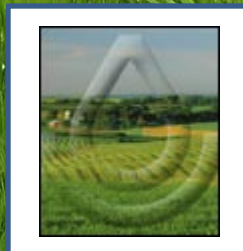




United States Department of Agriculture

# NRCS: Who we are & What we Do



Natural Resources Conservation Service

# NRCS

- NRCS provides products and services that enable people to be good stewards of the Nation's soil, water and related natural resources on non-Federal Lands.

**Mission:**

**Helping** People

**Help** the Land



# **Conservation Planning & Technical Consultation**

**Conservation Planning** – NRCS works side by side with our customers to identify natural resource concerns, such as soil erosion and water quality issues, and develop unique conservation plans for restoring and protecting resources.

**Technical Consultation** – Through technical consultation and planning assistance we provide professional advice to customers to help them make decisions about natural resource management. Technical Assistance is also provided to customers who seek to comply with other federal, state or local ordinances and environmental regulation.

# Conservation Implementation

Conservation Implementation - assists operators and landowners in installing conservation treatments, management measures and management systems that result in improved treatment of the resources.

- Designs: Designs are prepared for engineering and management practices that meet established technical standards and specifications.

- Follow-up: Follow-up is conducted with a client during planning and implementation and following implementations.

- Conservation Compliance Checks and Reviews: Mandated reviews ensure that USDA program participants are meeting their responsibility to protect highly erodible land and wetlands.

# CONSERVATION PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

**Financial Assistance** – NRCS offers financial and technical assistance to help agricultural producers make and maintain conservation improvements on their land.

- The **Agricultural Management Assistance** (AMA) helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and solve natural resource issues through natural resources conservation.
- The **Conservation Stewardship Program** (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.
- The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

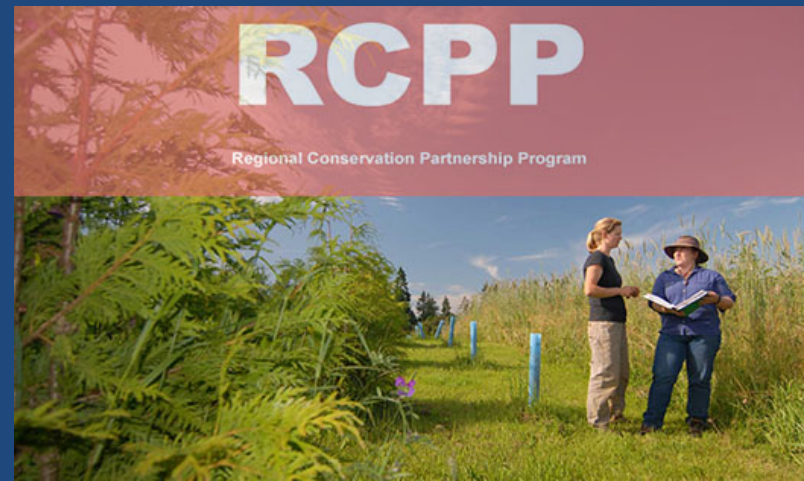
# Easements

NRCS offers easement programs to eligible landowners to conserve working agricultural lands, wetlands, grasslands and forestlands.

- The **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

# Partnerships

NRCS works with partners to leverage additional conservation assistance for agricultural producers and landowners in priority conservation areas.



- The NEW Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements.

RCPP combines the authorities of four former conservation programs – the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and the Great Lakes Basin Program. Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of EQIP, CSP, ACEP and HFRP; and in certain areas the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.

# Conservation Programs with Greatest Impact on Water Quality

- EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program
- WRP – Wetlands Reserve Program
- CREP- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (NRCS Technical Assistance Only)





# EQIP

- Since December 2008 (the signing of the 2008 Farm Bill) through September 30, 2013 - \$22.7 million dollars have been paid out to Delaware farmers to implement over 3,500 conservation practices through EQIP to improve water quality, improve water quality efficiency, and reduce inefficient energy use.



# EQIP Top Five Practices

- Heavy Use Area Protection – concrete pads in front of poultry house and poultry manure structures to reduce the amount of nutrients entering the surface and ground waters.
- Poultry Manure Structures – to store manure and then apply it to crop fields at the correct amounts and just prior to crop planting to maximize nutrient uptake.
- Irrigation Water Management – manage water to maximize crop yields, maximize nutrient uptake, and improve water quantity efficiency.

# Top EQIP Practices (Cont.)

- Nutrient Management – the 4 R's – the Right Rate, the Right Source, the Right Place, and the Right Time to maximize nutrient uptake and reduce the amount of nutrients going into surface and ground waters.
- Integrated Pest Management – using \*PAMS to reduce the amount of pesticides applied and thereby entering surface and ground waters.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)

## Top 5 Enhancements for Water Quality Gains:

#1 Practice - Plant a Cover Crop to Scavenge Residual Nitrogen

#2 Practice - Use of Deep Rooted Crops to Breakup Soil  
Compaction

- Practices 1 & 2 Used Collaboratively: Deep rooted crops with large taproots can penetrate the soil's naturally occurring or man-made compacted layers. This increases infiltration, reduces surface runoff, improves soil tilth and overall soil quality. It also eliminates the need for sub-soiling with a plow, thus saving fuel, reducing erosion, scavenges nutrients enhancing water quality.
- Between the top two practices shown here, there were 1,000 acres of additional cover crops planted through CSP in 2013

# Top CSP Practices (Cont'd)

#3 Practice: Drift Reducing Nozzles, Low Pressures, Lower Boom Height and Adjuvants to Reduce Pesticide Drift

#4 Practice: Plant Tissue Tests and Analysis to Improve Nitrogen Management

#5 Practice - High Level Integrated Pest Management to Reduce Pesticide Environmental Risk



# Wetlands Reserve Program

(Now Agricultural Conservation  
Easement Program  
(ACEP))

The top 5 practices used in wetland restoration are:

- Ditch Plugs
  - Water Control Structures
  - Berms
  - Shallow Areas for Wildlife Habitat
  - Tree Planting
- One or a combination of these practices can be used on cropland and/or woodland to restore the hydrology and improve the wildlife habitat of a wetland. While the primary goal of the program is to provide habitat for wildlife, many of the practices used to restore these wetland also trap and treat sediment laden and nutrient rich waters before they reach streams and rivers.
- In 2013, 100 acres of wetlands were restored and 166 acres were enrolled in permanent easements.



# Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

- CREP is a State-Federal partnership program that provides financial incentives to landowners willing to voluntarily implement conservation measures on marginal agricultural land rather than continue the land in agricultural production.



NRCS provides the technical assistance for CREP.

# CREP - Top 5 Practices for Water Quality Gains

- Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife provide a source of water for wildlife for the majority of the year. Nitrogen reduction of 34.8/lb an acre and .89/lb acre of phosphorus.
- Wildlife Plantings provide wildlife habitat diversity, enhance environmental benefits and in addition, remove pollutants caused by runoff thereby improving surface and groundwater quality. Nitrogen reduction of 33.9/lb an acre and .63/lb acre of phosphorus.



# CREP (Continued)

- Riparian buffers remove nutrients, sediment and other pollutants from surface runoff and subsurface flow while also creating shade to lower water temperature to improve habitat for aquatic organisms. Nitrogen reduction of 31.4/lb an acre and .77/lb acre of phosphorus.
- Hardwood Tree Planting -To establish and maintain a new or existing stand of predominantly hardwood trees in a timber planting that will remove pollutants caused by runoff through absorption, plant uptake, and other processes thereby improving water quality and providing wildlife habitat diversity. Nitrogen reduction of 31.1/lb an acre and .77/lb acre of phosphorus

# CREP (Continued)

- Grass buffers remove nutrients, sediment, pesticides and other pollutants caused by runoff thereby reducing pollution and improving water quality. Nitrogen reduction of 28.9/lb an acre and .52/lb acre of phosphorus

Questions???

# Non-discrimination Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)