



United States Department of Agriculture

INDIANA NRCS 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



	CONTRACTS	ACRES APPLIED	DOLLARS OBLIGATED
FARM BILL PROGRAMS	1,040	314,072	\$21,524,646
EASEMENTS	807	70,310	\$3,709,613
SPECIAL INITIATIVES	63	21,757	\$2,076,118
STATE INITIATIVES	153	31,577	\$2,807,539

Private citizens own over 90 percent of the land in Indiana which includes nearly 15 million acres of farmland and about 4 million acres of forestland, making stewardship absolutely critical to the health of our environment. Each day, farmers and forest landowners are making decisions about natural resource use and management that impacts soil and water quality. With the Natural Resources Conservation Service's help, many are creating more productive lands while maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Farm Bill Programs include: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which includes the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

Easements include: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP), Floodplain Easement Program (FPE), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) and Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

State Initiatives include: On-Farm Energy, Organics, Specialty Crop, Wildlife Habitat and Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB)

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)
Phosphorus Reduction
Targeted Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) dollars and technical assistance are provided to farmers for water quality conservation practices in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI)
Nutrient Reduction
Four watersheds areas are receiving additional EQIP funding to address nutrients and other resource concerns, including Middle Eel River, Little Wea Creek, Big Pine Creek, Busseron Creek, and Plummer Creek.

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
303d List Removal
Four targeted 12-digit watersheds are receiving additional EQIP funding. Watersheds include: Eagle Creek, Ell Creek, Beargrass Creek and Silver Creek.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Eagle Marsh
Construction of a permanent berm on the Eagle Marsh Wetland Restoration Program (WRP) easement that will keep Asian Carp out of the Great Lakes basin. Phase Two project will include raising the height of the berm to prevent all invasives from crossing into the Great Lakes basin.

Ohio River Water Quality Trading Pilot Project
Working with Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide technical assistance for a pilot project that encourages farmers to install conservation practices using cost share dollars from the Electric Power Research Institute to reduce loading of nitrogen and phosphorous.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Pokagon North Liberty WRP
Indiana NRCS is providing technical assistance to the Pokagon Tribe of the Potawatomi Indians to enhance their existing WRP easement site to improve wetland hydrology and habitat. Plans are underway to assist them with vegetative practices, including monarch habitat and potential culturally significant native rice plantings.

Goose Pond
NRCS has committed an additional half of a million dollars to the repair of levees on the Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area WRP easement. These efforts will repair wind and ice erosion on levees and protect the integrity of this important wildlife habitat.

HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED FARMERS

	Contracts	Acres	Dollars
Beginning Farmers	63	7,754	\$1,300,824
Socially Disadvantaged	3	137	\$29,264
Limited Resource	3	62	\$23,463
TOTAL	69	7,953	\$1,353,551

SOIL HEALTH

Indiana worked with the Indiana Department of Agriculture and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to conduct two tillage transects in FY-2015. The results of the transect show **Indiana is a top leader in the nation in acres of cover crops planted** which is important during weather extremes like those we experienced last summer.

The results of the transects shows that more and more Indiana farmers are effectively using conservation practices and specifically soil health management systems to improve their land. The reports estimate nearly **one million acres of living plant cover** such as cover crops and winter cereal grains were planted on Indiana farms last year. These important plants protect soil from extreme weather and retain valuable nutrients in fields that benefit water quality and improve soil biology.

Results for residues and soil undisturbed on harvested acres during the winter months include: 77% of corn acres; 79% of small grain acres; and 82% of soybean acres. In the spring, 34% of the harvested corn acres had residues and soil undisturbed and 59% of the harvested soybean acres had residues and soil undisturbed. Residues protected from environmental elements play a key role in building soil organic matter and soil health.

The no-till acres represented in the transect data are at a much higher and sustainable quality because farmers are using **multiple conservation practices implemented as part of a system** on their fields.

NRCS is proud to be working in partnership with the **Indiana Conservation Cropping Initiative (CCSI)** which is a unique effort that provides training to both employees and farmers, plus networking and mentoring opportunities to farmers that are interested in trying soil health management systems.

EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION

Localized heavy rainfall in April and July caused record flooding on White Lick Creek (Morgan County), Johnson Fork Creek (Dearborn County), and Plum Creek (Switzerland County). The cumulation of these three projects protected 0.5 acres of land, stabilized 1,761 streambank feet and saved 0.3 acres of roadway.

NRCS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: \$451,939
NRCS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: \$90,387
LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS: \$166,155

WATERSHED STRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

As part of the new Farm Bill, Indiana received funding in 2015 to work with local sponsors to conduct rehabilitation assessments on ten watershed structures.

OUTREACH EFFORTS

Outreach is an important way for NRCS to ensure that underserved individuals and groups throughout Indiana know about the agency's programs and services.

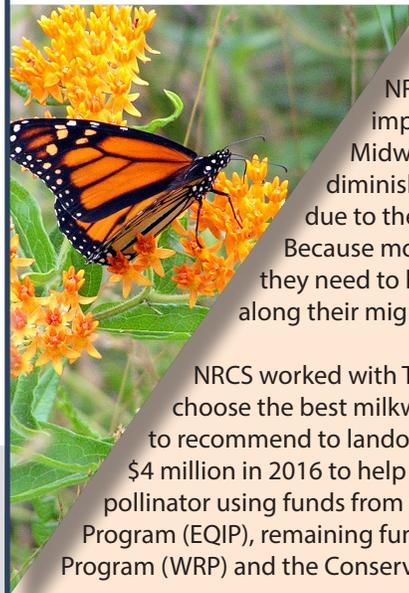
In FY-2015, we worked with Purdue Extension, Local Growers Guild, SWCDs, and the National AgrAbility Program to conduct ten beginning farmer tours, two of those were for **military veterans**.

We worked with American Farmland Trust, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Women in Food and Agriculture Network to hold six Women's Learning Circles (for **women who own or operate farms**).

We provided information and resources to **organic growers, small farmers and specialty crop growers** through our partnership efforts with Purdue Cooperative Extension, the Indiana Small Farms Team and Indiana Sustainable Ag Research and Education Grant (SARE) team.

A pilot project to provide information about soil health to **absentee landowners** in two watersheds – Beargrass Creek (Kosciusko County) and Ell (Dubois County) proved successful in reaching this group.

Through an agreement with the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District we are working with **urban small farmers, schools, community gardeners** and developing new on-line tools for the public.



MONARCH BUTTERFLY

NRCS recently launched a special effort to improve habitat for monarch butterflies in 10 Midwest and Southern Plains states to address diminishing populations of this important species due to the decline of native plants like milkweed. Because monarch butterflies are always on the move, they need to have the right plants at the right time along their migration route.

NRCS worked with The Xerces Society and butterfly experts to choose the best milkweed species and nectar-producing plants to recommend to landowners. This targeted effort will invest \$4 million in 2016 to help combat the decline of this important pollinator using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), remaining funds from the former Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Indiana is one of 10 states selected for this program because we are in the heart of the Monarch's migration area. We will focus on conservation practices that provide buffer habitat along waterways and in wetlands, cover crops and pasture management and that increase soil health, control invasive species and provide other beneficial wildlife habitat.

EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEERS

NRCS is proud of the dedicated Earth Team volunteers and staff who have committed their time and talents to conserving and protecting our natural resources. In FY15, **Indiana NRCS had 100% office utilization**, with 1,831 volunteers logging in 14,436.5 hours. Time dedicated by these volunteers to educational efforts, conservation planning and clerical services saved Indiana NRCS more than \$333,500.*

* based on the national value of volunteer time of \$23.07

