The 2014 Farm Bill

Texas Watershed Coordinators Roundtable
Waco, Texas
July 31, 2014
Differences Between the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bill Conservation Programs
Agricultural Act of 2014

• Reauthorizes Programs from the 2008 Farm Bill until 2018
  – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  – Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
  – Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)
  – Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
Agricultural Act of 2014

• Repealed programs from the 2008 Farm Bill
  – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
  – Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
  – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
  – Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
  – Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
  – Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
Agricultural Act of 2014

• New Programs Authorized
  – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
    • Includes a Wetland Reserve Easement Component (WRE)
    • Includes an Agricultural Land Easement Component (ALE)
Agricultural Act of 2014

• New Programs Authorized, cont.
  – Regional Conservation Partnership Program

• Combines similar programs from former Farm Bills
• Allows for a competitive process for partnership agreements to address large landscape resource concerns
• Includes a Partnership component
• Secretary will select up to 8 critical conservation areas
• Allows Secretary to waive AGI if needed to fulfill purposes of the program
• No funding may be used to cover partner administrative costs
Agricultural Act of 2014

• New Programs Authorized, cont.
  Voluntary Public Access and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
  • New program to NRCS from FSA
  • Will be funded via Request for Proposals
  • Additional information to follow
2014 Farm Bill
Conservation Programs
Agricultural Act of 2014
Conservation Programs

ACEP
ALE

EQIP

ACEP
WRE

CSP

RCPP
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to agriculture producers to promote agriculture production and environmental quality as compatible goals.
Agricultural Act of 2014
Environmental Quality Incentives Program

– At least 5% of funds go to practices benefitting wildlife
– Retains requirement that 60% of funding address livestock resource concerns
– Raises payment limit from $300,000 to $450,000; does not provide any waiver authority
– Reduces AGI eligibility to $900,000 for all income
Agricultural Act of 2014

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

– Maintained 10 year contract maximum

– Veterans eligible for increased payment rate as historically underserved producers

– Authorized funding for EQIP
  
  • FY 2014 – $1.35 B
  • FY 2015 – $1.6 B
  • FY 2016 – $1.65 B
  • FY 2017 – $1.65 B
  • FY 2018 - $1.75 B
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- New program designed to be an all encompassing program focused project.
- Uses EQIP, CSP, and ACEP WRE and ACEP ALE programs
- Addresses a multitude of resource concerns
Agricultural Act of 2014

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

RCPP is a new regional program that:

• Furthers the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife on a regional scale
• Encourages partners to cooperate with producers
• Provides assistance through:
  • Partnership agreements
  • Program contracts or easement agreements
• Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:
  • Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
  • Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program (CBWP)
  • Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
  • Great Lakes Basin Program for Erosion and Sediment Control
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CSP pays farmers who are improving conservation treatment on their working lands.

- Encourages the continuation of practices that benefit soil, water and air resources.

- A person or legal entity cannot receive CSP payments exceeding $200,000 during any five-year period.
Agricultural Act of 2014
Conservation Stewardship Program

- Reduces enrollment cap to 10 million acres annually from 12.7 million acres
- Allows for expiring contracts to be renewed
- Eliminates the 10% cap for forest land
- Increases locally identified priority resource concerns to at least 5 (soil erosion, water quality, etc.)
- CMT or other means will be used to rank applications
ACEP – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

- Helps landowners restore and protect grassland, including rangeland and pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands.

- Program emphasis is on support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grasslands under the greatest threat of conversion.

- Enrollment options:
  - Permanent easements
  - Rental agreements
ACEP - Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE)

A voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that helps private landowners, farmers and ranchers protect and restore wetlands on their property.

Enrollment options:
- Permanent easements
- 30-year easements
- 10 – year restoration agreement
Agricultural Act of 2014

Other Programs and Provisions

– Watershed Rehabilitation Program to be funded at $250M

– Special provisions for conservation compliance (as required by the 1985 Food Security Act) for crop insurance participants
  • 5 years to develop and comply with conservation plan
  • 2 years for existing operations with violations

– Retained the Technical Service Provider provision

– Veterans recognized as underserved group
Agricultural Act of 2014

• For More Information:
  – www.nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill
  – www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs
  – The local field office that provides technical assistance in your county.
Questions?

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