



SUPPORTING AMERICA'S  
WORKING LANDS





# Supporting America's Working Lands

At the Natural Resources Conservation Service, we have a proud history of supporting America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. For more than 80 years, we have helped people make investments in their operations and local communities to keep working lands working, boost rural economies, increase the competitiveness of American agriculture, and improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and habitat.

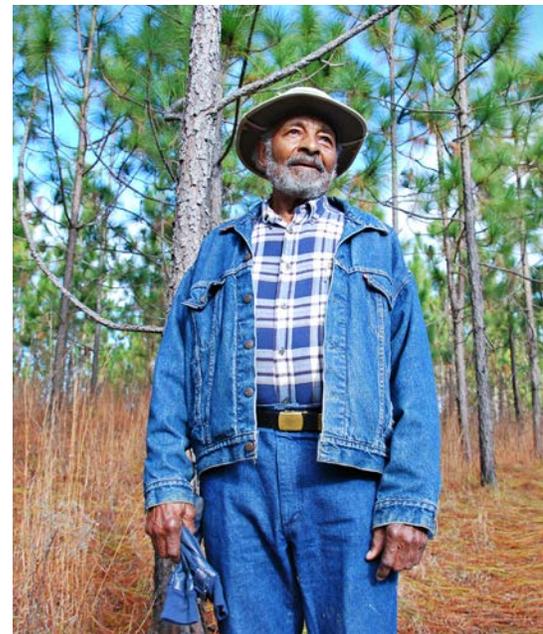
As the USDA's primary private lands conservation agency, we generate, manage, and share the data, technology, and standards that enable partners and policymakers to make decisions informed by objective, reliable science.

And through one-on-one, personalized advice, we work voluntarily with producers and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation and business goals. By doing so, we help ensure the health of our natural resources and the long-term sustainability of American agriculture.

**“We didn't inherit this land. We borrowed it from our children. It's about the future and not about the past.”**

Joseph McKinney, Alabama producer

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**On average, NRCS invests upwards of \$8 million every day of the year into conservation systems that help producers stay profitable and productive.**



# America's Working Lands Support Rural Economies

Farmers, ranchers, and foresters are the backbone of America. Shouldering the tremendous responsibility of feeding a rapidly growing Nation, their critical work also provides economic stability across the country side — supporting rural economies and creating jobs in local communities.

Rural America depends on productive working lands to fund local labor, not just agronomists and foresters, but also land improvement contractors, seed suppliers, irrigation specialists, and others. Their stewardship and careful management of these vital landscapes builds resilient local economies with profitable farms and ranches, clean air and water, healthy food, and abundant wildlife.

**“We are a business and have to be profitable, so the programs that we utilize with NRCS help us incorporate conservation practices. It’s important to us because we love this land and want to leave it to our children better than we found it.”**

Alan Herbert, Louisiana producer

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A man wearing a grey cap and a brown jacket is smiling while working in a greenhouse. He is holding a purple vegetable, possibly a radish, in his hands. The greenhouse structure is visible in the background, and the ground is covered with green plants.

**Organic is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. food industry, with demand currently outpacing supply. Urban farms, rapidly increasing in number, provide an entryway for new farmers and build appreciation for farming among all citizens.**

# America's Working Lands Support Consumer Demand

America's producers are responding to today's increasing consumer demand for organic products and fresh, local food. While rising to meet this new challenge, organic and urban farmers are conserving natural resources, diversifying the farming sector, and bringing new and non-traditional farmers to the field.

Organic agriculture and NRCS' goals are well aligned. Many USDA Organic requirements — such as soil health and biodiversity — can be addressed using NRCS conservation systems, which reflect these shared goals. Though often small, urban farms can make big impacts, beautifying neighborhoods and strengthening local communities while growing healthy food. Farmers throughout the country are now using high tunnels to meet the demand for fresh, local produce beyond the typical growing season.

**“We got assistance from the NRCS to put in the high tunnel, and it's completely changed the way we farm tomatoes... It's doubled production for us. We're also able to grow things during the winter.”**

Stacey Givens, Oregon producer

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The healthiest soils are those with a diversity and abundance of life. Farmers with the healthiest soils nurture that life by creating a diversity of plant life above the soil surface, with year-round ground cover, no tillage, and judicious pesticide use.



# America's Working Lands Support Healthy Soil

America's vitality is rooted in the soil. Today, private landowners across the country are partnering with NRCS to put soil health practices to work — growing profitable farms, vibrant rural economies, and healthy food and fiber to fuel our Nation today and into the future.

As world population and food production demands rise, keeping our soil healthy and productive is of paramount importance. By farming using soil health principles and systems that include no-till, cover cropping, and diverse rotations, more and more producers are increasing their soil's organic matter, reducing the need for expensive inputs, and improving microbial activity — all while harvesting better profits and often better yields.

**“I can't even imagine being a conventional farmer and looking to the future. I feel like those of us that have made the conversion have a future.”**

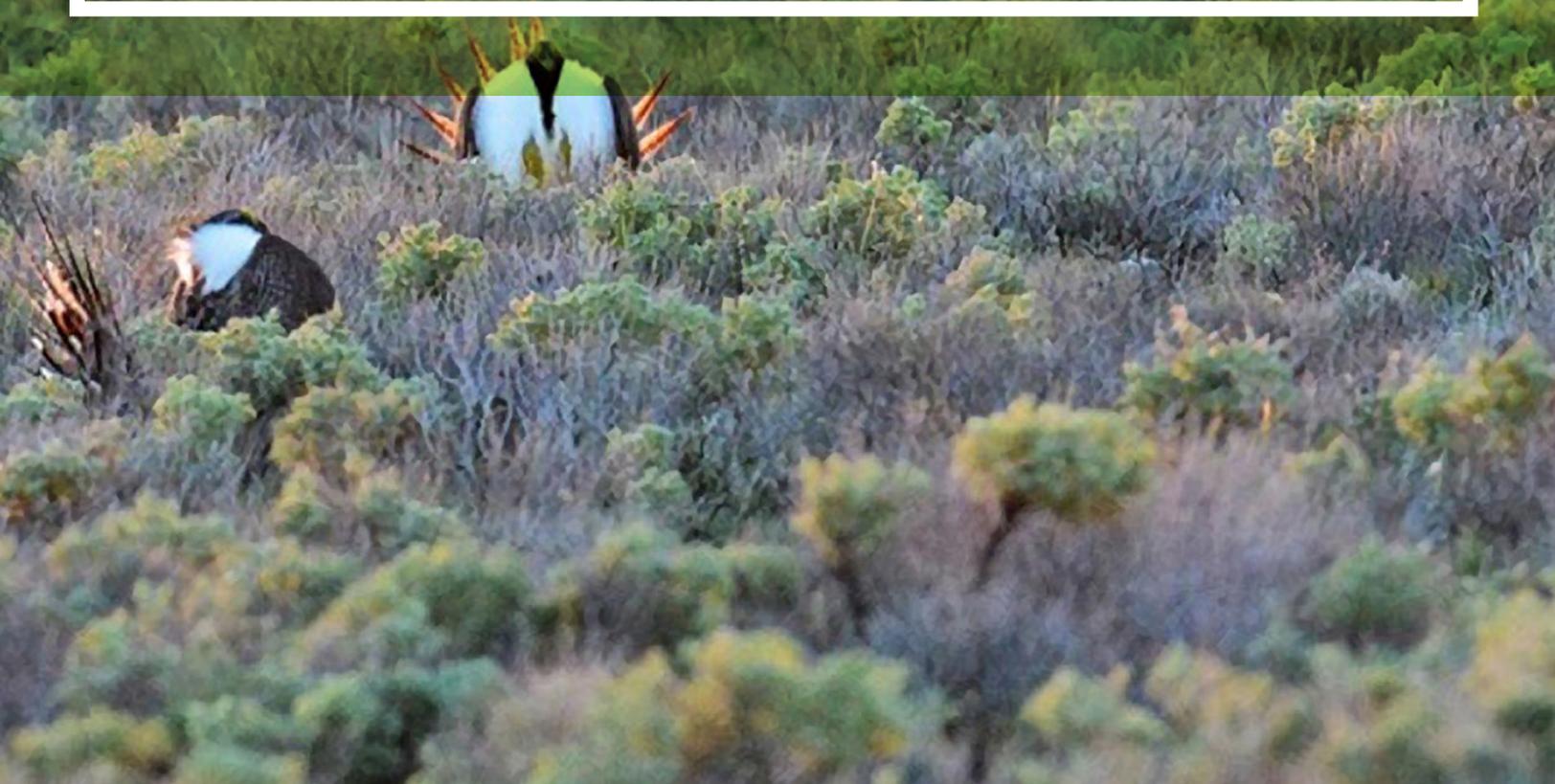
Douglas Poole, Washington producer

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Out West, ranchers have restored more than 5 million acres of the sagebrush ecosystem, helping the greater sage-grouse rebound while providing top-notch grazing lands for livestock.



# America's Working Lands Support Healthy Ecosystems

Agriculture and wildlife both thrive together through landscape-scale conservation. Two-thirds of the land in the lower 48 States is privately owned, and these productive working farms, ranches, and forests provide critical ecosystems for wildlife as well as the food and fiber that sustains us all.

From the Louisiana black bear to the Oregon chub, and from the sage grouse to the New England cottontail, many species have rebounded and recovered largely because of the conservation work by producers on private lands. NRCS uses a science-based, targeted approach to guide producers on how to best manage ecosystems to maximize beneficial outcomes, both for wildlife and agricultural operations.

**“Sustainable forestry practices recommended by NRCS are benefiting our personal lives as well as wildlife.”**

Natalie Love, Pennsylvania producer



A large-scale center pivot irrigation system is shown in a lush green field. The system consists of multiple long, parallel metal arms extending from a central point, with numerous smaller wheels and pipes along their length. The background features a range of mountains under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark blue rectangle in the center of the image.

**Agriculture is a major user of ground and surface water in the United States. By implementing efficient irrigation systems and other water management practices, producers increase the supply of both food and water.**

# America's Working Lands Support Clean Water

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners recognize water as our Nation's most precious resource. Every day, new producers are stepping up to work hand-in-hand with NRCS to implement systems that conserve water and keep valuable nutrients on the field and out of local waterways.

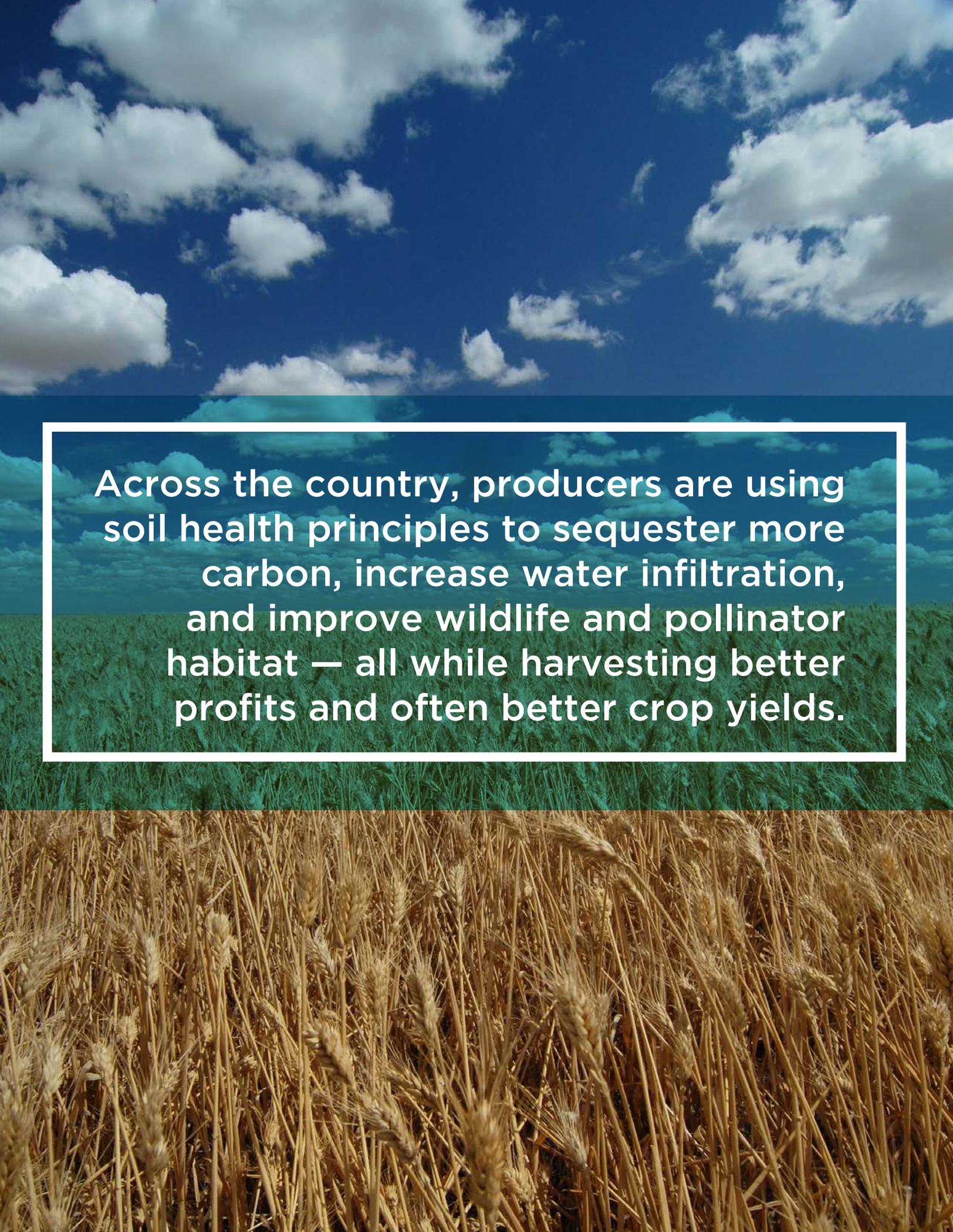
Many producers have joined their friends and neighbors in landscape-scale efforts to minimize agricultural impacts and improve water quality throughout watersheds. By improving soil health and adopting a systems approach to conservation across the landscape, these targeted efforts have resulted in an ever growing list of streams restored in working agricultural land.

**“I've always been conservation minded, so I'm working on using waterways and contour strips on the farm to combat erosion and fix some of the conservation issues.”**

Tim Servais, Wisconsin producer

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Across the country, producers are using soil health principles to sequester more carbon, increase water infiltration, and improve wildlife and pollinator habitat — all while harvesting better profits and often better crop yields.

# America's Working Lands Support Clean Air

Thanks to the success of voluntary conservation and air quality assessment tools, many producers are discovering that the techniques that increase soil and crop resiliency are the same techniques that reduce carbon and nitrous oxide emissions — creating a win-win for private landowners and their communities.

Many of these conservation-minded producers who are located in strong rural and urban land interfaces are also working with NRCS to implement moisture-management techniques and windbreaks that help minimize or diffuse dust and odors associated with livestock production.

**“If we take care of the land, it will take care of us.”**

Hugh Hammond Bennett, Father of Soil Conservation

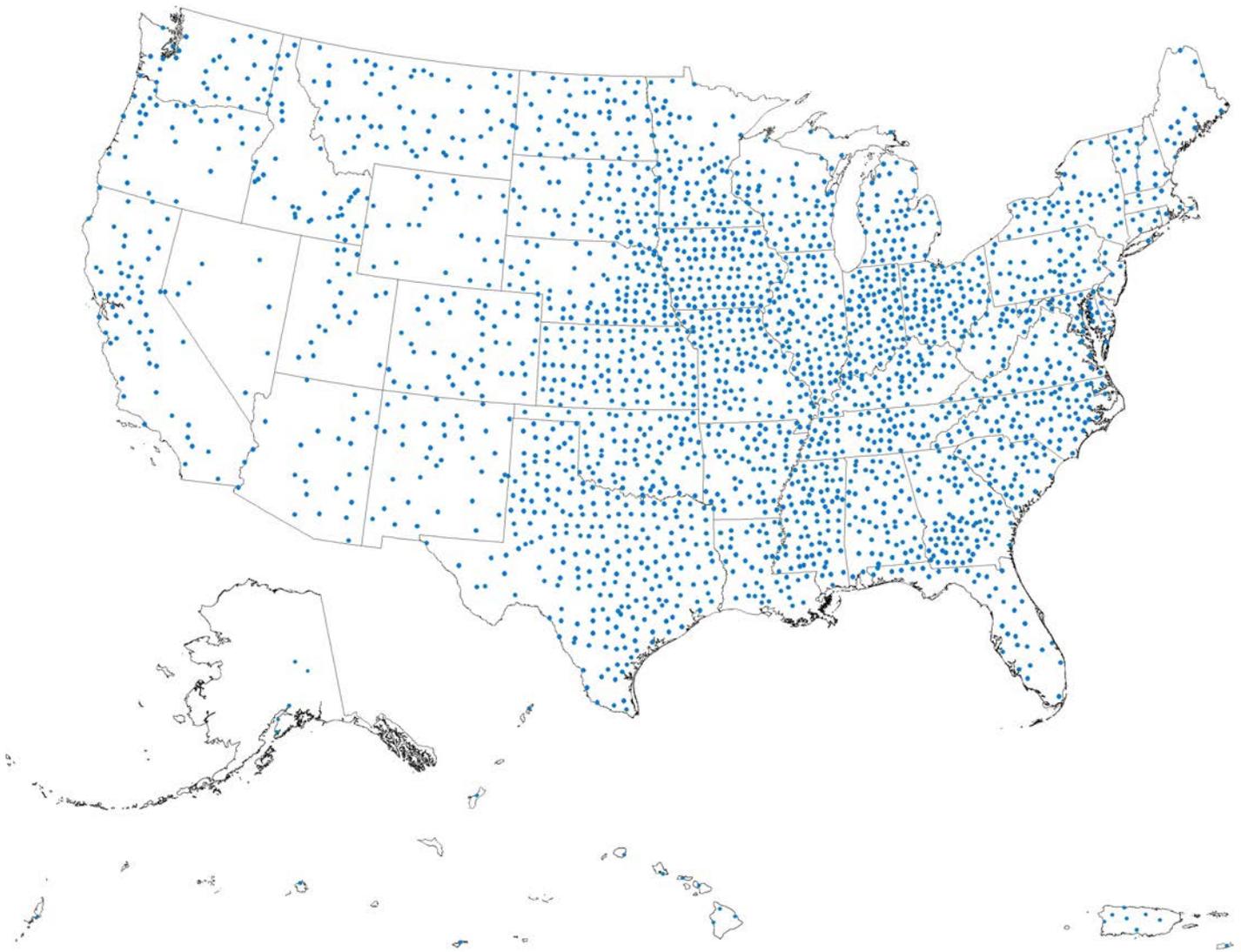
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## Get Started With NRCS

Do you farm or ranch and want to make improvements to the land that you own or lease?



## NRCS Offices Across the Country

NRCS was born out of troubled times — the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s. Dust storms ravaged the Nation’s farmland, stripping away millions of tons of topsoil and carrying it all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. What originally began as the USDA Soil Conservation Service in 1935 is now known as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, a name change that highlights our broader mission of natural resource conservation.

Today, through voluntary conservation programs, NRCS helps producers, soil and water conservation districts, and other partners protect and conserve natural resources on private lands throughout the United States.

With nearly 3,000 offices in communities nationwide, NRCS employees continue to provide the information, tools, and delivery systems necessary for producers — in every State and territory — to conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. This locally led, science-based approach offers producers voluntary conservation solutions that enhance their environment and commercial viability.

Find your local service center:  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)

# Helping People Help the Land

Each day, our 10,000 plus NRCS employees help people help the land by:

- Adhering to sound science principles;
- Using proven technical tools for on-the-ground application;
- Providing personalized advice and financial assistance to landowners and producers;
- Developing locally led conservation solutions with partners;
- Supporting innovation in agriculture, conservation, and economic markets; and
- Investing in people — including beginning, underserved, and veteran farmers.







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