

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Texas Strategic Plan FY-2023-2026



The Texas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Strategic Plan reflects the challenges and opportunities NRCS faces and outlines how Texas NRCS plans to address them.

This plan is guided by the USDA's FY 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan goals, which are:

- Combat climate change to support America's working lands, natural resources and communities
- Ensure America's agricultural system is equitable, resilient, and prosperous
- Foster an equitable and competitive marketplace for all agricultural producers
- Provide all Americans safe, nutritious food
- Expand opportunities for economic development and improve quality of life in rural and tribal communities
- Attract, inspire, and retain and engaged and motivated workforce that's proud to represent USDA







## Strategic Goal 1: Combat climate change to support America's working lands, natural resources and communities

USDA is developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy to incentivize climate-smart decision-making by all agricultural and forest producers, landowners, and communities. Investments in climate-smart agriculture, forestry, and renewable energy will reduce emissions and create new and better market opportunities for all producers. Texas NRCS plans to prioritization of climate smart agriculture conservation practices through the following actions:

- Promote high priority practices that align with climate-smart agriculture and forestry.
- Provide support to make climate-smart practices economically feasible for farmers and ranchers to make their operation adaptable and resilient to climate change.
  - ◊ Develop conservation practices that are scalable at the practice, field, and farm level.
  - ◊ Identify economic constraints to climate-smart conservation measures that affect all communities with special emphasis on underserved communities.
  - ◊ Maximize local flexibilities for using conservation practices to address natural resource issues that will have most impact helping producers adapt to climate change.
- Engage partners in the implementation of climate smart agriculture and forestry.

- Train workforce on climate-smart agriculture and forestry best management practices.
  - ◊ Develop communication strategy and SharePoint site for resources for staff to develop skills to communicate climate change risks to clients and to promote actions that will increase resilience of their operations.
  - ◊ Continually provide training and education to keep up with latest climate science so that every planner is knowledgeable about climate change impacts and can provide technical assistance and conservation planning that plans for a spectrum of future conditions.
- Quantify and account for greenhouse gas reductions and carbon sequestrations through the implementation of climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices.
- Collaborate with private and public sector businesses to identify natural resource concerns, develop unique solutions for restoring and protecting these resources, and leverage NRCS funds to increase the investment in private lands conservation.
  - ◊ Leverage local work group meetings, Community Based Organization partnerships.
- Explore use of satellite remote sensing to monitor changes across the landscape. Remote sensing can quantify changes over time more accurately and efficiently than onsite visual inspections.
- Leverage WaterSmart Initiative to help farmers and ranchers conserve water and build drought resiliency in communities.
- Work with local communities to invest in new dam and flood prevention projects and repairs on existing watershed infrastructure through WFPO, REHAB, or EWP with priority on communities heavily impacted by drought and other natural disasters as well as underserved and limited resource communities.
- Implementing the living shoreline plan along the Texas coastline.





## Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America's agricultural system is equitable, resilient, and prosperous

USDA will safeguard animal and plant health, support farmers and ranchers' ability to start and maintain profitable cooperatives and businesses and offer financial support to all producers affected by natural disasters to maintain an equitable and competitive agricultural sector. Texas NRCS examine farm bill programs for increased opportunity for enrollment and embrace new technologies to implement NRCS assistance through the following actions:



- Identify programs that are underutilized in Texas and develop methods to educate and promote for future increased use.
  - ◊ Engage with partners to expand opportunities for perpetual conservation through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program with a focus on protection of urban agricultural farms.
    - Implement easement training in each of the Zones with Texas Agricultural Land Trust.
  - ◊ Promote new RCPP projects to address regional resource concerns through partnerships.
  - ◊ Utilize EQIP state initiatives to address urban and small farm conservation.
  - ◊ Utilize EQIP conservation incentive contracts (CIC) in Texas.
    - Develop training for Zone/Field staff.
    - Develop promotional items with Public Affairs Team.
  - ◊ Promote CSP in Texas.
    - Develop training for Zone/Field staff.
- Accelerate urban conservation and opportunities for small farms.
  - ◊ Work with Federal, State and local agencies to increase outreach efforts targeting urban and small acreage farmers.
  - ◊ Research and find local nonprofit organizations to target urban and small acreage farmers (food pantries, faith-based organizations, churches, farmer's market organizations, etc.).



- ◊ Participate in conferences targeting urban and small acreage farmers by having a booth, speaking on the agenda, and networking with participants.
  - Texas AgriForestry Small Farmers and Ranchers conference
  - Southern Family Farmers and Food Systems Conference
  - Urban Forum
- ◊ Identify conservation methods and techniques to strengthen, promote and implement a technically sound urban and small farm agriculture program.
  - Develop native landscaping projects for cities that provide tax breaks to residents and involve PMC.
    - Fact sheet on NRCS and available advice and assistance
  - Develop conservation practice scenarios for urban and small farms
- ◊ Identify financial assistance programs that can be utilized to promote and implement urban and small farm agriculture.
  - Incorporate the approved national small-acreage scenarios in Texas.
  - Develop payment schedules to support small-acreage scenarios.
- Increased USDA infrastructure investments that benefit underserved communities.
  - ◊ Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Olmitos and Garcias Site 5 & 6 Rehabilitation projects will provide benefits maintaining current flood control, as more new homes are built near the floodplain and protects US Highway 83, a new federal border infrastructure, as well as commercial and residential properties in an extremely low-income area. The construction activities for these sites will directly benefit the local economy.
- Expand partnerships with technical service providers to ensure unserved producers have the additional support needed to access USDA programs.





### Strategic Goal 3: Foster an equitable and competitive marketplace for all agricultural producers

USDA will design, implement, and administer programs in a way that is environmentally sound and increases access, program participation, and investments to underserved communities. Texas NRCS plans to strengthen and expand partnerships through the following actions:



- Expand and enhance partnership and networks that provide assistance and information to underserved groups and individuals and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Ensure partners receive updated information regarding outreach through publications, meetings, and trainings.
- Prioritize Texas Partners for Conservation opportunities for projects that address NRCS priorities targeted for underserved groups and individuals and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- Develop a business model for salesmanship.
  - ◊ Communication Academy Plan
    - Research opportunities for podcasts and blogs to highlight agency opportunities.
    - Network with community leaders.
    - Develop a list of nontraditional media sources (Spanish radio/tv/newspapers, community newsletters, church announcements/newsletters, etc.) and share agency news releases with these resources.



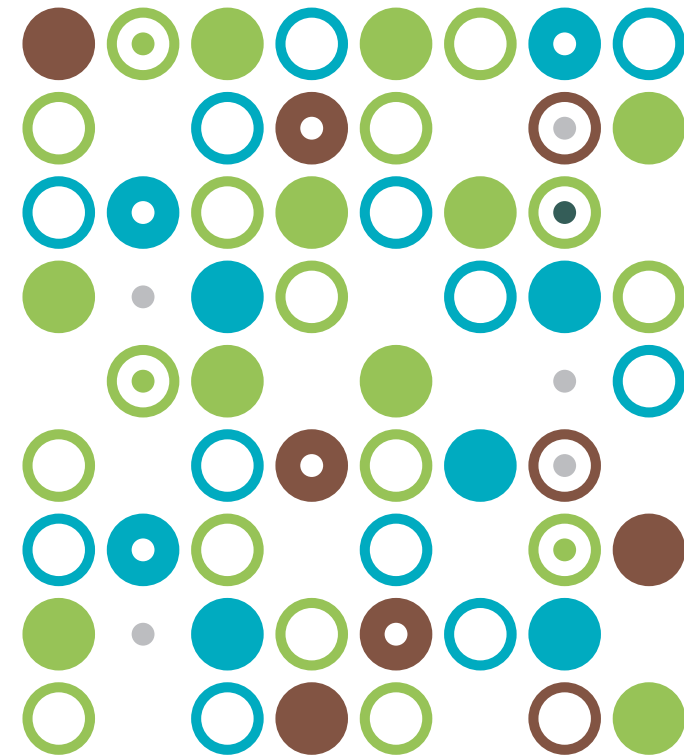




#### Strategic Goal 4: Expand opportunities for economic development and improve quality of life in rural and tribal communities

USDA will collaborate with communities to increase opportunities for underserved communities, and this includes working with Federal partners and various stakeholder groups to help rural and Tribal communities thrive. Texas NRCS will build trust, reduce barriers to access, invest in underserved communities, and foster innovation and partnership in rural and Tribal communities through the following actions:

- Reduce barriers to USDA programs and improve support to underserved farmers, ranchers, and landowners.
  - ◊ Establish a point of contact on each resource team to assist underserved customers through the NRCS conservation planning and program assistance process
  - ◊ Establish USDA service center in Dallas to provide presence and services to urban and suburban communities and align programs, payment schedules, and conservation practice implementation to meet the needs of urban and suburban agricultural producers
- Texas NRCS will take steps to remove barriers for American Indian Tribal nations to access USDA programs
  - ◊ Host tribal round table sessions for increased communication and customer service
  - ◊ Attend Nation to Nation meeting to improve outreach communications
- Build and strengthen partnerships with state, Tribal, and community partners to ensure climate change strategies are locally-led.





# Strategic Goal 5: Attract, inspire, and retain and engaged and motivated workforce that's proud to represent USDA

USDA is committed to reaching new heights by recruiting, onboarding, supporting, and retaining a diverse and talented workforce and cultivating a workplace environment that is collaborative, service-oriented, mission-centered, healthy, inclusive, and welcoming. Texas NRCS plans to continue to build a high performing organization through the following actions:

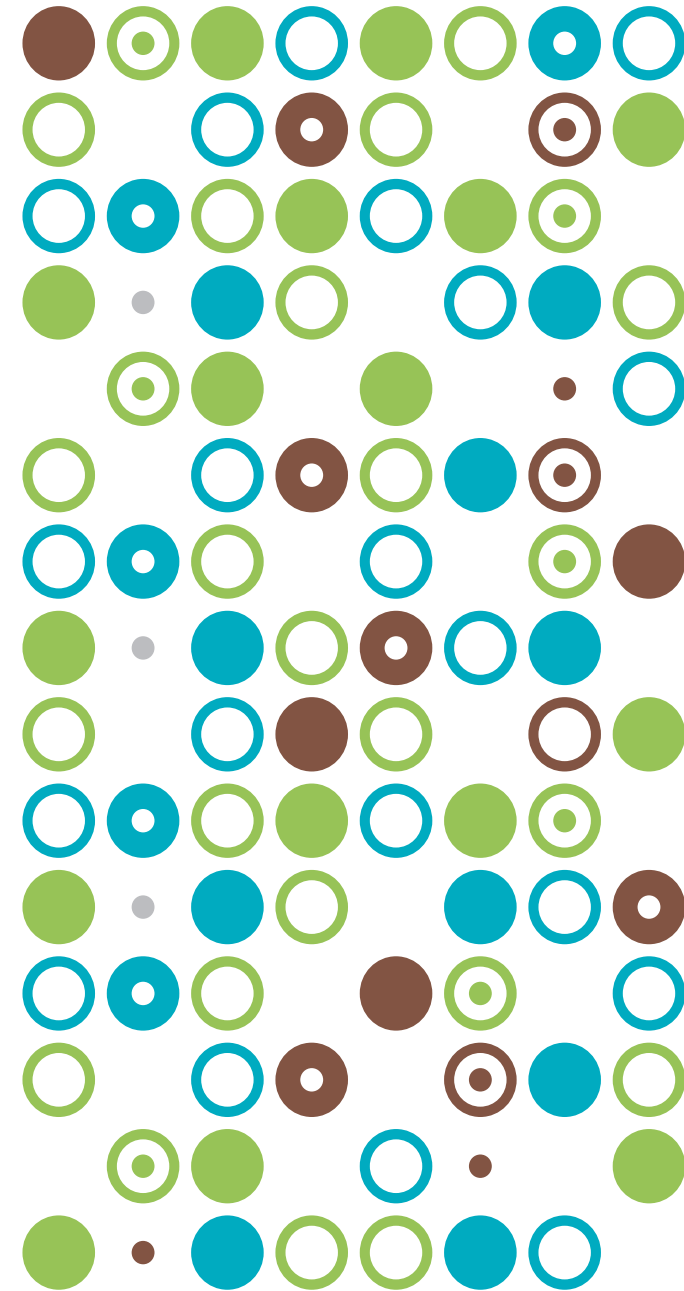
- Provide professional self-improvement opportunities to all staff including leadership development, work/life balance, financial management consultation, and retirement investment training.
  - ◊ Develop team building sessions and activities that can be utilized in Texas.
  - ◊ Utilize successful businesses to provide specific customer service training to supervisors and managers.
- Expand recruitment efforts
  - ◊ Develop the set of materials for college recruitment events and post to SharePoint for access.
  - ◊ Develop the set of materials for high school recruitment events and post to SharePoint for access.
  - ◊ Provide a NRCS booth at 4-H Round-Up and Tradeshow and Texas FFA Annual Convention.



- ◊ Develop contacts at local high schools to share NRCS career materials and attend career days.
- ◊ Develop relationships for recruitment at the Land Judging Events and other judging events.
- ◊ Explore stock show recruitment opportunities.
- ◊ Gather list of career events for colleges and universities in Texas with agriculture, engineering, and natural resources programs.
- Evaluate additional staffing needs based on agency priorities.
  - ◊ Increase the number of Program Support Specialists to handle large volume of program documentation and payments.
- Develop methods to improve employee morale.
- Increase opportunities for field staff and local partners to work together.
- Modernize technology in Texas.
  - ◊ Ensure all field employees have access to mobile tools, iPhones/iPads to access online tools while working in the field, improved GPS technology that integrates with iPhones/iPads.
  - ◊ Explore the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to assist staff with inspections, construction monitoring, easement monitoring, watershed structure monitoring, in addition to conservation practices.
  - ◊ Replace engineering survey equipment and technology to keep up with current technology.
- Provide staff training, education, and resources to effectively meet NRCS priorities including climate related, urban agriculture, drought resiliency, etc.







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