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Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs

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Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs

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 by Congress to remove duplication, a large number of programs remain, including

- 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—CLEAR30
- CRP—Farmable Wetland Program
- CRP—Grasslands
- CRP—Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- CSP—Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI)
- 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

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. In general, agricultural conservation programs can be grouped into the following categories based on similarities: working lands, land retirement, easement, partnership and grants, compliance, technical assistance, emergency assistance, watershed, and other programs and provisions.

Contents

Introduction	1
Overview	2
2018 Farm Bill.....	3
Conservation Programs	4
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).....	5
Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA).....	6
Conservation Operations (CO)—Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA).....	7
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).....	8
CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).....	9
CRP—CLEAR30	10
CRP—Farmable Wetland Program	11
CRP—Grasslands.....	12
CRP—Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP).....	13
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	14
CSP—Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI)	15
Emergency Conservation Program (ECP).....	16
Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)	17
Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP).....	18
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	19
EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	20
EQIP, CIG—On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials	21
Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program.....	22
Grassroots Source Water Protection Program	23
Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	24
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).....	25
Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.....	26
Water Bank Program	27
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO)	28
Watershed Rehabilitation Program.....	29

Figures

Figure 1. USDA Agricultural Conservation Programs by Type	3
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Contacts

Author Information.....	30
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Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers 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 of 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 reflect a rapid evolution of the conservation agenda,¹ 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 (CCC)*.

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>; and FS projects, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land>.

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.

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**). In this report, programs are listed alphabetically.

The majority of conservation programs are funded through 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 the 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 FY2023.¹⁰ 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 \$6.1 billion in FY2021.¹¹

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 Congress reduced mandatory funding authority for agricultural conservation programs annually through appropriations acts from FY2003 through FY2017. FY2018 was the first appropriations act since FY2002 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 FY2022 conservation appropriation, see CRS Report R46971, *Agricultural Conservation: FY2022 Appropriations*.

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 estimates may be found in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Reports to the Congress on the Joint Committee Reductions, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sequestration-reports-orders/>.

¹¹ CRS using CBO baseline data, FY2008-FY2021.

Figure I. 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly erodible land conservation (sodbuster) • Wetland conservation (swampbuster) • Sod saver
Partnership and Grants —programs that use partnership agreements to leverage program funding with non-federal funding or provide grants to states or research organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPPI) • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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;
- FY2022 funding level in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (P.L. 117-103, Division A), or, if applicable, the authorized level in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (sequestration, transfers, and carryover are included and noted where known);
- FY2023 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. Some figures may not add to totals due to rounding. 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	<p>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.</p> <p><i>Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)</i>—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.</p> <p><i>Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)</i>—Enrollment options (federal share) include permanent easements (100% easement value and 75%-100% restoration cost), 30-year easements (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost), term easements or the maximum duration under state law (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost), and 30-year contracts available only to Indian tribes (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost). NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement.</p>
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 FY2021, \$334 million in ACEP funding was used to enroll an estimated total of 197,734 acres of farmland, grassland, and wetlands through 361 new ACEP enrollments, as well as closing 348 easements on 121,503 acres. This includes ALE easements—173 on 154,060 acres, including 16 ALE grassland easements of special environmental significance; WRE permanent easements—174 on 41,515 acres; WRE 30-year easements—14 on 2,159 acres; and no WRE 30-year contracts with tribes.
Leading states	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2021 were in LA (\$31.0 million), AR (\$31.0 million), and MS (\$24.6 million).
Backlog/Interest	<p><i>Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)</i>—In FY2021, ALE applications were received for 363,560 acres, including applications for grasslands of special environmental significance. Approximately 42% of applications were enrolled.</p> <p><i>Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)</i>—In FY2021, WRE applications were received for 548,624 acres. Approximately 6% of applications were enrolled.</p>
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. \$450 million annually for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2022 funding	\$416 million (authorized \$450 million is reduced by sequestration and by a transfer to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center).
FY2023 Administration request	\$450 million (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration and transfer of \$8.3 million from total amount available to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center in FY2023).
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 FY2021, over \$7 million in AMA funding (for conservation only) was used to enroll 432 AMA contracts covering close to 6,050 acres within eligible states.
Leading states	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2021 were ME (\$899,000), WV (\$578,000), and PA (\$450,000).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2020, 1,056 applications were received, and 449 applications were funded (43%).
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.
FY2022 funding	\$9.4 million, including \$4.7 million for conservation (authorized \$10 million reduced by sequestration).
FY2023 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) 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 landowners 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. Total obligations for FY2021 were \$832.7 million and 3,585 staff years for CO and \$735.7 million and 3,071 staff years for CTA. Staff year refers to a full-time position funded for one year.
Leading states	No data are available for CTA alone in FY2021, but the three leading states for total CO funding were TX (\$35.2 million), CA (\$20.4 million), and IA (\$18.2 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2022 funding	\$759.8 million for CTA out of \$904.4 million appropriated for all CO, including \$19.6 million in congressionally directed funds (earmarks).
FY2023 Administration request	\$885.6 million for CTA out of \$1.0 billion 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) https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/water/snowsury (snow survey and water supply forecasting) 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	Available nationwide. As of May 2022, there were 559,587 active contracts on 315,767 farms with 22.1 million acres enrolled. Of this total, 10.2 million acres were enrolled under general sign-up, 785,553 acres under Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program sign-up (CREP), 6.8 million acres under non-CREP sign-up, 363,038 acres under Farmable Wetland sign-up, and 3.9 acres under grasslands sign-up.
Leading states	Leading states by total acres enrolled are TX (2.3 million), CO (2.0 million), and SD (1.8 million). Leading states by total number of contracts are IA (104,723), IL (73,973), and MN (54,195).
Backlog/Interest	The most recent CRP general sign-up was held in FY2022 (#58). During sign-up #58, close to 2.3 million acres were offered for enrollment, and 2 million acres were accepted (87%).
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.
FY2022 est. funding	\$2.0 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
FY2023 est. Administration request	\$2.0 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	Not available nationwide. CREP is available in areas with a CREP agreement. As of May 2022, there are over 40 CREP agreements in 32 states (AR, CO, DE, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MD, MI, MO, MN, MS, MT, ND, NE, NJ, NY, NC, OH, OK, OR, PA, SD, VT, VA, WA, WV, and WI), including 48,792 contracts on 33,511 farms, enrolling a total of 787,553 acres.
Leading states	Leading CREP projects by number of acres enrolled are PA-Chesapeake Bay (80,007), SD-James River (76,250), and OH-Scioto River Basin (59,270). CREP projects leading in number of contracts are OH-Lake Erie (12,091), PA-Chesapeake Bay (5,306), and MD-Chesapeake Bay (3,990).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
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: 8.0 million acres by FY2019; 8.3 million acres by FY2020; 8.5 million acres by FY2021; and 8.6 million acres by FY2022 and FY2023. No funding amount specified.
FY2022 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2023 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 – CLEAR30

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This pilot program of the CRP enrolls expiring CRP acres with select water quality practices in 30-year contracts. CLEAR refers to a separate but related initiative called the Clean Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers initiative, which prioritizes select water quality practices for continuous CRP contracts that reduce sediment and nutrient loading and harmful algal blooms. Eligible CLEAR30 practices include grass waterway, contour grass strip, prairie strip, filter strip, riparian buffer, wetland restoration practice, and other similar water quality practices. Expiring continuous CRP contracts with eligible practices may enroll in CLEAR30 during the last year of the contract. Participants receive 30 annual rental payments, similar to those calculated under general CRP, with a possible rental rate enhancement payment. Land is maintained in accordance with an approved conservation plan, and compatible economic uses are allowed if included in the conservation plan (e.g., hunting and fishing, managed timber harvest, or periodic haying or grazing).
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Created in the 2018 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. The first sign-up began in 2020 and included only land in 12 states located within the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. CLEAR30 was expanded nationwide in 2022. As of May 2022, 23,212 acres are enrolled in CLEAR30.
Leading states	As of May 2022, leading states by total acres enrolled are LA (5,833), MS (4,798), and AR (2,967).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and statutorily exempt from sequestration. Limited overall by the total CRP acreage enrollment cap. See “Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).”
FY2022 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2023 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle B of Title II (§2004(a)) of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) as §1231C of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §3831c(a).
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/crp-clear30-pilot.pdf

CRP—Farmable Wetland Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This 750,000-acre subprogram of CRP enrolls small isolated agricultural wetlands. On a single tract of land, enrollment is set at a maximum of 40 contiguous wetland acres. “Flooded farmland” has a 20-acre limit. Eligible lands include wetlands that were cropped in three of the preceding 10 years (and include buffers sufficient to protect them), on which the hydrology will be restored and a vegetative cover established. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized the program through FY2023.
National scope	Not available nationwide. 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 May 2022, there were 13,695 contracts on 11,688 farms for a total of 363,038 enrolled acres.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are ND (123,489), IA (94,003), and SD (88,201). The largest number of contracts are in IA (4,936), followed by SD (3,503) and ND (2,651).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
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).
FY2022 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2023 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in Title XI of Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 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 10 or 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 for enrollment. Enrollment is subject to a competitive offer process similar to the CRP general sign-up.
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	Available nationwide. Active contracts exist in all but 8 states—AK, CT, DE, HI, MA, NH, RI, and VT. As of May 2022, there were 11,588 active contracts on 6,540 farms with 3,925,424 acres enrolled. FY2022 CRP Grasslands sign-up (#204) closed in May 2022.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are NE (885,918), SD (836,860), and CO (646,307). The largest number of contracts are in SD (2,542), followed by NE (2,189) and CO (1,485).
Backlog/Interest	CRP Grasslands sign-up held in FY2021 (#203) resulted in 64% of acres offered for enrollment being accepted (4.0 million acres offered and 2.5 million acres accepted).
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.
FY2022 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2023 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle A of Title II (§2001 <i>et seq.</i>) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) as §1231 <i>et seq.</i> 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 <i>et seq.</i>
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/crp-grasslands/index

CRP—Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This pilot program of the CRP enrolls less-productive farmland in three- to five-year contracts to plant low-cost perennial vegetative cover in exchange for annual rental payments. Eligible land is limited to the Prairie Pothole region. Land must have a cropping history of three years prior to enrollment (not including CRP enrollment) and be less productive than other land on the farm. No more than 15% of a farm may be enrolled and no more than 50,000 acres of total CRP enrollments may be used for the pilot. Participants are required to plant low-cost, perennial, conserving-use vegetative cover at the participant's expense. In return the participant would receive an annual rental payment that is 50% of the general CRP annual rental payment, or up to 75% for beginning, limited-resource, socially disadvantaged or veteran participants. Contracts may be terminated early if considered necessary by FSA or if the participant agrees to pay back the annual rental payments. Harvesting, haying, and grazing are allowed outside of the local nesting and brood-rearing period, subject to additional conditions.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Created in the 2018 farm bill.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Only land within states located in the Prairie Pothole region (IA, MN, MT, ND, and SD) are eligible. As of May 2022, a total of 3,266 acres have been enrolled in the SHIPP pilot.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are SD (830), ND (754), and MN (595).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and statutorily exempt from sequestration. No more than 50,000 acres may be enrolled. No funding amount specified.
FY2022 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2023 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle B of Title II (§2004(b)) of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) as §1231C of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §3831c(b).
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/fsa-shipp-factsheet.pdf

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. There are two CSP contracts—classic and renewal. CSP classic 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. CSP renewal contracts require the applicant to continue the level of conservation from their classic contract and address or enhance additional resource concerns. Contracts are for five years 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.
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 were amended to focus on an application's actual and expected increase of conservation benefits and to add a cost-competitive selection criterion 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 FY2021, CSP provided over \$513.6 million in financial assistance for new enrollments, used to treat over 9.8 million acres.
Leading states	In FY2021, states with the highest enrollment included the following: for CSP classic enrollment by acres—NM (673,331), UT (569,927), and AR (408,491); for CSP classic enrollment by funding level obligated—AL (\$13.8 million), AR (\$13.7 million), and MS (\$11.3 million); for CSP renewal enrollment by acres—NM (513,386), UT (378,790), MT (349,528); and for CSP renewal enrollment by funding level obligated—IL (\$9.7 million), IA (\$9.3 million), and NM (\$9.3 million). The highest total funding obligated for all CSP contracts in FY2021 was in SD (\$39.1 million), AR (\$35.5 million), and NE (\$32.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2020, for all CSP enrollment types, 34,572 applications were received and 12,142 applications were funded (35%).
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.
FY2022 est. funding	\$773 million (authorized \$800 million reduced by sequestration and a transfer to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center for administrative expenses).
FY2023 Administration request	\$1 billion (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration and transfer of \$21.2 million from total amount available to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center for administrative expenses).
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §§12401-1240L-1 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

CSP—Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	While within CSP, the GCI has separate requirements from other CSP contracts. Under a GCI contract, the producer must meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one priority resource concern. Contracts are limited to five years, with no renewal, but a producer can terminate a contract at any time with no repayment penalty. Payments are limited to \$18 per acre and are not subject to the CSP payment limit. Land retains its base acre history while enrolled, but the calculation of payments may not exceed the number of base acres on a farm. Eligible land is limited to cropland for which base acres have been maintained under FSA's Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and was planted to grass or pasture, including idle or fallow land, during a specific period.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Created in the 2018 farm bill.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2021, GCI obligated over \$9.3 million in financial assistance for new enrollments, used to treat over 104,000 acres.
Leading states	In FY2021, OK had the most total acres enrolled (39,655), followed by TX (23,997) and KS (7,077). The most funding obligated for FY2021 enrollment was in OK (\$3.5 million), TX (\$2.1 million), and KS (\$636,542).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Unspecified subset of CSP.
FY2022 funding	Unspecified subset of CSP.
FY2023 Administration request	Unspecified subset of CSP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in §2309 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) as §1240L-1 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §3839aa-25.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2023.
Program website	https://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 fencing rather than receiving a higher payment following the completion and inspection of the practice. Advanced payments for fencing 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	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2021 were in CA (\$13.5 million), LA (\$13.5 million), and WA (\$13.1 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2022 funding to date	\$0.
FY2023 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	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2021 were in FL (\$26.7 million), OR (\$16.3 million), and IA (\$6.1 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2022 funding to date	\$0.
FY2023 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.
FY2022 funding to date	\$575 million (\$275 million in Div. B of P.L. 117-43 and \$300 million in Div. J, Title I, of P.L. 117-58).
FY2023 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 landowners 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% are targeted to practices benefiting wildlife.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized the program and made amendments focused on practices related to 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 FY2021, EQIP obligated over \$1.26 billion across 34,054 contracts covering 11.6 million acres.
Leading states	In FY2021, the top three states by active and completed contracts were TX (3,023), MS (1,810), and CA (1,749). Obligated funding was highest in CA (\$128.6 million), TX (\$115.1 million), and AR (\$70.1 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2021, 34,054 applications were funded of the 113,893 applications received (29.9%). 29,116 applications were determined to be valid, but unfunded. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were submitted in MS (3,389), AR (2,328), and TX (2,099). The total estimated cost of these unfunded valid applications would have been \$1.1 billion. States with the highest estimated unfunded application totals were MS (\$96.6 million), CA (\$92.4 million), and AR (\$88.6 million).
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. FY2019—\$1.75 billion, FY2020—\$1.75 billion, FY2021—\$1.8 billion, FY2022—\$1.9 billion, and FY2023—\$2.03 billion.
FY2022 funding	\$1.7 billion (authorized \$1.9 billion reduced by sequestration and a transfer to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center).
FY2023 Administration request	\$2.03 billion (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration and transfer of \$30.7 million from total amount available to the Farm Production and Conservation Business Center in FY2023).
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 increased from \$25 million to \$37 million annually. Up to \$25 million annually of EQIP funds for FY2019-FY2023 are required to 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 that provides financial assistance for soil health and carbon-related practices is required to be carried out under the on-farm conservation trial (“EQIP, CIG—On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials”).
National scope	Available nationwide with selected states offering state competitions. In FY2021, CIG funded 19 awards totaling \$15 million for projects nationally. Priorities for FY2021 include conservation adoption, grazing lands, nutrient management, soil health, and water resources. In addition to the national competition, 25 states held state-level CIG competitions in FY2021 and awarded \$8.2 million to CIG projects.
Leading states	None identified.
Backlog/Interest	In FY2021, 77 applications were received in the national CIG competition, and 19 projects were funded (24.7%).
Funding authority	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2022 funding	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2023 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 (e.g., private entities, nongovernmental organizations, and nonfederal government agencies) 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 . These requests for proposals include a Soil Health Demonstration Trial component that 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 FY2022, 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 FY2022 include irrigation management technology, climate smart agriculture solutions, and nutrient management.
Leading states	In FY2021, \$25 million was awarded to 18 projects. States with awarded projects include AZ, CA, CO, IA, ID, KY, ME, MI, MO, MN, MT, NC, NY, OH, OR, PA, UT, VA, WA, WV, and WI.
Backlog/Interest	In FY2021, 70 proposals were received and 18 projects funded (25.7%).
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. \$25 million annually of total EQIP funding.
FY2022 funding	\$25 million of total EQIP funding.
FY2023 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 nonfederal partners. Projects can be one to three years in duration. 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. 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, HI, LA, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC, and TX. In the first round of funding, NRCS obligated \$16.7 million for 20 pilot projects across 10 states. In the second round, \$11.7 million was obligated for 14 pilot projects across 8 states. In FY2021, NRCS provided approximately \$17.2 million for partner activities. As of June 2021, a total of 742 landowners and 1.3 million acres were treated or received assistance in one of the 10 states participating in round one of the program.
Leading states	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2021 were in MO (\$3.4 million), TX (\$2.9 million), and AL (\$2.0 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. \$75 million total for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2022 funding	\$0.
FY2023 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=NRCSSEPRD1461219

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 source water protection programs. 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 in FY2019 to remain available until expended.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2021, 177 source water plans were complete with management activities implemented in the source water areas. These water plans provide protection measures for 483 public drinking water sources (433 wells and 50 surface water intakes).
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.
FY2022 funding	\$6.5 million.
FY2023 Administration request	\$6.5 million.
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	Reauthorized HFRP 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 selected states. As of the end of FY2021, 106 agreements covering 678,616 acres have been enrolled in the program.
Leading states	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2021 were in GA (\$2.5 million), PA (\$479,000), and IN (\$139,000).
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. \$12 million annually.
FY2022 funding	\$0. The Explanatory Statement for Div. A of P.L. 117-103 includes \$7 million in congressionally directed funds from Conservation Operations.
FY2023 Administration request	\$20 million.
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 state, multistate, 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 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. One-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, Western Waters, Prairie Grasslands Region, and Northeast Forests and Waters. The remaining one-half of the funding is provided to state and 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 funding announcements: Classic and Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA). Contract renewals are available for successful existing RCPP projects. In FY2021, 85 projects from the Classic funding announcement and 15 projects from the AFA funding announcement were selected. Funding awarded in FY2021 included funds authorized in FY2020 and FY2021. The Classic funding announcement awarded \$330 million, and the AFA funding announcement awarded \$75 million in FY2021. Applications for FY2022 funding closed in April 2022.
Leading states	In the FY2021 Classic funding announcement, the two funding pools (state/multistate and CCA) that received the most federal investment were: state/multistate—48 projects total (OH, H2Ohio Western Lake Erie Basin—\$8 million), and CCA—36 projects total (Western Waters—\$32.2 million total).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. \$300 million annually for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2022 funding	\$282 million (authorized \$300 million reduced by sequestration).
FY2023 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. Projects last up to three years, and no award is more than \$3 million. Up to 25% of funds may be used to restore, enhance, or create wildlife habitat. 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. Total funding for the program was available in March 2020, and \$49 million was awarded to 27 recipients in 27 states.
Leading states	Of the March 2020 selected proposals, states receiving the most funding were NE and OK (\$3 million each), and VA (\$2.9 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration. \$50 million total for FY2019-FY2023.
FY2022 funding	\$0.
FY2023 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/farbill/?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 MN, ND, and SD 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 FY2021, \$3.7 million was obligated to 62 agreements covering 7,338 acres.
Leading states	In FY2021, eligible states receiving the most funding were ND (\$2.7 million), SD (\$912,000), and MN (\$67,000).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2022 funding	\$4 million.
FY2023 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 (WFPO)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS.
Program description	<p>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.</p> <p>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. For FY2022, no project whose activities are undertaken for the primary purpose of flood prevention may exceed 250,000 acres. 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.</p>
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Waived the watershed planning requirements when USDA considers it unnecessary or duplicative. Added a new section permanently authorizing \$50 million annually in mandatory funding beginning in FY2019 to be used for WFPO and the “Watershed Rehabilitation Program.”
National scope	Available nationwide. There are over 2,100 active or completed P.L. 566 projects in 50 states and U.S. territories. In FY2021, funding was provided to 46 new projects and 19 authorized but unfunded projects in 23 states.
Leading states	States in which the most funding was obligated in FY2021 include AR (\$65.4 million), CO (\$49.1 million), and MO (\$44.6 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration: \$50 million annually (may also be used for the “Watershed Rehabilitation Program”). Discretionary: no specific authorization level.
FY2022 funding	Mandatory: \$47 million (authorized \$50 million reduced by sequestration). Discretionary: \$600 million (\$100 million, including \$23.3 million in congressionally directed spending (earmarks) in Div. A, Title II, of P.L. 117-103; and \$500 million in Div. J, Title I, of P.L. 117-58).
FY2023 Administration request	Mandatory: \$50 million (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration). Discretionary: \$125 million.
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 2021, 5,938 of these dams have reached or exceeded that time span. By the end of 2022, this number is expected to rise to 6,169.
Major 2018 farm bill amendments	Reauthorized discretionary funding authority. Added a new section permanently authorizing \$50 million annually in mandatory funding beginning in FY2019 to be used for the Watershed Rehabilitation Program and “Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.”
National scope	Available nationwide. Only available for dams built through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program and the Resource Conservation and Development program. A total of 395 dams have been funded for rehabilitation between FY2000 and FY2021. Of these, 263 dams in 26 states are authorized for rehabilitation, including 171 projects completed, and the rest are in progress (either in planning, design, or construction phase). There are 110 dams in the planning phase awaiting funding. In FY2021, 38 assessments of high hazard dams were conducted.
Leading states	States with the largest number of dam projects funded over the life of the program (FY2000-FY2021) are OK (61), TX (46), and GA (38). States in which the most funding was obligated in FY2021 include TX (\$9.6 million), GA (\$5.4 million), and UT (\$4.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Mandatory and subject to sequestration: \$50 million (may also be used for “Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations”). Discretionary: \$85 million annually for FY2008-FY2023.
FY2022 funding	Mandatory: \$47 million (authorized \$50 million reduced by sequestration, and an unspecified portion may be used for “Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations”). Discretionary: \$119 million (\$1 million in Div. A, Title II, of P.L. 117-103 and \$118 million in Div. J, Title I, of P.L. 117-58).
FY2023 Administration request	Mandatory: \$50 million (authorization to be reduced by an unknown amount of sequestration and an unspecified portion may be used for “Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations”). Discretionary: \$10 million.
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 (P.L. 83-566), 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

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