An Overview of USDA-NRCS Programs

Regional Conservation Partnership Program
Statewide Priorities

Texas Watershed Coordinators Roundtable
Waco, Texas
July 31, 2014
Agricultural Act of 2014
Conservation Programs

ACEP
ALE

EQIP

ACEP
WRE

CSP

RCPP
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
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to agriculture producers to promote agriculture production and environmental quality as compatible goals.
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
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.
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

• 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.
Strengthening Conservation with Regional Partnerships

Apply to the NEW Regional Conservation Partnership Program
Coming Together for Conservation: New Approach, More Partners

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Regional Conservation Partnership Program is a new program that mobilizes partnerships to multiply investments and reach common conservation goals.
More Partners bring innovation, new ideas, resources and local expertise to solve problems.
3 RCPP Funding Options

40% National (multi-state projects)
25% State (state projects)
35% Critical Conservation Areas (areas designated by Secretary)
USDA plans to invest up to $1.2 billion

USDA Goal: Partners match investment to equal —

$2.4 billion

for conservation through 2018

more: nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill
RCPP Benefits

Partners participating in RCPP can use their local knowledge and networks to undertake conservation projects by joining with agricultural producers to restore or sustain natural resources such as:

- clean and abundant water
- healthy, productive soils
- enhanced wildlife and pollinator habitat
How It Works

Through RCPP, NRCS and state, local and regional partners coordinate resources to help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits achieved.
Eligibility

Eligible Partners

Agricultural or silvicultural producer associations, farmer cooperatives or other groups of producers, state or local governments, Indian tribes, municipal water treatment entities, water and irrigation districts, conservation-driven nongovernmental organizations and institutions of higher education.
Eligible producers and landowners of agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland should visit their local USDA Service Center for information on how to enter into conservation program contracts or easement agreements under the framework of an RCPP partnership agreement.
How to Apply

The Announcement of Program Funding outlines the requirements for proposal submissions. NRCS and the selected partner will enter into a partnership agreement through which they will coordinate resources to provide assistance to producers in the project area. Partnership agreements may be for a period of up to five years, but NRCS may extend for an additional 12 months if needed to meet the objectives of the program.
Partnership Agreement

The partnership agreement defines the scope of the project, including:

- Eligible activities to be implemented
- Potential agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operation affected
- Local, state, multi-state or other geographic area covered
- Planning, outreach, implementation, and assessment to be conducted

- Partners are responsible for contributing to the cost of the project, conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project and for conducting an assessment of the project’s effects.
- Partners may also leverage financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives.
- Before closing the agreement the partner must provide an assessment of the project costs and conservation effects.
National Initiatives and Statewide Priorities
NRCS Texas State Priorities

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Initiatives - 2015

Legend

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<tr>
<th>State Initiatives</th>
<th>Color</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highland Lakes</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pronghorn Antelope</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nueces River Water Conservation</td>
<td>Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Lands</td>
<td>Pink</td>
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<td>Central Gulf Coast Irrigation</td>
<td>Purple</td>
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<td>Bobwhite Quail</td>
<td>Light Purple</td>
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<td>Water Quality - TSS/CWB</td>
<td>Red</td>
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<td>Eagle Mountain Lake</td>
<td>Orange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poultry, Dairy, Beef CAFO</td>
<td>Gray</td>
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<table>
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<th>Zone Boundaries</th>
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<th>County Boundaries</th>
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Funding

Depending upon annual appropriations, NRCS will allocate specific amounts of EQIP funding to meet legislative requirements, address certain national priorities, and also make funds available for NRCS State Conservationists to help address resource priorities identified by State Technical Committees.
Authorized Funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

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
Questions ?

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