



# Indiana Talking Points 2008 Farm Bill NRCS Conservation Programs

## **Working Lands Programs**

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals.
- Provides farmers with financial and technical assistance to implement structural and management conservation.
- 2008 Farm Bill clarifies EQIP purposes to include:
  - Forest management and energy conservation,
  - Practices related to organic production, and
  - Fuels management.

### Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

- Establishes and improves fish and wildlife habitat on agricultural and non-industrial private forest land.
- Program focuses on national, regional, and State-directed fish and wildlife priorities, including rare and declining species.
- WHIP agreements between NRCS and the participant are generally for 5 to 10 years in length.

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by:
  - Undertaking additional conservation activities, and
  - Improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.
- To be eligible to participate, applicants must:
  - Demonstrate that they are meeting the stewardship threshold for at least one resource concern, and
  - Address at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the conservation stewardship contract.

### Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

- A component of EQIP that promotes ground and surface water conservation and water quality improvement.
- Projects will be selected through a national competitive request for proposals.
- Eligible partners must identify a target geographic area, identify specific practices to be funded, and agree to help promote these practices.
- Funds will be allocated directly to producers in selected geographic areas through the EQIP program.
- Eligible partners include Federally-recognized tribes, states, units of local government, agricultural or silvicultural associations or groups of such producers like irrigation associations or an agricultural land trust.

## Land Retirement/Easement Programs

### Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

- Restores wetland conditions on marginal farm land with emphasis on:
  - Restoring, protecting and enhancing wetland wildlife habitat,
  - Reducing flood water flow, and
  - Improving water quality.

### Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)

- Restores and enhances forest ecosystems to:
  - Promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species,
  - Reduce the risk of catastrophic fire,
  - Improve biodiversity, and
  - Enhance carbon sequestration.
- Land must restore, enhance, or measurably increase the likelihood of recovery of a threatened or endangered species; must improve biological diversity; and be privately owned.
- Landowners can only apply in funded project areas. Indiana has one funded project in the St. Joseph River Watershed focused on restoring habitat of the copper-belly watersnake along with other species.

### Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)

- Restores and protects eligible grassland, land that contains forbs, or shrublands for which grazing is the predominant use.
- Funding leverages landowner donations, local governmental monies, and non-governmental contributions to preserve current land use in grazing.
- The program operates by purchasing easements, entering into long-term rental agreements, and providing technical and financial assistance to participants for restoring the functions and values of grasslands and shrublands.

## Technical Assistance

### Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

- Allows the local delivery of technical assistance, and is the foundation technical expertise for conservation planning and support for other NRCS programs.
- Provides direct conservation planning, design, and implementation assistance that helps people plan and apply conservation on the land.

**Note: In many programs, increased payments are available for socially disadvantaged (minority), beginning and limited resource producers.**

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