
FY 2013 Nevada Farm & Ranchland Protection Program Plan

Executive Summary:

The purpose of the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program in Nevada is to protect and preserve critical croplands, pastureland and rangelands for future generations, by limiting the conversion to nonagricultural uses of the land. FRPP acquisition in Nevada is focused on agriculture's most valuable elements – soil quality, the availability of irrigation water and grazingland resources for sustained agriculture.

This plan is updated and reviewed annually with the Nevada State Technical Advisory Committee and the NRCS programs advisory committee. Review of this plan by the State Technical Committee is scheduled for October 22, 2012.

Private agricultural lands in Nevada are largely utilized to produce forage crops such as alfalfa hay, pasture, rangelands, and/or have within their irrigated cropping systems, small grains, corn, one or two years of potatoes, garlic, or onions. Cropland operations are vastly out-numbered by livestock operations in Nevada. This annual plan closely aligns with the National Goals for the program; to protect agricultural productivity by limiting nonagricultural uses of the land, the preservation of farmland for future generations, the protection of prime, unique, statewide or locally important soils, land containing historic or archaeological sites from conversion to nonagricultural uses.

Development Overview:

From 2000 to 2010, the US Census Bureau reported that Nevada had a population increase of 35.1% making it one of the fastest population growth states in the USA during that time period. This rapid growth primarily was concentrated in the Las Vegas area (Clark County). Expansive growth in the Clark County area has severely depleted nearly all of the agricultural lands used for production of food and fiber. Substantial population growth also occurred in Churchill, Washoe, Carson City, Elko, Douglas, Lyon and Nye Counties during this time period. These counties are productive agricultural areas and contain the majority of farms and ranches in production that are threatened by development. See appendix A for Census and NASS data.

Since 2008 Nevada has been experiencing a severe economic downturn. Housing and home construction has virtually ceased with a high percentage of foreclosures and residential property flooding the market and contributing to a marked decline in values. Due to the recent economic downturn Nevada has also experienced a reduction in tourism, gaming, and tax revenues. State and local governments have been operating on severely restricted budgets. Unemployment rates are in excess of 12% in some areas. Land values have remained steady but have declined somewhat in some areas as a result of market forces that have significantly reduced the current demand for development.

Historical participation and partnering efforts for the FRPP has been contingent on Nevada Division of State Lands "Question 1 Program" which provided grants to local governments and NGO's with farm and ranchland preservation interests. Current budgetary constraints have limited the State Comptroller from issuing additional bonds. This budgetary shortfall has resulted in NGO's requesting cancellation of all FY 10 FRPP agreements with NRCS.

NRCS in Nevada accepted FRPP proposals in FY 2011, however local governments and entities lacked sufficient match to take advantage of the USDA program for land preservation.

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FY 2012 marked an upturn in NGO participation in the FRPP for Nevada. The potential T&E listing of the Greater Sage-Grouse and the distinct bi-state population of this iconic bird has resulted in broader and more frequent news coverage, partnership development and political pressures to respond to this threat in a positive manner on the landscape. The Nevada Governor, the legislature and state agencies have stepped up and have fully endorsed the utilization of USDA conservation easement programs to protect the critical habitats of the Sage-grouse. This development led to one non-governmental entity to submit and receive FRPP funding to protect 4,200 acres in the estimated amount of 5.4 million dollars.

There remains a significant interest by individual landowners seeking conservation easements and local and county governments to protect “open space” or “green belts”. NRCS continues to partner with land preservation organizations to identify areas for potential FRPP conservation easements and seek sponsorship from a variety of sources both governmental and philanthropic.

2013 Plan Activities:

Priority areas that have a potential for sustainable agricultural activity, and are threatened by development. Washoe, Carson City, Douglas, Lyon, Churchill, Humboldt and Elko Counties

Total Acres Proposed for Protection FY12. 640 acres

Acres of prime, unique, statewide or locally important farmland estimated to be protected. 300 acres

Acres of historical and archaeological sites estimated to be protected with FRPP funds on farm and ranch lands. 15 acres

Value of farmland in areas targeted by this plan. \$18,000 (South Washoe, Carson City County), \$15,000 (Douglas), \$8,500 (Lyon), \$6,000 (Churchill), \$2,200 (Humboldt), \$1,500 (Elko)

Estimated average FRPP contribution per acre of land targeted in the plan. 50%

Estimated FY13 FRPP funding needs: 1.5M

Current participating entities and performance

Nevada Land Conservancy – Good standing (1 closed easement FY 2011), up to date monitoring reports on closed easements

American Land Conservancy – Good standing (1 easement agreement cancelled due to budgetary constraints and grant revocation due to state budgets)

Ranch Open Space Nevada - Good standing (1 easement agreement cancelled due to budgetary constraints and grant revocation due to state budgets)

The Nature Conservancy – Good standing (1 cooperative agreement for FY 2012)

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In addition to the national program eligibility requirements, Nevada is adding the following eligibility considerations, since the availability of irrigation water is critical to successful agricultural operations in Nevada.

NV FRPP Land Eligibility: Any cropland or pastureland considered in an offer must be legally water righted or certificated under appropriate state or federal water law. Non-irrigated and/or grazing lands and/or incidental lands for operation may be included as part of an offer.

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Nevada FRPP LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT (Ranking Tool) (National Criteria) > 50% of the evaluation weight

1. Prime Farmland Soils, are soils as defined in Secretary of Agriculture Memorandum No. 9500-2 dated March 10, 1982 and Soil Taxonomy, Agriculture Handbook 436. Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, fiber, and oilseed crops and is also available for uses including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other land, but not urban built-up land or water.

In Nevada, only irrigated lands have been classified as Prime farmland soils.

2. Farmland of Statewide Importance was defined in 1976 and confirmed in 1983 by the State of Nevada, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as: all farmland with a full or partial irrigation water supply is farmland of statewide importance. (Appendix A).

General to all soils examinations in this soils section: Only those lands currently producing food, forage or fiber crops will be evaluated for LE. All other land associated with farm or ranch support and structures such as feedlots, corals, parking and hay bale stack yards will not be examined, but may be included as part of an offer.

National Criteria #1: Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel to be protected (0 points for 50 percent or less, Baseline 10 points plus 2 points for every percent above 50 percent) (National Mandate – 0 points for 50% or less - Eligibility Criteria)

Percentage of some combination of prime, unique and/or farmland of statewide or local importance relative to the entire parcel of land being offered and/or contains historic or archaeological resources.* (NRCS will not accept parcels unless they meet the eligibility criteria set forth in sections 519.32c, 519.32d, and 519.32e of the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program Manual.) Include soils map with documentation.

1. PERCENTAGE OF SOILS AS PRIME, UNIQUE OR OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE (Maximum 110 points) & ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORIC RESOURCES (Maximum 3 points)

	Points Allowed (Maximum 60)	Your Project Value
<50% PUSI	0	
>50 % PUSI	10 Points (Baseline) plus 2 pt. for every % increase of prime, unique, Statewide Important Soils over 50%	10+

Example: Offer of 100 acres of which 65 are prime, unique etc and 35 that are not.

*Scoring= 10 pts. + ({65% -50%}= 15 X 2= 30) = **40 total points***

National Criteria #1a: * For the farm or ranchland to be eligible under the archaeological or historic resources provision, the applicant must provide documentation showing that historical or archaeological resources are located on the farm or ranchland and are:

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Listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), or

Formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), or

Formally listed in the State or Tribal Register of Historic Places.

If eligible historic or archaeological resources are located on the offered land, the following ranking criteria will apply.

	Points Allowed	Your Project Value
Listed in the NRHP	30 Points	
Eligible for listing in the NRHP	20 Points	
Listed in the state or tribal register	10 Points	

National Criteria #2: Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel to be protected (0 points for 33 percent or less, 1 point for every percent above 33 percent) (National Mandate – 0 points for 33% or less - Eligibility Criteria)

2. PERCENT OF CROPLAND, PASTURELAND, GRASSLAND, AND RANGELAND IN THE PARCEL TO BE PROTECTED (Maximum 67 points)

	Points Allowed	Your Project Value
< 33%	0 Points	
1 point for each percent >33%	1 Point / % Increase	
Calculation = Project % - 33 (multiplied by 1)	67 Max Points	

National Criteria #3: Ratio of the total acres of land in the parcel to be protected to average farm size in the county according to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture (www.agcensus.usda.gov) (0 points for a ratio of 1 or less, 10 points for ratios of 1.0 to 2.0, 20 points for ratios of greater than 2.0) (National Mandate – 0 points for ratio of 1 or less)

3. RATIO OF THE TOTAL ACRES OF LAND IN THE PARCEL TO BE PROTECTED TO AVERAGE FARM SIZE IN THE COUNTY (Maximum 20 points)

County: _____ Average Farm Size: _____ Acres

Project Size	Points Allowed (Maximum 20)	Your Project Value
Ratio	Offer Size/Divided by average farm size	
1.0 or less	0 points	
1.0 to 1.99	10 points	
> 2.0	20 points	

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National Criteria #4: Decrease in the percentage of acreage of farm and ranch land in the county in which the parcel is located between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture (www.agcensus.usda.gov) (0 points for decrease of 0 percent or less, 10 points for decreases of 0 to 5 percent, 20 points for decrease of 5 to 10 percent 10 points for decreases of 10 to 15 percent, 0 points for decreases of more than 15 percent) (National Mandate – 0 points for 0% or less)

4. DECREASE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF ACREAGE OF FARM AND RANCH LAND IN THE COUNTY BETWEEN THE LAST TWO USDA CENSUSES OF AGRICULTURE.
COUNTY: _____

Decrease	Points Allowed (Maximum 20)	Your Project Value
0% or less	0 points	
between 0 to 4.99%	10 points	
between 5 to 10%	20 points	
between 10-15%	10 points	
> 15%	0 points	

National Criteria #5: Percent population growth in the county as documented by the United States Census (www.census.gov) (0 points for growth rate of less than the state growth rate, 10 points for growth rate of 1 to 2 times the state growth rate, 20 points for growth rate of 2 to 3 times the state growth rate, 10 points for growth rate of more than 3 times the state growth rate) (National Mandate – 0 points growth rate less than the state growth rate)

5. Percent population growth in the county as documented by the United States Census.
County Growth Rate% _____ **Nevada Growth Rate%** _____

County Growth Rate	Points Allowed (Maximum 20)	Your Project Value
< State Growth	0 points	
1-1.99X State Growth	10 points	
2-2.99X State Growth	20 points	
> 3X State Growth Rate	10 points	

National Criteria #6: Population density (population per square mile) as documented by the most recent United States Census (www.census.gov) (0 points for population density less than the state population density, 10 points for population density of 1 to 2 times the state population density, 20 points for population density of 2 to 3 times the state population density, 10 points for population density of more than 3 times the state population density) (National Mandate – 0 points population density less than the state population density)

6. Population density (population per square mile) as documented by the most recent United States Census.
County Population Density _____ **State Population Density** _____

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County Population Density	Points Allowed (Maximum 20)	Your Project Value
< State Population Density	0 points	
1-1.99X State Pop. Density	10 points	
2-2.99X State Pop. Density	20 points	
> 3X State Pop. Density	10 points	

National Criteria #7: Proximity of the parcel to other protected land, including military installations (0 points for less than 250 acres of protected land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 10 points for 250-499 acres of protected land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 20 points for 500 acres or more of protected land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel)

7. Proximity of parcel to other protected land, State or Federal lands and or other existing Conservation Easements

Acreage of Ag Land	Points Allowed (Maximum 20)	Your Project Value
< 249 Acres	0 points	
250 – 499 Acres	10 points	
> 500 Acres	20 points	

National Criteria #8: Proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and infrastructure (0 points for less than 500 acres of agricultural land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 10 points for 250-500 acres of agricultural land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 20 points for 500 acres or more of agricultural land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel)

8. Proximity of the parcel(s) to other agricultural operations and infrastructure. Agricultural acreage within a mile of the offered property.

Acreage of Ag Land	Points Allowed (Maximum 20)	Your Project Value
< 249 Acres	0 points	
250 – 499 Acres	10 points	
> 500 Acres	20 points	

State Level Criteria

State Criteria #1: Non-soil based quality measuring agricultural viability: (Maximum 40 points)

With a wide diversity of agricultural operations and property values in Nevada agricultural operations, the use of acreage size or a scaled sizing table is neither practical nor reasonable. Determination of viability of a farm or ranching operation is, however, obtainable. As used in Nevada’s FRPP, viability is defined as an agricultural business operation of sufficient size or diversity of operation, to withstand the market and climatic fluctuations found in Nevada and would be sustainable, if urban development pressures were not present.

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The majority of eligible agricultural operations for participation in FRPP are: forage production irrigated hayland, irrigated pastureland, traditional row crops grown in rotation with forage crops and livestock grazingland. To determine agricultural viability, all crop production is converted to Animal Unit per Year (AUs/Yr.) to reduce bias in size of operation, dollar value of crops or number of livestock. Rather it bases the viability on the amount of production capacity (AUMs) of the offered land.

Crop Hayland - _____ Acres X _____ Equivalent AU = _____ AU's/YR
 Pastureland - _____ Acres X _____ Equivalent AU = _____ AU's/YR
 Rangelands - _____ Acres X _____ Equivalent AU = _____ AU's/YR
_____ **Total AU's / YR**

Potential AUs of Eligible land offered	Points Allowed (Maximum 40)	Your Project Value
0-99 AU's / YR	10 points	
100-149 AU's / YR	20 points	
150-199 AU's / YR	30 points	
> 200 AU's / YR	40 points	

State Criteria #2: Water Rights tied to the land

Water rights are important for long term viability of the farming operation. Land with full water rights have the highest value. Irrigated croplands / haylands and pastures generally have water rights associated with the farming enterprise. There is not enough precipitation to successfully grow dryland crops without supplemental irrigation. Pasture productivity without irrigation is generally equivalent to prevailing ecological site descriptions without supplemental irrigation. Maximum points 40

Type of water rights (deeded) etc: _____ Acre Feet/AC _____
 Acres of Crop/Hayland and Pasture: _____ Acres with full Water Right: _____

Water rights	Points Allowed (Maximum 40)	Your Project Value
90-100% of Cropland/Hayland and pasture have full water rights	40 points	
75 - 89% of Cropland/Hayland and pasture have full water rights	20 points	
50 -74% of Cropland/Hayland and pasture have full water rights	10 points	
< 50% of Cropland/Hayland and pasture have full water rights	0 points	

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State Criteria #3: Proximity to Non-Ag Zoning and Existing Conservation Easements

If an offered property is near or adjacent to property “zoned for development,” the threat of conversion is increased. Properties having zoned development on two or more sides are at increased risk of isolation or “islanding” of agricultural land. To enhance protection and further reduce isolation and islanding, it is important that FRPP preserve and/or expand corridors of protected land. Points will be given if the offered property is located near other conservation easements or federally owned land which is not designated for disposal by the land use agency management plan for the area.

Offered Property has:	Points Allowed Maximum 40:	Project Value
Agricultural zoning on all sides (or):	40	
25% of the circumambient distance of offered property is border by federally protected land*(or)		
1/4 mile proximity to existing conservation easement		
Non-Agricultural zoning** on one side:	30	
Non-Agricultural zoning** on two sides:	20	
Non-Agricultural zoning** on three sides:	10	
Non-Agricultural zoning** on four sides:	0	
* Federally protected land is DOE, DOD, Forest Service and/or BLM land that is not designated for disposal in that agency’s most current or “working draft” land management plan.		
**Committed to urban development whether by Non-Ag zoning or by county or regional land use plan designation; as land for Non-Agricultural use.		
Choose Highest Point Total		

State Criteria #4a&b– Public and Intrinsic Values of Site (Maximum 70 points):

4a) Water is critical to wildlife in Nevada and most species of wildlife occur along rivers, lakes or streams and drainage ways. Riparian and wetland values associated with private properties are critical to maintaining wildlife populations. Points will be awarded for the percent of riparian and or wetland acres that occur on the entire property offered for easement.

4b) Cultural and historical resources are a critical component of Nevada culture and heritage. Points will also be awarded for cultural and historic values of the property

Public Values of Site: (Maximum 200 points)

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4a) Acres of riparian or wetland acres in entire property	Divided by total number of acres in entire property	X	100	Percent of riparian and wetland value on property
_____ Acres	_____ Acres			_____ % Value
Percent of Riparian & Wetland on property		Points		Points Given:
Less than 2 %		0 points		
2 - 3%		5 points		
3.1 - 4 %		10 points		
4.1 - 5 %		15 points		
5.1 - 6 %		20points		
6.1 - 7 %		25 points		
7.1 - 8 %		30 points		
8.1 - 9 %		35 points		
> 9 %		40 points		
Subtotal				
4b) Historical or Archeological value of site: (40 points Max)				
Is there a Site on the parcel listed on National Register of Historic Places or Eligible for Inclusion on the National Register as defined under 519.80(V) of FRPP Manual				Points Given:
If No:		0 points		
If Yes:		40 points		
Subtotal				
Total 4a and 4b				

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State Criteria #6 - LEVERAGING

Maximum 10 Points

What percentage of the appraised easement offer requires USDA funds?

Total funding requested from USDA, for easement:

	Points Allowed	Your Project Value
< 19 %	10 Points	
20 - 24 %	9 Points	
25 - 29 %	8 Points	
30 - 34 %	7 Points	
35 - 39 %	6 Points	
40 - 44 %	5 Points	
45 - 50 %	4 Points	
> 50 %	Not eligible	

Document the leveraging:

What are the
funding sources?
Are they
committed? If yes,

NRCS easement cost			\$
Identified	Applications only?	Committed?	
Other Sources cost (list name)	Yes No	Yes No	\$
Other Sources cost (list name)	Yes No	Yes No	\$
Total easement cost			\$

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State Criteria #7 - HISTORY OF ENTITY EASEMENT WORK *(Maximum 6 Points)*

Participating entities' histories of acquiring, managing, holding, and enforcing easements, (including annual farmland protection expenditures, monetary donations received, accomplishments, and staff).

** In evaluating proposals, priority ranking should be given to those entities with a long- standing and successful history in acquiring and protecting farmland and that have extensive experience in managing and enforcing easements and adequate staff to manage stewardship responsibilities.*

Entity Certification	Points Allowed	Your Project Value
Entity is Certified in accordance with FRPP Final Rule and National Correspondence dated Nov 17, 2011	6 Points	
Entity is Not-Certified in accordance with FRPP Final Rule and National Correspondence dated Nov 17, 2011	3 Points	

Name of Organization To Hold Easement:
Address:
Phone Number:
Contact Person:

State Criteria #8 - HEL/Wetland Compliance and Conservation Plan **(Maximum 7 Points)**

Intent: place a higher priority on farms that already meet FRPP conservation compliance requirements.

Application includes a current (prepared, revised, or reviewed within the last 5 years) conservation plan with a plan map AND signed AD-1026 forms(s) for all fields owned by the landowner.

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Current Conservation Plan. | 5 points |
| 2. Conservation Plan has practices planned or implemented (within past 5 years) that will benefit wildlife habitat. | 2 points |
| 3. Does not meet the above criteria. | 0 points |

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SUMMARY OF THE CRITERIA

Summary Score Sheet by Question

Section	Available Points (% of whole)	Your Total Project Value
NC 1: Percentage of Soils (Prime, Unique, or Statewide Importance)	110	
NC1a: Archaeological or Historic Resources	30	
NC 2: % of Cropland, Pastureland and Rangeland in the parcel to be protected.	67	
NC 3: Ratio of offer to average farm size in the county	20	
NC 4: % decrease in county acreage of farm and ranchland between last two USDA Ag Censuses.	20	
NC 5: % Population growth of the county	20	
NC 6: % Population density in relation to state population density	20	
NC 7: Proximity of parcel to protected land.	20	
NC 8: Proximity of parcel to other agricultural operations.	20	
SC 1: Agricultural Viability	40	
SC 2: Water Rights tied to the land.	40	
SC 3: Proximity to Non-Ag Zoning and existing Conservation Easements	40	
SC 4a: Intrinsic Values – Riparian & Wetland	40	
SC 4b: Historical or Archeological Values	40	
SC 5: USDA FRPP Cost/Acre	55	
SC 6: Leveraging	10	
SC7: History of Entity Work w/Easements HEL/Wetland Compliance Plan/Con. Plan	6	
SC 8: Wetland/HEL and Conservation Plans	5	
TOTAL Available POINTS:	603	Score:

Total summary points from National Questions: _____ of **327** total points available
 Total summary points from State Questions: _____ of **276** total points available

Overall Total Ranking Score: _____

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USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service		
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Parcel Eligibility and Ranking Form		
Nevada FY 2013		
Fiscal Year		
Landowner Name and Address		
Cooperating Entity: Name and Address		
State in which the Parcel is Located		
County in which Parcel is Located		
Locality (Town/Township) in which the Parcel is Located		
Is the Landowner AGI Eligible?	Yes	No
Is the Landowner HEL Eligible?	Yes	No
Is the Landowner WC Eligible?	Yes	No
Name of NRCS Employee Confirming Landowner Eligibility		
Signature of NRCS Employee Confirming Landowner Eligibility		
Is the Cooperating Entity Eligible?	Yes	No
Name of NRCS Employee Confirming Entity Eligibility		
Signature of NRCS Employee Confirming Entity Eligibility		
Does Cooperating Entity have a Pending Offer for the Parcel (Y/N)?		
Name of NRCS Employee Confirming Parcel Offer		
Signature of NRCS Employee Confirming Parcel Offer		
Does the offered land have 50% prime, unique, and or statewide or locally important farmland?	Yes	No
Does the offered land have historic or archeological resources?	Yes	No
Does the offer include land that supports the objectives of a state or local farm and ranch land protection program?	Yes	No
Is the Land Eligible (Y/N)?		
Name of NRCS Employee Confirming Land Eligibility		
Signature of NRCS Employee Confirming Land Eligibility		

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Submit “offers” to:

**Bruce Petersen, State Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
1365 Corporate Blvd.
Reno, NV 89502-7102**

(A) Application Steps, Defined

The following steps outline FRPP application procedures.

- Step 1:** Landowners interested in participating in FRPP submit an application to eligible non-governmental organizations or State, Tribal, and local governments that have an existing farm and ranchland protection program. They must also sign a CPA-1200 Conservation Program Application at their local NRCS Field Office.
- Step 2:** NRCS will have a continuous sign up for FRPP. Annually, a cutoff for ranking will be announced at which time all eligible applications that have been received will be ranked.
- Step 3:** Non-governmental organizations, State, Tribal or local entities submit FRPP proposals to the State Conservationist before the date specified in the announcement.
- Step 4:** The NRCS State Conservationist receives the proposals and determines entity and land eligibility.
- Step 5:** The NRCS State Conservationist, with advice from the State Technical Committee, may rank the parcels based on the criteria in the State FRPP plan and/or LESA system or similar land evaluation system used to evaluate parcels. (Nevada ranking Criteria will be used)
- Step 6:** The NRCS State Conservationist makes awards to eligible entities based on the funds provided by the NRCS National Office. Once selected, NRCS will enter into cooperative agreements with selected entities.
- Step 7:** Following cooperative agreement signature by NRCS and the selected entity, funds may be obligated to the entity and the entity may begin to purchase conservation easements.