



United States Department of Agriculture



Alaska Agricultural Producers and Programs

August 2020

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Agriculture in Alaska

- Agricultural operations in Alaska range from small “backyard farms” to millions of acres of forest land.
- The 2019 National Agricultural Statistics states there are 810 farms in the state averaging 1,050 acres.
- Top crops based on acreage:
 1. Forage-hay
 2. Barley for grain
 3. Mixed Vegetables
 4. Oats for Grain
 5. Potatoes

Agriculture in Alaska

- Traditional livestock grown in Alaska includes cattle, poultry, horses, and pigs. Non-traditional livestock include elk, bison, yak, musk ox, and reindeer.
- Aquaculture products are also grown in Alaska including over a hundred fish and mollusk operations.
- A detailed list of Alaska's agricultural statistics can be found at: [USDA National Ag Statistics Service-Alaska](#)

Alaska Forestry

- Alaska has 129 million acres of forested land
 - 51% is managed by Federal agencies
 - 25% is managed by state and local government, trust lands supporting mental health programs, and the University of Alaska
 - Native corporations manage 24% of Alaska's forests
 - 0.4% of the forested land is privately owned

Alaska Forestry

- Most commercial timber harvest occurs in the coastal rain forest of Southeast and Southcentral Alaska on Federal and Native corporation lands.
- The Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska is 16.8 million acres, the largest national forest in the nation. The Chugach National Forest in Southcentral Alaska is the second largest national forest at 5.9 million acres. (U.S. Forest Service)
- NRCS assists private landowners and native corporations with their forestry management goals through a variety of technical and financial assistance programs on non-industrial forest lands.

Financial Assistance Programs in Alaska

Commonly utilized NRCS farm bill programs in Alaska:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Financial Assistance Programs in Alaska

NRCS provides technical assistance to Farm Service Agency's (FSA) conservation programs

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)

For a full list of FSA programs: [FSA Programs and Services](#)

- EQIP is the most commonly-utilized program in Alaska.
- Applicants must meet minimum eligibility requirements.
- Applications are “batched” and ranked based on environmental benefits. The highest ranked applications are funded. [How EQIP works in Alaska](#)
- Contracts are a maximum of 10 years.
- Payments are made upon satisfactory completion of planned conservation practices. Practices may not be started until contract is funded (obligated).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical and financial assistance to producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

Benefits

Through EQIP, NRCS provides agricultural producers with one-on-one help and financial assistance to plan and implement improvements, or what NRCS calls conservation practices. Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while improving agricultural operations.

Program at a Glance

NRCS will help you develop a conservation plan that meets your goals and vision. This plan becomes your roadmap for selecting the right conservation practices for your land. NRCS offers about 200 unique practices designed for working farms, ranches, and forests.

NRCS financial assistance can cover part of the costs of implementing conservation practices.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Who is Eligible?

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who own or rent agricultural land are eligible. EQIP assistance can be used on all types of agricultural operations, including:

- Conventional and organic
- Specialty crops and commodity crops
- Forestry and wildlife
- Historically underserved farmers*
- Livestock operations

*Increased and advance payments available for historically underserved producers (beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and military veterans.)

How to Apply

Apply at your local USDA Service Center, which you can find at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Applications for EQIP financial assistance are accepted throughout the year. Specific state deadlines are set for ranking and funding. If your application is ranked and selected, you will enter into a contract with NRCS to receive financial assistance for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Payment rates for conservation practices are reviewed and set each fiscal year.

More Information

For more information, visit nrca.usda.gov/farmbill or farmers.gov.

Find your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-locator.

What's New in the 2018 Farm Bill

Adds potential resource concerns related to beneficial cost-effective operation changes.

Raises cap for organic producers to \$140,000 over four years.

New enrollment option through incentive contracts to address priority resource concerns.

Requires advance payment option be offered to historically underserved producers.

Authorizes direct program assistance to irrigation districts, including acequias and other entities, for purposes of improving water use efficiencies.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

July 2019 nrca.usda.gov

EQIP Eligibility Requirements

- Eligible Land
 - Agriculture lands
 - Environmentally sensitive areas
- Eligible Person(s)
 - Agricultural producers
 - Owners of non-industrial private forestland
 - Indian Tribes
 - Those with an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation
- Farm records must be established or updated with the Farm Service Agency Must meet adjusted gross income and payment limitation provisions
- Must be in compliance with highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland conservation (WC) requirements

Commonly Applied EQIP Practices

- Cropland and Hayland
 - High Tunnel System
 - Nutrient Management
 - Cover Crop
 - Pasture and Hay Planting
 - Forage Harvest Management
 - Irrigation System, Microirrigation and Irrigation Water Management
- Pastureland and Rangeland
 - Prescribed Grazing
 - Water Facility and Livestock Pipeline
 - Fence
- Forestland
 - Forest Stand Improvement
 - Woody Residue Treatment
 - Tree and Shrub Establishment

Conservation Stewardship Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



- The Conservation Stewardship Programs helps producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems.
- CSP builds on existing conservation by offering enhancements, bundles, and activities that are not available through EQIP. [CSP Enhancements and Bundles](#)
- The contracts are 5 years in length.
- The program provides 2 types of payments:
 - Annual payment for maintaining existing systems and adopting new activities
 - Supplemental payment for adopting a resource conserving crop rotation or advanced grazing management

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

Overview

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. CSP pays participants for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

Benefits

CSP addresses various resource concerns including soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources, and animal resources as well as energy.

How It Works

CSP provides two possible types of payments through five-year contracts: annual payments for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing practices; and supplemental payments for adopting a resource-conserving crop rotation.

Who is Eligible?

Applicants may include individuals, legal entities, joint operations, or Indian tribes that meet the stewardship threshold for at least two priority resource concerns when they apply. They must also agree to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract. Producers must have effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract.



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Eligible lands include private and tribal agricultural lands, cropland, grassland, pastureland, rangeland, and nonindustrial private forest land. CSP is available to all producers, regardless of operation size or type of crops produced, in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Caribbean and Pacific Island areas.

New CSP Grasslands Conservation Initiative

Provides financial assistance to conserve grasslands through a single opportunity to enroll in a 5-year contract. Eligible lands are limited to cropland for which base acres have been maintained under FSA's ARC/PLC and were planted to grass or pasture, including idle or fallow, during a specific period. Enrolled acreage must be managed consistently with a grassland conservation plan.

How to Apply

Apply at your local USDA Service Center, which you can find at farmers.gov/service-locator. Applications are accepted at any time.

Payments are made soon as practical after October 1 of each fiscal year for contract activities installed and maintained in the previous year.

What's New in the 2018 Farm Bill

Increases payment rates for adoption of cover crop rotations and advanced grazing management activities.

Extends contracts to facilitate renewal under new program authority.

Authorizes specified annual funding levels.

Provides specific support for organic and transitioning to organic production activities.

Adds new CSP Grasslands Conservation Initiative.

More Information

For more information, visit nracs.usda.gov/farmbill or farmers.gov.

Find your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Natural Resources Conservation Service

CSP Eligibility Requirements

- CSP has the basic applicant eligibility requirements as EQIP
- CSP Land Eligibility
 - All eligible land in the applicant's operation must be part of the application.
 - If nonindustrial private forestland is part of the operation, it requires a separate application
 - Public land is eligible when it is a working part of the applicant's operation.
- Land in CRP and easements are ineligible for CSP.

CSP Eligibility Requirements

- Applications must meet Stewardship Threshold Requirements for National and State priority resource concerns
 - Applications are assessed using the Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART).
 - Stewardship threshold must be met for at least two resource concerns at the time of application and must meet or exceed one additional resource concern for each land use by the end of the contract.
 - Renewal applications-must meet or exceed two additional priority resource concerns or agree to adopt or improve conservation activities to achieve higher levels of conservation on two existing priority resource concerns.

- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program promotes the coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partner(s) that offer unique opportunities to provide conservation benefits within a regional natural resource concern.
- The partner(s) define project objectives, area of eligibility, determine list of activities/practices/enhancements that will be utilized to obtain project goals, and set project timeline lines for participation.
- RCPP agreements may be up to 5 years.
- RCPP may utilize EQIP, CSP or ACEP to address natural resource concerns on the ground.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

Overview

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

Benefits

RCPP makes available a variety of NRCS conservation activities to help partners, ag producers, and private landowners address local and regional natural resource challenges.

How It Works

Partners apply to NRCS for RCPP project awards. Once projects are selected, NRCS works with partners to set aside a certain pool of funding for an awarded project. Producers, landowners, and partners then enter into producer contracts and supplemental agreements with NRCS to carry out agreed-to conservation activities.

Who is Eligible?

Only eligible organizations interested in partnering with NRCS on conservation projects can develop applications for the RCPP competition. The lead partner for an RCPP

project is the entity that submits an application, and if selected for an award is ultimately responsible for collaborating with NRCS to successfully complete an RCPP project.

See the RCPP funding announcement for details about what types of organizations are eligible to apply.

RCPP projects must be carried out on agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land or associated land on which NRCS determines an eligible activity would help achieve conservation benefits.

Conservation Activities

RCPP projects may include any combination of authorized, on-the-ground conservation activities implemented by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. These activities include:

- Land management/land improvement/restoration practices
- Land rentals
- Entity-held easements
- United States-held easements
- Public works/watersheds.

How to Apply

Interested partners must apply through the RCPP portal (nrcs.my.salesforce.com). Applications are being accepted through December 3, 2019.

Once RCPP projects are selected, producers and landowners can apply to participate in projects that cover their geographic area. Interested producers should visit their local USDA Service Center to see if their land is included in the scope of any existing RCPP projects.

What's New in the 2018 Farm Bill

RCPP is now a standalone program with its own funding—\$300 million annually.

NRCS may award up to 15 Alternative Funding Arrangement projects, which are more grant-like and rely more on partner capacity to implement conservation activities.

RCPP now has two funding pools--Critical Conservation Areas and a State/Multistate pool.

RCPP partners must develop and report on environmental outcomes.

More Information

For more information, visit nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill or farmers.gov.

Find your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

July 2019 nrcs.usda.gov

RCPP Eligibility Requirements

- Partner Eligibility-partners must have the experience, expertise, and capacity to manage the partnership and project, provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental outcomes of the project.
 - Private Industry
 - Non-Government Organizations
 - Indian Tribes
 - Alaska Native Organizations
 - State and Local Governments
 - Universities
- Land Eligibility
 - Agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land or associated land on which NRCS determines an eligible activity would achieve conservation benefit.
 - Public land may be eligible if conservation activities will benefit lands as determined by NRCS and are included in the scope of the approved RCPP project.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



- ACEP helps landowners, trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farm and ranches through conservation easements.
- Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land.
- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) help to restore, protect and enhance wetlands, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, improve water quality, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biologic diversity, and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and non-developed recreational activities.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

Overview

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.

Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps American Indian tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land.

Under the Wetland Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands.

Benefits

Agricultural Land Easements protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Land protected by agricultural land easements provides additional public benefits, including enhanced environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat, and protection of open space.

Wetland Reserve Easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife (including threatened and endangered species), improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity, and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and non-developed recreational activities.

Agricultural Land Easements

NRCS provides financial assistance to partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of land. The program helps farmers and ranchers keep working farms in agriculture. Eligible partners include American Indian tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that have farmland or grassland protection programs.

Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS may contribute up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement. Where NRCS determines that grasslands of special environmental significance will be protected, NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement.

Wetland Reserve Easements

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance directly to private landowners and American Indian tribes to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands through the purchase of a wetland reserve easement. For acreage owned by an American Indian tribe, there is an additional enrollment option of a 30-year contract.

Continued on next page.



Natural Resources Conservation Service

nrcs.usda.gov

ACEP - Agricultural Land Easements

- Agricultural Land Easements help keep working farms in agriculture, especially those threatened by urban development.
- NRCS may contribute up to 50% for the fair market value of the easement.
- If the grasslands of special environmental significance are offered, NRCS may contribute up to 75% of the easement.
- Land Eligibility
 - Cropland
 - Pastureland
 - Rangeland
 - Grassland
 - Nonindustrial private forestland associated with an agricultural operation
- Easements are required to have a conservation plan that promotes the long-term sustainability of the land.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Programs



Conservation Reserve Program

- CRP removes environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and requires planting species that improve environmental health and quality to re-establish valuable cover, help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. [CRP Fact Sheet](#)
- CRP has a continuous sign up where an applicant may apply for a defined list of CRP practices anytime throughout the year. [Continuous CRP Fact Sheet](#)
- CRP has a grasslands component that protects sensitive rangeland and pastureland. [CRP Grasslands Fact Sheet](#)
- Contracts are 10-15 years in length.
- Participants receive a yearly rental payment.
- CRP eligibility is determined by the Farm Service Agency.

Emergency Conservation Program

- ECP is a voluntary program that helps farmers and ranchers repair damage to farmlands caused by natural disasters and to help put in place water conservation during severe drought. [ECP Fact Sheet](#)
 - Provides up to 75% of the cost for restoring practices or up to 90% cost for limited resource, socially disadvantaged, or beginning farmer applicants.
- FSA has a similar program for emergency forest restoration: Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP). [EFRP Fact Sheet](#)
 - Provides up to 75% of the cost share for restoring practices
- FSA has several disaster assistance programs and services that help when natural disasters strike. [FSA Disaster Assistance Programs](#)

NRCS Partnership with FSA

NRCS provides technical assistance to FSA

- Perform all conservation planning for CRP offers
- Complete Environmental Evaluation on CPA-52
- Certify all NRCS conservation practices were installed according to specifications.
- Certify vegetative establishment and practice maintenance by conducting a status review.
- Certify practice maintenance by completing a status review at least 12-months prior to contract expiration.
- Cooperate with FSA to determine if additional field visits are necessary to support management activities, haying and grazing requests and potential invasive species presence.



In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
 - (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
 - (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.
- USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender