The 2014 Farm Bill provides national, regional, and local forest landowners a package of voluntary programs for conserving natural resources. Technical and financial assistance helps agricultural producers implement conservation practices and activities that protect our water, promote soil health, enhance wildlife habitat, improve air quality, and conserve energy. This guide introduces the conservation assistance available from Farm Bill programs. NRCS conservation professionals are available in nearly every county across the country and can help you develop a conservation plan based on your natural resource and operation goals. Through the conservation planning process, NRCS staff can identify and explain the Farm Bill programs that best match your natural resource objectives.

Your Conservation Plan

The NRCS staff is available to help you define resource concerns on your land and identify assistance opportunities available through Farm Bill programs. NRCS conservation professionals are available in nearly every county across the country and can help you develop a conservation plan based on your natural resource and operation goals. Through the conservation planning process, NRCS staff can identify and explain the Farm Bill programs that best match your natural resource objectives.

Conservation programs for your land, watershed, and community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conservation programs for your land, watershed, and community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conserving and improving soil health</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conserving water resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protecting waterways from erosion and degradation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing manure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing grazing lands</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establishing riparian habitat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing forest lands</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improving air quality and conserving energy</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conserving and improving soil health**

- To reduce soil movement and nutrient runoff, and mitigate the effects of erosion from agricultural lands, consider:
  - contour buffer strips
  - windbreaks
  - vegetative windrow incorporation

**Conserving water resources**

- To make a positive impact on your soil health, consider:
  - residue management
  - cover crops
  - windbreaks
  - contour management
  - grassed buffer strips

**Protecting waterways from erosion and degradation**

- To protect your streams and rivers, as well as wildlife habitat, consider:
  - riparian buffers
  - strip cropping
  - no-till practices
  - streamside wetland mitigation

**Managing manure**

- To maximize crop production, prevent nutrient loss and protect natural resources and water quality, consider:
  - manure application
  - nutrient management
  - composting

**Managing grazing lands**

- To improve forage quality, control invasive species, and conserve habitat, consider:
  - prescribed grazing
  - past rotational grazing
  - fencing
  - livestock management

**Establishing riparian habitat**

- To enhance, restore, and protect fish and wildlife habitat, consider:
  - fish habitat improvement
  - riparian buffer planting
  - wetland restoration
  - wildlife management

**Managing forest lands**

- To restore and protect forest lands and improve habitat, consider:
  - tree planting
  - forest stand improvement
  - prescribed burning

**Improving air quality and conserving energy**

- To improve air quality and conserve energy, consider:
  - biomass management
  - fuel reduction
  - air quality

**Financial Assistance**

- All programs include Federal funds to assist with the costs associated with conservation practices. Producers can receive payments ranging from payments for conservation outcomes to financial assistance to help facilitate implementation of specific conservation practices on the land.

**Power of Partnerships**

- NRCS works with many partners to deliver conservation services and programs, such as local conservation districts, other natural resource groups, agriculture departments, producer cooperatives, and other intergovernmental conservation organizations. These partnerships enable technical assistance, leverage the Federal investment, and help in getting conservation on the ground.

**For More Information**

## What USDA Offers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Eligible Land</th>
<th>Length of Agreement/Contract</th>
<th>Payments</th>
<th>Easements</th>
<th>Product Responsibilities</th>
<th>What's New?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural Conservation Easement Component</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agricultural Land</strong> (build or on purchase of agricultural land including easement systems on non-federal private forestland)</td>
<td><strong>Permanent or 30-year</strong></td>
<td>Payments to assist the eligible entity to retire valuable water rights and/or wetland or forestland restoration costs.</td>
<td>Payments support conservation that helps maintain and enhance water resource and wildlife habitat.</td>
<td>Payments for both assessment, purchase, and restorative costs. Cost share is up to 75% of 2023 value for 30-year or 50% of 2023 value for permanent easements.</td>
<td><strong>New!</strong> Incorporates the objectives of the former Wibolds Inhabited Project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy Forests Program (HOPE)</strong></td>
<td>Forestland capable of sustaining a selected wildlife species</td>
<td><strong>30-year contracts</strong></td>
<td>Payments for both assessment, purchase, and restorative costs. Cost share is up to 75% of 2023 value for 30-year or 50% of 2023 value for permanent easements.</td>
<td>Payments support conservation that helps maintain and enhance water resource and wildlife habitat.</td>
<td>Payments for both assessment, purchase, and restorative costs. Cost share is up to 75% of 2023 value for 30-year or 50% of 2023 value for permanent easements.</td>
<td><strong>New!</strong> Incorporates the objectives of the former Wibolds Inhabited Project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Incentives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Programs</th>
<th><strong>NEW!</strong> Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)</th>
<th><strong>Program Aid - 2172</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conservation Stewardship Program</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eligible Land</strong></td>
<td><strong>August 2015</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private or non-industrial forestland</td>
<td><strong>Up to 15 years</strong></td>
<td><strong>Visit your local USDA Service Center, and our “5 Steps to Assistance” on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments support conservation that helps maintain and enhance water resource and wildlife habitat.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>How can I apply?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and follow RCPP plan that addresses resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by including and addressing traditional conservation activities along with innovative, emerging, and emerging activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Taking advantage of USDA conservation programs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unless eligibility requirements to at least two priority resource concerns.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Frequently asked questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watershed Reserve Easement component</td>
<td><strong>Up to 15 years</strong></td>
<td><strong>USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments for undertaking new conservation management systems or to secure a portion of valuable existing conservation practices.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Programs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and implement HRP restoration plan that promotes restoration, protection, enhancement and improving the level of conservation.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Great Lakes Basin Program.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and follow RCPP plan that addresses resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by including and addressing traditional conservation activities along with innovative, emerging, and emerging activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Regional Conservation Partnership Program</strong> (RCPP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments support conservation that helps maintain and enhance water resource and wildlife habitat.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conservation Stewardship Program</strong> (CSP) and EQIP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop and follow RCPP plan that addresses resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by including and addressing traditional conservation activities along with innovative, emerging, and emerging activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments support conservation that helps maintain and enhance water resource and wildlife habitat.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conservation Security Program</strong> (CSP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and follow CSP of operations,</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Natural Resources Conservation Service</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to $100,000 in assistance.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Great Lakes Basin Program.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What’s New?**

- **New!** Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- **Conservation Stewardship Program** (CSP)
- **Natural Resources Conservation Service**

**When can I apply and how will my conservation program application be evaluated?**

Most conservation program applications are accepted on a continual basis, with specific cutoff dates for NRCS to rank and make funding decisions. All applications received in your area will be ranked following specific criteria for your location. Working with a local NRCS staff member, you can develop a conservation plan that provides alternatives for natural resource treatments relevant to your application ranking considerations. You can select the level of treatment that best meets your individual needs, while improving your chance of being selected for funding.

**If I enroll land in a conservation program, do I maintain ownership? Am I required to allow public access to my land?**

Yes, you retain ownership of your land, and you are required to allow public access to your land. The only exceptions is the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Enhancement Program, which provides grants to States and Indigenous tribes to compensate landowners who allow the public to access their land for recreational uses.

**What types of wildlife habitat can I develop on my land?**

Practices and activities can be designed and managed to create habitat for specific species, such as turkey, quail, pheasants, songbirds, pollinators, bats, and other wildlife species. Applications that address habitat needs for threatened, endangered, or other species of concern may be given priority.

**I don’t own the land I farm but would like to apply for assistance. Can I still get help?**

Yes. Visit your local USDA Service Center, and our “5 Steps to Assistance” on the website at www.usda.gov/extension.

Are there other NRCS Farm Bill Conservation Programs that don’t fall under the categories of Financial Assistance, Easements or Partnerships listed on the chart?

Yes. Other Farm Bill programs include: Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP); Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services Program (ACES); Conservation Innovation Grants (CSG); and Technical Service Providers (TSP).