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# **Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs**

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Specialist in Agricultural Conservation and Natural Resources Policy

February 23, 2016

**Congressional Research Service**

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[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R40763

## Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently administer close to 20 programs and subprograms that are directly or indirectly available to assist producers and landowners who wish to practice conservation on agricultural lands. The differences and number of these programs have created general confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs. While recent consolidation efforts removed some duplication, a large number of programs remains. The programs discussed in this report are as follows:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Operations (CO); Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- CRP—Farmable Wetland Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Grassroots Source Water Protection Program
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP)
- Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program
- Water Bank Program
- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program

This tabular presentation provides basic information covering each of the programs. In each case, a brief program description is followed by information on major amendments in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, 2014 farm bill); national scope and availability; states with the greatest participation; the backlog of applications or other measures of continuing interest; program funding authority; FY2016 funding; FY2017 Administration budget request; statutory authority; the authorization expiration date; and a link to the program's website.

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## Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers a number of agricultural conservation programs that assist private landowners with natural resource concerns. These include working land programs, land retirement and easement programs, watershed programs, emergency programs, technical assistance, and other programs. The number and funding levels for agricultural conservation programs have steadily increased over the past 60 years. Early conservation efforts were focused on reducing high levels of soil erosion and providing water to agriculture in quantities and quality that enhanced farm production. Congress responded to these issues by creating and revising programs designed to reduce resource problems on the farm. By the early 1980s, however, concern was growing that these programs were not adequately dealing with environmental problems resulting from agricultural activities (especially off the farm). 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, including in 1990, 1996, 2002, 2008, and 2014,<sup>1</sup> reflect a rapid evolution of the conservation agenda, including the growing influence of environmentalists and other non-agricultural interests in the formulation of conservation policy, and a recognition that agriculture was not treated like other business sectors in many environmental laws.<sup>2</sup> 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)<sup>3</sup> 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).<sup>4</sup> In addition, the conservation effort involves 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 the agricultural conservation effort.

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<sup>1</sup> 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), and Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79).

<sup>2</sup> For additional discussion on conservation in the farm bill, see CRS Report R43504, *Conservation Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on: ARS projects, see <http://www.ars.usda.gov/Research/Research.htm>; ERS projects, see <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/natural-resources-environment/conservation-programs.aspx>; NIFA programs, see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/nre/nre.cfm>, and FS projects, see <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/>.

## Overview

USDA provides technical and financial assistance to attract interest and encourage participation in conservation programs. Participation in all USDA conservation programs is voluntary. These programs 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 create conditions to limit degradation in the future.

Though programs in this report are listed alphabetically, agricultural conservation programs can be grouped into the following categories based on similarities: working land programs, land retirement and easement programs, watershed programs, emergency programs,<sup>5</sup> compliance,<sup>6</sup> technical assistance, and other programs and overarching provisions.

### USDA Agricultural Conservation Programs

**Working Lands Programs**—typically classified as programs that allow private land to remain in production, while implementing various conservation practices to address natural resource concerns specific to the area.

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA).

**Land Retirement and Easement Programs**—land retirement programs provide federal payments to private agricultural landowners for *temporary* changes in land use or management to achieve environmental benefits. Conversely, conservation easements impose a *permanent* or *long-term* land-use restriction that is voluntarily placed on the land in exchange for a government payment.

- Conservation Reserve Program (includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and Farmable Wetland Program), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (including agricultural land easements and wetland reserve easements), and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP).

**Watershed Programs**—NRCS partners with local sponsors to carry out activities for soil conservation; flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; watershed surveys; and dam rehabilitation.

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (also referred to as the Small Watershed Program or P.L. 566 and P.L. 534) and Watershed Rehabilitation program.

**Emergency Programs**—provide disaster assistance for farmland rehabilitation and impairments to watersheds. Programs are usually funded through supplemental appropriation acts.

- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), and Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (includes floodplain easements).

**Compliance**—prohibits a producer from receiving many federal farm program benefits (including conservation assistance and crop insurance) when conservation program requirements for highly erodible lands and wetlands are not met.

- Highly erodible land conservation (Sodbuster), wetland conservation (Swampbuster), and Sodsaver.

**Technical Assistance Programs**—provides landowners with science-based conservation information and technical expertise (e.g., engineering and biological) unique to the region and land use type. Usually does not include financial assistance.

- Conservation Operations (includes Conservation Technical Assistance, Soil Survey, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting, and Plant Materials Centers).

**Other Conservation Programs and Provisions**—Conservation Innovation Grants, Grassroots Source Water Protection Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program, and Water Bank Program.

<sup>5</sup> Additional information on emergency land rehabilitation programs may be found in CRS Report R42854, *Emergency Assistance for Agricultural Land Rehabilitation*.

<sup>6</sup> 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*.

The majority of conservation programs are funded through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) as mandatory spending. Congress authorizes mandatory programs at specified funding levels (or acreage enrollment levels for CRP and CSP) for multiple years, typically through omnibus legislation such as the farm bill. Mandatory programs are funded at these levels unless Congress limits funding to a lower amount through the appropriations or legislative process (or puts a ceiling on acreage that can be enrolled).<sup>7</sup> Discretionary programs are funded each year through the annual appropriations process.<sup>8</sup>

Despite a steady increase in mandatory funding authority, many conservation programs have been reduced or capped through annual appropriation acts since FY2003. Many of these spending reductions were at the request of the Administration.<sup>9</sup> The mix of programs and amounts of reduction has varied from year to year. Some programs, such as the CRP, have not been reduced by appropriators in recent years, while others, such as EQIP, have been repeatedly reduced below authorized levels. Overall authorized mandatory funding for conservation programs was reduced by over \$5 billion between FY2006 and FY2016.

Sequestration has also had 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.<sup>10</sup> Discretionary accounts have avoided sequestration in recent years through adjustments to spending limits, however, sequestration continues on mandatory accounts. Most all mandatory conservation programs were subject to sequestration in FY2014, FY2015, FY2016, and likely will be again in FY2017.<sup>11</sup> Even with sequestration and appropriations act reductions, total mandatory funding for conservation programs has grown from a total of \$3.6 billion in FY2006 to over \$5 billion in FY2016.

## 2014 Farm Bill

Before the 1985 farm bill, few conservation programs existed, and only two would be considered large by today's standards. In contrast, leading up to the debate on the 2014 farm bill, there were over 20 distinct conservation programs with annual spending greater than \$5 billion. The differences and number of these programs created general confusion about the purpose, participation, and policies of the programs. Discussion about simplifying or consolidating conservation programs to reduce overlap and duplication, and to generate savings, continued for a number of years. The Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79, 2014 farm bill), contained several

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<sup>7</sup> For additional discussion on these reductions, see CRS In Focus IF10041, *Reductions to Mandatory Agricultural Conservation Programs in Appropriations Law*.

<sup>8</sup> For additional information on the FY2016 appropriation, see CRS Report R44240, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2016 Appropriations*.

<sup>9</sup> The FY2017 Administration's request is the first since FY2003 to not include a reduction of mandatory funding for conservation programs.

<sup>10</sup> For additional information on sequestration and the budget process, see CRS Report R42972, *Sequestration as a Budget Enforcement Process: Frequently Asked Questions*.

<sup>11</sup> The Conservation Reserve Program is statutorily exempt from sequestration (2 U.S.C. 905 (g)(1)(A)). Sequestration reductions in FY2014 were reflected in the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) baseline that was used to write the 2014 farm bill. For more information, see CRS Report R42484, *Budget Issues That Shaped the 2014 Farm Bill*. Sequestration estimates for FY2015, FY2016, and FY2017 may be found in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Reports to the Congress on the Joint Committee Reductions can be found at [https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative\\_reports](https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative_reports).

program consolidation measures, including the repeal of 12 active and inactive programs, the creation of two new programs, and the merging of two programs into existing ones.<sup>12</sup>

## Unfunded and Repealed Programs

A number of conservation programs were repealed by the 2014 farm bill or have gone unfunded by Congress in recent years. **Table 1** lists these programs and the most recent congressional action taken.

**Table 1. Unfunded and Repealed Programs**

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Action-Year</b>	<b>Description</b>
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)	Repealed-2014	A sub-program of EQIP that provided funding for water quality and quantity projects. Repealed in the 2014 farm bill and incorporated into RCPP.
Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program	Repealed-2014	Provided additional funding through existing programs to conservation projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Repealed in the 2014 farm bill and incorporated into RCPP.
Conservation Security Program	New enrollment unauthorized-2008	Replaced by the Conservation Stewardship Program in the 2008 farm bill, the program enrolled acres in 5- to 10-year stewardship contracts, the last of which will expire in FY2018.
Farmland Protection Program (FPP)	Repealed-2014	An agricultural land easement program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Program components were incorporated into ACEP.
Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)	Repealed-2014	A grassland easement and contract program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Easement provisions were incorporated into ACEP and rental contracts were incorporated into CRP.
Resource Conservation and Program (RC&D) Development	Unfunded since-FY2011	Funded local RC&D coordinator positions. Funding terminated in FY2011 and program close-out complete in FY2012. FY2014 appropriations act permanently cancelled any remaining funds.
Watershed Surveys and Planning	Unfunded since-FY2007	Funded investigations and surveys of river basins to respond to water quality, flooding, water and land management, and sedimentation problems.
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)	Repealed-2014	A wetland easement program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Program components were incorporated into ACEP.
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program	Repealed-2014	A wildlife habitat cost-share assistance program repealed in the 2014 farm bill. Program components were incorporated into EQIP.

**Source:** CRS.

## 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;

<sup>12</sup> For additional information on the amendments to conservation programs in the 2014 farm bill, see CRS Report R43504, *Conservation Provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79)*.

- major amendments to the program in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79), commonly referred to as the 2014 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 it is mandatory spending or discretionary appropriations, and any funding restrictions;
- FY2016 funding level provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016 (P.L. 114-113), or, if applicable, the authorized level in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (sequestration included where applicable);
- FY2017 funding level requested by the Administration (sequestration and carryover not included);
- statutory authority, recent amendments, and U.S. Code reference;
- expiration date of program authority unless permanently authorized; and
- program’s website link.

Information for the following tables is drawn from agency budget presentations, explanatory notes, and websites; written responses to questions published each year in hearing records of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees; and spending estimates from the Congressional Budget Office. Further information about these programs may be found on the NRCS website at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> and on the “conservation programs” page of the FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.



## Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	<p>ACEP provides financial and technical assistance through two types of easements: agricultural land easements that limit non-agricultural 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 agreement 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 only available to Indian tribes (50%-75% easement value and 50%-75% restoration cost). NRCS pays all costs associated with recording the easement.</p>
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Created in the 2014 farm bill from three repealed programs—Farmland Protection Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and Wetlands Reserve Program. General program provisions are the same across both easement types, including ineligible land; subordination, exchange, modification, and termination procedures; and compliance requirements.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. In FY2015, \$186 million in ACEP funding was used to enroll an estimated total of 115,233 acres of farmland, grassland, and wetlands through 347 new ACEP easements. This includes ALE (easements)—125 on 33,401 acres; ALE (grassland easements)—13 on 35,949 acres; WRE (permanent easements)—186 on 42,388 acres; and WRE (30-year easements)—23 on 3,950 acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	The most funding obligated in FY2015 was in FL (\$30.9 million), AR (\$25.0 million), and CA (\$20.9 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	<p><i>Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)</i>—In FY2015, 539 ALE applications were received for nearly \$171 million over 250,000 acres, including 60 applications for over 112,000 acres of grasslands of special environmental significance. Approximately 26% of applications were enrolled.</p> <p><i>Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)</i>—In FY2015, 662 WRE applications were received for nearly \$247 million over 124,000 acres. Approximately 38% of applications were funded.</p>
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. FY2014—\$400 million, FY2015—\$425 million, FY2016—\$450 million, FY2017—\$500 million, and FY2018—\$250 million.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$419 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$31 million from sequestration).
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$500 million.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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. 16 U.S.C. 3865-3865d.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/</a>

## Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS (conservation assistance), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS, organic certification), and Risk Management Agency (RMA, production, price, or revenue risk reduction).
<b>Program description</b>	AMA provides cost-sharing assistance under contracts of 1 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.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Both the House- and Senate-passed farm bills (H.R. 2642 and S. 954) included amendments to AMA, but none were adopted in the conference agreement.
<b>National scope</b>	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include CT, DE, HI, MD, MA, ME, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, and WY. As of the end of FY2015, 3,602 contracts were being implemented within these states.
<b>Leading states</b>	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2015 include ME (\$1.0 million), PA (\$437,000), and NY (\$404,000).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	A backlog of 1,667 applications was pending at the end of FY2015, up from a backlog of 323 applications in FY2014. The FY2015 backlog would enroll more than 152,000 acres at a cost of \$29 million.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. Permanently authorized at \$10 million for each fiscal year. Funding is split by law among the three USDA agencies: 50%—NRCS, 10%—AMS, and 40%—RMA.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$9.3 million (\$4.6 million for conservation; total authorization reduced by approximately \$680,000 from sequestration).
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$10 million (\$5 million for conservation).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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).
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program websites</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama</a> (NRCS); <a href="http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occsp">http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occsp</a> (AMS).

## Conservation Operations (CO)— Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	Conservation Operations (CO) is the primary account funding technical assistance within NRCS. More than 88% of CO funding is for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA), which provides conservation planning and implementation assistance through field staff placed in almost all counties within the United States and territories. This assistance is provided to producers and land owners who voluntarily apply natural resource conservation systems, consisting of one or more practices, on private and other non-federal lands. Other components of CO include the Soil Surveys, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting, and Plant Materials Centers.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. CTA was funded at \$752 million and estimated 5,390 staff years for FY2016. Total CO spending for FY2016 is \$851 million and estimated 5,920 staff years.
<b>Leading states</b>	No data are available for the CTA subset in FY2015, but the three leading states for total CO funding are TX (\$34.2 million), MO (\$25.2 million), and IA (\$20.0 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not available.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$752 million for CTA out of \$851 million appropriated for all CO.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$761 million for CTA out of \$860 million for all CO.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/</a> (CTA); <a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/</a> (soil survey); <a href="http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/">http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/</a> (snow survey and water supply forecasting); and <a href="http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/">http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/</a> (plant materials centers).

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## Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	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. Imbedded in the CRP are several small and more focused programs that bypass the general bidding process, some established in law and others established administratively, to address specific resource topics, including more concentrated resource problems in a portion of a state, protection of small isolated agricultural wetlands, and improvement of habitat for upland game birds. All lands that qualify for these subprograms are automatically accepted and enrolled on a continuous basis.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reduces enrollment ceiling from 32 million acres to 24 million acres by FY2018; amends emergency harvesting, grazing, and permits other use of forage, in some cases, without a reduction in rental rate; allows a one time, penalty-free, early-out in FY2015 for contracts enrolled longer than five years and containing no environmentally sensitive practices; and incorporates grassland contracts, similar to what was repealed under the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP).
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. In lieu of a general sign-up in FY2015, USDA offered expiring CRP contracts a one-year extension. The next general sign-up runs from December 1, 2015, through February 28, 2016. Sign-up for the new grasslands component ended November 20, 2015. As of December 2015, there are 635,883 active contracts on 358,115 farms with 23.5 million acres enrolled.
<b>Leading states</b>	Leading states in terms of total acres are TX (3.0 million), KS (2.1 million), and CO (1.9 million). Leading states in terms of total number of contracts are IA (102,918), IL (75,915), and MN (54,860).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2015, continuous sign-up acres increased by 837,000 acres, the largest continuous sign-up year to date. FY2016 continuous sign-up (through December) has increased by 131,000 acres, twice that of the next highest enrollment over the same period. General sign-up acres, however, have declined. An estimated one million acres expired at the end of FY2015. The 2014 farm bill's early-out provision in FY2015 withdrew approximately 108,000 acres. Between FY2009 and FY2015, over 14.3 million CRP acres under contract have expired and were not reenrolled in the program.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, statutorily exempt from sequestration. At any one time, CRP can enroll no more than: 27.5 million acres in FY2014; 26 million acres in FY2015; 25 million acres in FY2016; and 24 million acres in FY2017 and FY2018. No funding amount specified.
<b>FY2016 est. funding</b>	\$1.8 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
<b>FY2017 est. Administration request</b>	\$2.0 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §1231-§1235 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2001-§2008 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3831(a)-3835a.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index</a>

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## CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	This subprogram of CRP partners with states at their request. States propose sub-state areas, such as a watershed, where environmental or resource concerns are more concentrated and can be addressed by enrolling up to 100,000 acres per project. States contribute 20% of the funding so that larger payments can be made, in order to encourage greater participation. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	There are 47 CREP agreements in 34 states, including 68,272 contracts on 45,468 farms, enrolling a total of 1.2 million acres, as of December 2015.
<b>Leading states</b>	Leading states in terms of acres enrolled are PA (144,870), OH (116,249), and IL (104,240). States leading in number of contracts are OH (14,419), PA (8,962), and MI (6,107).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable since any eligible land can be enrolled at any time; participation has been much higher in some states than in others, but that is due, reportedly, to how the program is promoted. Average rental payments are higher than for acreage under the general CRP sign-up process.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authority derived from CRP statutory authority (see “Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)”).
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index</a>

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## CRP—Farmable Wetland Program

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	This 750,000 acre subprogram of the CRP enrolls small isolated agricultural wetlands. On a single tract of land, enrollment is set at a maximum of 40 contiguous wetland acres. "Flooded farmland" has a 20-acre limit. Eligible lands include wetlands that were cropped 3 of the preceding 10 years, and 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.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Renames the pilot program "Farmable Wetland Program." Reauthorizes the program through FY2018, and clarifies language related to constructed wetlands receiving water from agricultural drainage. Reduces acreage limitation from 1 million acres to 750,000 acres.
<b>National scope</b>	Active contracts in 23 participating states, including AL, AR, CO, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MD, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NC, ND, OH, OK, SD, WA and WI. As of December 2015, there are 16,486 contracts on 12,639 farms for a total of 379,902 enrolled acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	In terms of acres, the leading states are ND (118,963 acres), SD (97,503 acres), and IA (82,151 acres). The largest number of contracts are in IA (5,078), followed by SD (4,291) and MN (3,440).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable since any eligible land can be enrolled at any time; participation has been much higher in some states than in others, but that is due, reportedly, to how the program is promoted and the amount of eligible land with a state.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, statutorily exempt from sequestration. No more than 750,000 acres 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).
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in Title XI of Agriculture and Related Agency appropriations, 2001 (P.L. 106-387) as §1231B of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended by §2002 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3831b.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index</a>

## Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	CSP provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on tribal and private working lands. Contracts (five years in length with the option of extension) are based on meeting or exceeding a “stewardship threshold.” Payments are based on the actual costs of installing conservation measures, any foregone income, and the value of the expected environmental outcomes. Enrollment is offered through a continuous sign-up and applications are accepted year-round.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reduces the enrollment cap from 12.769 million acres annually to 10 million acres annually. Reorganizes the statutory language and refocuses the program on generating additional conservation benefits. Raises the entry bar for participants to two priority resource concerns upon entry and meet or exceed one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract. Contract renewal participants must meet the threshold for two additional priority resources concerns or exceed the threshold for two existing priority resource concerns. Removes the 10% limitation on nonindustrial private forest land and provides flexible transition options for land coming out of CRP.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. The program held its first sign-up in 2009, and at the end of FY2015, had nearly 73 million acres enrolled.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2015, SD had the most total acres funded (1.1 million), followed by NM (595,308) and MT (442,188). The most funding obligated in FY2015 was in SD (\$11.9 million), MN (\$8.0 million), and ND (\$6.9 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2015, CSP provided \$91 million in funding to enroll 7 million new acres. Over 20,000 applications were received in FY2015 and only about 5,800 applications (27%) were funded.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. 10 million acres each fiscal year. No funding amount specified.
<b>FY2016 est. funding</b>	\$1.23 billion (authorization reduced by sequestration; unknown effect on acres).
<b>FY2017 est. Administration request</b>	Estimated \$1.56 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §2301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) as §1238D-§1238G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. Amended in §2101 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3838d-3838g.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp</a>

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## Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	ECP provides emergency funding and technical assistance to producers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, floods, wind, and erosion) through activities such as removing debris, and implementing emergency water conservation measures in response to severe droughts.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely and unpredictably from year to year.
<b>Leading states</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2016 funding to date</b>	\$108 million, of which \$91 million is to remain available until expended and for necessary expenses resulting from a major disaster declared pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act, P.L. 93-288).
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §401 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 2201-2205.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index</a>

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## Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA, technical assistance by NRCS.
<b>Program description</b>	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.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely and unpredictably from year to year.
<b>Leading states</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2016 funding to date</b>	\$6 million, of which \$2 million is to remain available until expended and for necessary expenses resulting from a major disaster declared pursuant to the Stafford Act.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index</a>

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## Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS on private lands, U.S. Forest Service on National Forest Systems lands.
<b>Program description</b>	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.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Authorizes USDA to modify and terminate floodplain easements provided the current landowner agrees, and the modification or termination addresses a compelling public need for which there is no practical alternative, and is in the public interest.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely and unpredictably from year to year.
<b>Leading states</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2016 funding to date</b>	\$157 million, of which \$37 million is to remain available until expended and for necessary expenses resulting from a major disaster declared pursuant to the Stafford Act. Repurposed \$2.4 million of unobligated funds for disasters occurring in FY2016 and FY2017.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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 §2506 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 2203; and 33 U.S.C. 701b-1.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp</a>

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## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to producers and land owners to plan and install structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible lands to alleviate natural resource problems. Eligible producers enter into contracts to receive payment for implementing conservation practices. Approved activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice(s) to address resource concerns on the land. Sixty percent of the funds are targeted to practices benefiting livestock.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Incorporates the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) into EQIP with a 5% allocation to wildlife habitat practices; removes the minimum one-year contract length requirement; adds veteran farmer or rancher to the list of certain producers eligible for cost-share rates up to 90% and advanced payments; raises the payment limit to an aggregate of \$450,000 between FY2014-FY2018 and eliminates the waiver authority for contracts of environmental significance; repeals the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP); reauthorizes the innovative grants program (see “EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)”); retains the allocation of 60% of funding each year to practices related to livestock production; and reauthorizes and reduces the air quality funding carve-out from \$37.5 million to \$25 million annually.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. In FY2015, EQIP obligated over \$861 million for 32,957 contracts covering 9.9 million acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2015, the top three states by contracts signed were TX (3,199), CA (2,299), and MS (2,198). The most funding obligated was in CA (\$124 million), TX (\$95 million), and AR (\$54 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2015, 32,957 applications were funded (31.4%), and 72,104 applications went unfunded. The total estimated cost of this backlog is \$1.9 billion. The most unfunded applications were submitted in GA (5,520), MS (5,315), and OK (5,041).
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. FY2014—\$1.35 billion, FY2015—\$1.6 billion, FY2016—\$1.65 billion, FY2017—\$1.65 billion, and FY2018—\$1.75 billion.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$1.3 billion (authorization reduced by approximately \$112 million from sequestration and \$209 million from P.L. 114-113).
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$1.65 billion.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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 by §2201-§2206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-3839aa-7.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip</a>

## EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	CIG is a subprogram of EQIP that awards competitive grants to state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, tribes, and individuals to implement innovative conservation techniques and practices. Annual requests for proposals are posted on <a href="http://www.grants.gov">http://www.grants.gov</a> and include separate funding categories for national and state level competitions. 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.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Adds research and demonstration activities, and new technology pilot testing as eligible projects; reauthorizes but reduces the air quality funding carve-out to \$25 million of EQIP annually through FY2018; and adds a reporting requirement that no later than December 31, 2014, and every two years thereafter, a report must be submitted to Congress regarding CIG funding, project results, and technology transfer efforts.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide with select states offering state competitions. In FY2015, CIG awarded a total of \$20.5 million to 45 organizations through the national CIG competition.
<b>Leading states</b>	None identified.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	None identified.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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 by §2207 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig</a>

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## Grassroots Source Water Protection Program

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	FSA
<b>Program description</b>	Grassroots Source Water Protection Program provides funding to the National Rural Water Association for technical assistance to operate state's source water protection program. Local programs encourage the voluntary adoption of practices that prevent drinking water pollution.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reauthorizes discretionary funding authority and authorizes \$5 million in mandatory funding to remain available until expended.
<b>National scope</b>	In September 2013, the program was expanded to all 50 states.
<b>Leading states</b>	Annual appropriations are divided equally among all states.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	None identified.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration: FY2014—\$5 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: \$20 million annually.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$6.5 million.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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 by §2502 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-2
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September, 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/source-water-protection/index">http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/source-water-protection/index</a>

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## Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	HFRP assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year contracts, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Eliminates mandatory funding authority and replaces with an authorization to receive appropriations. Adds a definition of "acreage owned by Indian tribes." Provides flexibility for funding technical assistance.
<b>National scope</b>	Not available nationwide. Limited participation in select states. As of the end of FY2015, 110 agreements covering 677,337 acres have been enrolled in the program.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2015, states with the most funding obligated were OK (\$726,000), PA (\$298,000), and HI (\$178,000). There was no new enrollment in FY2015.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	Not available.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. \$12 million annually.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$0
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in Title V Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148), as amended. Amended by §8203 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 6572.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests</a>

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## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	RCPP provides financial and technical assistance for multi-state or watershed-scale projects. The program creates partnership opportunities to target and leverage federal conservation funding for specific areas and resource concerns. Project areas are defined by eligible partners and are selected through a competitive state or national competition. Partnership agreements are for five years with a possible 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. Funds are also directed through “critical conservation areas” (CCA) selected by NRCS. In FY2014, CCAs include Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Great Lakes Region, Mississippi River Basin, Colorado River Basin, Longleaf Pine Range, Columbia River Basin, Prairie Grasslands Region, and California Bay Delta. Funding is statutorily divided as: critical conservation areas—35%, national projects—40%, and state projects—25%.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Created in the 2014 farm bill from four repealed programs—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, and the Great Lakes Basin Program for soil erosion and sediment control. RCPP contracts follow the existing rules and requirements of the covered programs.
<b>National scope</b>	To be eligible for an RCPP contract, a producer must be located in either a CCA or a selected partnership area, but is not required to work with the sponsoring project partner and may choose to work directly with NRCS. Partnership applications are accepted in two phases: pre-proposal and full proposal. In FY2016, 84 projects were selected totaling over \$220 million in federal spending and leveraging an estimated \$500 million in partner contributions.
<b>Leading states</b>	Following the final selection in FY2016, the three funding categories received the following (most total partners; most offers): state—50 projects (NM—25 partners; CA—\$4.8 million), CCA—16 projects (Mississippi River Basin—52 partners; Mississippi River Basin—\$12.0 million), and national—18 projects.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2016, the total amount of funding requested was more than four times the amount available. During the pre-proposal round, 265 proposals were received requesting about \$857 million.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. 7% of available covered conservation program funds (EQIP, CSP, ACEP, and HFRP) plus an additional \$100 million annually.
<b>FY2016 est. funding</b>	\$93.2 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$6.8 million from sequestration), plus 7% of available covered conservation program funds (minus sequestration).
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$100 million, plus 7% of available covered conservation program funds.
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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. 16 U.S.C. 3871-3871f.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/</a>

## Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program encourages owners and operators of privately held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by state or tribal governments. Competitive grants are offered to states and tribal governments for expanding existing access programs or creating new programs. Grants are reduced by 25% if opening dates for migratory bird hunting in a state are not consistent for residents and nonresidents.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reduces and extends authorization of mandatory funding. Requires USDA to submit a report to Congress no later than 2016 on the effectiveness of the program.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. 26 states and one tribal government have participated to date. In FY2015, 15 states received grants for a total of approximately \$20 million.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2015, states receiving the most funding were KS (\$2.7 million), OK (\$2.3 million), and MN (\$1.7 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	None identified.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. \$40 million in total for the period of FY2014-FY2018.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$20 million.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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 by §2503 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 3839bb-5.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=stelpdb1242739">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=stelpdb1242739</a>

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## Water Bank Program

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<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	The Water Bank Program offers 10-year, non-renewable 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 of no funding, the program was appropriated \$7.5 million in FY2012. These funds were obligated exclusively in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota and were focused on flood reduction.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include MN, ND, and SD. In FY2015, \$4 million was obligated to 51 agreements covering 8,844 acres.
<b>Leading states</b>	In FY2015, eligible states receiving the most funding were ND (\$3.1 million) and SD (\$720,000).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2015, there was a backlog of 448 applications with an estimated value of \$19 million covering 48,651 acres in North Dakota and South Dakota.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$4 million.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in the Water Bank Act (P.L. 91-559), as amended. 16 U.S.C. 1301-1311.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?&amp;cid=stelprdb1047790">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?&amp;cid=stelprdb1047790</a>

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## Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	Also referred to as the Small Watershed Program, Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations are two separate authorizations under which more than 11,000 structures have been built in more than 1,700 active and completed projects. The P.L. 78-534 Flood Prevention Operations Program authorizes 11 projects, while the P.L. 83-566 Small Watershed Operations Program authorizes watershed projects generally. Projects may be authorized for any of eight purposes; almost all projects have flood control as an authorized purpose. Under P.L. 566, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to plan and install projects on private lands, in cooperation with local sponsors, states, and other public agencies. The small watershed project costs are shared with local partners. Projects are limited to a maximum size, including 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity and 250,000 acres in extent. Projects above a specified size require congressional committee authorization.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	None.
<b>National scope</b>	Available nationwide. A total of 414 work plans are complete under P.L. 534, and 1,645 are active or completed under P.L. 566. No new projects were authorized in FY2015.
<b>Leading states</b>	None identified.
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	An estimated \$921 million is needed to install the remaining measures in the 302 active watershed projects. States with the greatest value of unfunded commitments are TX (\$245 million), OK (\$126 million), and MO (\$111 million).
<b>Funding authority</b>	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$0 appropriated. \$10.6 million congressionally directed from CO. Rescinded \$20 million of unobligated balances.
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0
<b>Statutory authority</b>	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. 33 U.S.C. 701b-1 and 16 U.S.C. 1000 et. seq.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	Permanent authorization.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&amp;cid=nrcs143_008271">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&amp;cid=nrcs143_008271</a>

## Watershed Rehabilitation Program

<b>Administering agency(s)</b>	NRCS
<b>Program description</b>	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, and 3,724 reached or exceeded that time span by the end of 2014. By the end of 2016, this number is expected to be 4,749.
<b>Major 2014 farm bill amendments</b>	Reauthorizes both mandatory and discretionary funding authority.
<b>National scope</b>	Only available for dams built through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program and the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program. A total of 269 rehabilitation projects have been authorized in 31 states between FY2000 and FY2015. A total of 130 projects are complete, and 139 projects are being implemented (either in planning, design, or construction phase).
<b>Leading states</b>	States with the largest number of dam projects funded over the life of the program (2000-2015) are OK (54), TX (34), and UT (34). States receiving the most funds in FY2015 were UT (\$30.7 million), VA (\$19.3 million), and TX (\$10.6 million).
<b>Backlog/Interest</b>	In FY2015, over \$502 million in requests were received from public sponsors to rehabilitate 393 dams. Of the FY2015 funding available, \$73 million will be used to rehabilitate 76 dams and \$3 million will be used to assess 114 dams. Over \$400 million in requests are expected to remain unfunded.
<b>Funding authority</b>	Mandatory, subject to sequestration: FY2014—\$250 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: FY2008-FY2018—\$85 million annually.
<b>FY2016 funding</b>	\$12 million in discretionary funding and \$0 million in mandatory funding (authorization reduced by \$5 million from sequestration and \$63 million in P.L. 114-113).
<b>FY2017 Administration request</b>	\$0 in discretionary funding and \$14 million in mandatory funding (authorization reduced by \$54 million, not including sequestration). Requests a rescission of the reduction (\$54 million minus sequestration).
<b>Statutory authority</b>	Authorized in §313 of the Grain Standards and Warehouse Improvement Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-472) as §14 of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, as amended. Amended by §2505 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79). 16 U.S.C. 1012.
<b>Authorization expires</b>	September 30, 2018.
<b>Program website</b>	<a href="http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr">http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr</a>

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