

Helping People Help the Land

*A report of conservation progress by the USDA
Natural Resources Conservation Service and private
landowners in Texas in 2011*

2011

conservation
accomplishments
at a glance

Conservation plans written:
9,861,058 acres

Conservation to improve water quality:
9,403,298 acres

Conservation to improve soil quality:
1,249,285 acres

Irrigation efficiency improved:
280,155 acres

Wildlife habitat:
5,341,175 acres

Grazing land/Forestland conservation:
8,896,044 acres

Ag waste management:
95 plans developed
162 plans applied

Wetlands created, protected or restored:
10,618 acres



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Landowners, resources, public benefit from conservation successes in 2011

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided a record level of technical and financial assistance to Texas' land stewards in FY11. NRCS Texas State Conservationist Salvador Salinas said the assistance provided to landowners helped address a wide range of natural resources concerns for all citizens of the state – not just those who implemented conservation on their land.

“Texas landowners are voluntarily helping protect and improve soil, water and air quality, and wildlife habitat through the implementation of a wide range of conservation activities,” said Salinas. “Those activities lead to environmental benefits that are reaped by all of the citizens of Texas.”

“In 2011, landowners were able to utilize a suite of financial assistance, easements, and stewardship programs, which made it an especially productive conservation year,” Salinas added.

Thanks to a number of key conservation programs made possible through the 2008 Farm Bill, as well as NRCS's conservation technical assistance activities (CTA), landowners improved irrigation efficiency on 280,155 acres of land and improved water quality on 9.4 million acres across the state.

Another 5.3 million acres were enhanced for wildlife habitat, while individual landowner conservation plans were written covering more than 8 million acres.

To assist agricultural producers address water quality and state regulatory issues in 2011, NRCS developed 95 agricultural waste management plans with agricultural producers and helped them implement 162 plans.

In 2011, the agency's soil survey program mapped 3.7 million acres that resulted in the harmonization of soil mapunits across county boundaries and improved soil interpretations for use by individuals to make wise land resource management decisions.

Through the Small Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention program, NRCS provided technical assistance to local sponsors to complete the rehabilitation of two flood prevention dams.

Through the Plant Materials Program, NRCS in cooperation with Texas A&M University Kingsville, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute and *South Texas Natives*, released two new plants in 2011: the Hidalgo Germplasm multiflower false Rhodes grass and Oso Germplasm Hall's panicum. Prior to this release, there was no commercial source of these plant species available for conservation use by landowners. Multiflower false Rhodes grass and Hall's panicum are excellent plant species for use in upland wildlife habitat and rangeland plantings. Hall's panicum has an additional conservation benefit for potential use in providing conservation cover on highway rights-of-way.

NRCS Texas Conservation Programs

While NRCS's technical assistance provided the muscle for conservation planning, a portfolio of voluntary conservation programs authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill provided financial assistance and technical assistance funding to farmers and ranchers to implement needed conservation measures. In 2011, Texas' Farm Bill program funding was \$121.4 million.

Following is a brief overview of those programs.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP is the largest conservation program for farmers and ranchers to receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

New contracts: 4,202
Acres: 2.5 million
Financial assistance: \$85.3 million

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

AWEP is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers to conserve ground and surface water in their agricultural operations.

New contracts: 184
Acres: 48,569
Financial assistance: \$5.3 million

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP provides financial incentives to develop or improve habitat for fish and wildlife on private lands.

New contracts: 286
Acres: 323,878
Financial assistance: \$9.9 million

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary conservation program that emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland under threat of conversion to other uses.

GRP Rental Contracts

New contracts: 12
Acres: 31,165
Funding for new and existing contracts: \$1.8 million

GRP Easements

New contracts: 2
Acres: 1,423
Funding for new and existing contracts: \$2.5 million

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

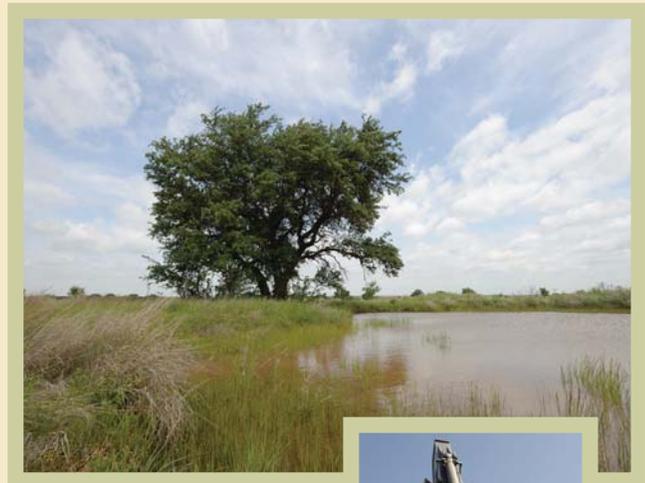
WRP offers landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. Through this program, NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts.

Agreements: 11
Acres: 8,102
Financial assistance: \$13.7 million

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)

This program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with local organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners.

Agreements: 1
Acres: 828
Funding: \$2.9 million



Our Mission
Helping People Help the Land

Our Vision
Productive Lands Healthy Environment

