

Delaware State Technical Committee Meeting
9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
February 9, 2022

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9:00 – 9:10	Welcome	Kasey Taylor
9:10 – 9:30	FY22 NRCS Accomplishments Report FY23 Agency Priorities	Kasey Taylor
9:30 to 9:40	Federal Crediting Task Force	Leon Tillman
9:40 to 9:45	Subcommittees Urban Ag Subcommittee	Ashley Lenig
9:45 to 10:10	Update on Delaware Poultry Environmental Assessment Working Lands for Wildlife - Pheasant and Quail Forever Partnership Watershed Program Updates	Jayne Arthurs & Ann Baldwin
10:10 to 10:30	Conservation Program Accomplishments in FY 2022	Ashley Lenig
10:30 to 10:35	Break	
10:35 to 11:00	FY23 Conservation Program Information/Input	Ashley Lenig
11:00 to 11:30	Local Work Group Information/Reminders	Kasey Taylor
11:30 to 12:00	Committee Member Reports Guest Reports	Group

(List of Committee Members are on page #2)

State Technical Committee Members

1. Farm Service Agency
2. U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
3. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4. Food and Nutrition Services
5. National Ag. Statistics Service
6. Environmental Protection Agency
7. State Departments and Agencies within the State
 - Delaware Department of Agriculture
 - Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
8. Delaware Lenape Tribe
9. Delaware Nanticoke Tribe
10. Delaware Association of Conservation Districts
 - New Castle County Conservation District
 - Kent County Conservation District
 - Sussex County Conservation District
11. Delaware Rural Water Association
12. Mid-Atlantic 4R
13. State Cooperative Extension Service and Land Grant Universities in the State
14. Farm Bureau
15. Nonprofit Organizations
16. Agriculture Producers representing the variety of crops and poultry and or livestock raised in the State

State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
February 9, 2023

NRCS State Conservationist, Kasey Taylor

- Kasey introduced our new staff on the programs side.
 - Shantel King our new assistant state conservationist for field operations. She will providing immediate oversight and engagement back for our field operations, as well as working directly with the district conservationists and their staffs looking at agreements, how we should be expanding out, partnering, collaborating, and then looking at new ideas or connecting back to expand our services and support.
 - Brooke Jones, formerly state programs specialist, has been selected as our assistant state conservationist for programs effective Monday, February 13th. She will help us continue to expand out the services that connect real time strategies that have been prescribed within our resource assessments and tied into conservation plans that we can get implemented on the ground throughout our financial assistance programs.
 - Elena Stewart, our new easement specialist, coming to us from Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environment Control (DNREC), and will help to make sure that we are sustaining and maintaining producers right to farm.
 - Emily Palmer, easement coordinator under Elena who will assist with increasing the level of stewardship, the work, and the commitment for agland easements and restoration for wetlands here in the state.
- Fiscal Year (FY) 22 Accomplishments
 - The state of the state for fiscal year (FY) 22 when we closed out our books on September 30th highlight the unwavering commitment to conservation solutions that were completed in partnership with our conservation partners to expand our voluntary conservation going into.
 - The investments focused our efforts on our two most critical resource concerns, people and the land as outlined in our strategic plan.
 - The people - focusing on how we support our valued internal and external stakeholders in service to our natural resources.
 - The land - make sure that we're supporting the resilience of our agricultural landscapes and being able to look at long term sustainable solutions.
 - Key achievements
 - We implemented strategies to increase our employees' competencies and technical leadership by ensuring that we have timely services and support for Delawareans for prescriptive conservation solutions.
 - Continuously improving the adoption of conservation practices while expanding our services for our customers and partners.
 - We've also started looking at our conservation tools and expansion real time, agency wide, to address the unique needs of larger producers, as well as focusing on urban agriculture and small farmers.
 - As such, the Urban Agriculture and Small Farm Subcommittee has been stood up through the Delaware State Technical Advisory Committee. They help to

guide what we're seeing as the needs within the state to address urban ag priorities while also expanding our outreach efforts.

- As a result, Delaware has adopted new conservation practice standards and payment scenarios specific to the small and urban farmers to address those concerns related to plant production, as well as ineffective water use, pest management, and soil health.
- We've also launched our environmental assessment to help expand our service and support for new and expected resource concerns for our poultry producers.
 - The assessment's goal is to allow new poultry producers to apply for financial assistance in advance of the placement of birds within poultry houses.
- We are also working towards ensuring equity within the delivery and implementation of our agency's conservation programs and services.
- As such, Delaware NRCS has provided nearly \$4.5M, which equated to 60% of the funds for beginning or socially disadvantaged and urban farmers.
- We've also prioritized climate smart agriculture and forestry practices within several existing conservation programs to help producers build healthier and more resilient soils, by improving nutrient stewardship and increasing the energy efficiency to adapt to change within the climate.
- We've partnered with our federal, state, and local partners to establish our riparian forest buffer initiative and making sure we've identified opportunities to increase the riparian forest buffers and ensuring those numbers are increasing. This effort has been key to meeting Delaware's current goal within our water implementation plan (WIP) of which 65 acres of those RFP's have been outlined and moved forward for implementation.
- We partnered with Quail Forever to target outreach efforts to increase the populations of the Northern Bobwhite Quail through the national working lands for wildlife initiative. This addresses the critical need for conservation challenges that are contributing to a downward trend within the bobwhite numbers.
- Our farmers and landowners are using conservation systems to protect and improve water quality. These systems are proven to reduce the nutrient and sediment transport back to surface water and groundwater. In addition to improving the water quality for all of this, this will help within the comprehensive approach and benefits for soil health, air quality and wildlife habitat as well as strengthen profitability.
- Agency funded conservation systems that are improving water quality in FY22.
 - Cover Crops - improve water quality by scavenging residual nitrogen, reducing erosion and sedimentation, and improving infiltration.
 - 4,320 acres of cover crop enhancements were applied throughout the conservation stewardship program (CSP) to improve soil health increasing solar organic matter, suppressing the excessive heat pressure, and breaking pest cycles.
 - Cropping systems - include the no-till, mulch till, and nutrient management to effectively manage the application of nutrients and limit the disturbance of the

soil to improve crop nutrient uptake as well as increase infiltration and reduce the sediment transport to improve water quality.

- 7,940 acres of nutrient management enhancements were applied through CSP to improve the nutrient uptake, efficiency, and reduce the risk of nutrient losses to both the surface water and air quality.
- Animal Waste Management Systems - include the heavy use area protection pads/animal mortality facilities, waste management, and waste storage structures.
 - These ensure effective storage and management of the animal manure until the nutrients from the manure can be properly applied to a growing crop.
- The agency remains committed to increasing assistance for climate smart agriculture and forestry making sure that we can support producers in building resiliency across their operations.
 - Technical and financial assistance was provided to practices that allowed us to install 12,828 square feet of cover to protect crops from the sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold to extend the growing.
 - High Tunnels - our farmers installed 14,816 feet of trees, shrubs, and grasses which will result in improved air quality, energy efficiency, and water quality.
 - Soil Carbon Amendments - Delaware farmers contracted to implement 1,500 acres of compost, fire, char, or other organic carbon amendments to improve soil organic matter, aggregation, and soil organism habitat.
 - Sprinkler Systems - our farmers contracted to install 11 systems covering over 558 acres, which will result in improved, efficient, and uniform application of water on irrigated lands.
- We continue partnership with Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) for land acquisition efforts. Our efficiency improvements were identified and led to a process improvement project to better align partnership goals and our timelines. During this undertaking, the goal was to position Delaware to increase the funding in the state and at the federal level.
- Additional federal land acquisition processes were launched on October 1, 2022, with the focus on 15 applications received during round #26 with an initial projection of \$1.35 million slated to date.
- Agriculture Management Assistance Program (AMA) - addresses resource concerns for historically underserved producers; limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and veterans.
 - We received 10 applications with 185 acres enrolled for a total of \$218,800.
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) - Delaware NRCS is currently providing technical and financial assistance to 35 active CSP contracts on 35,560 acres totaling more than \$3.2M, of which \$514.500 in financial assistance has been provided for six new contracts covering 4,340 acres.
 - In addition, three CSP contracts which were expiring in 2022 have been renewed for a total of \$149,000 in financial assistance covering over 1,205 acres.

- Urban Ag - NRCS focused efforts on addressing barriers for urban farmers to access the agency and partner resources.
 - This includes tailoring traditional practices for small and urban farmers and utilizing multiple agency programs to fund the needs.
 - NRCS also created a ranking pool to specifically target and fund urban agriculture. The agency has funded nine urban projects for over \$50,000.
 - Continuing to expand our partnership and being able to close those needs and gaps that have been identified, the agency has partnered with the New Castle Conservation District (NCCD) to develop an urban farmer training program to provide hands-on training, educational materials, and increase networking.
 - A website has been developed, www.deuffc.org to serve as a hub for urban farming resources. NCCD will be working with small and urban farmers to access information on funding opportunities, local events, and ways to get involved within the urban community and more.
- Wildlife – we’ve partnered with Ducks Unlimited to lead out the NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative to enhance and restore habitat for the American Black Duck.
 - NRCS approved five contracts to benefit the waterfall habitat and our farmers have treated 1,031 acres of phragmites to improve wildlife habitat.
 - Through invasive species control in FY22, Delaware NRCS along with our partners trained conservation planning staff as well as, reached out to our farmers to reverse the decline of northern bobwhite habitat.
 - Over the next five years, the agency is setting aside funds for wildlife practices to benefit nesting covers for bobwhite rearing habitat, forage habitat, and escape cover in priority areas throughout the state.
 - We will continue providing the technical assistance through our Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), as well as our Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to establish wildlife habitat and improve water quality in partnership with Farm Service Agency (FSA) as well as the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC).
 - We had one new landowner enrolled in CRP and reenrolled nine prep sites in FY22.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - provides implementation for producer’s conservation practices outlined in the conservation plan.
 - EQIP will focus on incorporating environmental priorities as identified at the state level.
 - We will be working with our state technical advisory committee and local working groups in selecting specific program options that will be offered, what the factors are, what questions, and screening tools will be used to ensure that the application ranking process is very fair, inclusive, and equitable.
 - In FY22, NRCS approved 159 contracts helping to address resource concerns for 16,405 acres totaling to \$7.57M.

- The top 10 conservation practices installed in FY22 were for heavy use area pad, roofs, covers, irrigation, and pivot systems; cover crops are litter amendment; building envelope improvements at manure storage structures; farmstead energy efficiency improvements, nutrient management, and soil carbon amendments. Heavy Use Area Pads was our largest funded practice for \$1.29M.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) - protecting the Delaware Bay and inland Bays with cover crops.
 - We had four approved contracts for \$43,400 covering over 605 acres for the Inland Bay.
 - Additional RCP projects include:
 - The Chesapeake of the Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation
 - Cost share opportunities for beginning farmers
 - Energize Delaware Farm Energy and Efficiency Program
- Fiscal Year 2023 Priorities
 - Our Chief wants us to make sure that we're building upon his four building blocks, focusing on locally led leadership to help inform and educate, inform, scope, and develop those needs and prioritize resource concerns to move partnership forward.
 - The partnership starts with making sure our employees are properly trained, have the right resources, needs, and supplies as well as being empowered through current knowledge to work with our producers and partners in prioritizing and identifying what the needs are and taking that into conservation planning recommendations.
 - We want to start looking at how do we expand voluntary conservation through technical science integrity to make sure that those solutions become the prioritization.
 - We're going to focus on our partnership to utilize the full extent of our partnership from our community-based organizations, our county level leadership, our state level programs, and being able to adopt it federally within our statute and program implementation to make sure we have efficiency and effectiveness within program delivery.
 - We're going to ensure equity within the delivery and implementation of all of our services and financial assistance programs to increase climate smart ag and forestry and look at real time solutions starting with the work that has historically been done from cover crops, water efficiency, and air quality to move forward in new innovations.
 - We also want to expand out the tools to make sure that they're being supported to reduce the inefficiencies, delays, and how those concerns are being received from our producers and staff real time so it's consistently engaging for every producer.
 - Continue to grow and expand our knowledge base to leverage innovative partnerships to expand agency's ability to get conservation on the ground.

Chesapeake Bay Coordinator, Leon Tillman

- Leon provided highlights and an update on USDA and EPA's Federal Crediting Task Force.
 - This joint effort was announced by Under Secretary Robert Bonnie and is looking at crediting federal conservation investments to work with jurisdictions to more fully credit agricultural conservation practices implemented in the Bay.
 - There's been discussions with the various jurisdictions from Delaware and Maryland for opportunities to improve crediting for federal conservation practices.
 - The task force is going to function as an ad hoc/independent team separate from the Bay program structure. They will be providing recommendations to the Bay to get recommendations voted on and enacted.
 - The work is going to be done by utilizing and maintaining scientific integrity for the Bay as well as ensuring producer privacy.
- Four objectives for the task force
 - Developing full accounting for practices and ensuring there is no double counting.
 - Identifying and verifying expired practices. Key part to providing credit and looking for opportunities.
 - Credit more practices to account for practices implemented through various federal programs and characterize reduction efficiencies.
 - Identifying time saving technologies and methodologies to credit more practices for our jurisdictions.
- They are looking to have approximately 24 members on the team with USDA agency representatives (NRCS, NASS, FSA, and FS) as well as representatives from EPA, USGS, and each of the Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions.
- They've been having pre-meetings and talking to departments from the ag environment to ensure adequate representation from each jurisdiction to identify opportunities and technical expertise to be able identify time saving technologies, methodologies, interpretations of federal law policy, and programs to identify paths forward.
 - The task force is going to have two subgroups to tackle the four objectives that were identified through a course of various meetings.
 - They are planning to host a few introductory meetings and then have subgroup meetings with Leon in attendance to flesh out what some of the recommendations are to provide a report back to the Bay program leadership as well as EPA and USDA leadership.
- Deliverables for the task force are to establish an action plan that will include the recommendations across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to meet the various objectives.
- The action plan will include actionable items for recommended enactment through the Bay program to include scientific justification, scope, and area of affect to justify the adoption.
 - They'll work to identify what scientific research has been done, what kind of support we have out there, what is working and is not working within the jurisdictions, and to provide documentation to go along with the recommendations.
 - This task force will develop an action plan over the course of the next year.

- They've had a kickoff meeting with USDA, EPA, and secretaries and commissioners of ag and environmental conservation across the Bay and are now working throughout the next year to establish the action plan.
- They will also take the recommendations that can be implemented more immediately into consideration as the 2025 deadline is quickly approaching.
 - They don't want to hold off on recommendations that can be easily enacted but go ahead and provide those in the present time to be enacted as they are ready.
 - They will also have those recommendations incorporated into the overall recommendation action plan at the conclusion of a year.
- They have been working with each of the state's departments of ag and environmental conservation to get feedback and recommendations for task force members and will start to reach out to them to set up times for meetings and establish the foundation, objectives, and actionable items.
- The task force coordination and facilitation are being led by Leon Tillman, USDA-NRCS, and Kelly Shank, EPA Region 3, and will be periodically providing updates to and through the Chesapeake Bay program as well as the various leaderships across USDA, EPA, and the jurisdictions.
 - Richard Wilkins asked via the chat, how will you capture data on practices farmers are doing without any government programs?
 - Leon replied, that will not be part of their main focus. That question has been raised as they are having these discussions. There is a route to identify some of those through remote sensing, there was previously a remote sensing pilot in Pennsylvania. There is a large federal investment across the Bay through NRCS and FSA with federal practices. We know those federally funded practices are there and functioning but want to ensure that those practices get translated into credit for each jurisdiction in the Bay. Leon is hoping this will also lead to recommendations through the ag work group or watershed technical work groups that are similar in using some of the same technologies and methodologies that are identified through this task force.

Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Ashley Lenig

- Ashley comes to us from the great state of Pennsylvania where she focused on the conservation stewardship program (CSP), national water quality initiative (NWQI), conservation innovation grants (CIG), and several other duties as assigned. Having her engagement here has helped us connect out some of the conversations that we've had within our listening sessions and what we're seeing as some of those needs as well as looking at how we increase efficiency and timeliness of our programs being rolled out, serviced, and making sure we have a continued dialogue for our producers coming up to our field office level and then back. Ashley's last day will be Friday, February 10th.
- Ashley provided updates on the Urban Agriculture Subcommittee.
 - Brooke Jones, Program Coordinator is the chairperson for the subcommittee.
 - A meeting was held on October 18th where they reviewed the Delaware NRCS Urban Conservation Outreach Plan.

- New Castle Conservation District highlighted their efforts in inventorying community ag resources. The website, www.deuffc.org (added to the chat) includes resources, information, events, and recordings for opportunities for funding and volunteering.
- Upcoming subcommittee meetings will focus on current conservation practices and ideas for new conservation practices in 2024.

State Resource Conservationist – Jayme Arthurs

- The Poultry Environmental Assessment (EA)
 - We are in the process of going through or developing an environmental assessment for Delaware for the area identified in lower, western Sussex County with the goal of implementing flexibility provided in the 2018 farm bill for EQIP to address new and expected resource concerns.
 - The hope is that by going through this process, developing the environmental assessment we'll be able to tailor this assessment while completing environmental evaluations for projects in this area. This will give poultry producers an opportunity to apply and possibly get contracted for conservation practices on their farms without having birds in their poultry houses and having that resource concern there.
 - They've had both the public and stakeholder meetings. One was held in June and the other was held this past November. They received a lot of feedback from both.
 - The contractor hired, Conservation Works, to do the EA put the environmental document together and has completed and analyzed the evaluation and data from each of the hypothetical poultry sites used and have drafted out the EA and are in the process of reviewing that now. Once completed, it will be forwarded to our East National Science and Technology Center (ENTC) for their review and feedback before it continues through the process.
 - We are on schedule to get the EA completed by July of this year with the hopes to have it implemented beginning in FY24.
 - As we move closer to our next STAC meeting (May), Jayme will continue to provide updates on where we are in the process.
- Working Lands for Wildlife, Northern Bobwhite Quail Initiative or effort here in the state.
 - We are partnering with Quail Forever along with Maryland and Virginia to have an individual working in Delaware with our field office staff, partners, and our landowners to increase bobwhite quail habitat in the state.
 - We've entered into an agreement with Quail Forever in FY22 and are looking at position descriptions for that individual. Jayme received the position descriptions the other day and is in the process of reviewing it. He is hoping to have somebody on board here in the state to start focusing on the quail efforts as early as the summer.
 - They've developed some outreach materials related to bobwhite quail and have the materials sets available for the field offices and landowners which includes the fact sheet presented during this meeting.
 - Our resource staff and public affairs specialist work with DNREC Fish and Wildlife have also developed an outreach video located on the Delaware NRCS website.

State Engineer – Ann Baldwin

- Watershed Program Updates
 - Ann provided updates that we have for projects in the state regarding the watershed program.
 - Through our normal watershed operations funding, as well as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), a lot of money has been coming into the program allowing for opportunities to look at ways to utilize those funds.
 - Previously, Ann reported on samples of the output that we received for the Upper Nanticoke Watershed plan. The contractor continues to work on the modeling of the various watersheds within the Upper Nanticoke and have submitted all their models for our review for the existing conditions.
 - They are currently running the model with proposed alternatives with anticipated future conditions within the watershed. Ann received some information that was submitted yesterday and has few questions for them. When those questions get answered, she will be sending the newest information to the sponsors for review and then their next steps will be developing that plan with the proposed alternatives.
 - Ann presented an example of the type of the data we've received for the various watersheds. They have maps showing the inundation for the various storm events under existing conditions and now are getting ready to receive the same information with proposed conditions, such as, future development within the watershed as predicted. Which alluded to Ann's question raised to the consultant as to how they determine those future conditions for land use and such.
- City of New Castle –Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR)
 - As mentioned during the last STAC meeting, we had had a request from the City of New Castle resulting from their sea level rise task Force about the watershed program. We received that formal request asking for funding for a project.
 - The first step towards receiving funding from the watershed program is that a preliminary investigation feasibility report must be developed through our contracting process.
 - We did receive funding and it was approved for us to do a contract with a consultant, RJH Consultants. They're basically the only one on retainer to complete these types of studies for the country.
 - This study will determine if this potential project with the City of New Castle fits the watershed program and does not have any barriers that would make it ineligible based on the requirements within the program and could be done within the scope of the program.
 - The request is to evaluate ways to mitigate the flooding/anticipated flooding through sea level rise in the City of New Castle, as well as increased storm event flows. There have been numerous studies done in the city within the watershed already which proved that with sea level rise and continuing increased storm events that current protections in the city are already inadequate and certainly will be in the future.

- The request is, if we can use the watershed program to help them mitigate these effects of the climate change, sea level rise, and such.
- An initial meeting was held with the consultant and the representatives from the city for discussion about the scope of the potential project and gaining information for the consultant to evaluate the water, the program requirements, if it's a feasible project.
- The report is scheduled to be completed by the middle of April and then based on the results; the city could move forward to request a project if it's deemed feasible. If not, unfortunately that would be the end of it.
- We are very early in the process, but Ann will follow-up during the next STAC meeting.
- If anybody else has potential projects in mind, this would be the first step that we would take towards deciding if it fits the watershed program.
- We continue to receive funds toward to the program through the various laws and funding opportunities. The agency is staffing up for this additional funding knowing that we have an increase in our workload for this program.
- Some of the purposes that we could use to apply towards a project consist of flood prevention, watershed protection, agricultural water management, water quality management, public recreation as a purpose, fish and wildlife, as well as municipal and industrial water supply, with the top four being the main purposes.
- Another eligibility requirement is that 20% of the economic benefits of the project must benefit agland or rural communities.
- And there must be an eligible sponsor for a watershed project.
 - An eligible sponsor is a local sponsor, must be a state agency or subdivision of the state which conservation districts are local municipalities or a tribal organization.
 - They must have some interest in control in the projects and be willing to administer and implement the operation maintenance once the project is complete.
- We are in conversation with the Kent Conservation District regarding their aging stormwater management facilities throughout the county and trying to decide what a project would look like with defining the scope.
- If anybody would like to contact us regarding a potential project, feel free to reach out to Ann.

Acting Assistant State Conservationist, Programs – Ashley Lenig

- Conservation Program Accomplishments in FY 2022
 - We function by fiscal year (FY) which ends on September 30th of every year and then we go the next fiscal year. Ashley's presentation provides a comparison between FY2021 and FY2022.
 - *FY22 Contracts* - We had 180 contracts in 2022, which was an increase from last year. Of those 180, our Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) led the way with the most contracts 159 and then Agricultural Management Assistance

(AMA) 10, followed by Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), 7 and our Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), 4.

- The shading on the presentation represents whether they're active or completed, active is the lighter blue and then navy blue which has moved towards completed. We treated over 21,000 acres with a total obligation of \$8.3M with 25% of that being paid out already.
- *Total active contracts* - We create and obligate new contracts every FY, considering contracts from past years that are still active. We have 302 contracts on 60,832 acres across the state for a total obligation of \$19.9M. While we're doing well with paying those out, only 51.6% have been paid, \$10.3M.
 - For FY23 to date, we only had one contract for a CSP renewal. We will also see CSP Classic, EQIP, and other contracts being obligated as we go through the year.
- *Contract Acres by County* - A map displays the spread of contracts across the counties and the state. Most of the contracts were completed in Sussex.
 - The contract acres ranged from over 5,000 acres in the northern part of the state to over 36,000 acres in the southern part of the state.
- Conservation Stewardship Program Contracts
 - 2010 through 2023, our total contracts were 186 with 144,872 treated acres for a total obligation of \$13.6M. We had a high rate of payout on those at \$12.2M being paid with a lot of those being older contracts.
 - The navy blue (darker blue) indicates completed contracts. The lighter blue shows our active contracts from 2018 through 2023.
 - Most of the contracts are completed but you can see the fluctuation over a few years. 2015, 2016, and 2017 had high numbers for CSP and then it sort of declined and we haven't seen those numbers that high again.
 - We are working on increasing CSP participation and recently had a listening session and gathered ideas from our staff to see what we can do to improve awareness and participation of CSP.
 - We want to have a comprehensive training session for our staff and are working on some outreach tactics and materials that would help us get more interest in that program.
 - All forms of CSP includes renewals of CSP contracts. With CSP we're rewarding the best and motivating the rest. CSP is a program where we're looking for folks that have basically treated their main resource concerns, large resource concerns, have already done a high level of stewardship on their own, or have completed an EQIP contract and want to go above and beyond and begin to enhance what they've already done. They are getting a payment for existing activities that are being done on the landscape for conservation purposes and then adding at least one additional enhancement to go beyond the level of conservation that year on the landscape.
 - CSP over time has seen a little bit of a decline here and we'd like to boost that up.

- *Historically Underserved*
 - On our application, there is a check box with a link that you can check if you'd like to know more about what these categories are, Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged, Veterans, and Limited Resource Producers. If you fall into one of these categories that has not had as much access to funding in the past, you can mark it on your application and receive a higher rate of funding.
 - We had 98 historically underserved contracts in FY22 which is over half of our total 180 contracts, and we obligated \$4.8M which is over half of our \$8.3M that we spend in contracts. 82.7% of those contracts we've begun to pay for \$1.8M to historically underserved contracts.
 - We also track on applications for veterans and beginning farmers and historically underserved. Beginning farmers had the most at 52.6%. Then, socially disadvantaged at 24.1%. Limited resource producers had 1.4% of our applications.
- *Top Ten Practices*
 1. Heavy Use Area Protection for stabilizing a heavily used area
 2. Roofs and Covers to keep clean water clean and protect areas that have manure from having nutrient runoff
 3. Irrigation Sprinkler System
 4. Cover Crop
 5. Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste
 6. Energy Efficiency Practices for the Building Envelope
 7. Energy Efficiency Practices for the Ag Operation
 8. Waste Storage Facility storing manure to be spread, the appropriate time, rate, and location
 9. Nutrient Management, the actual managing of those nutrients
 10. Soil Carbon Amendments
- *EQIP* – review of 2021 and 2022. We had more obligations in 2022, over \$7.5M spread across the counties which fluctuates depending on the year you have applications, a substantial increase from 2021 where we had \$5.8M.
- *AMA* - We had 17 applications statewide in FY22. We funded 13 out of the 17 applications. We were able to fund all five applications in Sussex and the majority in the other counties.
 - AMA is typically high tunnels and irrigation.
- *Obligations* in 2021 versus 2022, FY21 we had a slightly higher amount, \$224,000 versus \$218,000 in FY22 across all counties obligated.
- *AMA and AMA Risk Management Agency (RMA) Funding Levels* are split and distributed across the counties.
- *Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) 2021 versus 2022.*
 - Renewals – In 2022 we had a total amount of just over \$144,000 versus over \$970,000 in FY21.
 - Classic – In FY22 we obligated \$217,152 versus FY23, \$239,540. Classic is the basic program, and the renewals are contracts that are existing and wanting to

renew or need to have something additional to get their contract renewed for the next five-year period.

- EQIP Contract Implementation Ratio (CIR)
 - Looking at the past three fiscal years in Delaware, we had a contract implementation ratio of 90.7%. Kent County has the highest contract implementation rate at 95% in Kent, New Castle has 90%, and Sussex has 89%.
 - Kasey stated that we need to stress the importance of this to the committee because it means that when you see a high implementation rate, it's because of the ability and timing of our planners and conservation partners working with producers and capturing their needs and opportunities in their plans and tying that into the contract to get the funding immediately in the hands of the producers. Doing this at a 90% rate means that as soon as those individuals are coming in, we make an application, they are approved, and then turned around to provide them financial assistance, and get that implemented positions Delaware to be able to receive additional dollars and expand our service and support for our producers in the state.
 - Kasey stated, it's exciting to see that Delaware continues to operate at a minimum of 90%. We've gone as high as 97% and beyond, which means that Delaware is operating within the top 5% across NRCS.
 - A CIR target rate of 87% for Delaware is 90 - 97% typically. The Northeast Region is at a level above that 87%, which is the average calculation for the region.
 - Ashley's presentation shows Delaware and various states CIR with New Hampshire leading the way.
- FY23 Conservation Program Information and Input
 - FY23 spending plans include our advisory allocation while we are under a continuing resolution.
 - Nationally mandated funding, we are nationally mandated to spend 5% of our funds in EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC), 50% in livestock practice, and 10% on wildlife practices. In addition to that, we spend 5% of our funds in beginning farmer and socially disadvantaged. We typically spend more than 10% on the historically underserved categories.
 - The EQIP fund pools for FY23, listed out, have been adjusted and updated as needed. Local work group input and other needs were analyzed and incorporated during that time as well.
 - We move money into these categories and rank and fund applications accordingly. This funds distribution is structured the same as last year.
- Preliminary AMA Ranking Pool Funds
 - We have \$92,000 allocated for high tunnels and for AMA-RMA, we have yet to receive our funds.
- EQIP High Priority Practices
 - States can select up to 10 high priority practices that will receive an increased incentive rate.
 - High Priority Practices must meet one of the following criteria.

- Address specific cause of impairment related to excess nutrients and ground or surface water.
 - Address the conservation of water to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers.
 - Meet other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified and habitat or other area restoration plans.
 - Be geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.
- These practices are what were selected as underutilized practices with a high potential for conservation benefit on a state level.
- FY23 High Priority Practices are the same as FY22 with the addition of, 612 Tree Establishment.
- FY23 Source Water Protection
 - In accordance with the farm bill, they want us to spend 10% of our funds on source water protection nationwide. This includes the source of drinking water, threats to drinking water such as sediments, nitrates, or other nutrients in the water.
- Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation (CSAF)
 - CSAF identified practices are for extreme weather events that would benefit climate change conditions.
 - Conservation Cover
 - Crop Rotation
 - No Till
 - Reduce Till
 - Cover Crops
 - Field Border
 - Filter Strips
 - Grassed Waterways
 - Prescribed Grazing
 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover
 - Riparian Forested Buffer
 - Wildlife Habitat Planting
 - Tree and Shrub Establishment
 - Forest Stand Improvement
 - Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
 - There is a multi-page document for CSAF practices, this is to highlight a few of our common practices that they could do on their own or through EQIP or CSP.
- FY23 Payment Schedule
 - The FY23 payment schedule has been finalized and they are currently working with their EQIP assessments and rankings and then at some point they will be using the cost estimator, which is based on the new cost list, to develop their cost estimate.
 - We are also starting to work on the FY24 payment schedule for next year. If you are aware of any practices that you think the payment is too high or the payment is too low, contact the programs team regarding those concerns.

- The local work group and STAC input would be considered and incorporated in finalizing FY24 cost.
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program-Conservation Incentive Contract (EQIP-CIC)
 - Provides stewardship opportunities for producers through EQIP based on land use, must address at least one of our priority resource concerns, and be within an identified watershed or other area.
 - This was designated to provide a steppingstone for producers going from our more traditional program of EQIP to CSP where they're enhancing conservation that they're already doing. It allows producers to implement elements of the CSP program but on a smaller scale.
 - The goal is to improve water quality by reducing sediment, pathogen and pesticide loss and source water depletion for the high priority areas. The entire state was chosen as a high priority area and the targeted land use is crop land.
 - The resource concern categories that we plan to address with EQIP-CIC are field sediment and pathogen loss, source water depletion and field pesticide loss.
 - We will use the FY22 EQIP-CIC eligible practices again this year.
 - Conservation Crop Rotation
 - No Till
 - Reduced Till
 - Cover Crop
 - Irrigation Water
 - Drainage Water Management
 - Nutrient Management
 - Pest Management
 - Conservation System
 - Carbon Amendment
 - Soil Health Testing
 - The EQIP-CIC application deadline is tomorrow, February 10th. Dates for the rest of our programs have been released via news releases as well as on a calendar for our staff here.
 - Upcoming application deadlines are:
 - Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) - February 17th
 - Ag Land Easement (ALE) - March 3rd
 - Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), Delaware Bay and Inland Bay - March 24th
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
 - We currently have one eligible entity that we work with, the Delaware Department of Agriculture, DDA.
 - We have an over \$1.3M allocation available for parcel acquisition in FY23.
 - \$2.7M has been requested from the entity for FY23 for 15 easements on agricultural land projects and that would require additional \$1.3M to fund all the projects.
 - \$1.2M of the requested funds is from Chesapeake Bay watershed. Eight projects are in the Chesapeake Bay.

- Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE)
 - Focusing on easements for wetlands, protecting and enhancing them.
 - FY23 Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC) for Delaware were not established due to issues with the contracting office.
 - We currently have one application for WRE and are working with national headquarters to get the individual appraisal to establish its value while concurrently awarding a new five-year contract for the Areawide Market Analysis (AWMA), what the geographic area rate caps will be based off.
 - FY23 WRE deadlines are shown below. Applications are available at your local field office by February 17th. Eligibility must be completed by March 17th and ranking by March 31st for obligation by June 2nd.
 - Ranking Criteria
 - Application ranking criteria process is to approve for funding.
 - That process is reassessed every year.
 - We are proposing that it remain the same as in FY22.
 - GARC rates
 - Delaware will proceed with appraisal in FY23.
 - GARC rates apply to easement offers between 20 - 300 acres.
 - Proposed percent of the established GARC that is applied to the appraisal to establish the compensation amount is less than 95% of the fair market value.

State Conservationist – Kasey Taylor

- Local Working Group (LWG)
 - We continue to expand engagements and conversations to ensure forward-looking meetings where it's more engaged in helping us set priorities and reviewing how programs are being received, as well as indication of barriers or unintended consequences that can be remediated. We also want to capture what each working group has identified as core priorities.
 - We are an agency within the federal government specifically directed underneath the United States Department of Agriculture and provide service and support for voluntary conservation aligning back to our local resource concerns that are prioritized by these local working groups.
 - LWGs are comprised of our conservation districts, farmers, local, federal and state entities to make sure we continue to expand voluntary conservation to align the federal conservation programs and financial assistance throughout the entirety of the Delaware Conservation Partnership.
 - We envisioned having these conversations at a national scale and coming back to the local level for our producers to engage at the county level with our local districts, DDA, DNREC, and others up to the federal level with Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, and a host of partners to address producers needs and challenges focusing in on conservation solutions.
 - We want to leverage the funding to connect it back and make sure that we have options at every level for every producer here in the state.

- We want to have these LWG meetings to focus in on what our producers' needs are. We want to be able to ensure that the feedback is helping us set local priorities, leverage funding, and allocate the funds for conservation programs.
- The meetings allow us to see what those needs are from prioritizing, to establish ranking criteria, set funding levels, but specifically to make sure we can get that work delivered and implemented in a timely fashion.
- We want to make sure that our process within the LWG was more reflective to the conversations we're having in the state and that it positions us to have full consistent strategies to connect these conversations real time.
- We've expanded out the program process to allow us to be innovative, creative, and capture real time solutions to use as a foundation for requests for proposal (RFPs) for potential partnership with DNREC, DDA, DACD, and our partners across the conservation districts and beyond then going back into our community-based organizations and groups who leading out some of these efforts in a larger scale.
- We want to make sure everyone knows that these are open to the public, we need public participation specifically our producers. Our district representatives consist of board members that are actively farming, engaged, and can provide insight and feedback on a day-to-day basis. But we also want to make sure that everyone knows that they are fully welcome to this.
- We are looking at having the county LWG meetings concluded by May 26th to have a good product of recommendations for review by our team and present it to the STAC meeting on September 7th as our structure to deliver conservation going into FY24.
- The State Technical Advisory Committee comprises of NRCS working hand in hand with our conservation districts, the STAC, as well as several partners at the state level to help determine our work emphasis on an annual basis who are fully engaged in these dialogues.
- We want to make sure that the groups that don't have much of a voice, that we are amplifying those conversations to include our Delaware tribes and continuing to expand those conversations moving forward.
- We're also looking at working in and championing things with our Delaware Association of Conservation Districts (DACD), our state government agencies, our state agricultural associations, the agricultural nonprofit organizations and Agri business to continue to serve as an advisory back to the NRCS state conservationist and her team to offer input, insights, and making sure that our members and constituents will help determine what we see and how we should be allocating our resources and funding.
- The LWGs, while similar to the STAC is where they focus on county specific resources, concerns, needs, as well as at the watershed level on the integrity of how, why, and what additional practices we should anticipate or where the need is as we continue having emerging needs for water security, water quality, saltwater intrusion, and how that's immediately impacting our freshwater areas. We want to make sure that we start looking at key items we can use to remediate that and bringing it forward.

- This would allow for opportunities to highlight the bay and get back to traditional work, challenges, and needs for our producers.
- Local Working Group Strategy
 - We are asking the committee to help us prioritize the top five resource concerns for ag land, wildlife, and beyond to make sure we have a good understanding of what's happening in each county and tie it into recommendations and solutions that can expand beyond federal financial assistance funding.
 - Looking at the working lands programs and the easements programs first five priorities examples.
 1. Aquatic Habitat
 2. Storage and Handling of Pollutants
 3. Inefficient Energy Use
 4. Livestock Production Limitation
 5. Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
 - There's not a large conversation for our forested acres, we want to make sure that we also have sensitivities there. There's a large push moving across Delaware, as well as across the landscape to make sure that we are keeping our forested acres at a high emphasis because it's ensuring we have fresh/clean air.
 - We have been partnering with the Delaware Department of Agriculture, Mike Valenti and his team to make sure that conversation continues to be elevated forward.
 - These conversations will assist the LWG identify additional activities, practices, and enhancements we should be bringing forward. Examples of completed practices identifying forest land top five priorities.
 1. Terrestrial Habitat
 2. Wind and Water Erosion
 3. Degraded Plant Condition
 4. Air Quality Emissions
 5. Inefficient Energy Use
 - Kasey provided an example of a list of emerging resource concerns and priorities for the LWG, and conservation districts expanded conversations.
 - EQIP Ranking Question and Practice List.
 - In the LWG process, initially we wanted that to be programmed neutral to focus on the biggest resource challenges and needs our producers have identified that we're historically working on and then add in the funding. We wanted to add in the working lands program for EQIP as a starting part of the conversation to connect that back and show how we've used that funding to resolve those issues to provide engagement, a path forward, and emerging needs that we should be focusing on.
 - As recommendations come forward, we want to make sure that we have a good understanding of the scope, intent, challenges, and needs are for our criteria, ranking, timelines, and the questions to make sure we are on trend with what our producers are doing as well as where they are growing and moving forward

from an equity, inclusivity, and accessibility to expand diversity for our agricultural operations.

- Looking at our working lands for wildlife, we've been able to use this strategically to implement our programs to target the appropriate resource concerns. We are working within the LWG to look at ideas and partnerships for increasing habitat for all species in general and those that are at risk or endangered within Delaware and look at a path forward making sure there are no risks back to the producers.
- We would work to have it corrected and delisted so it's not an impact for conservation solutions to expand the work that we're doing here in the state and for our producers to operate at a higher level or being able to sustain their implementation. We want to bring that back into our conversations and connect it with our practices and potential to leverage funding in our partnership to include EPA, Fish and Wildlife Service, and beyond to have additional opportunities for our producers.
- Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that to drive innovation in the field and across the state at a higher level.
 - We want to prioritize funding and start looking at new emerging resource concerns to ramp up funding coming in through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), that will allow us to go into deeper dives for sustainable solutions and how we are identifying that and being able to tie it back into our current strategic plan.
 - We want to make sure that we can reinvigorate this program and allow us to do pilots for on-farm trials through our universities, extension service, conservation districts, community-based organizations, and to collaborate real time within the state to accept those proposals.
 - We will be doing announcements as we start getting into FY24 to prepare us for some of those new innovative opportunities.
 - To connect identifying and prioritizing resource concerns from our crop lands to our forested acres and beyond through the innovative grants, we want you to think of this as a whiteboard exercise to capture your ideas for future projects. We want to bring that forward and have a funded solution, not a single practice to look at long term solutions to connect the conversations back and provide a strategy and process forward to use this information as a launching pad for future project proposals.
 - These could go into the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) partnership projects internally as well as look within EQIP and beyond to provide funding at all levels.
 - Once we go through that, the group will be able to compile this information on the Conservation Needs Assessment Report form and allow us to capture those assessment needs within this report and tie it back to the top ranked conservation needs.
 - We want to ensure that the local level has good data, resources, and information consisting of information provided back from NRCS and our partners with their data from FY22 through 23 to show our projected funding need and support for this project going for the next three plus years.

- On average, our contracts go from one to three years depending on the complexity. We are really trying to move those into three-year contracts to make sure that we are getting into more of an adoption strategy as well as being able to do more training and engagement with our producers on these practices.
 - Jayme reported that there's a link that you can go to in the resource concerns fact sheet that gives more information on the resource concerns.
 - Tim Riley, National Association of Conservation Districts reported that back in January, he was able to go to Indiana and present to the Indiana Association of Conservation Districts the local working group process and the tool that NACD put together. One of the challenges throughout the nation is that in different areas they're handled differently, and the districts have gotten them confused over the years as to who's supposed to run them, whether it's the district or NRCS. In Delaware, we have been fortunate because we're small, 3 districts, to be able to make sure we keep our processes proper.
 - ❖ With this, we've been able to come up with the history of it, how it all got put together, and then put these tools out there and available on the NACD website. You can also find them on the other partners websites as well. It's a booklet where you can follow the patterns as well as templates for meeting agendas, etc.
 - ❖ They had a team that did a really good job on this and made sure that the tools are there for any district throughout the nation. As we know, there are some districts that only have one part time employee so, they don't necessarily have all the tools that Delaware and other districts have.
 - ❖ It was a great project and is needed to get back to the local grounding for locally led conservation.
 - Kasey replied that Delaware is coming to the table with our willingness as well as solutions from the front showing how we collaborate, how we're training, how we're making sure we apply accountability, and then the results that are being translated real time and providing a path forward.
 - Don Clifton stated that the Governor's Council on ag submitted a recommendation to Kasey and asked if they should proceed through this local working group strategy to develop the rationale and the resource concerns?
 - Kasey replied that they can do that in addition to what has come back in. She met yesterday afternoon Brooke Jones, our incoming assistant for programs and they are going to be meeting back with the team to get a better understanding of why that was pulled and then make sure we have a more consistency for the ag chemical handling facilities.
 - ❖ When you go into your LWG meetings, please include that because we want to make sure that it's a strategy to take us into 2024 and beyond.
 - Don Clifton asked if the Governor's Council has representation from all three counties in their local working groups?
 - Kasey replied that that is correct, from Kent to New Castle and down to Sussex.

- Don asked how they should most efficiently proceed since this already under consideration and has the full support of the Delaware Farm Bureau. He will exchange communication offline with Kasey as she can advise him best of what works best.
- Kasey suggested he attend his county (Kent) LWG meeting.
- David Baird, Sussex District Coordinator asked, regarding the local work group meetings They try to give an overview of the priorities for the current year so that everybody's aware of the base that we're building from. Will NRCS staff have that information available for those meetings?
- Kasey replies, yes, we want to try to provide at least a three-year average to help the group get a better understanding and a screenshot to show where we are making an impact, have we leveled out, or are we only able to touch the surface. We want to make sure that we can share that information real time. We'll provided that and make sure we have our priority data layers and if there's additional requests from the district conservationist, Shantel, or Chris for a recommendation. We can also work with Jayme and Art Walker to have that ready in preparation of those meetings.
- David asked that instead of that data being presented from a statewide perspective, could that be broken down by county since these are county work groups.
- Kasey replied that we can do both.

Committee Member Reports and Updates

Farm Service Agency (FSA), Maryann Reed

- FSA continues to support NRCS with all producer payment eligibility determinations and part of that is doing customer data, worksheets, farm operating plans, adjusted gross income certifications and then our conservation compliance form (1026) for sodbusters for CRP.
- We work with NRCS and our state partner DNREC on doing all the CRP and CREP for the state.
- Right now, we're doing 2023 status reviews. These are reviews to ensure that the practices are up to par and standardized for 2023 re-enrollments.
- We're also working with new producers who have interest in CRP and CREP. FSA starts that process by making producer and land eligibility determinations for participation in those programs and then move forward with making offers and so forth. Currently we're in sign up 59 for CRP and CREP
- There is going to be an upcoming announcement for general sign up 58. That should be coming out this spring.
- We are currently working with NRCS on reviewing/setting installation rates for CRP practices. We want to make sure that the set rates for that program are consistent with the current cost for the program.

- Maryann added a link in the chat for the updated CREP fact sheet that was redone last year, 2022.
https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/FactSheets/2022/crep_delaware_factsheet_4.pdf
- FSA has some new program initiatives. They just finished national training on the programs that were announced in late January.
 - The Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP). This program provides financial assistance to producers of ag commodities who suffered at least a 15% loss in growth gross revenue in calendar year 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.
 - The Emergency Relief Program (ERP) phase two is for producers who had been impacted by expenses associated with losses of eligible crops due in whole or part to a qualifying disaster event experienced in 2020 or 2021.
 - We will provide financial assistance to those producers who suffered that eligible revenue loss in the applicable disaster year compared to a benchmark year. Both programs have a deadline of June 2nd for program sign up.
 - We're currently in the process of doing state training to ensure our county offices are up to par and ready to take applications for these programs.
- We are going to be hosting some producer meetings in early March. When they get that information together, Maryann will share it with our partners so that you can spread the word to producers around the state so we can get people at those meetings and explain to them how the program works, how they can complete an application, and participate.

United States Geological Survey, Mark Nardi

- Mark reported on the direct outcome of some work that USDA, EPA, and USGS did within the context of the Chesapeake Bay area.
- Looking at water quality monitoring and gaps; EPA is funding five new continuous water quality monitoring and flow sites within the basin and there's a very high probability that at least one of those will be in Delaware.
 - They are looking for small watersheds and have begun conversations internally within USGS, EPA, DNREC, and DDA. Mark would like to include USDA for siting new Delaware stations.
 - USGS is looking at scientific approaches, but we know that there's going to be practical and political considerations that come into that, so we need to begin the conversation.
- Kasey will be available to be brought into the conversation whenever they are ready for us to connect next steps. The monitoring is a key point as she and Ann Baldwin have been working on expanding out some of these projects. They're making sure that is consistently included and being able to move that forward.
 - Mark will talk to Kasey offline about how to best do that, whether it's through Leon or through local staff or both.

Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), Chris Brosch

- The department is actively putting together plans for supporting the governor's proposed budget.
- He did hear that there might be some reappropriation of funds that were previously allocated for irrigation equipment conversion to help support the environmental handling of derelict poultry houses from the nutrient management perspective.
- In the vein of nutrient management and the Commission, they are engaging with the Delaware Aquaculture Association on some ideas and at least support in the writing of their endeavors trying to get those acres in the inland bays supported.

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), Jenna Talbot, Conservation Program Section reporting for Marcia Fox

- The Nonpoint Source Program opened the fiscal year RFP for 2023 on Monday, December 5, 2022, for both the Clean Water Act Section 319 Grant and the Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant (CBIG).
 - The CBIG BMP project proposals were accepted through March 1, 2023. Partner organizations were sent an email on Monday, December 5th with RFP details.
 - Additional information can be found at <https://de.gov/319grants> and <https://de.gov/cbig>. Both links have been added to the chat.
 - The nonpoint source section 319 grant for fiscal year 23 is soliciting for approximately \$250,000 in water quality BMP projects and the CBIG is soliciting for approximately \$425,000 in projects.
 - The local government implementation funding, which set aside funding allocation in the overall C BIG Three grant is soliciting for \$366,000 of applicable BMP projects.
- The government's recommended budget was announced in January and is as follows.
 - The Conservation Reserve Enhancement program (CREP) is \$25,000.
 - The Debris Pit Program is \$1M.
 - The Resource Conservation and Development (RC &D) funds are \$5,000,000.
 - The Conservation cost share is \$1.7 million.
 - The Tax Ditch Program is \$1.148M which includes \$500,000 for tax ditch maintenance.

Kent Conservation District formerly Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), Stephanie Walt

- Stephanie reported that they had a successful soil health workshop on Friday night, February 3rd and thanked NRCS for their funding of that event. They had over 90 participants. It was very well received, and they look forward to doing it again in the future.

Sussex Conservation District (SCD), David Baird

- The cover crop program that was planted in the fall, he thanked all their farmers in Sussex County for another record year. They had over 81,600 acres planted through the districts cover crop program and through conservation cost share with DDA through

their cover crop program for the primary sources of funding. In accordance with the program that'll be about \$4.3M in financial assistance to help Sussex County producers with their cover crop investment this year, quite an accomplishment all the way around.

- David also, highlighted that they are in the middle of their winter Soil Health Series. Back in January, Jeremiah Durbin attended and even though they had a little bit of a slow start, they still had great attendance.
 - The second session was yesterday with updates from Tim Rosen on some of the conservation drainage activities that they are doing along with some updates from UD extension. They had about 70 folks register and attend that event.
 - On February 22nd, Liz Haney will be wrapping up the third meeting for the winter. If you're interested in that, information is available on the SCD website. All the events have been held and will be held at the Bridgeville Fire Hall, feel free to come out and join us on February 22nd.
 - David congratulated the New Castle District and the Kent District for having their event last week and they had an overwhelmingly successful event.
- The tax ditch program in Sussex County last year, they started a new pilot program along the lines of a contract management type of operation where they can work closely with tax ditch managers on not only managerial capacity but financial assistance and identifying what the needs are on the tax ditches. They started that program last year with 10 tax ditches. Really off to an overwhelming start there.
 - They had nine of the 10 tax ditches really take what we did to heart and adopt a lot of the provisions that were included in the reports that we provided to them.
 - They were pleased with that so much so that they're expanding that program by another five tax ditches this year.
- David reported that they are finally at a full staffing level after a quite lengthy time of not being staffed up. He introduced the three great young folks that have joined their ranks; Benny King, Amanda Fabi, and Megan Davidson have all started within the last couple of weeks and they have been complimentary to their existing staff and have hit the ground running. They are in good shape in Sussex and looking forward to what the rest of 2023 holds.

Kent Conservation District (KCD), Tim Riley

- Tim reported that the Soil Health Workshop went well and had good attendance. It worked out a lot better than everyone expected being that it was held on a Friday night.
- He reiterated Stephanie's report from earlier about the CBIG Grant. She is on staff now to handle grant management stuff and is doing a knockout job so far and will continue down that road.
- KCD hired a young man, Zach Torgerson back in November in their planner section and they have another new planner starting this Monday, Virginia Grimm. This will bring them up to full planner staffing, 22. Both are going to start manure management training next month. So, they're looking for that process to get going better again.

New Castle Conservation District (NCCD) Representative, Mrs. Pierce

- Mrs. Pierce stated that she has enjoyed this meeting, it was very well done with all the staff, Kasey's leadership, and the participants.
- She acknowledged that she was really pleased with Ann Baldwin's report on the new watershed for Newcastle. Because she's been involved with the regional and NACD meetings she understands that that's an issue that Delaware does very well with partnership and looking for new ways to approach partnerships.

Delaware Rural Water Association (DRWA), Anita Beckel

- The Delaware Rural Water Association is gearing up for their conference on February 22nd - 23rd and will have a USDA reserved booth.

Rural Development is going to be having a short meeting there with Charlie Stevens, a director from DC, to meet with anybody that wants to meet him while we're there.

- DRWA is also going to have representatives from EPA Region 3 and DNREC for source water protection section at the conference.
- Anita is wrapping up her current year as the new year starts on April 1st.
 - She will be taking comments about priority source water protection areas to work in starting April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. If she could help anybody with making sure that 10% of the conservation money is used in the source water protection areas, she can identify the areas on maps, so please reach out to her.
- Anita has been asked to look at New Castle County for a cover crop program.
 - David Baird was successful in Sussex County and so we are going to be looking for something similar on a smaller scale but as a demonstration project. She is working with Jim Sullivan for the State Revolving Loan Fund money for a small project in New Castle County.

Delaware Farm Bureau, Don Clifton

- Don reported that he has increased staff resources, which is wonderful. They went from two people to three full time employees to assist with enhancing the value of providing membership to the community at large and enhancing partnerships with all of you and look forward to continuing that.
- they are heavily engaged in the General Assembly with some legislative initiatives and watching a little bit on the defensive side of other expected legislation.
- They have a risk management conference coming up March 6th at the Pardee Center. You'll be seeing announcements about that.
- they are planning some town halls to be hosted in each county to facilitate input from our local grassroots members and the community at large. The goal is to enhance the value that we provide, and it will also help us receive value in return. The value is the buzzword around here and he really appreciates relationships with all the organizations and folks that are on this this call today.

Agriculture Producers

Richard Wilkins reported that the Conservation Legacy Award Program is always seeking nominees for every year in the Mid-Atlantic region. About two years, we have a farmer in the Mid-Atlantic region that is a contender for that national award program.

The next State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting is on Thursday, May 11th.



United States Department of Agriculture



USDA – NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

STATE TECHNICAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Thursday, February 9, 2023



Natural
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9:00 – 9:10	Welcome	Kasey Taylor
9:10 – 9:30	FY22 NRCS Accomplishments Report FY23 Agency priorities	Kasey Taylor
9:30 – 9:40	Federal Crediting Task Force	Leon Tillman
9:40 to 9:45	Subcommittees: Urban Ag Subcommittee	Ashley Lenig
9:45 to 10:10	Delaware Poultry Pilot, New and Expected Resource Concerns Update, Working Lands for Wildlife - Quail Forever Partnership Watershed Program Funding Opportunities	Jayme Arthurs & Ann Baldwin
10:10 to 10:30	Conservation Program Accomplishments in FY 2022	Ashley Lenig
10:30 to 10:35	Break	
10:35 to 11:00	FY23 Conservation Program Information/Input	Ashley Lenig
11:00 to 11:30	Local Work Group Information/Reminders	Kasey Taylor



United States Department of Agriculture

9:10 am-9:30 am

Agency Updates



Kasey L. Taylor
State Conservationist



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FY22 Delaware Accomplishments



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Conservation Results Delivered



Results: Cover Crops

Delaware farmers have planted 7,428 acres of cover crops which has resulted in the following:

- 118,848 lbs. of Nitrogen reduced
- 81,708 lbs. in sediment reductions



Results: Cropping Systems

Delaware farmers have installed Nutrient Management practices on 5,725 acres. Together, these practices have made the following impact:

- 9,160 lbs. of Nitrogen reduced
- 115 lbs. of Phosphorus reduced



Conservation Results Delivered



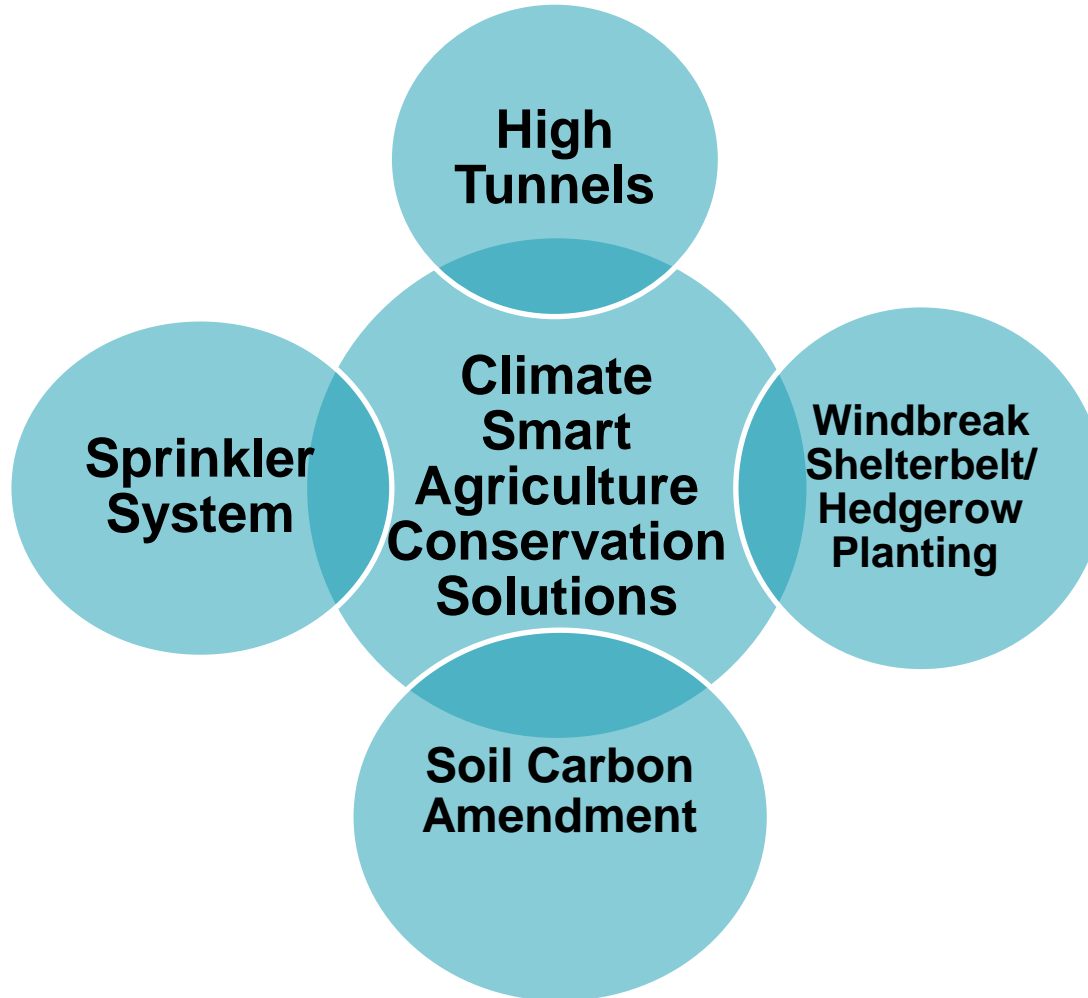
Results: Animal Waste Management Systems

Delaware farmers have applied 169 HUAPs, 25 Animal Mortality Facilities and 29 Waste Storage Structures, which have resulted in the following:

- 28,433 lbs. of Nitrogen reduced
- 980 lbs. of Phosphorus reduced



Conservation Results Delivered



Conservation Results Delivered



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE)

Delaware NRCS has partnered with the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation (DALPF) to purchase federal easements on Delaware farms.

Wetlands Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)

NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands through permanent, 30-year or term easements.



Conservation Results Delivered



Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Delaware received 10 AMA applications in FY 2022. Delaware's approved contracts cover 185 acres for a financial assistance total of \$218,800.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

In FY2022, Delaware NRCS provided \$514,500 in financial assistance through six new contracts on 4,340 acres.

Delaware NRCS renewed three CSP contracts which were up for expiration in 2022. They totaled \$149,000 in financial assistance and covered 1,205 acres.



Conservation Results Delivered



Urban



Conservation Results Delivered



Wildlife



Conservation Results Delivered



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



Delaware approved 159 contracts covering 16,405 acres for a financial assistance total of \$7.57 million.



Conservation Results Delivered



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

In FY2022 Delaware NRCS provided assistance for the following RCPP project:

- **Protecting Delaware Bay and Inland Bays with Cover Crops:**
 - Four approved contracts for \$43,400 covering 605 acres.

Recent RCPP Projects in Delaware include:

- Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation
- Cost-share Opportunities for Beginning Farmers*
- Energize Delaware Farm Energy Efficiency Program



Delaware State Technical Advisory Committee

FY23 Priorities

- **Ensure equity in the delivery and implementation of all NRCS programs and services to meet the needs for our evolving agricultural landscape in the state**
- **Increasing assistance for climate-smart agriculture and forestry**
- **Expanding conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of urban farmers and communities nationwide**
- **Cultivating a complete and diverse workforce that has the right tools, technologies, and training to uphold the scientific integrity of NRCS**
- **Continued leveraging for innovative partnerships to expand NRCS's ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently to ensure a viable resource base within the state.**





United States Department of Agriculture

9:30 am-9:40 am

Agency Updates USDA-EPA Task Force



Leon Tillman
Chesapeake Bay Coordinator



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United States Department of Agriculture



USDA-EPA Task Force on Crediting Federal Conservation Investments



Leon Tillman- NRCS Chesapeake Bay Coordinator

Task Force Overview



**Convened by USDA and EPA
Senior Leadership**

**Ad hoc, Independent
Task Force**

Will make final recommendations to the Principals' Staff Committee and Management Board for review and assignment to the appropriate CBP committees.

- EPA and USDA are united in our commitment to give farmers the credit they deserve.
- More fully credit farmers' conservation efforts in cooperation with the Bay States and ag community.
- Maintain scientific integrity and ensure producer privacy is protected.

Objectives

- Develop a full accounting of practices, considering double counting
- Identify and verify expired practices
- Credit more practices
- Develop time-savings methodologies



Membership

Approximately 24 members that will serve 2 sub-groups.

- No more than 6-8 USDA (NRCS, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Farm Service Agency, and Forest Service)
- No more than 2-3 EPA, USGS, and each Chesapeake Bay State

Meeting Frequency

- Task Force introductory meetings
- Sub-group bi-monthly meetings
- Periodic high level leadership meetings

Deliverables

- **Action Plan:** Recommended solutions for each objective.
- Will include additional support documentation, as needed
- A final plan will be presented to CBP partnership within 1 year.
- Recommendations will be presented throughout the year as they become ready.



Questions

Kelly Shenk, EPA
Office of the Regional Administrator
Region 3 Ag Advisor
Shenk.kelly@epa.gov

Leon Tillman, NRCS
NRCS - Maryland
Chesapeake Bay Coordinator
Leon.Tillman@usda.gov





United States Department of Agriculture

9:40 am-9:45 am



Subcommittees

**Ashley Lenig,
Acting ASTC-Programs/Field Operations**



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Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture Subcommittee Updates

- Meeting was held on October 18, 2022
- Reviewed DE NRCS' Urban Conservation Outreach Plan
- New Castle Conservation District highlighted their efforts in inventorying Community Ag Resources.
- Information & resources collected are located @ <https://www.deuffc.org/>.
- Subsequent Subcommittee meetings will focus on current conservation practices and ideas for new practices in 2024.





United States Department of Agriculture

9:30 am-9:40 am



Delaware Poultry Environmental Assessment, New & Expected Resource Concerns Update

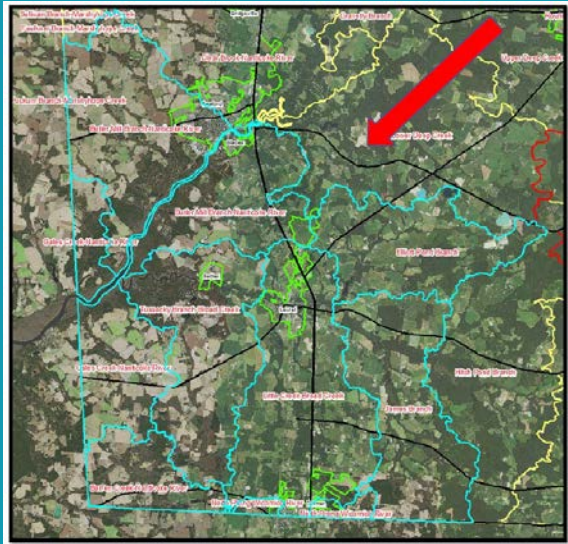
Jayne Arthurs
State Resource Conservationist



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Delaware Pilot Environmental Document



- **Stakeholder and Public Meetings were held in early June and November to outline the process and to solicit input.**
- **Conservation Works visited 7 sites in the project area in June and collected the following data:**
 1. Proximity to urban area
 2. Nearest residence
 3. Distance to surface water
 4. Distance to potable water/well
 5. Distance to riparian area
 6. Predominant wind and average speed
 7. Predominant soil
 8. Depth to shallow water table
 9. Slope of site
 10. Hydric Soils on Site
 11. Presence of wetlands
 12. Presence of Aquifer
 13. Indication of cultural resources
 14. Presence of Threatened and Endangered Species (T & E)
 15. Immediate access to type of road (Paved, Gravel, Primary, Secondary)
 16. Distance to access centerline
- **Data has been analyzed and Conservation Works has completed an Environmental Evaluation for each site.**
- **Conservation Works has drafted the Environmental Assessment document that will include Purpose and Need for Action, Alternatives, including the proposed action, and affected environment and environmental consequences.**
- **Environmental Assessment document is drafted and being sent to the East National Science and Technology Center for review and feedback.**
- **Anticipated completion date with all reviews is July 2023 with an anticipated EQIP rollout for FY24.**



United States Department of Agriculture

9:45 am - 10:00 am



Working Lands for Wildlife: Northern Bobwhite Initiative

Jayme Arthurs
State Resource Conservationist



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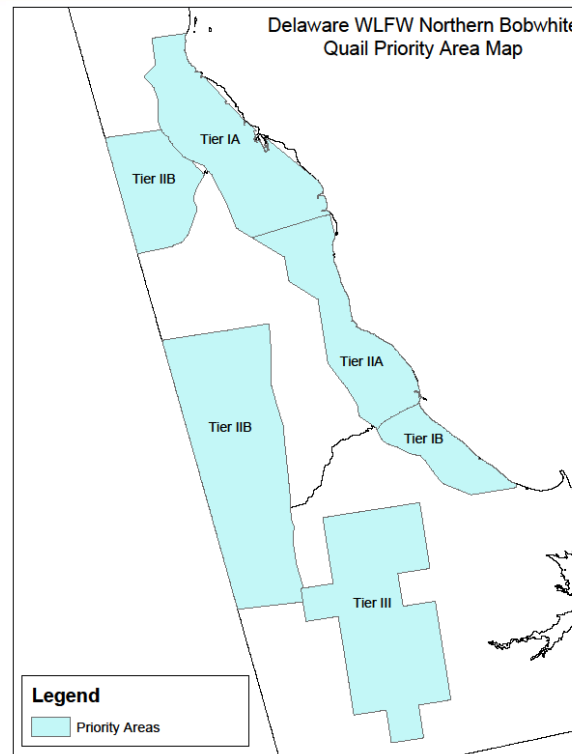
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In FY2021, NRCS worked with partners, with support from the WLFW team, to develop input for range-wide conservation needs and goals including priority areas and practices.

In FY2022, NRCS entered into an agreement with Pheasants and Quail Forever along with Maryland and Virginia to provide Technical Assistance to landowners in Delaware with implementing practices to improve habitat for quail.

Currently working on hiring individual that work solely in Delaware for this effort.



Practice Code	Practice Name
314	Brush Management
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment
327	Conservation Cover
338	Prescribed Burning
386	Field Border
393	Filter Strip
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting
380	Winbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
422	Hedgerow Planting
490	Tree/Shrub Site Prep
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment
666	Forest Stand Improvement
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
647	Early Successional Habitat Management

Environmental Quality Incentives Program ASSISTANCE FOR BOBWHITE QUAIL HABITAT

Background: Northern Bobwhite

The northern bobwhite, commonly referred to as bobwhite quail, is an iconic and highly valued species that was once common throughout eastern North America.

With the decline of suitable habitat, populations have decreased by more than 80% over the last 60 years. Changes in agricultural practices, changes in land use, and lack of forest management have led to fragmentation of high quality habitat and loss of quality early successional habitat.

How Can You Help?

Bobwhites depend on early successional habitat grasslands, shrubby areas, and pine or oak savannahs found across the East. These habitats have the forbs, legumes and insects that bobwhite need for food and the heavy or brushy cover for nesting, brooding and safety.

To help reverse bobwhite declines, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is looking for private landowners to manage for nesting cover, broad-ranging habitat, forage habitat and escape cover.

Eligible landowners can receive technical and financial assistance to implement a variety of conservation practices to restore northern bobwhite quail habitat.

See back page for full practices list.



Priority Areas

Delaware NRCS is targeting priority areas throughout the state that have the greatest benefit to bobwhite quail habitat based on known populations through partnership restoration efforts.

How to Apply

Interested landowners with property in the priority areas should contact their local NRCS Office to learn more about opportunities available for assistance.

In Sussex County, call 302-856-3990, ext. 3; In Kent County, call 302-741-2600, ext. 3; and in New Castle County, call 302-832-3100, ext. 3

Partnership Effort

The northern bobwhite quail is a state-identified target species of the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) partnership, a collaborative approach to conserve habitat on working lands.

Delaware NRCS is partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Delaware Department of Agriculture, Delaware Division of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), Quail Forever and the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative to enhance and conserve working agricultural lands and improve bobwhite quail populations.



Photo Credit: USFWS

Photo Credit: USFWS

WILDLIFE RELATED NRCS CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Practice Code	Practice Name	Brief Description
314	Brush Management	Management or removal of woody (non-herbaceous or succulent) plants including those that are invasive and noxious.
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	The removal or control of herbaceous weeds including invasive, noxious and prohibited plants.
327	Conservation Cover	Establishing/maintaining permanent herbaceous cover
338	Prescribed Burning	Prescribed burning is applying controlled fire to a predetermined area of land.
386	Field Border	A band or strip of perennial vegetation established on the edge of a cropland field.
393	Filter Strip	A strip or area of vegetation for removing sediment, organic matter, and other pollutants from runoff and wastewater.
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting	Wildlife Habitat Planting will be planned and applied when establishing herbaceous vegetation or shrubs for wildlife
422	Hedgerow Planting	Establishing strips of dense vegetation (typically woody)
490	Tree/Shrub Site Prep	Retaining, developing or managing wetland habitat for wetland wildlife.
612	Tree/Shrub	Involves planting seedlings or cuttings, seeding, or creating conditions that promote natural regeneration.
644	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	Planting and managing trees, shrubs and other vegetation that provide cover and food to attract wildlife to an area.
647	Early Successional Habitat Management	Involves manipulating a stand of plants to create and maintain early successional attributes that benefit desired wildlife.
666	Forest Stand	Involves the manipulation of forest species composition and structure by cutting or killing selected trees and understory vegetation

Delaware

Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.de.nrcs.usda.gov



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Service

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United States Department of Agriculture

10:00 am – 10:10 am



Watershed Program Update

Ann Baldwin
State Conservation Engineer



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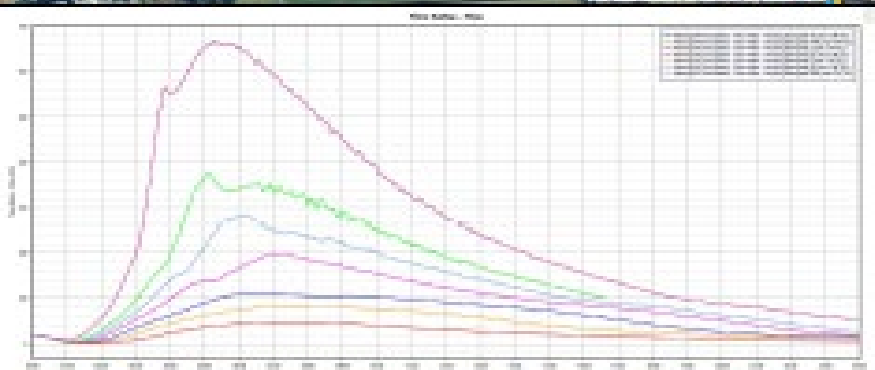
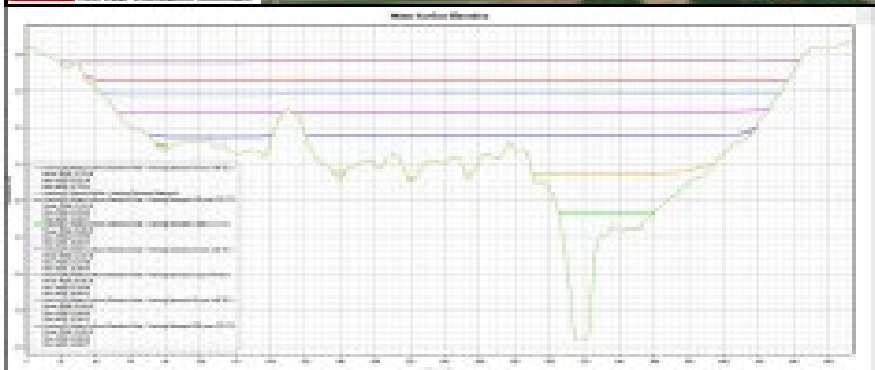
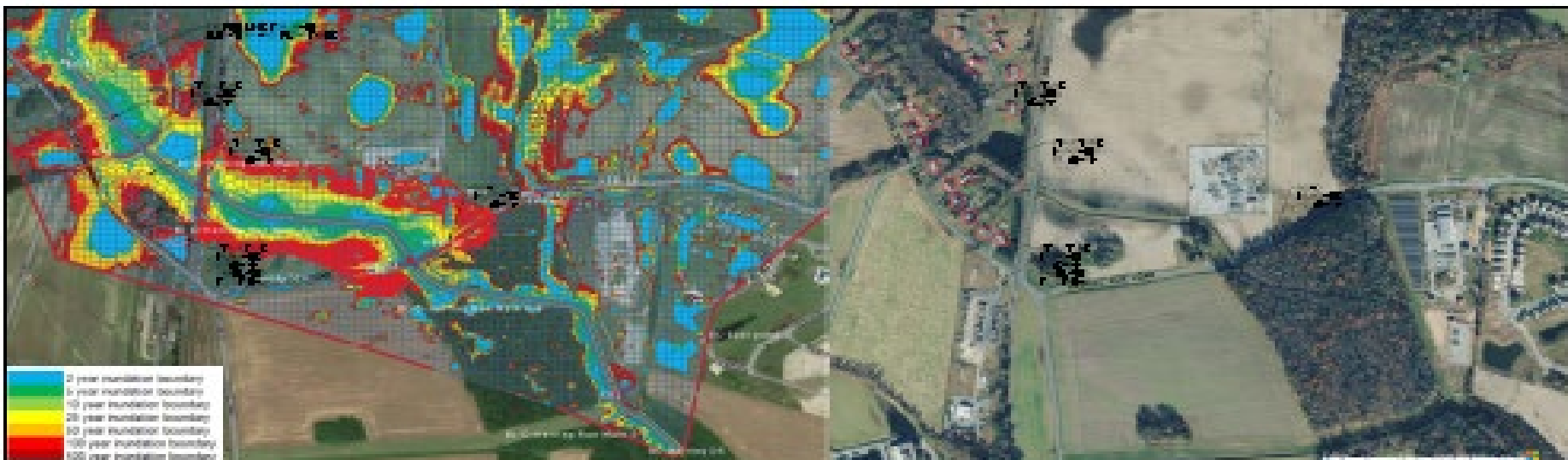


Watershed Program Updates

Upper Nanticoke Watershed Plan Update

- **Previously Reported**
 - Report of methods provided and reviewed by NRCS and DNREC engineers
 - Samples of output from model to verify results and show the format for presenting results
- **Current Work**
 - Completed model output and submitted for review. NRCS and DNREC Drainage Section have reviewed
 - Now running model with proposed alternatives and should be receiving results soon





				<p>MRCS</p> <p>UPPER NANTICOKE RIVER WATERSHED IMPROVEMENTS</p>																																				
<table border="1"> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </table>																																						<p>DATE: 10/10/10</p> <p>PROJECT: MRCS</p>	<p>DATE: 10/10/10</p> <p>PROJECT: MRCS</p>	<p>DATE: 10/10/10</p> <p>PROJECT: MRCS</p>





Watershed Program Updates

City of New Castle – Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR)

- Previously reported that a formal request from the City had been made and that NRCS DE had requested funding for the PIFR
- The funding was approved and a contract has been developed with RJH Consultants, Inc. from CO. They are the consultant who is on retainer to complete these studies for the agency.
- The initial meeting with the consultant and the City representatives was held last Friday to discuss the scope of the potential project and available information to help them determine project eligibility/feasibility
- The PIFR is scheduled to be completed by 4/15/23 after which it will be determined whether the City can proceed to request a project through the watershed program.





Watershed Program Updates

Additional Program Updates

- Congress continues to appropriate more funds to program
- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding – almost \$1 billion
- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – funding directed to agency overall and Watershed Program specifically.
- Increasing staffing at national and regional levels to assist states





Watershed Program Updates

Future Projects in DE

- **Purposes**
 - Flood Prevention
 - Watershed Protection
 - Agricultural Water Management
 - Water Quality Management
 - Public Recreation
 - Public Fish and Wildlife
 - Municipal and Industrial Water Supply
- **20% benefit to ag land or rural communities**
- **Eligible Sponsor**





Watershed Program Updates

Local Sponsor

To be a local sponsor you must be a state agency, a subdivision of the state (which could be a non-profit if it is a part of the state government), a local municipal agency for county/city, or a tribal organization.

Sponsors must have some interest and control in the projects they would be administering and ability to implement operation and maintenance.





Watershed Program Updates

On the Horizon

- **Kent Conservation District – Aging SWM Facilities**
 - Starting to consider what a project may look like
 - Data collection by District





United States Department of Agriculture

10:10 am-10:30am



Conservation Program Accomplishments in FY 2022

Ashley Lenig
Acting ASTC-Programs/Field
Operations



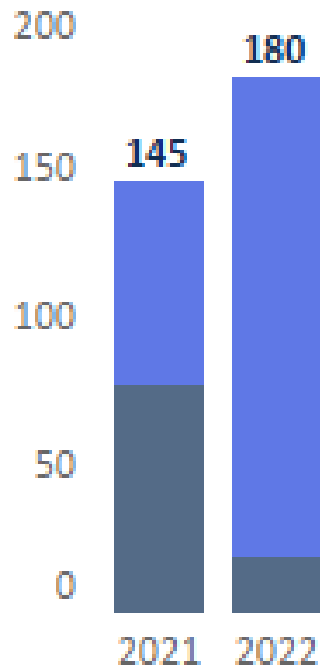
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Delaware Comparison FY 21 & 22

CONTRACT FISCAL YEAR | Contract Count by Status

Click column to filter by contract fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



FY 2022 Contracts

TOTAL CONTRACTS

180

TREATED ACRES

21,537

TOTAL OBLIGATIONS

\$8.3M

25.5% PAID

\$2.1M PAID

CONTRACT STATUS

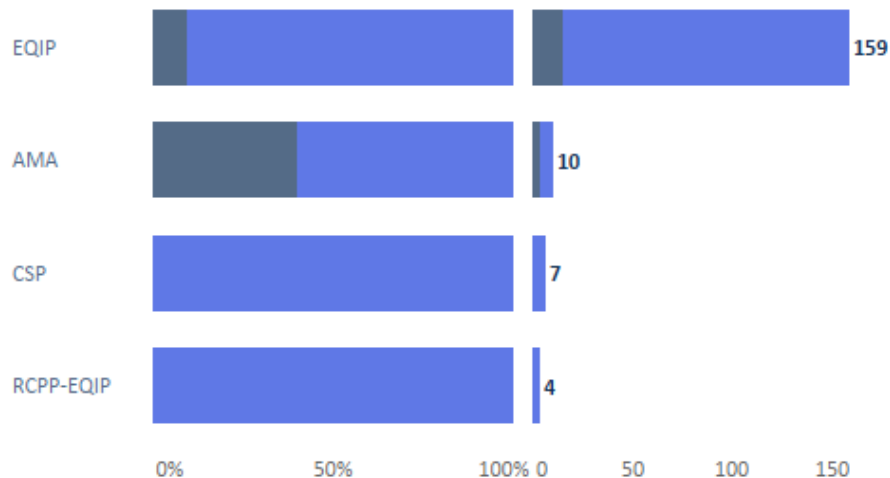
Click to filter page by status

Active	161	\$7,546,899
Completed	19	\$785,657

PROGRAM BREAKOUT | Select Type:

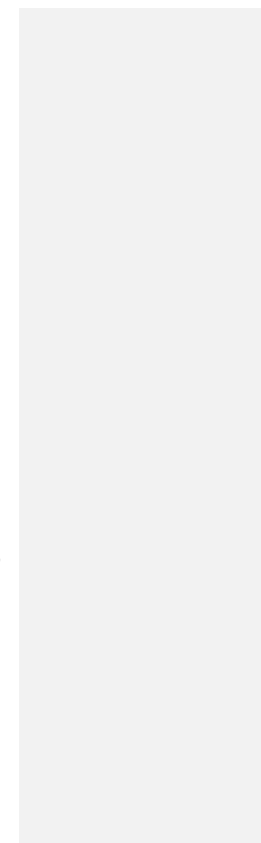
Contract Count by Status

Click on a row to filter by program fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



CONTRACT FISCAL YEAR | Contract Count by Status

Click column to filter by contract fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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TOTAL CONTRACTS

302

TREATED ACRES

60,832

TOTAL OBLIGATIONS

\$19.9M

51.6% PAID

\$10.3M PAID

CONTRACT STATUS

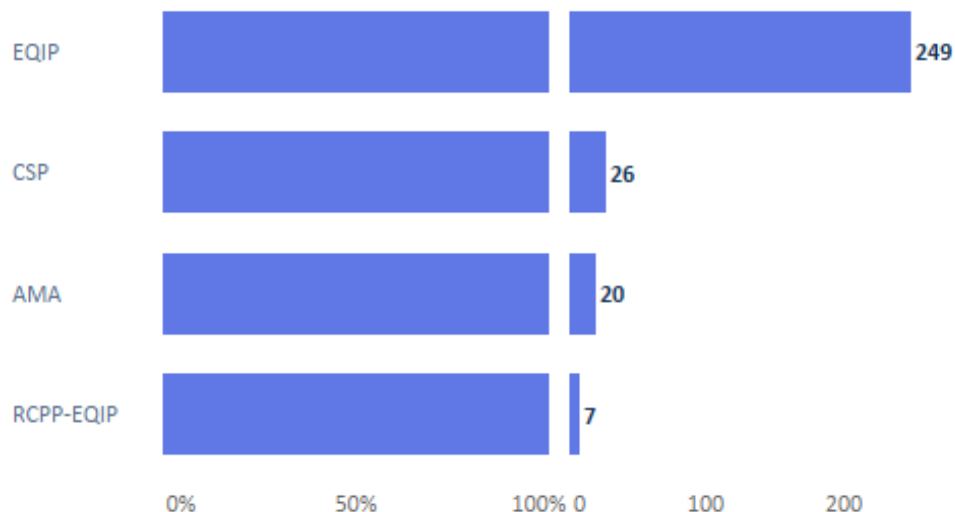
Click to filter page by status

Active	302
	\$19,893,400

PROGRAM BREAKOUT | Select Type:

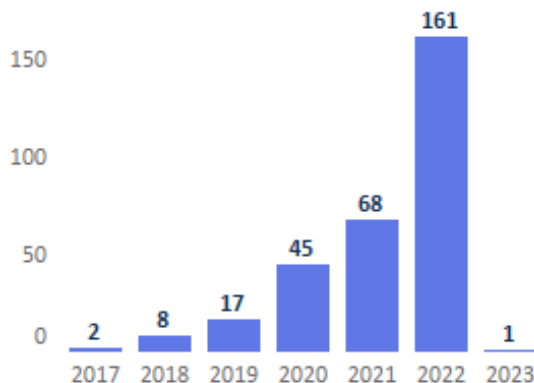
Contract Count by Status

Click on a row to filter by program fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



CONTRACT FISCAL YEAR | Contract Count by Status

Click column to filter by contract fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



Contract Acres by County



MAP OVERVIEW | Contract Acres by Contract/Physical County

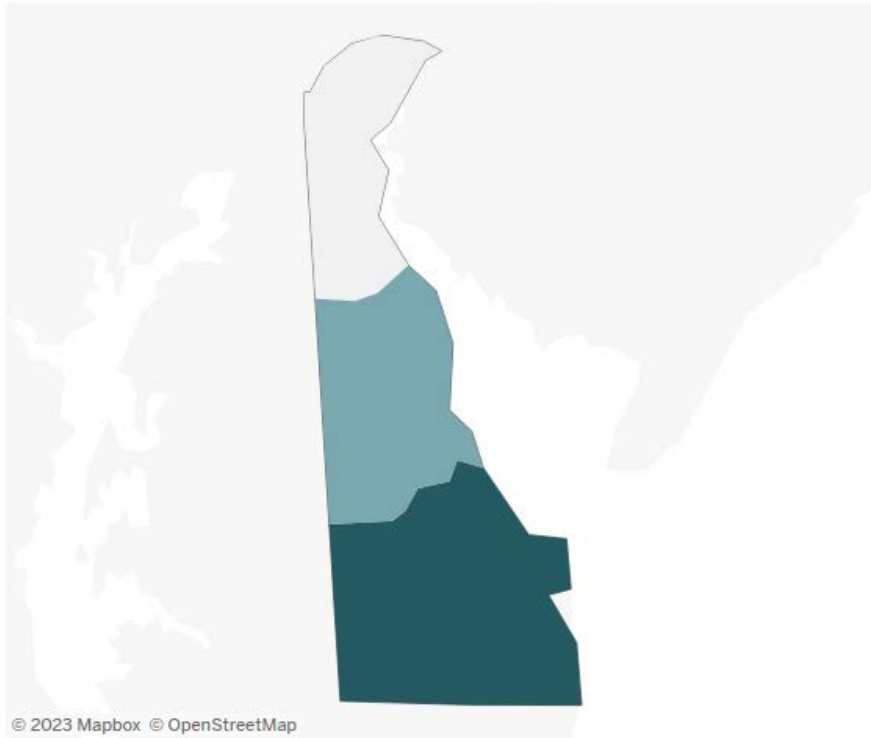
Click state or county to filter the page

Select Value:

Contract Acres

Select Type:

Contract/Physical County



© 2023 Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

5,297

36,077



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CSP contracts 2010-2023 to date

TOTAL CONTRACTS

186

TREATED ACRES

144,874

TOTAL OBLIGATIONS

\$13.6M

89.4% PAID

\$12.2M PAID

CONTRACT STATUS

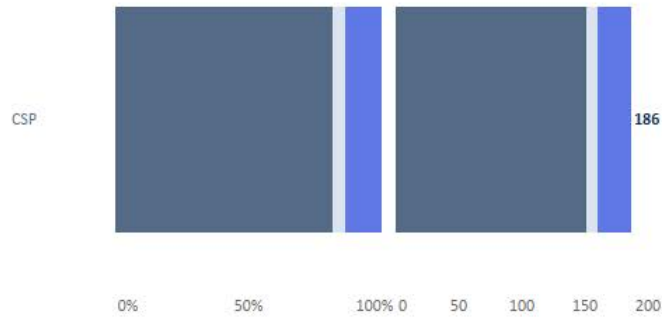
Click to filter page by status

Active	26	\$2,462,231
Completed	151	\$10,658,133
Cancelled	9	\$499,672

PROGRAM BREAKOUT | Select Type:

Contract Count by Status

Click on a row to filter by program fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



CONTRACT FISCAL YEAR | Contract Count by Status

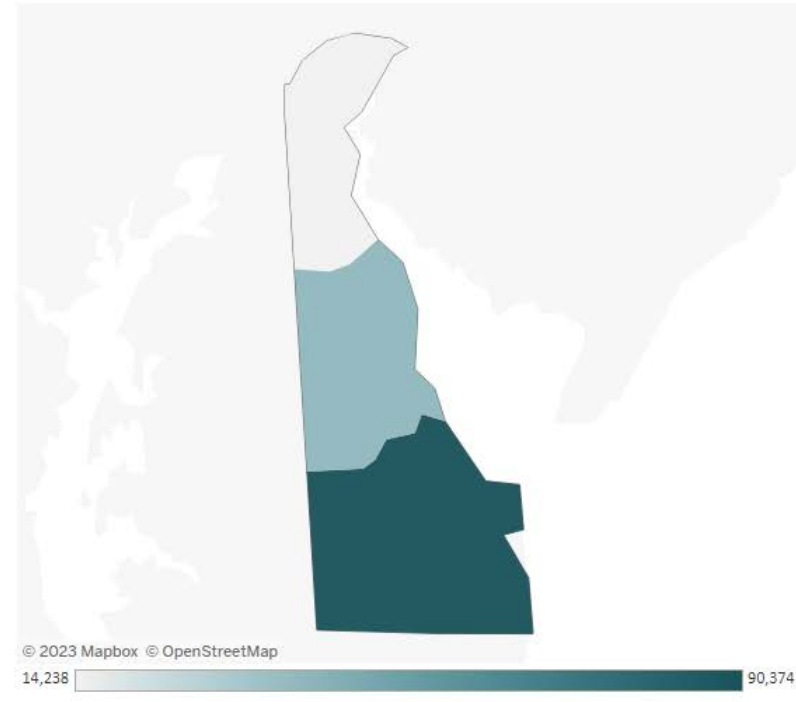
Click column to filter by contract fiscal year, click a bar to also filter by status



MAP OVERVIEW | Contract Acres by Contract/Physical County

Click state or county to filter the page

Select Value: Contract Acres | Select Type: Contract/Physical County

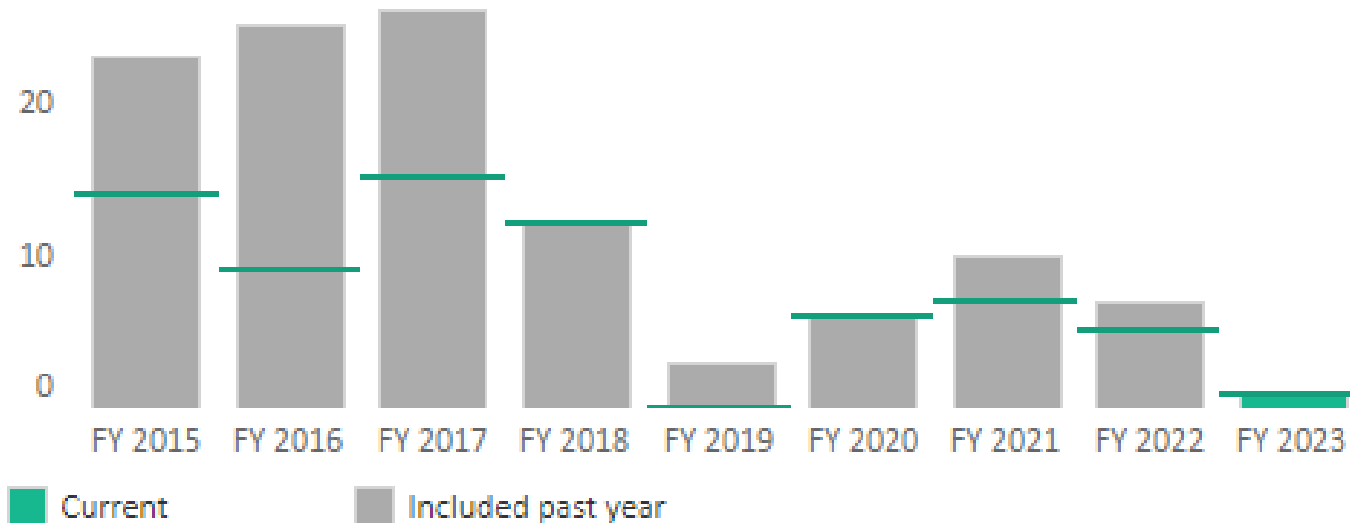


All forms of CSP over time

FISCAL YEAR TOTALS

Fiscal Year-to-Date |

Compare this year's total so far to this time in previous years and see FY totals.





Historically Underserved DE FY22



HU CONTRACTS*

98

54.4% of 180 total

HU OBLIGATIONS

\$4.8M

57.5% of \$8.3M total

HU PAYMENTS

\$1.8M

82.7% of \$2.1M total

UNFUNDED APPLICATIONS

0

0.0% of 3 total

% APPLICATIONS FUNDED

100.0%

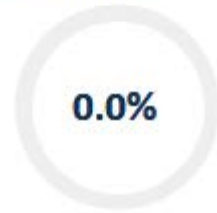
96.5% FOR NON-HU APPLICATIONS

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FUNDING BY TYPE

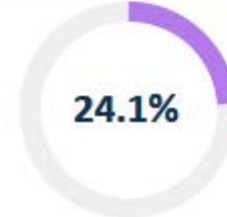
Beginning Farmers
\$4.38M on 86 Contracts



Veterans
\$0.0K on 0 Contracts



Socially Disadvantaged
\$2.01M on 41 contracts



Limited Resource Producers
\$113.2K on 4 Contracts



APPLICATIONS BY TYPE

Beginning Farmers

0

0.0%

Socially Disadvantaged

0

0.0%

Veterans

0

0.0%

Limited Resource Producers

0

0.0%



DE Top 10 Practices in FY2022



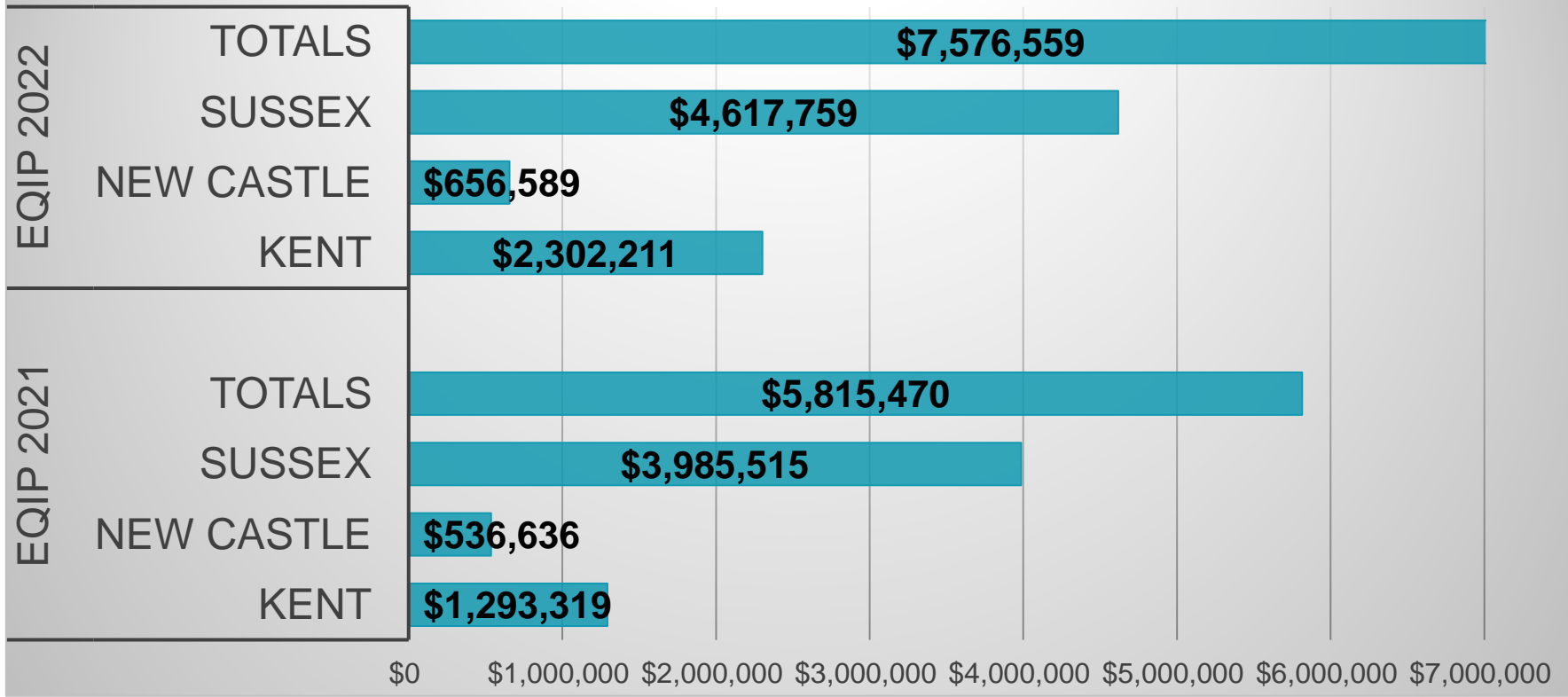
561- Heavy Use Area Protection	675- Energy Efficient Building Envelope
367- Roofs & Covers	374- Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation
442- Irrigation Sprinkler System	313- Waste Storage Facility
340- Cover Crop	590- Nutrient Management
591- Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste	808- Soil Carbon Amendment



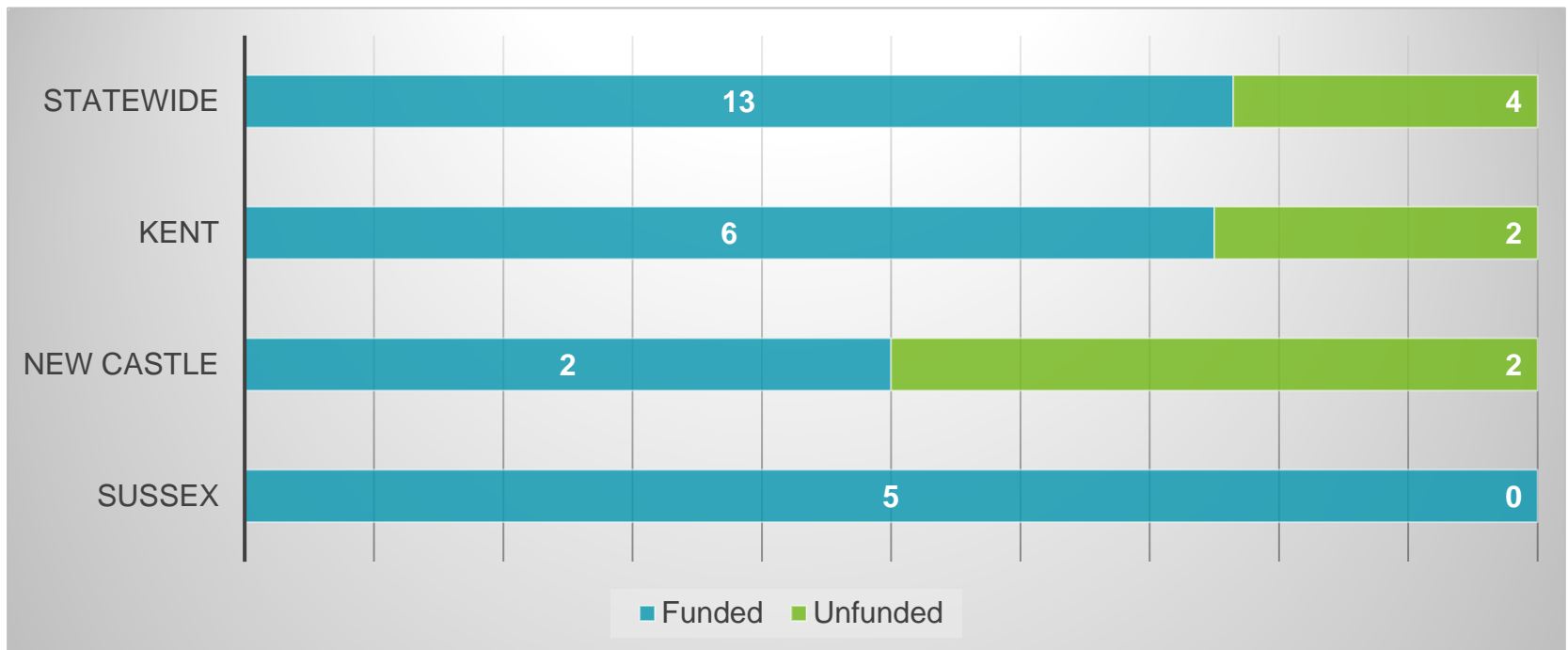
EQIP 2021 vs 2022



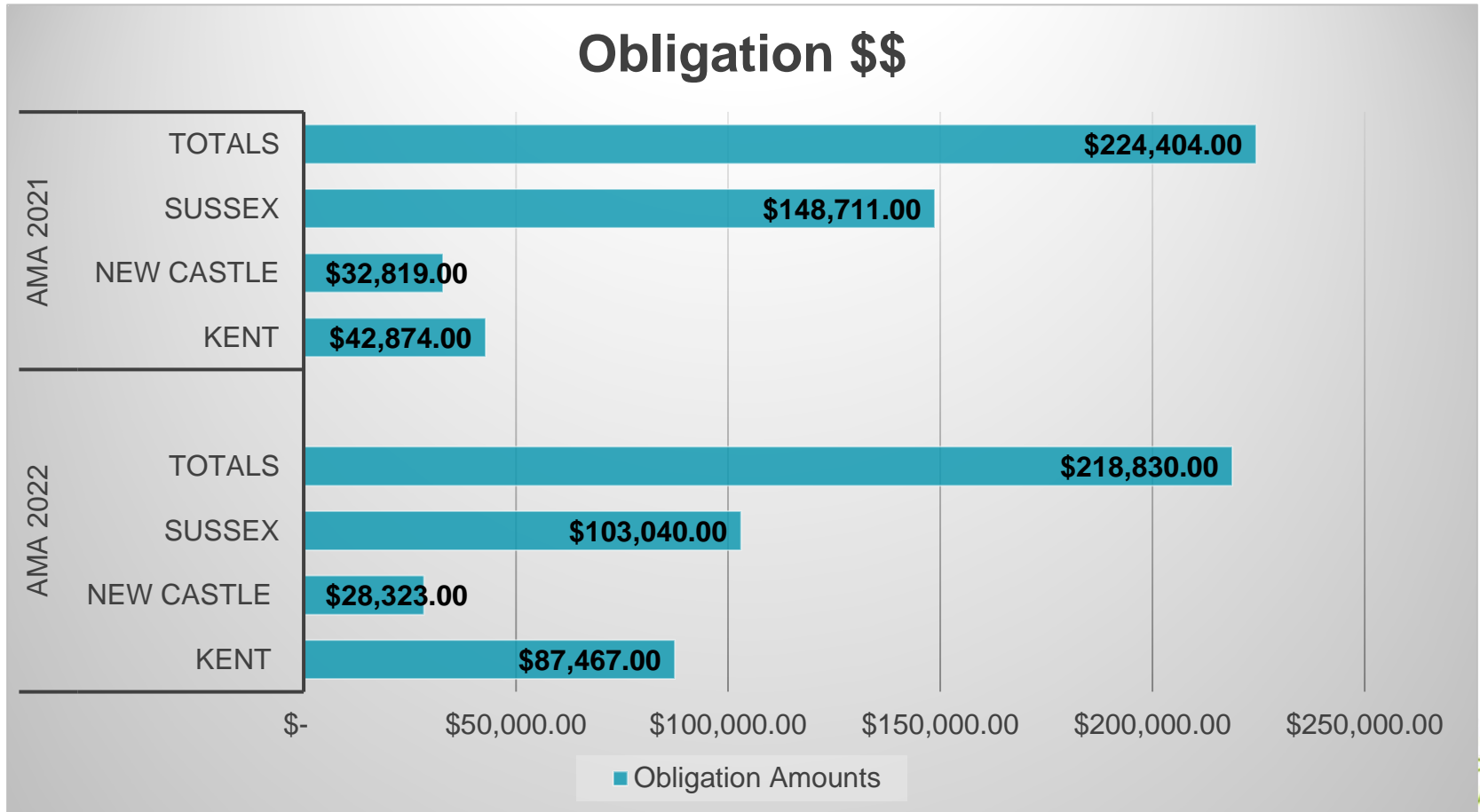
Obligations \$



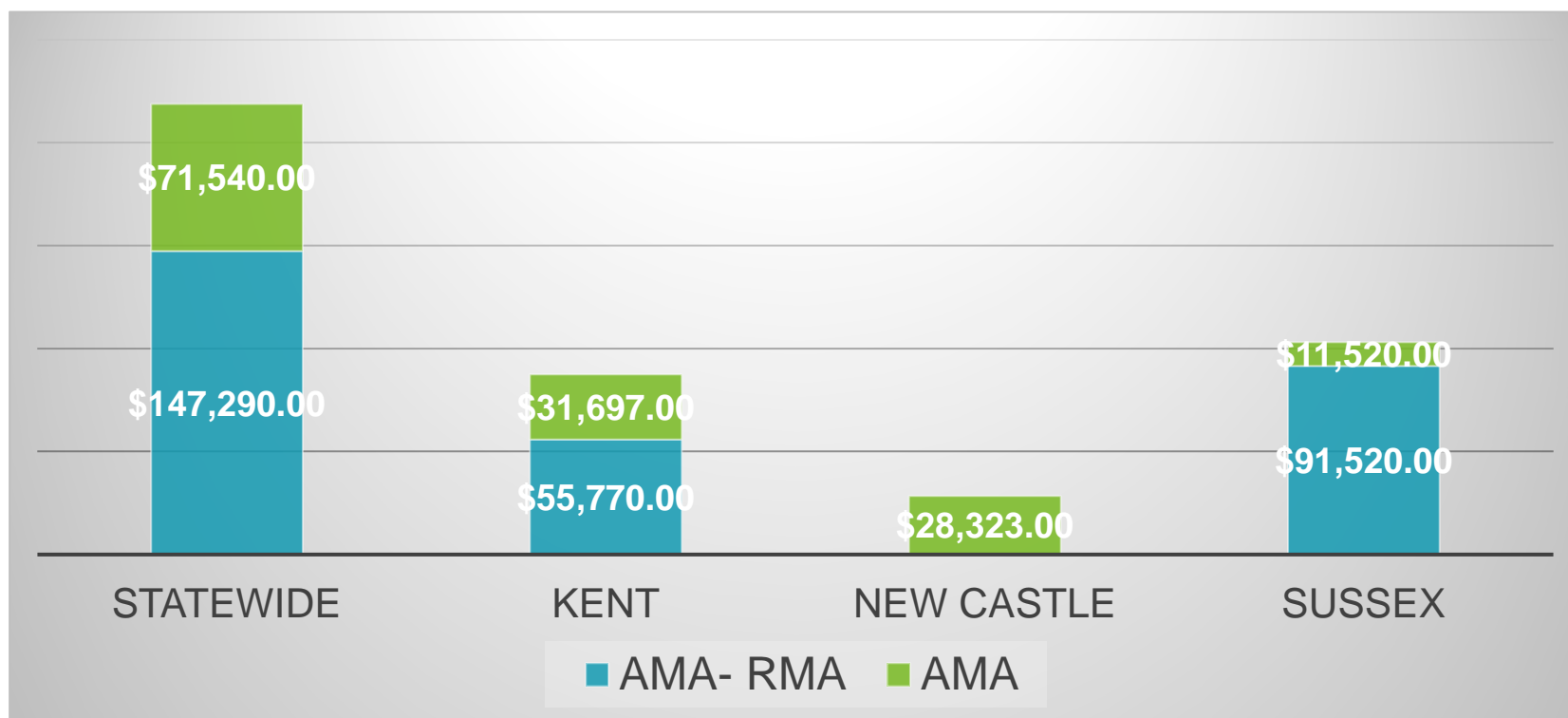
AMA FY 2022 Applications



AMA 2021 vs. 2022

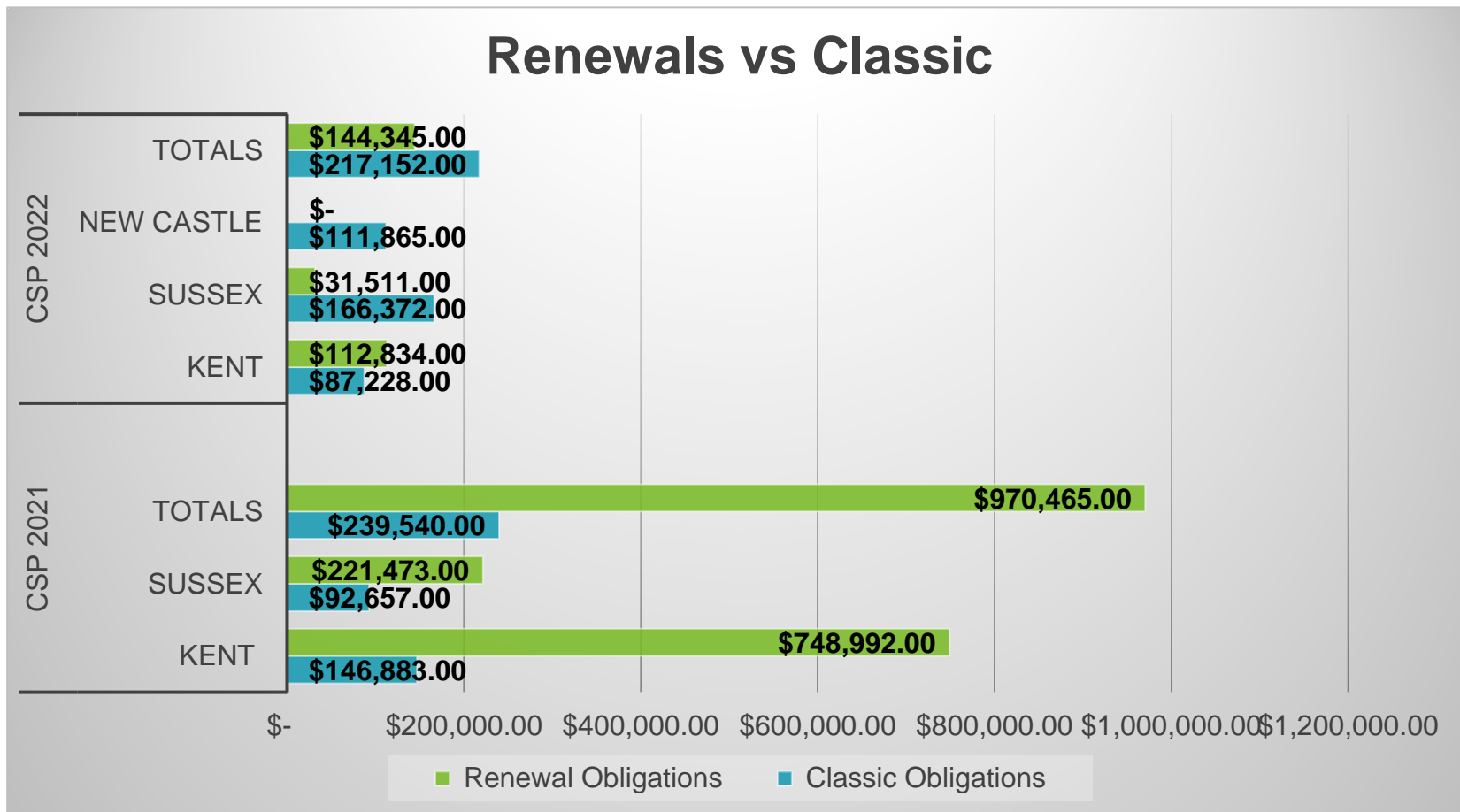


AMA-RMA & AMA Funding Levels



CSP 2021 vs 2022

Renewals vs Classic





EQIP Contract Implementation Ratio (CIR)

For EQIP contracts obligated three fiscal years ago, this is the percentage of obligated items that have been applied on completed, cancelled, or terminated contracts. CIR is calculated for each contract and then is averaged across contracts. This KPI is reported annually.

NATIONAL KPI

TARGET: 87%

ABOVE TARGET

BELOW TARGET

Contract Status

(All)

Data Source: Protracts

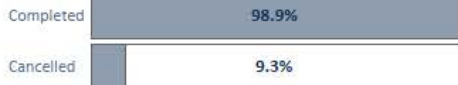
Last Updated: 2/5/2023

TOTAL CIR

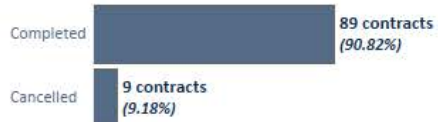
90.7%

Target: 87%

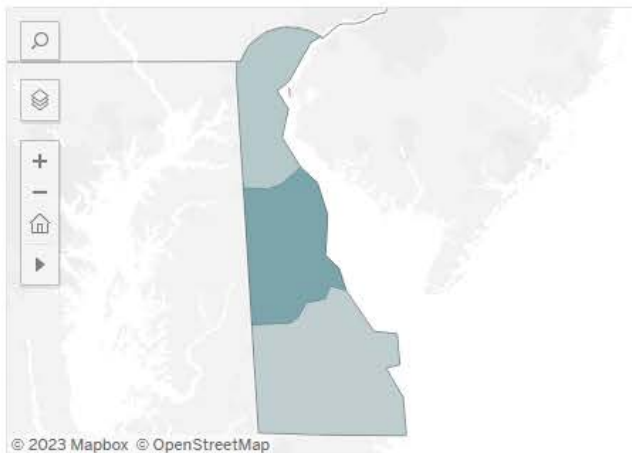
CIR BY CONTRACT STATUS



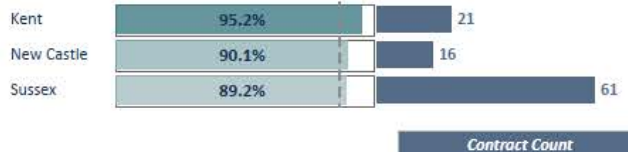
CONTRACT STATUS DISTRIBUTION



GEOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT | BY CONTRACT/PHYSICAL COUNTY

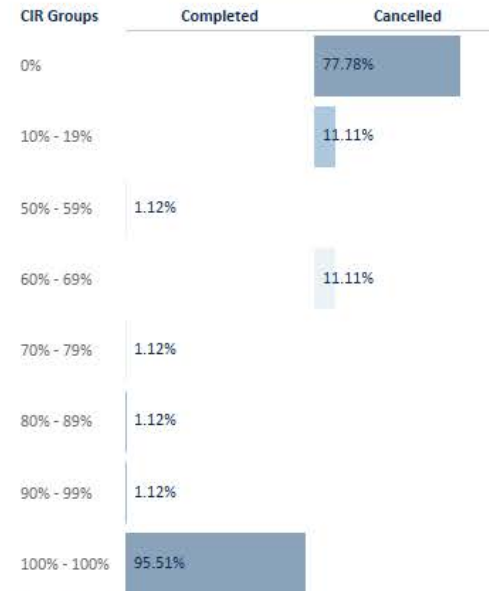


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CONTRACT-LEVEL CIR DISTRIBUTION

Select measure: Percentage of Contracts by Status



Hover here for more information



EQIP Contract Implementation Ratio (CIR)

For EQIP contracts obligated three fiscal years ago, this is the percentage of obligated items that have been applied on completed, cancelled, or terminated contracts. CIR is calculated for each contract and then is averaged across contracts. This KPI is reported annually.

NATIONAL KPI

TARGET: 87%

ABOVE TARGET

BELOW TARGET

Contract Status

(All)

Data Source: Protracts

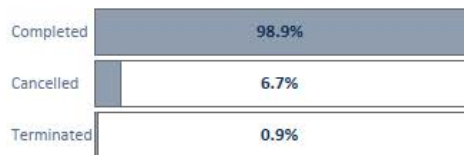
Last Updated: 2/5/2023

TOTAL CIR

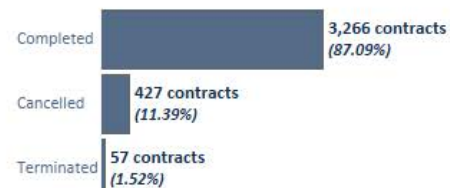
87.0%

Target: 87%

CIR BY CONTRACT STATUS

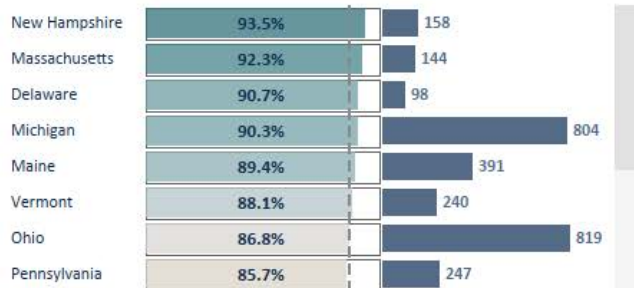


CONTRACT STATUS DISTRIBUTION



GEOGRAPHIC BREAKOUT | BY STATE

Click a State to filter page and drilldown



Contract Count

CONTRACT-LEVEL CIR DISTRIBUTION

Select measure: Percentage of Contracts by Status

CIR Groups	Completed	Cancelled	Terminated
0%		84.07%	96.49%
0% - 9%		0.94%	
10% - 19%		1.87%	1.75%
20% - 29%		3.04%	
30% - 39%	0.12%	2.58%	1.75%
40% - 49%	0.03%		
50% - 59%	0.58%	3.04%	
60% - 69%	0.73%	2.11%	
70% - 79%	0.86%	1.17%	
80% - 89%	1.04%	0.70%	
90% - 99%	0.64%		
100% - 100%	95.99%	0.47%	

Hover here for more information



Thank you!





United States Department of Agriculture

 **BREAK**
5 minutes

10:30 am-10:35 am



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United States Department of Agriculture

10:35 am-11:00 am



FY23 Programs Information/Input

Ashley Lenig
ASTC-Programs/Field Operations



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FY23 Spending Plans

- Advisory Allocation
- Under Continuing Resolution

Nationally Mandated Funding



- **Nationally mandated to spend 5% of our funds in: EQIP CIC**
- **Nationally mandated to spend 50% of our funds on livestock practices**
- **Nationally mandated to spend 10% of our allocation on wildlife practices**





- Fund pools have been adjusted and updated for FY23 as needed
- Local Work Group input and other needs were analyzed and incorporated

Ranking Pool	Preliminary Funds
Beginning Farmer	\$900,000
Conservation Activity Plans	\$20,000
Cover Crop Kent/New Castle	\$175,000
Cover Crop Sussex	\$175,000
Cropland	\$627,550
Drainage Water Management	\$100,000
Forestry	\$75,000
Livestock	\$275,000
On-Farm Energy	\$550,000
Organic Certified/Transitioning	\$5,000
Poultry Headquarters Kent/New Castle	\$750,000
Poultry Headquarters Sussex	\$750,000
Reserve	\$200,000
Socially Disadvantaged Farmer	\$900,000
Urban Agriculture	\$25,000
Wildlife 10%	\$650,300
EQIP CIC 5%	\$325,150
Total	\$6,503,000

2023 Preliminary AMA Ranking Pool Funds

High Tunnel	\$92,000
AMA-RMA	TBD



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EQIP High Priority Practices

States have the opportunity to select up to 10 “High Priority” practices that may receive an increased incentive rate



High Priority Practices



A high priority practice must meet one of the following criteria:

- Addresses specific causes of impairment relating to excessive nutrients in ground or surface water;
- Addresses the conservation of water, to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers;
- Meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or
- Is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.
- Under utilized practice with high potential for conservation benefit , State specific

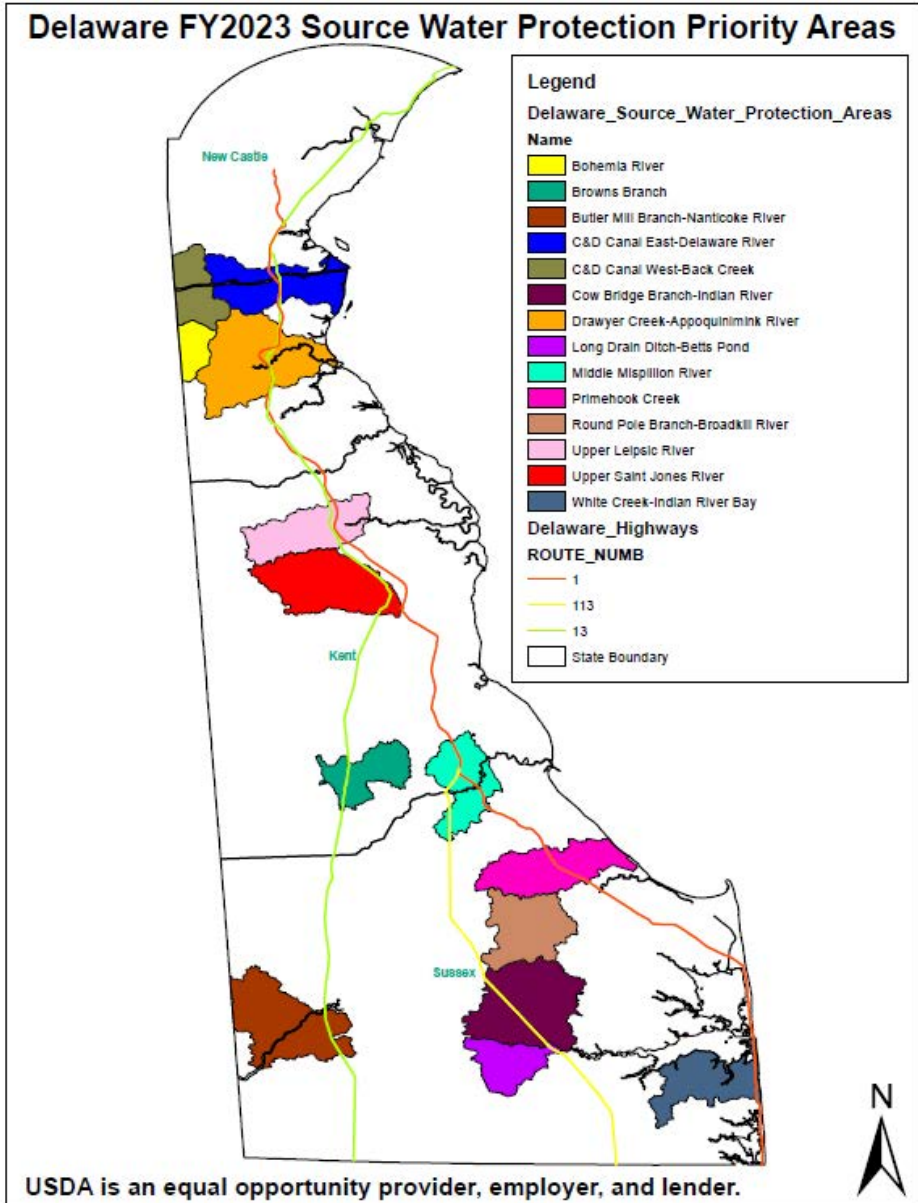


FY23 High Priority Practices

- 329- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
- 390- Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- 391- Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393- Filter Strip
- 605- Denitrifying Bioreactor
- 604- Saturated Buffer
- 620- Underground Outlet, Blind Inlet
- 554- Drainage Water Management
- 587- Structure for Water Control
- New in FY23
 - **612 Tree Establishment**



FY23 Source Water Protection



Climate Smart Agriculture & Forestry Mitigation (CSAF)



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Climate Smart Ag and Forestry

Practices include:

Conservation Cover

Crop Rotation

No Till

Cover Crops

Reduced Till

Field Border

Filter Strips

Grassed Waterways

Prescribed Grazing

Riparian Herbaceous Cover

Riparian Forest Buffer

Wildlife Habitat Planting

Tree & Shrub Establishment

Forest Stand Improvement

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management



Payment Schedule

FY23
Final

FY24
Upcoming

Payment Schedule FY24 Updates:

**LWG and STAC
input will
be considered and
incorporated in
finalizing FY24
costs**



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EQIP- Conservation Incentive Contracts

To provide stewardship opportunities for producers through EQIP:

- Based on land use
- Must address at least one Priority Resource Concerns (PRC)
- Within an identified watershed or other area (HPA)

Steppingstone for producers from EQIP to CSP:

- Allows producers to implement elements of CSP on a smaller scale



Delaware's FY 2023 EQIP-CIC Program



Goal: *Improve water quality by reducing sediment, pathogen & pesticide loss and source water depletion*

High Priority Area: Entire State

Target Land Use: Cropland

Resource Concern Categories addressed:

- Field Sediment & Pathogen Loss
- Source Water Depletion
- Field Pesticide Loss



FY 2022 EQIP -CIC ELIGIBLE PRACTICES AND ACTIVITIES--- Delaware

	Code	Asset	Units	Lifespan
PRACTICES	328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Ac	1
	329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Ac	1
	340	Cover Crop	Ac	1
	345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	Ac	1
	449	Irrigation Water Management	Ac	1
	554	Drainage Water Management	Ac	1
	590	Nutrient Management	Ac	1
	595	Pest Management Conservation System	Ac	1
	808	Soil Carbon Amendment	Ac	1
CEMAs				
(Conservation	216	Soil Health Testing	No	1
Evaluation &				
Monitoring				
Activities)				

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Application Deadline- EQIP CIC

2/10/23



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Calendar of Program Deadlines

Date	Program	Deadline
11/18/2022	EQIP/AMA	Batch 1 Application Deadline
12/16/2022	CSP	CSP Payment Deadline (NHQ) for annual payments made in CY 2022 (approve)
12/16/2022	CSP Renewals	Obligation Deadline (DE)
12/30/2022	CSP Renewals & GCI	Obligation Deadline (NHQ)
1/13/2023	EQIP/AMA	Eligibility Deadline
1/20/2023	EQIP/AMA	Screening Tool Deadline
1/31/2023	EQIP/AMA	Contract Management Training
1/31/2023	CSP	CSP Listening Session
2/10/2023	EQIP-CIC	Application Deadline
2/15/2023	CSP Classic	FY2023 CSP Activity List Released
2/17/2023	ACEP-WRE	WRE Applications Due
2/17/2023	CSP	CSP Payment deadline (DE) for annual payments made in CY 2023 (approve)
2/24/2023	CSP	CSP Payment deadline (NHQ) for annual payments made in CY 2023 (approve)
3/3/2023	ACEP-ALE	ALE Application Deadline
3/10/2023	EQIP-CIC	Eligibility Deadline
3/17/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	Batch 2 Application Deadline
3/17/2023	ACEP-WRE	WRE Eligibility Deadline
3/17/2023	EQIP-CIC	Screening Tool Deadline
3/24/2023	CSP Classic	Application Deadline
3/24/2023	RCPP DE Bay/Inland Bay CC	Application Deadline
3/31/2023	EQIP/AMA	Assessment and Ranking Deadline
3/31/2023	ACEP-WRE	WRE Ranking Deadline
3/31/2023	EQIP-CIC	Assessment and Ranking Deadline
4/4/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	State Office Reviews
4/11/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	State Office Review corrections due
4/19/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	State Office selects applications for funding
4/21/2023	RCPP DE Bay/Inland Bay CC	Eligibility and Screening Deadline
4/28/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	Annual Contract Review Deadline
5/19/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	Batch 3 Application Deadline
5/26/2023	CSP Classic	Assessment and Ranking Deadline
5/26/2023	RCPP DE Bay/Inland Bay CC	Ranking and Assessment Deadline
6/2/2023	CSP Classic	State Office selects applications for funding
6/2/2023	ACEP-WRE	WRE Obligation Deadline
6/16/2023	EQIP/AMA/CIC	Obligation Deadline
6/23/2023	RCPP DE Bay/Inland Bay CC	Obligation Deadline
7/21/2023	CSP Classic	Obligation Deadline
7/27/2023	EQIP/AMA/CSP	Fund Return Deadline (NB 440-23-05)
TBD	EQIP/AMA	Batch 2 Eligibility Deadline EQIP/AMA
TBD	EQIP/AMA	Batch 3 Eligibility Deadline EQIP/AMA

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) UPDATES



Agricultural Lands Easement Program (ALE)

- ✦ **Currently 1 Eligible Entity – DE Department of Agriculture**
- ✦ **\$1,354,133 allocation is available for parcel acquisition in FY23**
- ✦ **\$2,751,463.00 requested from entity for FY23 (15 projects)
(requires an additional \$1,397,330 to fund all projects)**
- ✦ **\$1,220,047 of the requested funds is from Chesapeake Bay watershed (8 projects are in the CB watershed)**



Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE)

- ★ **FY23 Geographic Area Rate Caps for DE are not established due to issues with the contracting office**
- ★ **Currently have 1 active application – working with NHQ to get individual appraisal to establish value while concurrently awarding new 5-year contract for the Areawide Market Analysis (AWMA)**
- ★ **FY23 Deadlines**
 - Application February 17, 2023
 - Eligibility March 17, 2023
 - Ranking March 31, 2023
 - Obligation June 2, 2023



Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE)



WRE Ranking Criteria

- NRCS uses ranking process to approve applications for funding
- Reassessed every year
- Proposing to remain same as FY22



GARC rates

- Delaware will proceed with appraisal option in FY23
- GARC rates apply to easement offers between 20 300 acres
- Proposed percent of established GARC that is applied to the appraisal to establish the compensation amount - 95% of FMV





United States Department of Agriculture

11:00 am- 11:30 am



Delaware Local Working Group Strategy

Kasey L. Taylor
State Conservationist



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Local Working Group Strategy

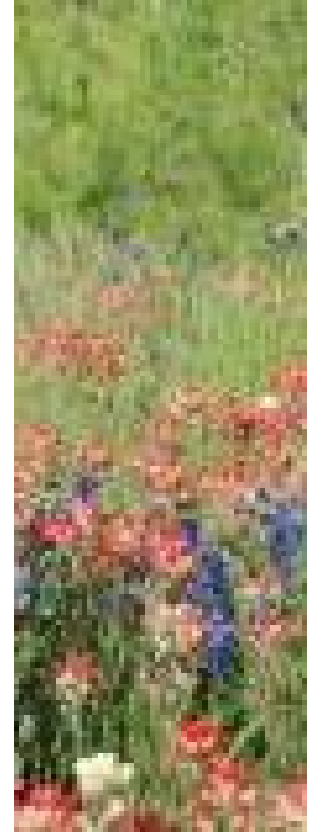
Community stakeholders are best suited to identify and resolve local natural resource concerns



Local Work Group Strategy

Convened by local SWCD and NRCS, responsibilities include:

- **Identify the biggest conservation needs in our counties;**
- **Prioritize those conservation needs that can be addressed by conservation programs to include: federal, state and county financial assistance**
- **Recommending USDA conservation program application and funding criteria and focus of NRCS funding efforts**
- **Assisting NRCS with public outreach and information efforts**
- **Providing recommendations to the NRCS State Technical Advisory Committee based on resource data.**



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Public Involvement



- **Anyone can participate**
- **Local, state and federal agencies**
- **Agricultural organizations**
- **Local agri-businesses**
- **Impacted stakeholders**



State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)



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Local Working Group Strategy

Resource Priorities – Agriculture Lands	
<p>Directions: Identify and rank the top 5 resource priorities for Agricultural Lands</p> <p>(agricultural lands include: Cropland, Pasture, Range, Associated Agricultural Land, & Farmstead)</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality Emissions <input type="checkbox"/> Aquatic Habitat <input type="checkbox"/> Concentrated Erosion <input type="checkbox"/> Degraded Plant Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Field Pesticide Loss <input type="checkbox"/> Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Management <input type="checkbox"/> Inefficient Energy Use <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock Production Limitation <input type="checkbox"/> Pest Pressure <input type="checkbox"/> Salt Losses to Water <input type="checkbox"/> Soil Quality Limitations <input type="checkbox"/> Source Water Depletion <input type="checkbox"/> Storage and Handling of Pollutants <input type="checkbox"/> Terrestrial Habitat <input type="checkbox"/> Weather Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Wind and Water Erosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality Emissions 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Aquatic Habitat <input type="checkbox"/> Concentrated Erosion <input type="checkbox"/> Degraded Plant Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Field Pesticide Loss 5 <input type="checkbox"/> Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Management 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Inefficient Energy Use 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock Production Limitation <input type="checkbox"/> Pest Pressure <input type="checkbox"/> Salt Losses to Water <input type="checkbox"/> Soil Quality Limitations <input type="checkbox"/> Source Water Depletion 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Storage and Handling of Pollutants <input type="checkbox"/> Terrestrial Habitat <input type="checkbox"/> Weather Resilience <input type="checkbox"/> Wind and Water Erosion
<p>Access the Resource Concern & Categories tab, "National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria" and "Resource Concerns Fact Sheets" for information regarding each concern listed below at:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> National Resource Concern List Resource Concerns Fact Sheets </p>	

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Local Working Group Strategy

Resource Priorities – Forest Lands	
<p>Directions: Identify and rank the top 5 resource priorities for Forest Lands</p>	<p>EXAMPLE:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Air Quality Emissions _____ Aquatic Habitat _____ Concentrated Erosion _____ Degraded Plant Condition _____ Field Pesticide Loss _____ Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss _____ Fire Management _____ Inefficient Energy Use _____ Livestock Production Limitation _____ Pest Pressure _____ Salt Losses to Water _____ Soil Quality Limitations _____ Source Water Depletion _____ Storage and Handling of Pollutants _____ Terrestrial Habitat _____ Weather Resilience _____ Wind and Water Erosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 _____ Air Quality Emissions _____ Aquatic Habitat _____ Concentrated Erosion 3 _____ Degraded Plant Condition _____ Field Pesticide Loss _____ Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss _____ Fire Management 5 _____ Inefficient Energy Use _____ Livestock Production Limitation _____ Pest Pressure _____ Salt Losses to Water _____ Soil Quality Limitations _____ Source Water Depletion _____ Storage and Handling of Pollutants 1 _____ Terrestrial Habitat _____ Weather Resilience 2 _____ Wind and Water Erosion
<p>Access the Resource Concern & Categories tab, "National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria" and "Resource Concerns Fact Sheets" for information regarding each concern listed below at:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> National Resource Concern List Resource Concerns Fact Sheets </p>	

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Local Working Group Strategy



Resource Concern Category	Resource Concern
<i>Wind and water erosion</i>	Sheet and rill erosion
	Wind erosion
<i>Concentrated erosion</i>	Ephemeral gully erosion
	Classic gully erosion
	Bank erosion from streams, shorelines or water conveyance channels
<i>Soil quality limitations</i>	Subsidence
	Compaction
	Organic matter depletion
	Concentration of salts or other chemicals
	Soil organism habitat loss or degradation
<i>Weather resilience</i>	Aggregate instability
	Ponding and flooding
	Seasonal high water table
	Seeps
	Drifted snow
	Naturally available moisture use
<i>Source water depletion</i>	Surface water depletion
	Groundwater depletion
	Inefficient irrigation water use
<i>Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss</i>	Nutrients transported to surface water
	Nutrients transported to groundwater
	Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to surface water
	Sediment transported to surface water
<i>Field Pesticide loss</i>	Pesticides transported to surface water
	Pesticides transported to groundwater
	Nutrients transported to surface water
<i>Storage and handling of pollutants</i>	Nutrients transported to groundwater
	Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to surface water
	Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to groundwater
	Salts transported to surface water
<i>Salt losses to water</i>	Salts transported to groundwater
	Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors
<i>Air quality emissions</i>	Emissions of greenhouse gases - GHGs
	Emissions of ozone precursors
	Objectionable odor
	Emissions of airborne reactive nitrogen
<i>Pest pressure</i>	Plant pest pressure
<i>Degraded plant condition</i>	Plant productivity and health
	Plant structure and composition
<i>Fire management</i>	Wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation
<i>Livestock production limitation</i>	Feed and forage balance



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Local Working Group Strategy



Resource Concern Category	Resource Concern
<i>Livestock production limitation</i>	Inadequate livestock shelter
	Inadequate livestock water quantity, quality and distribution
<i>Terrestrial habitat</i>	Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
<i>Aquatic habitat</i>	Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms
	Elevated water temperature
<i>Inefficient energy use</i>	Energy efficiency of equipment and facilities
	Energy efficiency of farming/ranching practices and field operations
<i>Long term protection of land</i>	Threat of Conversion
	Loss of functions and values



Local Working Group Strategy

EQIP Ranking Question and Practice List

NRCS uses the Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) to rank applications for funding. CART evaluates applications by assessing existing conditions, planned practice effects, resource priorities, program priorities and cost efficiency.

Questions:

Does the LWG have any concerns with ranking questions that may be causing barriers?

Are there any conservation practices not offered by NRCS that should be? If so what resource concern will it address and to what geographical extent should the practice be applied?

Are there any suggestions for improvements of conservation practices offered by Delaware NRCS?

Are there payment rates for practices that need reconsideration?



Local Working Group Strategy

Working Lands for Wildlife

Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) is not a program - its an approach which brings together diverse partners who are grounded in the belief that wildlife and agriculture have mutual goals. WLFW is used to strategically implement a host of programs to target appropriate resource concerns.

Delaware NRCS is looking for LWG ideas and partnerships to increasing habitat for all species in general and for those at risk or endangered in Delaware.

Questions:

Has the LWG identified an additional need for WLFW projects?

Species identified:

Partners who are interested:

Geographical area of interest:

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Local Working Group Strategy

State Conservation Innovation Grant

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are competitive grants that drive innovation in the field of conservation through the development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands.

An applicant's CIG funding request must be matched at least 1:1 with non-federal funding. The grantee is also responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. CIG applications are accepted from state or local governments, federally-recognized American Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations, and individuals.

For more information on CIG visit: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/cig-conservation-innovation-grants>

Question:

Has the LWG identified any ideas for State CIG in Delaware?

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Local Working Group Strategy

Special Projects

Think of this question as a white board - a place to tell us your ideas for future project that NRCS may be involved with. Projects within your local work group that further the mission of NRCS. NRCS will take these into consideration when implementing programs, funding, and partnerships.

Questions:

Has the LWG identified any special projects?

Are there any emerging conservation issues that NRCS should be aware of?

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Local Working Group Strategy



Local Work Group:

Conservation Needs Assessment Report

Rank in order of Priority resources concerns identified in the Conservation needs assessment.						NRCS Funding Required			Recommendation from Local work group
Narrative of Priority Resource Issue		Resource concern categories	Extent	Recommended activities to solve resource concerns	Programs and fund pools that may help treat the identified resource concerns	2023	2024	2025	Identify suggestion for technical, policy, or application selection criteria that should be forward to the State Technical Committee for consideration in addressing the resource concerns.
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									





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 **BREAK**
5 minutes

10:40 am-10:50 am



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Thank you!

**Thank you to the Districts for holding
LWG meetings this spring and
submitting minutes for the STAC**

Committee Reports



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Guest Reports



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State Technical Advisory Meetings



Next Meeting dates are:

5/11/23

9/7/23





Wrap-up Questions/Discussion





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