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Who We Are

Inspired by a shared vision of agriculture as a valued component of the landscape, NRCS works in partnership with farmers, ranchers and many others to improve, restore and protect the Nation's natural resources.

Side-by-side with these partners, we work to sustain and improve the quality of our soil, water, air and wildlife habitat, and we develop conservation plans that work for the land and for farmers and ranchers. Farm Bill programs help with the cost of putting conservation on the ground, which benefits the farm, the watershed and the community. Conservation easement programs, also in the Farm Bill, help to protect the agricultural and natural resource values of the land over the long-term.

With our help, Michigan is balancing economic goals with a high quality environment— ensuring productive lands to supply food, fiber, forest and energy products for the Nation and the world.



District Conservationist Jim Sweeting (left) and Baraga County landowner Dean Patterson look over forest habitat restoration work done to improve upland bird habitat .

Restoring habitat for woodland birds

Landowners are restoring habitat important to migratory American woodcock and other upland birds like ruffed grouse with the help of NRCS and funding through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

American woodcock populations are in a long decline primarily due to a lack of habitat. Portions of Michigan's Upper Peninsula are an important breeding ground for woodcock which require a diversity of habitats during their life cycle. Mating woodcock require forest openings while young birds need cover to protect them from predators. As forest areas continue to mature without older trees being harvested, a diversity of different aged stands of trees is being lost.

Woodcock live on the forest floor, feeding mostly on earthworms. They have a long flexible beak for probing and adults typically weigh anywhere from 4 to 10 ounces. Male woodcock attract mates by defending a forest clearing from other males and performing a ritual where they spiral high into the air. Landowners are creating clearings on their forest land that make good mating sites; in addition, as young trees re-establish in the clearings they create nesting cover.

Through this initiative, NRCS provided financial assistance to nearly 60 landowners to create 10,200 acres of forest clearings. The forest clearings are less than five acres in size and many landowners created multiple clearings on their property. Landowners can choose to replant the clearings with selected native trees to add diversity, or they can allow them to restore naturally.

Protecting the Great Lakes

Farmers are working to protect the Great Lakes

The largest watershed in Michigan drains into Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay. The Saginaw Bay Watershed contains some of the state's most productive agricultural land. Farmers here are implementing new conservation measures to improve their operations and the water quality of the Great Lakes.

Through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), farmers used additional funds to implement new conservation measures like cover crops and filter strips to keep fertile topsoil on their farms and reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients that find their way to the Great Lakes. Their efforts help to reduce non-point source pollution in the Saginaw Bay and Western Lake Erie Basin watersheds.

During fiscal years 2010 and 2011, farmers in the Saginaw Bay and Western Lake Erie Basin watersheds established cover crops on 38,000 acres (59 square-miles) of cropland. Farmers in the watersheds will also begin using residue management practices on 25,600 acres (40 square-miles) of cropland. These conservation actions improve soil quality and conserve energy-good for farmers-and will prevent loss of sediment-good for the Great Lakes water quality and aquatic habitat.



Cover crops and residue management practices help keep sediment and nutrients from reaching the Great Lakes.

Helping to Support Local Food

Michigan's American Indian tribes are returning to traditional foods to improve nutrition and sustain their culture.

Walleye and other native fish have played an important role in the diet and culture of Michigan's native people. Tribal members are allowed to spear for walleye and many fish for subsistence and sport. With many native fish populations declining, it is important for the tribes to preserve this resource.

Since 2008, NRCS has assisted three American Indian tribes in the Upper Peninsula in the construction of walleye rearing ponds. The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Chippewa Indians and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians have used EQIP to construct walleye rearing ponds. The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe completed a pond in 2010 and began production during 2011.

All three of the projects were used during 2011 producing thousands of walleye fingerlings. Walleye raised in the ponds are stocked in lakes and rivers where tribal members later harvest them.



The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians constructed a walleye rearing pond utilizing financial assistance from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The tribe began raising walleye in the pond in 2011.

Restoring Wetlands

Restore wetlands to improve water quality, reduce severity of flood events and provide valuable wildlife habitat.

During 2011, private landowners enrolled nearly 900 acres of wetlands into permanent easements through the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). This brings the total number of wetland acres in Michigan enrolled in permanent easements to almost 40,000. In early May of 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service documented the first successful fledgling bald eagles born in Michigan's lower peninsula since the 1960s. The area where the nest was found is surrounded by 1,900 acres of land enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program.



Bald eagle fledglings on a WRP site in Jackson County.

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

is simply about helping people help the land. NRCS has used CTA successfully for more than 75 years to reach out to American farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners and managers.

America's farmers and ranchers invest in conservation with help from CTA to care for the more than 70 percent of our land, water and other natural resources that are in their hands. In FY2011 Michigan received \$11.1 million in CTA funds.

NRCS employees work with customers to identify natural resource problems, inventory resources, develop conservation alternatives and help individual farmers, ranchers, Tribes, local governments and urban landowners with their conservation decisions. This prepares the way for using Farm Bill and other conservation funding.

Environmental Improvement:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)—promotes agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality as compatible goals.

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)—promotes water conservation and quality through partnered efforts.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)—improves wildlife habitat on private agricultural, forest and Tribal lands.

Conservation Easements:

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)—helps keep farm and ranch land in agriculture.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)—restores wetlands and wetland habitat on marginal agricultural land

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)—restores and protects grassland, rangeland and pastureland, and helps maintain viable ranching operations.

Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)—restores and enhances forest ecosystems to promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

Stewardship:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)—encourages long-term comprehensive conservation by maintaining and improving existing conservation measures.

Watershed and Communities:

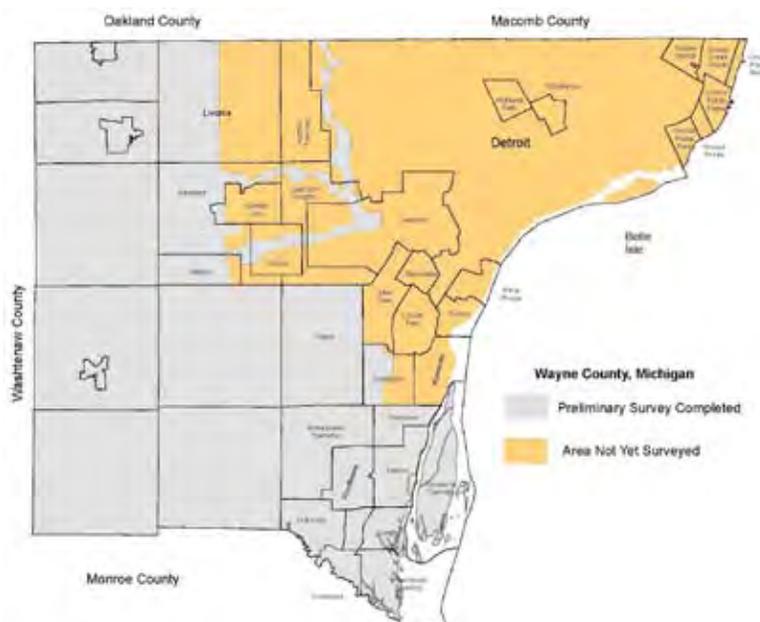
Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)—undertakes emergency measures in watersheds where there are imminent threats to life and property resulting from fire, flood and other natural disasters.

Michigan in The National Landscape

Soil mapping of Michigan to be complete after survey of urban Wayne County

When you look at a soils map of Michigan, urban Wayne County stands out as the only unmapped portion of the state. NRCS began work in the fall of 2011 so that soils data and maps will be available for the 164,000 acres of Wayne County not included in the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

NRCS is working with 24 municipalities in eastern Wayne County to gather the information necessary for a complete soil map of the county. Detailed information about an area's soils is a valuable planning tool for local governments and the private sector. Soils information can help determine if an area is suitable for development or prone to flooding for example. When completed, the soil survey will be available to the public online.



NRCS has entered into agreements with municipalities, including the city of Detroit, that account for over 140,000 acres of the unmapped area. The agency is in the process of finalizing agreements with the remaining local governments.

The municipalities that have entered into agreements are providing any soils information they have to NRCS. In 2012, field staff will begin work to obtain soils information that is not available from project partners. Field work will include NRCS soil scientists going into neighborhoods to analyze soil borings.

The NRCS hopes to complete its field work and have digitized soil maps of urban Wayne County available by the end of 2014. A soil map of the less-urbanized portion of Wayne County was published in 1977 and is available online at the NRCS Web Soil Survey.

2011 Farm Bill Program Funding*

NRCS Program	Number of Contracts	Financial Assistance to Producers
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	186	\$1.7M
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	624	\$15.7M
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)	38	\$3.2M
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)	13	\$2M
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)	3	\$911,000
Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	4	\$161,000
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	14	\$3.2M
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	44	\$389,000

*Financial Assistance (FA) is provided directly to producers. Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) funding is used by NRCS for professional planning and expertise to help carry out conservation activities. Data source: Foundation Financial Information System Status of Funds