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## Who We Are

Inspired by a shared passion for conservation, NRCS collaborates with farmers, ranchers, communities, and other individuals and groups to protect natural resources on private lands.

Working side-by-side with these customers, we identify natural resource concerns, such as water quality and quantity issues, soil erosion, air quality, wetlands and wildlife habitat, and develop unique conservation plans for restoring and protecting resources. Funds to implement these plans are made available in Farm Bill programs that share the cost of conservation for the benefit of the farm, the watershed, and the community. Conservation easement programs, also in the Farm Bill, provide long-term options.

NRCS helps Michigan and the Nation balance economic goals with the needs of the environment—ensuring sustainably productive lands that supply food, fiber, forest products, and energy for all citizens.



Reducing the amount of sediments and excess nutrients leaving fields is the major goal in the Saginaw Bay Watershed.

## Protecting a Valuable Natural Resource: NRCS and Farmers Target the Saginaw Bay Watershed

Due to contaminated sediments and other factors the Saginaw Bay watershed, a major tributary to Lake Huron, is considered an Area of Concern by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Since 2001 NRCS has been working with area farmers in addressing these issues. Providing technical and financial support, NRCS has implemented conservation practices such as filter strips, cover crops, wetland restorations, windbreaks, grassland plantings and riparian buffers. Beginning in 2010 NRCS committed additional resources through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.\*

Using a variety of Farm Bill programs, NRCS Michigan and partners have achieved the following:

- Protected or improved the quality of drinking water for 81,450 households.
- Demonstrated the capacity of private landowners to make significant contributions to watershed-wide conservation efforts. Landowners who participated in NRCS conservation programs contributed at least \$3.1 million in cash and in-kind contributions to implement new conservation activities on their land.
- Infused over \$9.3 million into 22 local counties since 2001.
- Preserved outdoor recreation uses, supporting tourism and the local economy.
- The planting of 12,631 acres of cover crops under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) will prevent an estimated 250,000 tons of soil from being lost through soil erosion annually. This is the equivalent to 16,600 typical dump truck loads. Much of this soil would have made it way to Saginaw Bay, harming water quality. As a result of GLRI, water quality is improved and local agricultural productivity maintained.

\* Led by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is a new interagency program which targets the most significant problems in the region, including invasive aquatic species, non-point source pollution, and contaminated sediment.

## Protecting Water Quality and Quantity

**Issue:** Water quality and availability was threatened by inefficient irrigation practices and inadequate conservation practices.

**What NRCS MI is doing:**

In 2009, NRCS established the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program for 21 counties in southern Michigan and northern Indiana. The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts partnered with NRCS to promote water conservation practices to farmers. Nearly 16,000 acres have been enrolled in AWEP and over \$3.7 million in conservation assistance were provided through NRCS. The payments will be used for purchasing more efficient irrigation equipment and installing practices like field buffers to improve surface water quality.

Program used: (EQIP) (AWEP)



The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program helps farmers improve the efficiency of their irrigation practices.

## Private Forestland Management

**Issue:** Private forestland owners lack resources to actively manage their land.

**What NRCS MI is doing:**

NRCS-Michigan launched three new initiatives to encourage non-industrial private forestland owners to actively manage their land. These include the forest management pilot under EQIP that provides payments for developing individualized forest management plans, a cost-share agreement to fund a full-time forester in the Upper Peninsula and an outreach effort to enroll forestland owners in the Conservation Stewardship Program.

- 28,429 acres of private non-industrial forestland were enrolled in CSP
- CSP enrollees developed forest management plans to address conservation concerns
- NRCS funded 43 forest management plans through the EQIP pilot program, including 2,291 acres of private forestland.

Program used: (EQIP), (CSP), (WHIP)



Private forestland owner Eugene Gonsowski (right) enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program to better manage his land and improve wildlife habitat.

## Wildlife Habitat

**Issue:** Road culverts degrade fish habitat.

**What NRCS MI is doing:**

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, located on along the Keweenaw Bay of Lake Superior, will utilize about \$400,000 in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program financial assistance to replace road culverts that inhibit fish passage on streams on and around the reservation. The tribe plans to replace culverts at 12 road crossings. The current road culverts do not allow fish passage when water levels are low or have water flow too high for fish to pass through them.

Brook trout are one species that will benefit from improving fish passages. The fish passages will be installed on cold water streams that provide habitat for trout. Improved fish passages will give trout access to more of the stream system to find food and spawn.

Program used: (WHIP)



The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community will utilize NRCS conservation assistance to replace road culverts like this one that restrict fish passage.

# Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

*is the core approach NRCS has used successfully for 75 years to reach out to all American farmers and ranchers. Through CTA America invests in Conservation by investing in American farmers and ranchers, and the technical assistance they need to care for the 70+% of our land, water and other natural resources that are in their hands. In FY2010, Michigan received \$10.9 million in CTA.*

*CTA is simply about helping people. NRCS employees provide conservation options, recommendations, planning, and engineering assistance to individual farmers, ranchers, local governments, and urban landowners. This prepares the way for using Farm Bill and other conservation funding by providing—*

## Technical Planning and Design:

- Agronomy
- Soils
- Engineering
- Rangeland
- Forestry
- Wetlands

## Project Coordination:

- State Environmental Regulation
- Archeological Permits
- Necessary Environmental Consultations
- Professional Coordination

### Cost Share Programs for Working Lands:

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)—assistance for a broad spectrum of conservation practices that promotes agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality as compatible national goals.

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)—a subprogram of EQIP specific to water conservation and quality through partnered efforts.

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)—a partnered program that uses 6% of EQIP, WHIP and CSP funds for an integrative, focused approach.

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

### Easement and Long-Term Rental:

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

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

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)—helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland and pastureland, and maintain viable ranching operations.

Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)—restores and enhances forest ecosystems for biodiversity and more.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) —pays farmers to plant trees, grass and brush on highly erodible/ environmentally sensitive cropland. NRCS provides technical assistance only.

### Stewardship:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)—encourages producers to embrace long-term comprehensive conservation, maintaining and improving existing practices.

### Watershed/Community-Wide Programs:

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) —Provides conservation measures and flood retarding structures in authorized watersheds.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) —undertakes emergency measures on watersheds damaged by fire, flood and other natural calamities to prevent erosion and runoff that could endanger lives and property.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) —improves economics and quality of life in an area through prudent use and conservation of natural resources.

# Michigan in the National Landscape

## Helping farmers control feral swine

NRCS-Michigan is utilizing Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds in an effort to control feral swine. Financial assistance through EQIP is available to landowners in Arenac, Bay, Gladwin and Midland counties.

As a non-native species, feral swine compete with native species for food and habitat and have no natural predators. Their feeding habits include digging up large portions of ground, destroying native plants and field crops and causing soil erosion. Feral swine are a host for diseases and parasites that can be spread to domesticated livestock.

This effort is in conjunction with a feral swine trapping program being conducted by the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy and USDA Wildlife Services. NRCS will make financial assistance available to identify feral swine impacted areas, for labor associated with trapping the feral swine, and for repairing areas affected by feral swine.

## Protecting agricultural land from conversion

Local farmland preservation organizations are partnering with NRCS to protect farmland from development. In 2010, the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program had its most successful year every in Michigan with 3,288 acres of farmland permanently protected from conversion to non-agricultural uses.

Since 2001, NRCS and locally -formed organizations have entered into agreements to permanently protect 12,352 acres of farmland. Protecting farmland is important for a number of reasons. It helps maintain the viability of Michigan’s agricultural sector, provides conservation benefits such as wildlife habitat and sequestering carbon and helps assure the future availability of affordable food.

## Supporting local food production

With the decline of the auto industry and manufacturing many Michigan cities are suffering from urban blight. City residents are turning to local food production as a way to produce income, provide healthy foods to residents, and to utilize vacant land in low income neighborhoods.

NRCS is providing technical and financial assistance to urban farmers in cities like Flint and Detroit and their surrounding areas. Conservation program payments have helped these farmers to install seasonal high tunnels and to implement conservation practices such as cover crops, mulching and pest management.



NRCS-Michigan is working with both individual and community-based producers in urban areas to grow food in an environmentally sustainable manner.

## 2010 Farm Bill Program Funding\*

NRCS Program	Dollars Obligated	Number of Contracts/Easements
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	\$4.7 million	544
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$15.2 million	538
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)	\$2.2 million	25
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)	\$6.1 million	34
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)	\$664,545	4
Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)	\$11,645	-
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	\$4 million	25
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	\$1.6 million	115

\*The numbers reflect Financial Assistance (FA) that is provided directly to landowners. Technical Assistance (TA) funding was also received by the Agency for professional planning and expertise to help carry out the conservation activities.