

USDA and other Government Agency efforts to Enhance Soil and Water Conservation

USDA-NRCS

- The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) was originally the Soil Conservation Service (SCS)
- SCS
 - Created in 1935 when congress passed Public Law 74-46, in which it recognized that "the wastage of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands . . . is a menace to the national welfare" and established the SCS

NRCS

- The original function of the SCS was to reduce the rate of erosion from crop, grazing and forest lands.
- Because of the importance of soils in dictating the “value” of other natural resources, the function of the SCS was expanded to conserve crop, grazing, and forest land “systems” as well as water quantity and quality and now air quality.
- In other words the NRCS is concerned with all natural resource issues related to Ag land management

NRCS

- In 1994, SCS's name was changed to the Natural Resources Conservation Service to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency's concerns

Conservation Programs-NRCS

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)
- Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

- Cost Share and technical assistance for installing conservation practices
- Practices included:
 - Improved water management structures or irrigation
 - Tree planting for windbreaks or to improve water quality
 - Adoption of crop rotations
 - Erosion control
 - Integrated Pest Management
 - Transition to organic farming
- Practices are **not** limited to highly erodible land and wetlands
- Available in 16 states where Fed. Crop Ins. Participation is historically low.

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

- Cost share and technical assistance to implement water enhancements to conserve surface and groundwater and improve water quality
- AWEP is a component of EQIP
- AWEP is only available in specific project areas
- AWEP is different than other cost-share programs in that funds are used to leverage additional resources from non-federal partners

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (Oklahoma)

- High Plains RC&D Association, Inc. will receive funds for on-farm projects that will improve water use efficiency
- Jackson County Conservation District will receive funds to address water quality issues of excessive nutrients, organics, salinity, and sedimentation; and water quantity issues of excessive runoff, flooding, ponding, and inefficient irrigation.

Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)

- Voluntary program providing cost share and technical assistance through contracts up to a maximum of ten years.
- Implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and
- Improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and non-Industrial private forestland.
- Help producers meet Federal, State, Tribal and local environmental regulations

Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)

- Payments to eligible producers are based on a portion of the average cost associated with practice implementation
- Historically underserved producers (limited resource farmers/ranchers, beginning farmers/ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, Tribes) may be eligible for a higher practice payment rate
- Producers may use a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) for technical assistance

Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)

- There is an extensive list of programs and practices that are funded through EQIP
- Practices can be funded through National or State Initiatives
- County Level initiatives are identified by local advisory boards and ensure that practices are relevant.

Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)

- EQIP cost-share is meant to incentivize adoption
 - Not simply paying a producer to do something
 - It is meant to demonstrate a BMP with the intent that the producer is continue doing it due to the benefits of the practice
- This is very much different that programs like the Conservation Reserve program and Wetlands Reserve Program which pay for implementation and then pay an annual easement.

EQIP, National Initiatives

- [Organic Initiative](#)
- [Spill Prevention Containment and Countermeasure Initiative](#)
- [Ag Energy Initiative](#)
- [Seasonal High Tunnel House Initiative](#)

EQIP, State Wide Programs

- Lagoon Closures
- Irrigation Water Conservation Funding
- Historically Underserved Funding
- AFO/CAFO Animal Waste Management

EQIP, County Specific Programs

- [No-Till Initiatives](#)
- [Eucha/Spavinaw and Illinois River Sub-basin Initiative](#)
- [Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative](#)
- [Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative \(CCPI\)](#)

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

- Voluntary program to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, and Indian land.
- This program provide tech assistance and cost share to implement practices

WHIP Priority areas

- Promote the restoration of declining or important native fish and wildlife habitats
- Protect, restore, develop or enhance fish and wildlife habitat to benefit at-risk species
- Reduce the impacts of invasive species on fish and wildlife habitats; and
- Protect, restore, develop or enhance declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitats
- Protect, restore, develop or enhance important migration and other movement corridors for wildlife

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

- Similar to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in that the NRCS pays for an easement after restoration
- Voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property.
- Goal is to achieve the greatest wetland functions and values, along with optimum wildlife habitat, on every acre enrolled in the program

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a **comprehensive** manner
- CSP address conservation on a whole farm basis.
- Participants are paid for conservation performance: the higher the operational performance, the higher their payment

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CSP is different than EQIP in that producers receive a payment based on the performance of their efforts not the implementation of BMPs
- The following calculation is used

$$\text{Payment} = \text{land use acres} * \text{performance points} * \text{payment rate}$$

- [Factsheet](#)

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Producer is required to inventory their conservation activities and production system
- And be willing to implement additional BMPs
- [List of activities used in point system](#)