



United States
Department of
Agriculture

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION

FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA) | NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) | RISK MANAGEMENT AGENCY (RMA)

CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

USDA's **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** and **Farm Service Agency (FSA)** offer federally funded, voluntary conservation programs to help farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners protect and conserve the natural resources we all depend on, supporting healthy soil, cleaner air and water, and conserving wildlife habitats, while helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

NRCS and FSA conservation programs are incentive based and provide financial assistance to implement conservation practices. NRCS also offers free conservation technical assistance to help producers plan practices. NRCS accepts applications for conservation programs year-round, but applications are ranked and funded by funding cycle, which have state-specific application dates.

FSA program application periods vary by program. Producers interested in assistance are encouraged to contact their local USDA Service Center.

In addition to NRCS and FSA conservation programs, USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) also supports conservation through Federal crop insurance, including supporting use of cover crops, water conservation, and nutrient management.

To participate in FSA and NRCS programs, producers have to be compliant with adjusted gross income requirements as well as highly erodible soils and wetland provisions.

Additionally, other eligibility provisions may apply.

PROGRAM KEY

	NRCS
	FSA

CONSERVATION PROGRAM	AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	APPLICABLE LAND USES	CONTRACT LENGTH	ELIGIBILITY	NOTES
ACEP-AGRICULTURAL LAND EASEMENTS (ALE) 	NRCS	Helps private and tribal landowners, land trusts, and other entities such as state and local governments protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements.	Cropland, pasture, forest	Permanent	Apply to local entity	Apply through partner
ACEP-WETLANDS RESERVE EASEMENTS (WRE) 	NRCS	Helps private and tribal landowners protect, restore, and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.	Cropland, pasture, forest and non-ag land	30 years or Permanent	Landowner and landscape requirements	2-year ownership prior to application Apply directly to NRCS
AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE (AMA) 	NRCS	Helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices. NRCS administers the conservation provisions while USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and RMA implement the production diversification and marketing provisions.	Cropland, pasture, forest, farmstead and associated ag. land	Up to 10 years	Control land for contract term	Not available in every state
CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS (CIG) 	NRCS	Competitive program that supports the development of new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands. Through creative problem solving and innovation, CIG partners work to address our nation's water quality, air quality, soil health, and wildlife habitat challenges, all while improving agricultural operations.	Cropland, pasture, forest, farmstead, and associated ag. land	1-3 years	<i>Classic:</i> All non-Federal entities and individuals are eligible to apply. <i>On-Farm Trials:</i> All non-Federal entities are eligible to apply.	All CIG projects must involve EQIP-eligible producers
CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP) 	NRCS	Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority natural resource concerns. The higher the performance above existing management, the higher the payment.	Cropland, pasture, forest, farmstead and associated ag. land	5 years	Control land for contract term	Meet stewardship thresholds

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)		NRCS	NRCS's flagship conservation program provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.	Cropland, pasture, forest, farmstead and associated agricultural land	1 - 10 years	Control land for practice lifespan	No payment duplication
EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM		NRCS	Assists sponsors and landowners to protect lives and property from flooding or soil erosion after a natural disaster impairs a watershed. The EWP Program is designed for emergency recovery work, including the purchase of floodplain easements.	All	Variable	Measures must provide protection from additional flooding or soil erosion and reduce threats to life or property	NRCS will not provide funding for activities undertaken prior to the signing of a formal agreement
HEALTHY FORESTS RESERVE PROGRAM (HFRP)		NRCS	Helps landowners restore, enhance, and protect forestland resources on private lands through easements and financial assistance. Through HFRP, landowners promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species, improve plant and animal biodiversity, and enhance carbon sequestration.	Forestland	10-year restoration agreements and 30-year or permanent easements	Control land for contract term	Must be privately owned Apply directly to NRCS
REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)		NRCS	A partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements demonstrate the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.	Cropland, pasture, forest, farmstead, and associated ag. land	Typically five years	Organizations interested in partnering with NRCS on conservation projects submit project proposals during application periods.	All RCPP projects must develop and report on their environmental outcomes Producers can apply to participate in a funded project through NRCS or partners.
GENERAL CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)		FSA	Protects soil, water quality, and habitat by removing highly erodible or environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production through long-term rental agreements. CRP landowners are eligible for the Transition Incentives Program (TIP), which assists with selling your land to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers.	Cropland	10 - 15 years	Control land for contract term	Land cannot be farmed
CONTINUOUS CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)		FSA	Under continuous CRP signup, environmentally sensitive land devoted to certain conservation practices can be enrolled in CRP at any time. Also includes CLEAR30 and Safe Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE).	Cropland or pasture	10 - 15 years	Control land for contract term	Land cannot be farmed
CRP HAYING & GRAZING (EMERGENCY & NON-EMERGENCY)		FSA	Haying and grazing of CRP acres is authorized under certain conditions to improve the quality and performance of the CRP cover (non-emergency) or to provide relief to livestock producers due to certain natural disasters (emergency).	Cropland or pasture	Authorized practices within the 10 to 15-year contract	Emergency - County designated severe drought (D2) or greater Non-Emergency haying every 3 year; grazing every 2 years.	Haying and grazing restriction apply during and outside of the primary nesting season.

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GRASSLAND CRP SIGNUP		FSA	A voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers to help landowners and operators protect grassland. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and eligible land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion.	Grasslands, Rangeland, Pastureland	10 - 15 years	Control land for contract term	Haying & grazing allowed w/some restrictions
CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (CREP)		FSA	Targets specific state or nationally significant conservation concerns. Federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to address those concerns by paying farmers in exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production and establishing permanent resource conserving plant species.	Cropland or pasture	15 years	Control land for contract term	Restrictions are negotiated with the partner and are specific to each agreement.
EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM (ECP)		FSA	Provides funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to restore farmland damaged by natural disasters and for emergency water conservation measures in severe droughts.	Farmland damaged by a natural disaster	6-18 months	FSA County Committee inspects the damage to determine if land is eligible	Conservation problems that existed before the disaster or severe drought are ineligible. Frequently damaged land (twice in the last 10 years) and private forestland is ineligible.
EMERGENCY FOREST RESTORATION PROGRAM (EFRP)		FSA	Provides funding to restore privately owned forests damaged by natural disasters. Assistance helps landowners carry out emergency measures to restore forest health on land damaged by floods, hurricanes or other natural disasters.	Private forestland damaged by a natural disaster	Disaster-specific funding	FSA County Committee inspects the damage to determine if land is eligible	Only owners of nonindustrial private forests with tree cover existing before the natural disaster occurred are eligible.
FARMABLE WETLANDS PROGRAM (FWP)		FSA	Designed to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffer to improve both vegetation and water flow. Participants must agree to restore the wetlands and establish plant cover. Plant cover may include plants that are partially submerged or specific types of trees.	Previously farmed wetlands or wetland buffers	10-15 years	Must have been used for agricultural purposes for three of the past 10 crop years	Land cannot be used for commercial purposes



More Information

For more information about USDA conservation programs, visit farmers.gov/conservation or contact your local USDA Service Center.

To find your local USDA Service Center, visit farmers.gov/service-locator.

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