



# NRCS Operations

The Effective  
District Conservationist





# Objective Topics:

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- NRCS legislative authorities and funding
- Setting Agency Priorities
- Government Performance Results Act
- Operational planning
- Budgeting process
- Accountability Information Management systems

# Legislative Authority

## Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935 (P.L.74-46)

- Conservation Technical Assistance
- Soil Survey
- Snow Survey
- Plant Materials



# Legislative Authority

## Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**
  - **Agricultural Water Enhancement Program**
  - **Conservation Innovation Grants**
  - **CIG Air Quality**
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program**



# 2008 Farm Bill

- **Agricultural Management Assistance Program**
- **Conservation Stewardship Program**
- **Conservation Security Program**

# 2008 Farm Bill

- **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative**
- **Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative**

# 2008 Farm Bill

- **Conservation Easement Programs**
  - **Conservation Reserve Program**
  - **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program**
  - **Healthy Forests Reserve Program**
  - **Wetlands Reserve Program**

# **Legislative Authorities**

**See attached list of Legislative Authorities**

# Appropriation/Allocation

**Appropriation acts make Federal funds available for obligation and expenditure**

- Subsequent administrative actions required to release appropriations to the spending agencies



# Appropriation/Allocation

**Apportionment by OMB  
distributes budget amounts to  
agencies making appropriated  
funds available for obligation**

- Agency allowances delegate authority to agency officials to incur obligations within the scope of the delegation



# Mandatory/Discretionary Funding

## Discretionary Funding:

- Annual appropriation limited only by appropriated amount
- Congress and President must act each year to provide spending authority



# Mandatory/Discretionary Funding

## Mandatory Funding:

- Based on limits in statute—cannot be funded above the limits
- Congress and President may act to change spending that current law allows



# Setting Agency Priorities

- **Congress**
- **President**
- **Secretary of Agriculture**
- **Chief**
- **State Conservationist**
- **District Conservationists or Field Teams**
- **Local Conservation Districts**
- **Others**



# Setting Agency Priorities

Can NRCS have a  
priority outside a  
legislative mandate?

# NOPE !



**The Effective District  
Conservationist**



# Agency Priorities

- **Who are we responsible to?**
- **Does anyone really care what happens as a result of Federal agencies implementing authorized activities?**

# Government Performance and Results Act "GPRA"

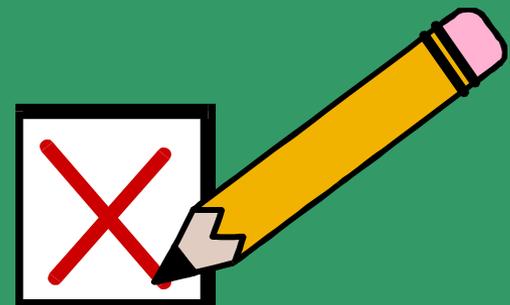
## What is it?

- **Legislation signed in 1994**
- **Promotes results oriented government**



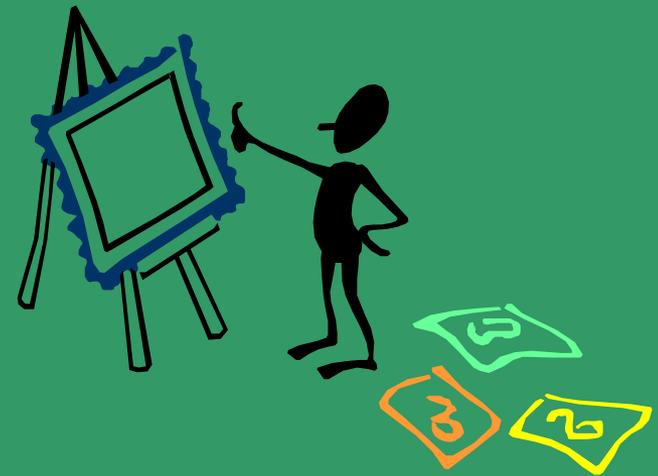
# GPRA—What does it establish?

- **Agency Strategic Planning**
- **Agency Performance Measurement**



# GPRA—What does it require of NRCS?

- **Six-year Strategic Planning Cycle**
  - Outcome oriented
  - Measurable goals
- **Agency Performance Measurement**
  - Performance indicators
  - Performance goals
- **Annual Performance Report**



# GPRA—Who supports this approach?

- **Taxpayers**
- **Quality Management Experts**
- **Congress**
- **The Administration**
- **NRCS Leaders**
- **You**



# NRCS Operational Planning

**GM 340**

**Parts 400-407, 412**

**Strategic Plan—Agency's fundamental mission and long-term goals and objectives.**

**Performance Plan—National annual performance goals for each target.**

**Business Plan—Tactical activities undertaken to achieve strategic goals, objectives, management initiatives and performance goals.**

# NRCS Strategic Plan - What is it?

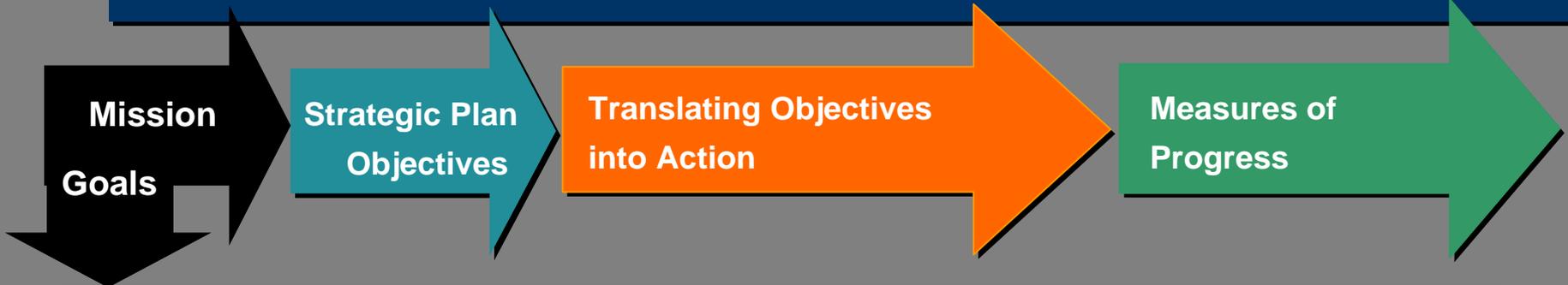
- **Purpose is to communicate the fundamental mission and long-term goals and objectives**
- **How the organization will fulfill its mission and achieve long-term goals.**

Our Mission—Helping People  
Help the Land.

Our Vision: Productive Lands—  
Healthy Environment.

# How is the Strategic Plan Used?

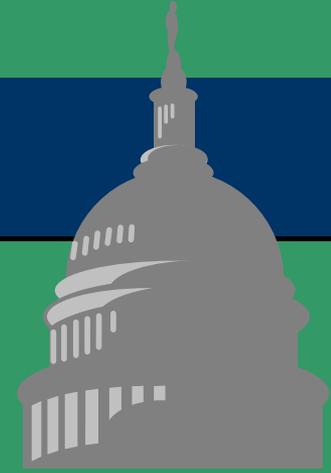
- **Business planning**
- **Performance planning**
- **Resource allocation**
- **Performance measurement**
- **Day-to-day and long-term decisions**
- **Template against which decisions are evaluated**



<p>Clean and Abundant Water</p>	<p>By 2010, agricultural producers will reduce potential delivery of sediment and nutrients from their operations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in improved technology and information needed to support planning for watershed health.</li> <li>Accelerate efforts to develop methods and models to credibly estimate effects of conservation measures on water quality and quantity.</li> <li>Develop field-scale technology to quantify the effects of conservation on water quality and quantity to foster development of markets for private sector investment.</li> <li>Integrate Conservation benefits information into watershed-scale planning assistance to help communities focus resources on priority practices and geographic areas.</li> <li>Expand water supply forecasting nationwide to assist individuals and communities that are beginning to experience water quantity challenges.</li> <li>Work with ARS, CSRE and Extension Service to identify water-efficient plants and technologies as a research priority.</li> <li>Provide incentives, including market-based incentives, for converting irrigated land to less water-intensive uses, particularly in areas experiencing water shortages, or converting frequently flooded areas to floodplains or wetlands</li> <li>Provide incentives, including market-based incentives, for maintenance and improvement of existing drainage systems to achieve water quality and quantity objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2010, potential sediment delivery from agricultural operations will be reduced by 70 million tons.</li> <li>By 2010, potential delivery of nitrogen from agricultural operations will be reduced by 375,000 tons.</li> <li>By 2010, potential delivery of phosphorus from agricultural operations will be reduced by 70,000 tons.</li> <li>By 2010, conserve 8 million acre-feet of water</li> </ul>
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# The Federal Budget Process



**The Federal Budget provides the means for the Federal Government to efficiently collect and allocate resources to meet national objectives.**

# The Federal Budget Process

- **Factors impacting department and agency appropriations:**
  - Performance
  - Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Scores
  - Budget deficits
  - National debt
  - National disasters
  - International conflicts



# The Federal Budget Process

- **The President's Role:**
- **Deliver a budget as required**
- **Execute the budget**



# The Federal Budget Process

- **Congress' Role:**
  - Authorizations
  - Appropriations
    - Discretionary Spending
    - Mandatory Spending
- Bill Language and Report language

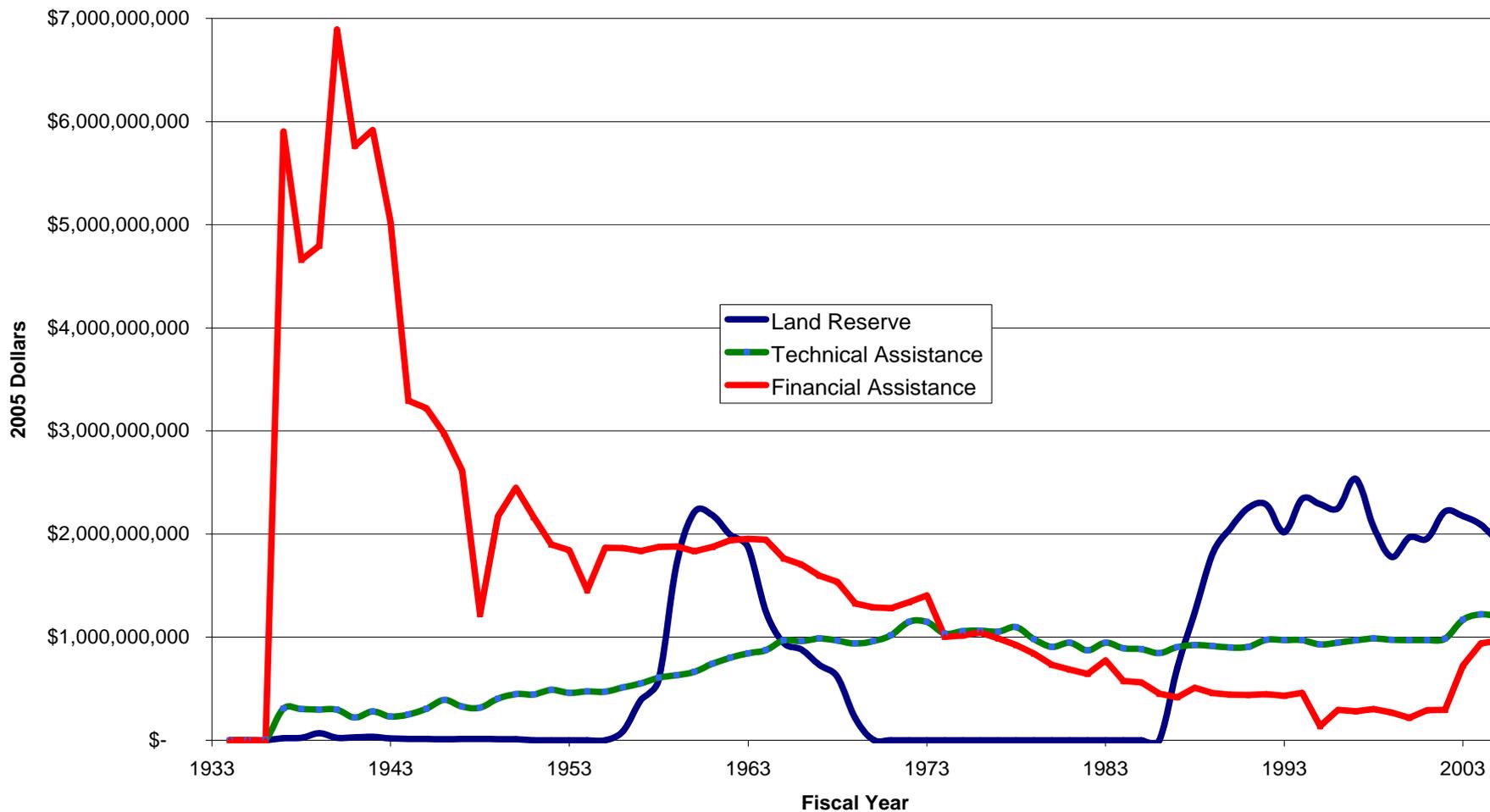




# NRCS FY2006 Congressional Action

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE					
FY 2006 CONGRESSIONAL ACTION HISTORY					
(Dollars in Thousands)					
Program	2005 Actual	2006 President's Budget	2006 House Action	2006 Senate Action	2006 Conference Action
<b>Discretionary Funds:</b>					
Conservation Operations:					
Technical Assistance	\$696,613	\$659,000	\$657,175	\$768,558	\$702,673
Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative	23,312	0	27,312	28,156	27,500
Soils Surveys	86,498	88,000	88,149		88,149
Snow Surveys	10,416	10,000	10,457	11,000	10,650
Plant Materials Centers	14,318	11,000	10,547	11,847	10,547
Total, Conservation Operations	831,157	768,000	793,640	819,561	839,519
Watershed Surveys and Planning	7,026	5,000	7,026	5,141	6,083
Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations:					
Flood Prevention - PL-534	9,920	0			
Emergency WS Protection Program	354,500	0			
Watershed Operations - PL-566	65,051	0			
Loan Subsidy	0	0			
Total Watershed and Flood Prevention	429,471	0	60,000	60,000	75,000
Watershed Rehabilitation Program	27,280	15,000	47,000	27,313	31,561
Resource Conservation and Development	51,228	26,000	51,360	51,228	51,300
Healthy Forest Reserve Program	0		--	5,000	2,500
Trust Funds	4,753				
<b>Subtotal, NRCS Discretionary</b>	<b>1,350,915</b>	<b>814,000</b>	<b>959,026</b>	<b>968,243</b>	<b>1,005,963</b>
<b>Mandatory Funds (CCC Funding):</b>					
Wetlands Reserve Program	267,129	321,000	Ac 154,500	Ac 150,000	Ac 150,000
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	1,024,827	1,068,000	1,103,000	1,068,000	1,068,000
Grassland Reserve Program	71,266	0	**	***	
Conservation Security Program	201,568	274,000	245,000	***	259,000
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	45,590	60,000	43,000	47,000	43,000
Biomass Research and Development	782	12,000	12,000	12,000	
Agricultural Management Assistance	13,780	0	6,000	***	6,000
Farmland Protection Program (FPP) b/	111,789	84,000	73,500	***	73,500
Conservation Reserve Program (TA only)	69,207	90,000			
<b>Subtotal, NRCS Mandatory</b>	<b>1,805,938</b>	<b>1,909,000</b>	<b>1,482,500</b>	<b>1,127,000</b>	<b>1,449,500</b>
Other Reimbursements	69,121				
<b>Total, NRCS Funds</b>	<b>\$3,225,974</b>	<b>\$2,723,000</b>	<b>\$2,441,526</b>	<b>\$2,095,243</b>	<b>\$2,455,463</b>
** President's Budget did not propose funding GRP as the program will approach the legislative cap of \$254 million in FY 2005.					
*** Report language did not set specific spending caps for these program so they revert to the authorized level for Senate action.					

### Major U.S. Department of Agriculture Conservation Programs 1934-2005 Funding for Technical Assistance, Financial Assistance, and Land Reserve *2005 Dollars*



**Technical Assistance includes:** Conservation Operations, Emergency Erosion Control, Watershed Planning, River Basin Surveys & Investigations, Watershed Surveys & Planning, Great Plains Conservation, Resource Conservation & Development, Water Conservation & Utilization Projects, Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations, Wildlife Habitat Incentives, Farmland Protection, Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, and Environmental Quality Incentives. **Financial Assistance includes:** Agricultural Conservation, Great Plains Conservation, Resource Conservation & Development, Water Conservation & Utilization Projects, Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations, Conservation Farm Option, Environmental Quality Incentives, Wildlife Habitat Incentives, and Farmland Protection. **Land Reserve includes:** Land Utilization & Retirement of Submarginal Lands, Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, and Soil Bank.

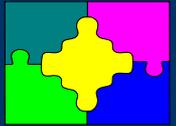


# Overview of Budget Process

## Overview of NRCS Budget Process

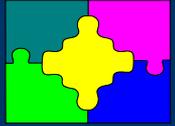


- April-May .....** Program managers make recommendations to Budget Planning and Analysis Division (BPAD) for future needs of NRCS programs. BPAD presents program manager recommendation to Chief.
- May .....** Chief relays final decision to BPAD for the Agency submission.
- May- June .....** BPAD finalizes justifications for the Agency submission.
- Early July.....** BPAD transmits Agency recommendations to USDA's budget office, the Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA).
- Mid August .....** Agency receives preliminary passback" decisions from the Department.
- Late August.....** Agency receives "final passback" decisions from the Department.
- Mid September ...** Agency prepares Department Estimates for submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- Late November ...** OMB provides OBPA with funding decisions. OBPA work with Agency to prepare any appeals of OMB funding decisions.
- Mid-December ....** OMB provides President's Budget to OBP Agency then develops explanatory Notes in support of the President's Budget.
- February .....** President's Budget is submitted to Congress the first Monday of February.
- March .....** congressional appropriations hearings.
- March - April.....** Agency responds to Congressional inquiries (questions and answers).
- April-June .....** House and Senate Actions.
- June - July.....** Members of House and Senate come together and negotiate agreements between the House and Senate discrepancies (Conference Action).
- August - Sep.....** Congress submits Bills to President for signature.
- September .....** President signs appropriations Bills into law.



- **Workload Analysis (WLA)**
- **Total Cost Accounting System (WebTCAS)**
- **Conservation Information System (CIS)**
- **Performance and Results System (PRS)**
- **FSA Compliance Reviews**
- **POINTS**

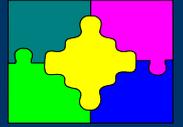
# Workload Analysis



- **Activity Based Costing (ABC) exercise provides data for workload analysis**
- **ABC was a Snapshot look, point in time**
- **Captures time it takes to do each “product” that NRCS does**
- **Assesses what part is done by NRCS and by partners/others**
- **Identifies staff skills and discipline needs**
- **Includes field input of time requirements for each product (conservation planning, practice implementation, contracting, etc.)**

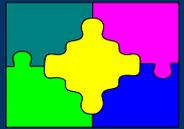
# Full Cost of Programs

## Total Cost Accounting System (WebTCAS)



- **Captures actual hours worked by program, activity and location, including CCC funded programs**
- **Direct charge to programs**

# Conservation Information System (CIS)



## Portal to information

- Technical assistance cost of programs
- Staff costs
- Goals, progress and performance
- Budget, allocation and status of funds
- Non-NRCS contributions
- Direct and reimbursable outlays by program
- Staff year costs
- Cost, obligations and outlays

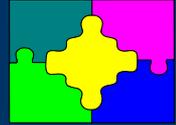
**Summary Staff Cost  
FY 2005:- September National  
All Programs  
All Program Modifiers  
All Activities**

CIS 2.2

Generated: Tuesday, July 18, 2006

ACRES Data Through: Friday, September 30, 2005

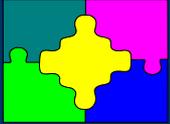
Location	Staff Years	Hours			Costs (\$)			Percentage of Total
		Worked	Leave	Total	Salaries	Benefits	Total	
National	12,366.26	21,921,367	3,899,382	25,820,750	706,064,865	180,233,911	886,298,775	100
Central Region	4,847.91	8,635,230	1,487,212	10,122,442	259,809,382	68,401,575	328,210,957	37.03
East Region	3,991.07	7,035,543	1,297,817	8,333,360	227,252,795	56,685,970	283,938,765	32.04
NHQ, Centers & Institutes	888.21	1,537,013	317,571	1,854,583	73,560,636	15,856,605	89,417,241	10.09
West Region	2,639.06	4,713,582	796,783	5,510,365	145,442,052	39,289,760	184,731,812	20.84
Alabama	216.04	377,709	73,375	451,084	11,843,602	2,968,680	14,812,283	1.67
Alaska	66	117,692	20,121	137,813	3,458,969	1,719,932	5,178,901	0.58
Arizona	153.85	274,832	46,410	321,242	8,764,540	2,214,582	10,979,122	1.24
Arkansas	262.53	463,575	84,578	548,152	14,419,802	3,691,944	18,111,746	2.04
California	418.12	744,821	128,206	873,027	24,444,836	5,952,673	30,397,509	3.43
Centers & Institutes	0.15	269	46	314	13,745	2,750	16,495	0



# Performance and Results System (PRS)

- **Captures acres planned and applied**
- **Captures practices applied**
- **County Contributions to NRCS programs**
- **NRCS and Partnership accomplishments toward goals**
- **External reports**
- **Parity Reports**

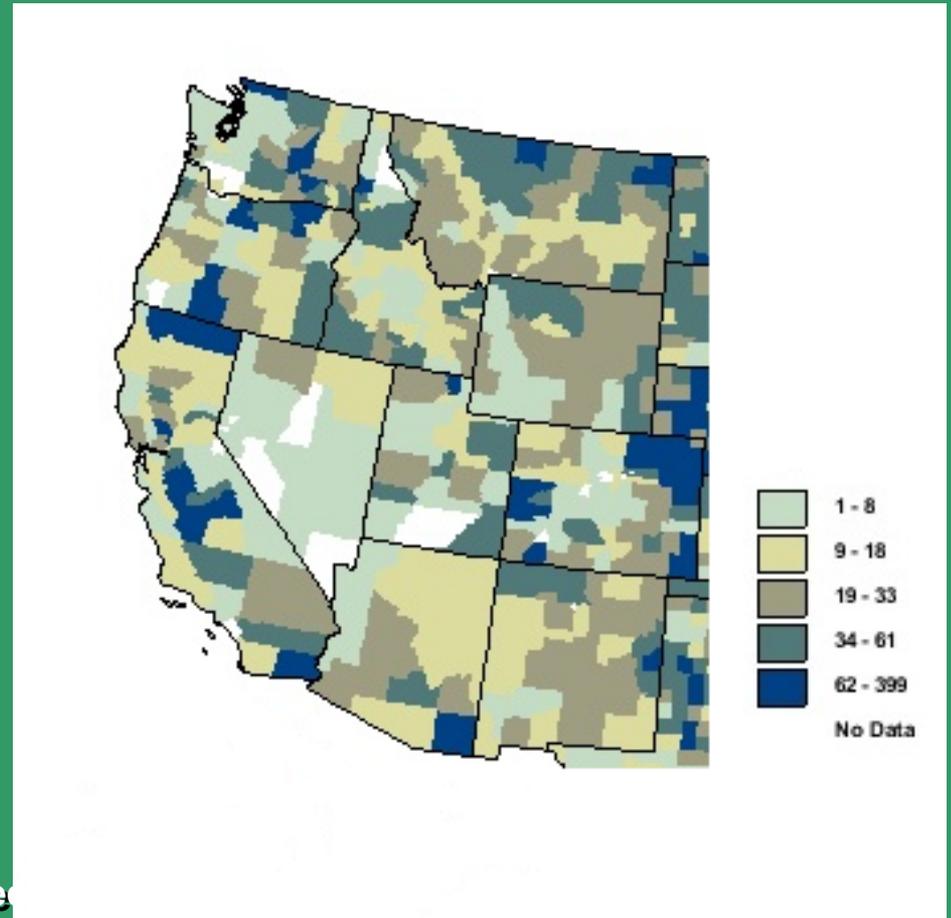
# Performance and Results System (PRS)



PRS 1.1

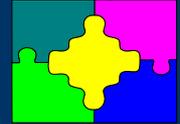
Conservation System Plans Applied

West  
FY 2006



The Effect  
Conservationist

# Accountability Information Management System



- **Establish budget and program credibility**
- **Link Agency performance to strategic plan goals**
- **Analyze NRCS and Partner Workload**
- **Account for time and funding**
- **Articulate accomplishments**
- **Link changes in funding and workload**



# Summary

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In this section we have provided an overview of NRCS authorities, priorities, and budgeting processes and the integrated accountability systems we use to manage operations and report agency activities.