



United States Department of Agriculture

**2014**

# **Farm Bill**

A large, semi-transparent, light blue graphic of a water drop with a thick outline, positioned on the right side of the slide. It overlaps the text and the background image.

**Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service**

# NRCS AQAC Team Update

## NRCS/ARS Livestock GRACEnet webinars

– 3 complete, 2 to go

- May 21 – Acid Scrubbers for Ammonia from Poultry Houses

– [www.ConservationWebinars.net](http://www.ConservationWebinars.net)

## USDA Methane Strategy

– NRCS helping develop Biogas Roadmap

# Farm Bill Overview

## What's New?

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

## What's Not?

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  - Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
  - Air Quality Initiative (AQI)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

## Differences from 2008 Farm Bill:

- Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program rolled into EQIP
- Funding authorization:
  - \$1.35 billion for 2014
  - \$1.60 billion for 2015
  - \$1.65 billion for 2016 and 2017
  - \$1.75 billion for 2018

# Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

No major differences from 2008 Farm Bill

- Funding from EQIP

FY14 pre-proposals were due March 7, 2014

- Full proposals due on May 5, 2014
- Air Quality and Atmospheric Change included as part of the National Component priorities in FY14

# Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

## State-level CIG for FY14:

- Arkansas – closes 4/30/14
- Connecticut – closed 4/25/14
- Georgia – closes 4/30/14
- Idaho – closed 4/25/14
- Iowa – closes 4/30/14
- Kansas – closes 5/16/14
- Kentucky – closed 4/25/14
- New Hampshire – closes 5/2/14
- New Jersey – closes 6/30/14
- New Mexico – closes 5/30/14
- Oregon – closes 5/16/14
- Pacific Islands Area – closes 4/30/14
- South Carolina – closes 5/5/14
- Vermont – closes 5/9/14
- Virginia – closes 5/2/14
- Wyoming – closes 5/1/14

# Air Quality Initiative (AQI)

No major differences from 2008 Farm Bill

- Funding authorization:
  - \$25 million/year through 2018

FY14 program substantively similar to FY13

FY14 states:

- Arizona
- California
- Colorado
- Ohio
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Texas
- Washington

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

No major differences from 2008 Farm Bill

- CStP cap of 10 million acres per year
- HFRP authorized at \$12 million per year



# Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:

- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLPP)

# Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

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 Soil Erosion and Sediment Control

# RCPP

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 and landowners in:
  - Meeting or avoiding the need for national, State, and local natural resource regulatory requirements related to production on eligible land; and
  - Implementing projects that will result in the installation and maintenance of eligible activities that affect multiple agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operations on a local, regional, State, or multistate basis

# RCPP

Implement eligible activities on eligible land through:

- Partnership agreements under which NRCS enters contracts and easement agreements with producers and landowners participating in a project with a selected partner; and
- Direct Conservation Program Contracts (CPCs) or easement agreements in
  - Critical conservation areas; or
  - In a selected partner project area but who are seeking to implement an eligible activity independent of a partner

# RCP

## Critical conservation areas

- Secretary will select up to 8 critical conservation areas
- Priority consideration given to geographical areas which:
  - Include multiple States with significant ag production
  - Have an existing agreement or work plans
  - Benefit water quality improvement
  - Benefit water quantity improvement
  - Assist producers to meet natural resource regulatory requirements

# RCPP

## Partners are responsible for:

- Contributing a significant portion of the overall costs
- Conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project
- Acting on a landowner's or producer's behalf, if requested by the landowners or producer in applying for assistance
- Leveraging financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives.
- Conducting and providing an assessment of the project costs and conservation effects

# RCPP

In the selected partner project areas, RCPP program assistance is delivered to producers through conservation program contracts and easement agreements under the covered programs.

# RCPP

## Covered programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

In addition to the covered programs, the authorities under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566), other than Watershed Rehabilitation provisions, may be used in CCAs.



# RCPP Funding

## Available funding:

- \$100 million of direct RCPP funding each year
- 7% of funds from the four covered programs (ACEP, EQIP, CStP, HFRP) reserved annually through April 1

# RCPP

## Funding Allocation

- 25% for State Projects
- 40% for National Projects
- 35% for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas

# RCP

## Additional Program Provisions

- Allows the Secretary to waive AGI if needed to fulfill purposes of the program
- Allows adjustments to discretionary rules of covered program with Secretary's approval, if requested by partner
- No funding may be used to cover partner administrative costs



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill)

Questions may be submitted via Email to:

[FarmBillQA@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:FarmBillQA@wdc.usda.gov)