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Agricultural Conservation: A Guide to Programs

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Summary

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently administer 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 remain. 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
- CRP—Grasslands
- 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, FY2018 funding, FY2019 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 undertaken by Congress were focused on reducing high levels of soil erosion and providing water to agriculture in quantities and quality that enhanced farm production. 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 2014,¹ 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.² 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)³ 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).⁴ In addition, agricultural conservation programs involve 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 further agricultural conservation efforts.

¹ 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).

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

³ 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. For more information on the CCC, see CRS Report R44606, *The Commodity Credit Corporation: In Brief*.

⁴ 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 seek to create conditions with the objective of limiting 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,⁵ compliance,⁶ 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], Farmable Wetland Program, and Grasslands), 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—provisions that prohibit 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.

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

⁶ 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).⁷ Discretionary programs are funded each year through the annual appropriations process.⁸

Despite a steady increase in mandatory funding authority, select 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. The mix of programs and amount of reductions vary 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. Authorized mandatory funding for conservation programs has been reduced by a total of more than \$4 billion over the past 10 years. FY2018 marks the first time in 15 years that an appropriations act does not reduce mandatory conservation program funding.

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.⁹ Discretionary accounts have avoided sequestration in recent years through adjustments to spending limits, although sequestration continues on mandatory accounts. Most all mandatory conservation programs were subject to sequestration in FY2014 through FY2018.¹⁰ Even with sequestration and appropriations act reductions, total annual mandatory funding for conservation programs has grown from a total of \$3.9 billion in FY2008 to over \$5 billion in FY2018.

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 total 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

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

⁸ For additional information on the FY2018 appropriation, see CRS Report R45128, *Agriculture and Related Agencies: FY2018 Appropriations*.

⁹ For additional information on sequestration and the budget process, see CRS Report R42972, *Sequestration as a Budget Enforcement Process: Frequently Asked Questions*.

¹⁰ 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 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/sequestration-reports-orders/>. Sequestration will remain in effect through FY2027 unless there is congressional action.

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.¹¹

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

Program Name	Action-Year	Description
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 the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (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.

¹¹ 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)*.

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;
- 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 mandatory spending or discretionary appropriations, and any funding restrictions;
- FY2018 funding level in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-124), or, if applicable, the authorized level in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (sequestration and carryover not included unless noted);
- FY2019 funding level requested by the Administration (sequestration and carryover included where known);
- 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)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	<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>
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2017, \$214.1 million in ACEP funding was used to enroll an estimated total of nearly 300,000 acres of farmland, grassland, and wetlands through 659 new ACEP easements. This includes ALE (easements)—186 on 79,487 acres; ALE (grassland easements)—27 on 127,148 acres; WRE (permanent easements)—397 on 72,386 acres; and WRE (30-year easements)—47 on 19,479 acres.
Leading states	The highest levels of funding obligated in FY2017 were in FL (\$51.4 million), AR (\$46.4 million), and MT (\$31.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	<p><i>Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)</i>—In FY2017, 542 ALE applications were received for over 336,800 acres, including 39 applications for over 168,600 acres of grasslands of special environmental significance. Approximately 39% of applications were enrolled.</p> <p><i>Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)</i>—In FY2017, 2,336 WRE applications were for over 352,870 acres. Approximately 19% of applications were funded.</p>
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. FY2014—\$400 million, FY2015—\$425 million, FY2016—\$450 million, FY2017—\$500 million, and FY2018—\$250 million.
FY2018 funding	\$233.5 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$16.5 million from sequestration).
FY2019 Administration request	\$234.5 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$15.5 million from sequestration), subject to reauthorization.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS (conservation assistance), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS, organic certification), and Risk Management Agency (RMA, production, price, or revenue risk reduction).
Program description	AMA provides cost-sharing assistance under contracts of one 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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include CT, DE, HI, ME, MD, MA, NV, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, and WY. In FY2017, over \$4.7 million in AMA funding was used to enroll 377 AMA contracts covering over 2,000 acres within eligible states.
Leading states	States with the most funds obligated (for conservation only) in FY2017 include ME (\$572,000), PA (\$494,000), and MD (\$248,000).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2017, AMA had a backlog of 644 pending applications that would enroll more than 4,200 acres. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were submitted in ME (234), WV (161), and PA (94).
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. Permanently authorized at \$10 million for each fiscal year. Funding is split by law among the three USDA agencies: 50% to NRCS, 10% to AMS, and 40% to RMA.
FY2018 funding	\$9.3 million (\$4.7 million for conservation; total authorization reduced by approximately \$660,000 from sequestration).
FY2019 Administration request	\$0. Requests a rescission of the reduced total for FY2018 (\$10 million minus sequestration).
Statutory authority	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).
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program websites	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama (NRCS); http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occsp (AMS).

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

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 nonfederal lands. Other components of CO include the Soil Surveys, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting, and Plant Materials Centers.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. CTA was funded at \$759 million and 4,347 staff years for FY2017. Total CO spending for FY2017 was \$864 million and 4,849 staff years.
Leading states	No data are available for the CTA subset in FY2017, but the three leading states for total CO funding are TX (\$31.3 million), MO (\$25.2 million), and IA (\$22.2 million).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2018 funding	\$774.4 million for CTA out of \$874.1 million appropriated for all CO.
FY2019 Administration request	\$575.9 million for CTA out of \$669.0 million for all CO.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta/ (CTA); http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/ (soil survey); http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/ (snow survey and water supply forecasting); and http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/ (plant materials centers).

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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. This is referred to as general sign-up. Embedded in the CRP are several small and more focused subprograms and initiatives—some established in law and others established administratively—that bypass the general bidding process and address specific resource topics. Examples of these focus on concentrated resource problems in a portion of a state, protection of small isolated agricultural wetlands, or improvement of habitat for upland game birds. All lands that qualify for these subprograms and initiatives are automatically accepted and enrolled on a continuous basis. This is referred to as continuous sign-up.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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). These grassland contracts are referred to as grassland sign-up.
National scope	At the end of FY2017, there were 638,723 active contracts on 358,673 farms with 23.4 million acres enrolled. Of this total, 16.0 million acres are enrolled under general sign-up, 1.1 million acres under Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program sign-up (CREP), 5.9 million acres under non-CREP sign-up, 393,796 acres under Farmable Wetland sign-up, and 89,052 acres under grasslands sign-up.
Leading states	Leading states by total acres enrolled are TX (2.9 million), KS (2.1 million), and IA (1.8 million). Leading states by total number of contracts are IA (109,068), IL (78,903), and MN (55,026).
Backlog/Interest	Interest in the most recent general sign-up (#49) was high, with a 22% acreage offer acceptance rate (1.9 million acres offered and 407,416 acres accepted). No general sign-up is expected in FY2018. An estimated 1.5 million acres are expected to expire from the program at the end of FY2018 (including 440,000 continuous and 1.1 million general sign-up).
Funding authority	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.
FY2018 est. funding	\$1.8 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance).
FY2019 est. Administration request	\$1.9 billion (based on the estimated number of acres that will be enrolled, including technical assistance). Request also proposes refocusing the program, eliminating select incentive payments, and limiting annual rental payments to 80% of National Agricultural Statistical Service county rental rates.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/

CRP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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 to allow for larger payments, in order to encourage greater participation. Average rental payments are higher than for acreage under the general CRP sign-up process. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	There are 47 CREP agreements in 34 states, including 64,057 contracts on 43,071 farms, enrolling a total of 1.1 million acres, as of September 2017.
Leading states	Leading states by number of acres enrolled are PA (142,777), OH (120,051), and KY (97,456). States leading in number of contracts are OH (15,413), PA (8,769), and MD (4,734).
Backlog/Interest	In May 2017, FSA announced a freeze on all continuous sign-up due to the 24 million acreage enrollment limit. Between May and September 2017, 1.185 million acres of continuous sign-up (including CREP acres) were approved for acceptance but not enrolled because of the freeze.
Funding authority	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2017 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2018 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authority derived from CRP statutory authority (see “Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)”).
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement/index

CRP—Farmable Wetland Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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 in three of the preceding 10 years (and include 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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Active contracts in 22 participating states, including AL, AR, CO, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, LA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NC, ND, OH, OK, SD, WA and WI. As of September 2017, there are 15,785 contracts on 12,087 farms for a total of 393,796 enrolled acres.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are ND (130,430), SD (100,587), and IA (89,517). The largest number of contracts are in IA (5,065), followed by SD (4,163) and ND (2,889).
Backlog/Interest	In May 2017, FSA announced a freeze on all continuous sign-up due to the 24 million acreage enrollment limit. Between May and September 2017, 1.185 million acres of continuous sign-up (including the Farmable Wetland Program acres) were approved for acceptance but not enrolled because of the freeze.
Funding authority	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).
FY2017 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2018 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/farmable-wetlands/index

CRP—Grasslands

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	This subprogram of the CRP enrolls grassland—including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands—while maintaining the area as grazing. Contracts are for 14 and 15 years. Rental payments are limited to 75% of the contracted land’s grazing value. Small livestock operations are considered in a separate ranking pool during enrollment. Expiring CRP acres have priority enrollment. Sign-up is held on a continuous basis.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	Created in the 2014 farm bill, partially from the repealed Grassland Reserve Program.
National scope	Active contracts in 20 states, including CO, IN, IA, KS, KY, MN, MO, MT, NE, NM, NC, ND, OH, OK, PA, SD, TN, TX, WI and WY. As of September 2017, there are 309 contracts on 196 farms for a total of 89,052 enrolled acres.
Leading states	Leading states by acres enrolled are NE (25,115), SD (14,979), and CO (13,214). The largest number of contracts are in NE (91), followed by SD (56) and ND (28).
Backlog/Interest	The CRP grasslands sign-up (#200) had an acreage acceptance rate of 10% (1.0 million acres offered and 101,293 acres accepted). Applicants in all states except seven (AK, DE, ME, NV, NH, RI, and VT) offered acres. Approximately 800,000 acres of grassland sign-up had been approved for contracts beginning in FY2018, with only 420,000 acres completely enrolled as of September 2017. In May 2017, FSA announced a freeze on all continuous sign-up due to the 24 million acreage enrollment limit. Between May and September 2017, 1.185 million acres of continuous sign-up (including CRP Grassland acres) were approved for acceptance but not enrolled because of the freeze.
Funding authority	Mandatory, statutorily exempt from sequestration. No more than 2 million acres enrolled at any one time between FY2014 and FY2018.
FY2017 funding	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
FY2018 Administration request	Unspecified acreage subset of CRP.
Statutory authority	Authorized in subtitle A of Title II (§2001 <i>et seq.</i>) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79) as §1231 <i>et seq.</i> of the Food Security Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-198), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §3831 <i>et seq.</i>
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/crp-grasslands/index

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 renewal) are based on meeting or exceeding a “stewardship threshold.” CSP provides two possible payments: (1) an annual payment for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing activities and (2) a supplemental payment for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation. Enrollment is offered through a continuous sign-up and applications are accepted year-round.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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 requires the participant to 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.
National scope	Available nationwide. The program held its first sign-up in 2009, and at the end of FY2017, more than 87.3 million acres were enrolled. Of the expiring FY2012 contracts, 57% were renewed in FY2017 for an additional five years.
Leading states	In FY2017, SD had the most total acres funded (661,494), followed by NE (637,159) and ND (534,333). The most funding obligated in FY2017 was in MS (\$7.3 million), SD (\$7.1 million), and NE (\$5.1 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2017, CSP had a backlog of 4,620 valid applications that would enroll approximately 4.4 million acres. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were submitted in AR (480), OK (403), and MS (375). The highest numbers of unfunded applications by acres were in MT (591,622), AR (448,388), and ND (433,654).
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. CSP can enroll up to 10 million acres each fiscal year. No funding amount specified.
FY2018 est. funding	\$1.3 billion; 10 million acres (authorization reduced by sequestration; unknown effect on acres).
FY2019 est. Administration request	Proposes to eliminate new enrollments for FY2019, subject to reauthorization.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely from year to year.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2018 funding to date	The Bipartisan Budget Act of FY2018 (P.L. 115-123) provided \$400 million to remain available until expended for necessary expenses related to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria and wildfires occurring in calendar year 2017.
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in §401 of the Agriculture Credit Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-334), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §§2201-2205.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/emergency-conservation/index

Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)

Administering agency(s)	FSA, with technical assistance by NRCS.
Program description	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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely from year to year.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2018 funding to date	\$0
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/emergency-forest-restoration/index

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS on private lands and U.S. Forest Service on National Forest Systems lands.
Program description	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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Available nationwide. Participation and funding varies widely from year to year.
Leading states	Not applicable.
Backlog/Interest	Not applicable.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2018 funding to date	The Bipartisan Budget Act of FY2018 (P.L. 115-123) provided \$541 million to remain available until expended for necessary expenses related to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria and wildfires occurring in calendar year 2017.
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 specific land resource concerns. Sixty percent of the funds are targeted to conservation practices benefiting livestock.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2017, EQIP obligated over \$1.1 billion across 38,726 contracts covering 11.6 million acres.
Leading states	In FY2017, the top three states by active and completed contracts were TX (4,314), MS (2,684), and AL (1,810). The most funding obligated was in TX (\$158 million), CA (\$105 million), and AR (\$62 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2017, 38,726 applications were funded (29.2%), and 56,968 applications went unfunded. The total estimated cost of this backlog is \$1.7 billion. The highest numbers of unfunded applications were submitted in MS (6,020), AR (5,853), and OK (3,414).
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. FY2014—\$1.35 billion, FY2015—\$1.6 billion, FY2016—\$1.65 billion, FY2017—\$1.65 billion, FY2018—\$1.75 billion, and FY2019—\$1.75 billion.
FY2018 funding	\$1.6 billion (authorization reduced by approximately \$115.5 million from sequestration).
FY2019 Administration request	\$1.5 billion. Of the proposed \$252 million reduction from authorized funding, approximately \$116 million is reduced by sequestration and \$136 million would be rescinded.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2019.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip

EQIP—Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 http://www.grants.gov 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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Available nationwide with select states offering state competitions. In FY2017, CIG awarded a total of \$22.6 million to 33 projects through the national CIG competition. CIG funding since 2004, when the program began, totals \$286.7 million for 711 projects. Applications for FY2018 funding closed February 26, 2018. An estimated \$10 million was available for FY2018.
Leading states	None identified.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2018 funding	Unspecified subset of EQIP.
FY2019 Administration request	Unspecified subset of EQIP, subject to reauthorization.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig

Grassroots Source Water Protection Program

Administering agency(s)	FSA
Program description	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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	Reauthorizes discretionary funding authority and authorizes \$5 million in mandatory funding to remain available until expended.
National scope	In September 2013, the program was expanded to all 50 states.
Leading states	Annual appropriations are divided equally among all states.
Backlog/Interest	None identified.
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration: FY2014—\$5 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: \$20 million annually.
FY2018 funding	\$6.5 million (discretionary).
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	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
Authorization expires	September, 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/source-water-protection/index

Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	HFRP assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year contracts, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	Eliminates mandatory funding authority and replaces it with an authorization to receive appropriations. Adds a definition of “acreage owned by Indian tribes.” Provides flexibility for funding technical assistance.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Limited participation in select states. As of the end of FY2017, 105 agreements covering 676,181 acres have been enrolled in the program.
Leading states	In FY2017, states with the most funding obligated were MS (\$109,000), KY (\$15,000), and OK (\$12,000).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. \$12 million annually.
FY2018 funding	\$0
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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. Current 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%.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	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 FY2018, 91 projects were selected totaling over \$220 million in federal spending.
Leading states	Following the final selection in FY2018, the three funding categories received the following (most total partners; most federal investment): state—54 projects (IL and IN—33 partners; NM—\$3.4 million), CCA—19 projects (Mississippi River Basin—66 partners; Chesapeake Bay Watershed—\$16.1 million total), and national—18 projects (Driftless Area Habitat for the Wild and Rare Phase 2—46 partners; Crisis to Opportunity: Sierra Nevada Tree Mortality and Partnership GRIC Water Supply Protection Program—\$10 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2018, the total amount of funding requested was three times the amount available. During the pre-proposal round, 164 proposals were received requesting \$683 million with a partner match of \$1 billion.
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. RCPP receives 7% of available covered conservation program funds (EQIP, CSP, ACEP, and HFRP) plus an additional \$100 million annually.
FY2018 funding	\$93.4 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$6.6 million from sequestration), plus 7% of available covered conservation program funds (minus sequestration).
FY2019 Administration request	\$93.8 million (authorization reduced by approximately \$6.2 million from sequestration), plus 7% of available covered conservation program funds (minus sequestration), subject to reauthorization.
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmland/rcpp/

Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	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.
National scope	Available nationwide. In FY2014 and FY2015, \$20 million was made available each year. In total, 21 states and one tribal government were awarded agreements. In FY2016, all formal grant agreements were complete.
Leading states	Of the FY2014 and FY2015 selected proposals, states receiving the most funding were PA (\$6 million), IA (\$3 million), and KS (\$2.7 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2014, 28 state wildlife agencies and two tribal governments submitted proposals requesting funding in excess of \$62 million. Nine state agencies and one tribal government received \$19.7 million. In FY2015, 25 state wildlife agencies submitted proposals requesting funding of over \$33 million. Fifteen state agencies received \$19.7 million.
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration. \$40 million in total for the period of FY2014-FY2018.
FY2018 funding	\$0
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/farmbill/?cid=stelpdb1242739

Water Bank Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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 for agreements in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota and were focused on flood reduction.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Not available nationwide. Eligible states include MN, ND, and SD. In FY2017, \$4.4 million was obligated to 101 agreements covering 11,486 acres.
Leading states	In FY2017, eligible states receiving the most funding were ND (\$4 million), SD (\$442,000), and MN (\$42,000).
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2018 funding	\$4 million.
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	Authorized in the Water Bank Act (P.L. 91-559), as amended. 16 U.S.C. §§1301-1311.
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/?&cid=stelprdb1047790

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	<p>Also referred to as the Small Watershed Program, the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) program consists of projects built under two authorities—the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83-566) and the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534). The vast majority of the projects have been built pursuant to the authority of P.L. 83-566 (referred to as P.L. 566 projects), under which smaller projects authorized by the chief of the NRCS are constructed. Larger projects must be approved by Congress. Eleven projects were specifically authorized under P.L. 78-534 (referred to as P.L. 534 projects); they are much larger and more expensive than P.L. 566 projects.</p> <p>Under P.L. 566 projects, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to state and local organizations to plan and install measures to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and flood damage and to conserve, develop, and utilize land and water resources. The project costs are shared with local partners. No project may exceed 250,000 acres, and no structure may exceed more than 12,500 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity, or 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity. The Senate and House Agriculture Committees must approve projects that need an estimated federal contribution of more than \$25 million for construction or include a storage structure with a capacity in excess of 2,500 acre-feet. If the storage structure will have a capacity in excess of 4,000 acre-feet, approval is also required from the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.</p>
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	None.
National scope	Available nationwide. There are 2,100 active or completed P.L. 566 projects in 50 states and U.S. territories. In FY2017, funding was provided to 48 new projects and 41 existing projects.
Leading states	None identified.
Backlog/Interest	Not available.
Funding authority	Discretionary. No specific authorization level.
FY2018 funding	\$150 million appropriated, plus \$5.6 million in congressionally directed funds from Conservation Operations.
FY2019 Administration request	\$0
Statutory authority	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. §1001 <i>et. seq.</i>
Authorization expires	Permanent authorization.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/landscape/?&cid=nrcs143_008271

Watershed Rehabilitation Program

Administering agency(s)	NRCS
Program description	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. As of the end of 2017, 5,450 of these dams have reached or exceeded that time span. By the end of 2018, this number is expected to rise to 5,922.
Major 2014 farm bill amendments	Reauthorizes both mandatory and discretionary funding authority.
National scope	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 284 rehabilitation projects have been authorized in 31 states between FY2000 and FY2017. Of these, a total of 144 projects are complete, and 140 projects are implemented (either in planning, design, or construction phase) subject to funding.
Leading states	States with the largest number of dam projects funded over the life of the program (2000-2017) are OK (53), TX (35), UT (22), and MS (22). States receiving the most funds in FY2017 were UT (\$5.4 million), GA (\$4.9 million), and TX (\$4.2 million).
Backlog/Interest	In FY2017, unfunded requests for federal funding totaled over \$741.1 million, including 175 dam assessments. The largest total of unfunded requests was submitted in TX (\$241 million), MS (\$91 million), and WV (\$78 million).
Funding authority	Mandatory, subject to sequestration: FY2014—\$250 million (to remain available until expended). Discretionary: FY2008-FY2018—\$85 million annually.
FY2018 funding	\$10 million in discretionary funding and \$55 million (minus sequestration) in carryover mandatory funding from prior years' reductions.
FY2019 Administration request	\$0 in discretionary funding and \$0 million in mandatory funding (authorized carryover requested to be reduced by \$55 million). Requests a rescission of the proposed reduction (\$55 million, minus sequestration).
Statutory authority	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.
Authorization expires	September 30, 2018.
Program website	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/wr

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