



**United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service**

***Helping People Help the Land***

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
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## **Mission**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

## **Vision**

Harmony between people and the land.

## **Overview**

Since 1935, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. NRCS employees provide technical assistance based on sound science and suited to a customer's specific needs. NRCS provides financial assistance for many conservation activities. Participation in NRCS programs is voluntary.

NRCS manages natural resources conservation programs and services that provide environmental, technical, financial, and social benefits.

Our science and technology activities provide technical expertise in such areas as clean water, ecological sciences, engineering, and resource economics. We provide expertise in soil science and leadership for soil surveys.

Technical assistance is provided from our 30 service centers. Technical help is also available through certified technical service providers.

NRCS offers a variety of financial incentives to producers and landowners interested in conservation programs. Some programs offer annual payments for conservation use. Others offer one-time up-front payments for long-term easements; many include government funds to share in the costs of installing conservation measures.

NRCS reaches out to all segments of the agricultural community, including under served and socially disadvantaged farmers to ensure that our programs and services are accessible to everyone.

NRCS employees serve all 55 West Virginia counties from 30 field offices across the state. Staffs include engineers, conservationists, technicians, soil scientists, biologists, and volunteers. These employees work hand-in-hand with land users to conserve natural resources on private lands.

We work closely with West Virginia's 14 Conservation Districts and six Resource Conservation and Development Councils. These locally elected or appointed community leaders ensure that local conservation concerns are addressed. The West Virginia Conservation Agency and NRCS balance their specific local needs with a coordinated state and national conservation effort.

## **Programs**

NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. Public benefits include enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty. For more information on any of these programs, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

## **NRCS Technical Assistance Programs and Services**

### **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program**

The Conservation Technical Assistance Program helps land users, communities, units of State and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems. The purposes of conservation systems are to reduce erosion and flooding, improve air, soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve pasture, and woodlands. Technical assistance is provided to landowners whether or not they are enrolled in a USDA conservation program. NRCS promotes planning a total resource management system. This sustainable approach takes into account all of the natural resources in the planning

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area. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta.html>.

### **Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs)**

Technical guides are the primary scientific references for NRCS. Technical guides used in each service center are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs). FOTGs are available online at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>.

### **Soil Survey Program**

Soil surveys provide a field-based scientific inventory of soil resources, including soil maps, data about the physical and chemical properties of soils, and information on the potentials and limitations of each soil. Soil surveys help people make decisions on how to best use the land based on properties and characteristics of the soils.

Modern soil survey information is available for the entire state of West Virginia. All 55 counties have data available on the Web Soil Survey or Data Mart. Sources for WV surveys may be found at <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/soils.html>.

### **Appalachian Plant Materials Center**

The Appalachian Plant Materials Center serves 11 states in the Appalachian Region. The center is operated by the NRCS in cooperation with other agencies and universities.

The Plant Materials Center evaluates plants for their ability to solve specific conservation problems related to climate, the rugged topography, soil limitations, various land uses, fish and wildlife needs, and desires of the landowners. The center conducts systematic observations and evaluations of plants needed to protect our natural resources. New techniques are developed for the propagation, establishment, management, and use for new or improved species of grasses, legumes, shrubs, and trees. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/wvpmc.html>.

## **Financial Assistance Programs**

### **Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)**

The Agricultural Management Assistance Program assists agricultural producers to manage risk and voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming. NRCS may provide financial and technical assistance to help landowners reduce risk. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama/ama\\_11/ama11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama/ama_11/ama11.html).

### **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

Through CSP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/csp\\_11/csp11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/csp_11/csp11.html).

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

West Virginia has 14 different Local Work Group areas for EQIP allocations and rankings. Each Conservation District has convened Local Work Group meetings to identify and prioritize their natural resource concerns that EQIP can address. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip\\_11/eqip11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip_11/eqip11.html).

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The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, and Organic Program Initiative are part of EQIP.

- **Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI)**  
CBWI provides assistance to producers to minimize delivery of nutrients and sediments in order to restore, preserve, and protect the Chesapeake Bay. The program offers financial and technical assistance to producers to install practices that help control soil erosion and nutrients on eligible agricultural land from reaching the Bay. The practices are not limited to, but emphasize crop residue management, crop nutrient management, manure management, cover crops, buffers, riparian forest buffers, and streamside fencing to keep livestock out of the streams and water courses. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cbwi/cbwi\\_11/cbwi11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cbwi/cbwi_11/cbwi11.html).
- **Organic Initiative**  
The 2008 Farm Bill places additional emphasis on providing technical and financial assistance to producers who want to transition to organic farming as well as current certified organic producers. Financial and technical assistance from NRCS will help producers plan and implement conservation practices to sustain their organic operations. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip\\_11/organic11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip_11/organic11.html).

#### **Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)**

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program is a voluntary program for developing or improving high quality habitat that supports fish and wildlife populations of National, State, and local significance. Through WHIP, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners for the development of upland, wetland, aquatic, and other types of wildlife habitat. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/whip\\_11/whip11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/whip_11/whip11.html).

## **Easement Programs**

### **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)**

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, local governments, and/or non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/frpp\\_11/frpp11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/frpp_11/frpp11.html).

### **Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)**

The Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP) is a program established to provide financial assistance to private landowners to undertake projects that restore and enhance forest ecosystems to help promote the recovery of threatened and endangered species, improve biodiversity; and enhance carbon sequestration. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/hfrp/hfrp\\_11/hfrp11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/hfrp/hfrp_11/hfrp11.html).

### **Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)**

The Grassland Reserve Program is a program that helps landowners and operators restore and protect grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining these areas as grazing lands. The program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conversion. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp/grp\\_11/grp11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp/grp_11/grp11.html).

### **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

The Wetlands Reserve Program provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private land in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. WRP provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. For more information, go to [http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WRP/wrp\\_11/wrp11.html](http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WRP/wrp_11/wrp11.html).

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## Recovery Act Programs

### Watershed Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation of aging watershed dams is included in Section 14 of the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000 (PL106-472). Dams constructed under the four watershed programs (PL-534, PL-566, Pilot) are eligible for assistance under this authority. Rehabilitation of these dams is needed to address critical public health and safety issues. A priority ranking system will consider the condition of the dam and number of people at risk if the dam should fail. NRCS may provide technical assistance and 65 percent of the total rehabilitation project cost. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/recovery/recovery.html>.

### Watershed Operations.

This program provides assistance to sponsor local organizations of authorized watershed projects, planned and approved under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83-566), and designated watersheds authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534). NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to implement authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of watershed protection; flood mitigation; water quality improvements; soil erosion reduction; rural, municipal and industrial water supply; irrigation water management; sediment control; fish and wildlife enhancement; and wetlands and wetland function creation and restoration. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/recovery/recovery.html>.

### Floodplain Easements.

Floodplain easements restore, protect, maintain, and enhance the functions of the floodplain; conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge, and open space; reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion. NRCS may purchase easements on floodplain lands that meet program criteria. Purchases are based upon established priorities. The easements provide NRCS with the authority to restore and enhance the floodplain's functions and values. Landowners retain several rights on the property, including quiet

enjoyment, the right to control public access, and the right to undeveloped recreational use such as hunting and fishing. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/recovery/recovery.html>.

## Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Programs

### The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL 78-534 and PL 83-566) authorized NRCS to cooperate with States and local agencies to carry out works of improvement for soil conservation and for other purposes including flood prevention; conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water; and conservation and proper utilization of land. NRCS implements the Act through three programs: Watershed Surveys and Planning, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations, and Watershed Rehabilitation. For more information, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/watershed/>.

### Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program undertakes emergency measures—including the purchase of flood plain easements—for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood, or any other natural occurrence is causing (or has caused) a sudden impairment of the watershed. The EWP Program relies on Federal funding which has been limited in recent years. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/ewp09.html>.

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## General Programs

### Earth Team

The Earth Team is NRCS' volunteer program. NRCS needs people who are willing to commit their time and talent to conserving and protecting soil, water, and wildlife for their community and everyone in it. Earth Team volunteers may work with private farmers and landowners implementing conservation practices; improving wildlife around their community; or assisting in data collection for soil, water, or archaeology surveys. Earth Team volunteers also assist with office and clerical work, community outreach, and giving tours. For more information, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>.

### Backyard Conservation

Backyard Conservation shows how conservation practices used on agricultural land across the country to conserve and improve natural resources can be adapted for use on the land around your home. These practices help the environment and can make your yard more attractive and enjoyable.

Ten conservation practices have been scaled down for homeowners and city residents to use in their yards. Tip sheets offering "how to" steps and helpful hints may be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/>.

## Key Contacts

Name	Position	Phone	E-mail
Kevin Wickey	State Conservationist	304-284-7540	Kevin.Wickey@wv.usda.gov
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John Vandevender	Plant Materials Manager	304-445-3005	John.Vandevender@wv.usda.gov
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NRCS has offices in many of West Virginia counties. Local offices may be found at <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/> or contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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## Service Center Contact Information

Service Center	Counties Served	District Conservationist	Phone	Email
Beckley	Fayette, Raleigh, Wyoming	Gary Redden	304-255-9225	gary.redden@wv.usda.gov
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