 AMA contracts covering over 4,200 acres within eligible states.
Leading states	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2018 were ME ($915,000), WV ($611,000), and MD ($605,000).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. Permanently authorized at $10 million for each fiscal year. Funding is split by law among the three USDA agencies: 50% to NRCS, 10% to AMS, and 40% to RMA.
FY2019 funding	$9.3 million, including $4.7 million for conservation (authorized $10 million reduced by sequestration).
FY2020 Administration request	$10 million, including $5 million for conservation (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration).
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. 7 U.S.C. §1524(b).
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program websites	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama (NRCS); http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occsp (AMS); and https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occsp/index (FSA).

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 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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. CTA was funded at $768.8 million and 4,219 staff years for FY2018. Total CO obligations for FY2018 was $836.5 million and 4,709 staff years. Staff year refers to a full-time position funded for one year.
Leading states	No data are available for CTA alone in FY2018, but the three leading states for total CO funding were TX ($33.0 million), MO ($24.7 million), and IA ($20.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2019 funding	$725.9 million for CTA out of $819.5 million appropriated for all CO.
FY2020 Administration request	$661.2 million for CTA out of $755.0 million for all CO.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/ (CTA); http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/ (soil survey); http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ (snow survey and water supply forecasting); and http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/ (plant materials centers).

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with 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. This is referred to as general sign-up. Embedded in the CRP are several small and more focused subprograms and initiatives that bypass the general bidding process and address specific resource topics. 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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	CRP was reauthorized and amended, including an incremental increase in its enrollment ceiling from 24 million acres in FY2019 to 27 million acres by FY2023. This increase in enrollment was partly offset by reducing rental rates for general contracts to 85% of the county average rental rate and to 90% of the county average rental rate for continuous contracts. Cost-share payments were limited to the actual cost of establishing the approved practices, including not more than 50% for seed mix costs. A number of other amendments were included that would further expand grazing and commercial uses on CRP acres as well as transition options for new and limited resource producers. Existing subprograms were codified and new pilot programs were created.
National scope	As of June 2019, there were 603,214 active contracts on 339,751 farms with 22.3 million acres enrolled. Of this total, 13.5 million acres are enrolled under general sign-up, 941,465 acres under Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program sign-up (CREP), 6.6 million acres under non-CREP sign-up, 395,769 acres under Farmable Wetland sign-up, and 923,976 acres under grasslands sign-up.
Leading states	Leading states by total acres enrolled are TX (2.8 million), KS (1.9 million), and CO (1.8 million). Leading states by total number of contracts are IA (106,984), IL (76,415), and MN (55,248).
Backlog/Interest	The most recent CRP general sign-up was held in 2016 (#49). During sign-up #49, interest was high, with a 22% acreage offer acceptance rate (1.9 million acres offered and 407,416 acres accepted). No general sign-up is expected in FY2019, however a one-year extension is being offered for contracts that expire September 30, 2019. This reduces the number of estimated acres expected to expire in FY2019 (1.35 million), but increases the estimated number of acres expected to expire in FY2020 (4.62 million).
Funding authority	Mandatory and statutorily exempt from sequestration. At any one time, CRP can enroll no more than: 24 million acres in FY2019; 24.5 million acres in FY2020; 25 million acres in FY2021; 25.5 million acres in FY2022; and 27 million acres in FY2023. No funding amount specified.
FY2019 est. funding	$2.1 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
FY2020 est. Administration request	$2.1 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 §§2201-2209 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§3831-3835.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/

CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This subprogram of CRP partners with states and nonprofit organizations at their request. Partners propose areas, such as a watershed, where environmental or resource concerns are more concentrated and can be addressed by enrolling eligible acres into CRP. Partners contribute a portion of the project funding to allow for larger payments, in order to encourage greater participation. Average rental payments are higher than for acreage under the general CRP sign-up process. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Codified CREP as a subprogram of CRP similar to the original version of CREP that was in effect at the time of enactment. Existing CREP agreements were allowed to remain in force but may be modified if mutually agreed upon. Agreements with partners were formalized, including matching fund contributions and sources. Additional requirements for select cost-share payments, incentive payments, and maintenance payments were also included. Specific requirements were included related to grazing, forested riparian buffers, and drought and water conservation agreements.
National scope	There are 47 CREP agreements in 34 states, including 56,596 contracts on 38,314 farms, enrolling a total of 941,465 acres, as of June 2019.
Leading states	Leading states by number of acres enrolled are PA (126,247), OH (121,155), and SD (79,484). States leading in number of contracts are OH (15,689), PA (7,692), and MD (4,391).
Backlog/Interest	Authority for CRP, including CREP, lapsed with the expiration of the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79) at the end of FY2018. Following enactment of the 2018 farm bill, continuous sign-up, including CREP, remained suspended until enrollment re-opened June 3, 2019. No announcement has been made for new or modified CREP agreements.
Funding authority	Mandatory and statutorily exempt from sequestration. Limited overall by the total CRP acreage enrollment cap (see "Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)") but included in the minimum enrollment targets for all continuous contracts: 8 million acres by FY2019; 8.25 million acres by FY2020; 8.5 million acres by FY2021; and 8.6 million acres by FY2022 and FY2023. No funding amount specified.
FY2019 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2020 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2202 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) as §1231A of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §3831a.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement/index

CRP—Farmable Wetland Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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 ten 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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized the program through FY2023.
National scope	Active contracts in 22 participating states: 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 June 2019, there were 15,165 contracts on 11,651 farms for a total of 395,769 enrolled acres.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are ND (135,562), SD (100,248), and IA (92,478). The largest number of contracts are in IA (4,970), followed by SD (4,067) and ND (2,893).
Backlog/Interest	Authority for CRP, including the Farmable Wetland Program, lapsed with the expiration of the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79) at the end of FY2018. Following enactment of the 2018 farm bill, continuous sign-up remained suspended until May 15, 2019, when USDA announced the reopening of select continuous sign-ups, including the Farmable Wetland Program.
Funding authority	Mandatory and statutorily exempt from sequestration. No more than 750,000 acres may be 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).
FY2019 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2020 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 in §2203 of the Agriculture Improvement Act 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §3831b.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/farmable-wetlands/index

CRP—Grasslands

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This subprogram of the CRP enrolls grassland—including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands—while maintaining the area as grazing. Contracts are for 14 and 15 years. Rental payments are limited to 75% of the contracted land's grazing value. Small livestock operations are considered in a separate ranking pool during enrollment. Expiring CRP acres have priority enrollment. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis, but enrollment is subject to a competitive offer process.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized and increased the enrollment limit to not less than 2 million acres by FY2021. Prioritized enrollment of expiring CRP land, land at risk of development, or land of ecological significance.
National scope	Active contracts exist in all but 10 states—AK, CT, DE, HI, ME, MA, NV, NH, RI, VT. As of June 2019, there were 3,342 active contracts on 2,082 farms with 923,976 acres enrolled.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are NE (335,877), SD (135,974), and NM (94,684). The largest number of contracts are in NE (993), followed by SD (501) and MT (188).
Backlog/Interest	Authority for CRP, including grassland contracts, lapsed with the expiration of the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79) at the end of FY2018. Following enactment of the 2018 farm bill, grasslands sign-up remains suspended.
Funding authority	Mandatory and statutorily exempt from sequestration. Overall limited by the total CRP acreage enrollment cap (see "Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)") but required to maintain a minimum enrollment of grassland contracts of 1.0 million acres in FY2019; 1.5 million acres in FY2020; and 2.0 million acres in FY2021-FY2023. Unenrolled grassland acres may not be used to enroll other types of CRP contracts. No funding amount specified.
FY2019 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2020 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle A of Title II (§2001 *et seq.*) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) as §1231 *et seq.* of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2201 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §3831 *et seq.*
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/crp-grasslands/index

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	CSP provides financial and technical assistance to producers to maintain and improve existing conservation systems and to adopt additional conservation activities in a comprehensive manner on a producer's entire operation. CSP contracts must meet or exceed a stewardship threshold for at least two priority resource concerns at the time of application and meet or exceed at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract. Contracts are for five years in length with the option of a competitive renewal. 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, advanced grazing management, and comprehensive conservation plan development. Enrollment is offered through a continuous sign-up and applications are accepted year-round.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized the program but amended how the program limits future enrollment. CSP is shifted from a program limited by acres (10 million acres annually under prior law; approximately $1.4 billion in FY2018) to one limited by total funding ($700 million in FY2019 in mandatory funding, increasing to $1 billion in FY2023). CSP's ranking criteria was amended to focus on an application's actual and expected increase of conservation benefits and to add a cost competitive selection criteria for similar applications. Additionally, payments for adopting cover crops, grazing management, and comprehensive conservation plan development were amended to include higher and more comprehensive payment options.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2018, CSP provided over $83 million in financial assistance for new enrollments, used to treat over 7.5 million acres. An additional 640,000 acres were newly enrolled with the renewal contracts.
Leading states	In FY2018, NE had the most total acres enrolled (711,509), followed by MS (589,414) and ND (530,878). The most funding obligated for FY2018 enrollment was in MS ($16.3 million), SD ($5.7 million), and NE ($5.5 million). Highest total funding obligated for all CSP contracts in FY2018 was in SD ($94.6 million), AR ($83.6 million), and MN ($80.3 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2018, CSP renewed 37% of expiring 2013 contracts for another five-year term. Changes in operations resulted in the additional enrollment of 640,000 acres. States with the highest number of acres renewed in FY2018 were NE (684,182), SD (634,108), and AR (450,857). States with the most financial assistance for renewals were AR ($9.0 million), SD ($5.5 million), and NE ($4.1 million).
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. FY2019—$700 million; FY2020—$725 million; FY2021—$750 million; FY2022—$800 million; and FY2023—$1 billion. Funding for CSP contracts enrolled prior to the 2018 farm bill is provided through mandatory sources using such sums as necessary.
FY2019 est. funding	$1.5 billion total, including $656.6 million for contracts enrolled prior to the 2018 farm bill and $838.3 million for contracts enrolled under the 2018 farm bill (authorization reduced by sequestration and a transfer to Farm Production and Conservation Business Center).
FY2020 Administration request	Proposes to eliminate the Conservation Stewardship Program.
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), as amended. Amended in §§2301 and 2308 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§3839aa-21-3839aa-25.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance to producers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires) through activities such as removing debris, restoring fences and conservation structures, and implementing emergency water conservation measures in response to severe droughts.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Added a new provision allowing producers the option of accepting a reduced payment for repairing or replacing fence rather than receiving a higher payment following the completion and inspection of the practice. Advanced payments for fence cannot exceed 25% of the total payment (based on cost) and must be expended after 60 days or be returned. Added a payment limitation of $500,000 per producer.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies from year to year.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2019 funding to date	The FY2019 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 116-20) provided $558 million to remain available until expended for necessary expenses related to Hurricanes Michael and Florence and wildfires occurring in calendar year 2018, tornadoes and floods occurring in calendar year 2019, and other natural disasters.
FY2020 Administration request	$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in §401 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. Amended in §2403 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§2201-2205.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies from year to year.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2019 funding to date	The FY2019 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 116-20) provided $480 million to remain available until expended for necessary expenses related to Hurricanes Michael and Florence and wildfires occurring in calendar year 2018, tornadoes and floods occurring in calendar year 2019, and other natural disasters.
FY2020 Administration request	$0
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS on private lands and 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 floodplains that will benefit natural resources such as wetlands, while reducing the risk of exposure to future natural disasters.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Amended funding authority to include a set-aside of 25% of all available funding to repair and replace fencing.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies from year to year.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2019 funding to date	The FY2019 supplemental appropriation (P.L. 116-20) provided $435 million to remain available until expended for necessary expenses related to Hurricanes Michael and Florence and wildfires occurring in calendar year 2018, tornadoes and floods occurring in calendar year 2019, and other natural disasters.
FY2020 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. Amended in §2403 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §2203; and 33 U.S.C. §701b-1.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp

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 specific land resource concerns. Fifty percent of the funds are targeted to conservation practices benefiting livestock and 10 percent are targeted to practices benefiting wildlife.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized the program and made a number of amendments focused on practices related water quality and quantity, soil health improvement, and wildlife habitat improvement. The allocation of funding for livestock and wildlife was amended by increasing wildlife allocations from 5% to 10% and reducing livestock allocations from 60% to 50%. Payment limits for conservation practices related to organic production were increased to an aggregate of $120,000 between FY2019 and FY2023. Water conservation system payments were expanded to include irrigation and drainage entities with limitations. A new Conservation Incentive Contract was established to provide annual payments based on the adoption, installation, management, and maintenance of conservation practices that address priority resource concerns in select geographic regions. Payment limits or a specific percentage of EQIP funds to be used for incentive contracts was not included. Conservation Innovation Grants were reauthorized and expanded to include community colleges, on-farm innovation, and soil health trials (see "EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)" and "EQIP, CIG—On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials").
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2018, EQIP obligated over $1.3 billion across 42,887 contracts covering 13 million acres.
Leading states	In FY2018, the top three states by active and completed contracts were TX (5,106), MS (3,737), and CA (2,013). Obligated funding was highest in TX ($173 million), CA ($120 million), and MS ($76 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2018, 42,887 applications were funded (45.7%) of the 93,778 applications received. 14,840 applications were determined to be valid, but unfunded. The total estimated cost of these unfunded valid applications was $206 million. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were submitted in MS (4,751), LA (1,187), and WI (1,109).
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. FY2019—$1.75 billion, FY2020—$1.75 billion, FY2021—$1.8 billion, FY2022—$1.85 billion, and FY2023—$2.025 billion.
FY2019 funding est.	$1.6 billion (authorized $1.75 billion reduced by sequestration and a transfer to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center).
FY2020 Administration request	$1.75 billion (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration).
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 §§1240-1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §§2302-2306 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§3839aa-3839aa-7.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip

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, nongovernmental organizations, tribes, and individuals to implement innovative conservation techniques and practices. Annual requests for proposals are posted on http://www.grants.gov and include separate funding categories for national and state level competitions. Grantees must provide a one-to-one match to grant funding. 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 2018 farm bill amendments	Community colleges were added to the list of eligible EQIP producers that may be included in a project. The list of eligible projects was expanded to include urban agriculture and edge-of-field monitoring. The air quality funding carve-out was reauthorized and expanded from $25 million to $37 million annually. Up to $25 million annually of EQIP funds for FY2019-FY2023 are required be used for an on-farm conservation innovation trial to test new or innovative conservation approaches either directly with producers or with eligible entities. A soil health demonstration trial is required to be carried out under the on-farm conservation trial that provides financial assistance for soil health and carbon-related practices ("EQIP, CIG—On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials").
National scope	Available nationwide with select states offering state competitions. In FY2019, CIG announced a total of $12.5 million available for projects. Priorities for FY2019 include increasing conservation adoption, water quantity, pollinator habitat, and urban agriculture. CIG funding since 2004, when the program began, totals nearly $300 million though FY2019 and has funded over 700 projects. Applications for FY2019 funding closed May 30, 2019.
Leading states	None identified.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2019 funding	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2020 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 in §2308 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §3839aa-8.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig

EQIP, CIG—On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials is a subprogram of CIG, which is a subprogram of EQIP. Funding is provided to partners, who provide incentive payments and technical assistance to producers to offset the risk of adopting innovative conservation practices. Producers must meet the EQIP eligibility criteria. Partners must evaluate and report on the environmental and economic impact of adopted conservation practices. Annual requests for proposals are posted on http://www.grants.gov and include a Soil Health Demonstration Trial component. The Soil Health Demonstration Trial component focuses exclusively on soil health practices that minimize disturbance, maximize soil cover, maximize biodiversity, and maximize the presence of living roots. Partners under the Soil Health Demonstration Trial agree to follow NRCS soil health assessment protocols when evaluating practices.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Created in the 2018 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2019, NRCS announced up to $25 million available for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trial projects, including $10 million for Soil Health Demonstration Trials. The maximum amount for a single award was limited to $5 million. Priorities for FY2019 include irrigation management, precision agriculture, and management technologies and strategies. Applications for FY2019 closed July 15, 2019.
Leading states	Not Available.
Backlog/Interest	Not Available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. $25 million annually of total EQIP funding.
FY2019 funding	$25 million, including $10 million for the Soil Health Demonstration Trial.
FY2020 Administration request	$25 million of total EQIP funding.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2307 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) as §1240H(c) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §3839aa-8(c).
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/cig/?cid=nrcseprd1459039

Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
Program description	NRCS and APHIS coordinate the pilot through three components: (1) feral swine removal by APHIS, (2) restoration efforts supported by NRCS, and (3) assistance to producers for feral swine control provided through partnership agreements with non-federal partners. Projects can be one to three years in duration. Pilot areas are limited to states where feral swine have been identified as a threat. Cost-share assistance is limited to 75% of the cost of eradication and control measures or restoration. Total funding is split between NRCS and APHIS, with no more than 10% for administrative expenses.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Created in the 2018 farm bill.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Available in select project areas of AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, and TX. In FY2019, USDA announced $33.75 million for partnership efforts in 20 project areas in 10 states. The maximum amount for a single award is limited to $1.5 million and requires a 25% match by the partner. Eligible activities under a partnership agreement may include outreach, training, equipment, and operation of feral swine training that are consistent with APHIS technical standards. Applications for FY2019 close August 19, 2019.
Leading states	Not Available.
Backlog/Interest	Not Available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. $75 million total for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2019 funding	$70 million (authorization reduced by sequestration).
FY2020 Administration request	$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2408 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 7 U.S.C. §8351.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=NRCSEPRD1461219

Grassroots Source Water Protection Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA
Program description	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.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized discretionary funding authority and authorized $5 million in mandatory funding to remain available until expended.
National scope	In September 2013, the program was expanded to all 50 states.
Leading states	Annual appropriations are divided equally among all states.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration: FY2019—$5 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: $20 million annually.
FY2019 funding	Mandatory: $4.7 million (authorized $5 million is reduced by sequestration). Discretionary: $6.5 million.
FY2020 Administration request	$0
Statutory authority	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 in §2405 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §3839bb-2
Authorization expires	September, 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/source-water-protection/index

Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	HFRP assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year contracts, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	HFRP is reauthorized through FY2023, subject to appropriations. Expanded the purposes, eligibility requirements, and enrollment priorities of the program to include species recovery and habitat conservation considerations. Authorized federally recognized Indian tribes to sell permanent easements on lands they own in fee simple. Specified that restoration plans may include a variety of land management practices if necessary to achieve habitat restoration objectives.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Limited participation in select states. As of the end of FY2018, 104 agreements covering 676,131 acres have been enrolled in the program.
Leading states	In FY2018, Oklahoma ($47,000) was the only state to receive funding.
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. $12 million annually.
FY2019 funding	$0
FY2020 Administration request	$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title V Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148), as amended. Amended in §8407 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§6571-6578.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 five-year renewal or a 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, which can be provided through direct funding, in-kind, or a combination thereof. Half of the available funding is directed to "critical conservation areas" (CCA), which include the 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. The remaining one-half of the funding is provided to state or multistate projects.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized and amended the program by shifting away from enrolling land through existing conservation programs to a stand-alone program with its own contracts. Expanded the scope of eligible activities and granted more flexibility to partners. Funding was increased from $100 million annually to $300 million annually for FY2019-FY2023.
National scope	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 FY2018, 91 projects were selected totaling over $220 million in federal spending.
Leading states	Following the final selection in FY2018, the three funding categories received the following (most total partners; most federal investment): state—54 projects (IL and IN—33 partners; NM—$3.4 million), CCA—19 projects (Mississippi River Basin—66 partners; Chesapeake Bay Watershed—$16.1 million total), and national—18 projects (Driftless Area Habitat for the Wild and Rare Phase 2—46 partners; Crisis to Opportunity: Sierra Nevada Tree Mortality and Partnership GRIC Water Supply Protection Program—$10 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2018, the total amount of funding requested was three times the amount available. During the pre-proposal round, 164 proposals were received requesting $683 million with a partner match of $1 billion.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. $300 million annually for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2019 funding	$281 million (authorized $300 million is reduced by sequestration).
FY2020 Administration request	$300 million (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration).
Statutory authority	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. Amended in §§2701-2707 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §§3871-3871f.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
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 2018 farm bill amendments	Priority for funding under the program is amended to include wildlife habitat improvement efforts on CREP acres and wetland reserve easements under ACEP. Reauthorized $50 million in mandatory funding for FY2019-FY2023. Added a $3 million set-aside to encourage public access on land covered by wetland reserve easements under ACEP.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2014 and FY2015, $20 million was made available each year. In total, 21 states and one tribal government were awarded agreements. In FY2016, all formal grant agreements were complete. Additional mandatory funding authorized under the 2018 farm bill is forthcoming.
Leading states	Of the FY2014 and FY2015 selected proposals, states receiving the most funding were PA ($6 million), IA ($3 million), and KS ($2.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	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.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. $50 million total for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2019 funding	$47 million (authorized $50 million is reduced by sequestration).
FY2020 Administration request	$0
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), as amended. Amended in §2406 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §3839bb-5.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=stelprdb1242739

Water Bank Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	The Water Bank Program offers 10-year, nonrenewable 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 without 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 efforts.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Only landowners in MN, ND, and SD are eligible. In FY2018, $4.0 million was obligated to 53 agreements covering 10,315 acres.
Leading states	In FY2018, eligible states receiving the most funding were ND ($3.5 million), MN ($577,000), and SD ($195,000).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2019 funding	$4 million.
FY2020 Administration request	$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in the Water Bank Act (P.L. 91-559), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §§1301-1311.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?&cid=stelprdb1047790

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	Also referred to as the Small Watershed Program, the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) program consists of projects built under two authorities—the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83-566) and the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534). The vast majority of the projects have been built pursuant to the authority of P.L. 83-566 (referred to as P.L. 566 projects), under which smaller projects authorized by the chief of the NRCS are constructed. Larger projects must be approved by Congress. Eleven projects were specifically authorized under P.L. 78-534 (referred to as P.L. 534 projects); they are much larger and more expensive than P.L. 566 projects. Under P.L. 566 projects, 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 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 $25 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. *The 250,000 acre limitation applies only to activities undertaken for the primary purpose of flood prevention in FY2019.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Waived the watershed planning requirements when considered unnecessary or duplicative. Added a new section permanently authorizing $50 million annually in mandatory funding beginning in FY2019.
National scope	Available nationwide. There are over 2,100 active or completed P.L. 566 projects in 50 states and U.S. territories. In FY2018, funding was provided to 23 new projects, 19 authorized but unfunded projects, and 5 remedial projects in 16 states.
Leading states	States obligating the most funding in FY2018 were FL ($96.7 million), MO ($42.1 million), and MS ($36.2 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration: $50 million annually. Discretionary: no specific authorization level.
FY2019 funding	Mandatory: $47 million (authorized $50 million is reduced by sequestration). Discretionary: $150 million, plus $5.6 million in congressionally directed funds from Conservation Operations.
FY2020 Administration request	Mandatory: $50 million (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration). Discretionary: $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. Amended in §2401 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 33 U.S.C. §701b-1 and 16 U.S.C. §1001 *et. seq.*
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&cid=nrcs143_008271

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 are eligible. Small watershed project dams have a 50-year design life. As of the end of 2018, 6,245 of these dams have reached or exceeded that time span. By the end of 2019, this number is expected to rise to 6,470.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized discretionary funding authority.
National scope	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 235 rehabilitation projects have been authorized in 31 states between FY2000 and FY2018. Of these, a total of 150 projects are complete, and 85 projects are in progress (either in planning, design, or construction phase).
Leading states	States with the largest number of dam projects funded over the life of the program (FY2000-FY2018) are OK (53), TX (36), UT (22), and MS (22). States receiving the most funds in FY2018 were TX ($22.5 million), OK ($15.2 million), and MA ($4.9 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary: $85 million annually for FY2008-FY2023.
FY2019 funding	$10 million.
FY2020 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 in §2401 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334). 16 U.S.C. §1012.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr

Author Information

Megan Stubbs
Specialist in Agricultural Conservation and Natural Resources Policy

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