



NRCS ALASKA ANNUAL REPORT 2022



On behalf of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, I would like to extend a huge thanks to all private landowners, producers and partners who embraced voluntary conservation with us over this last year! Because of your dedication to sustainable lands management, environmental stewardship, and building resilient communities, we have delivered yet another year of Farm Bill programs in Alaska.

Fiscal Year 2022 was the year of Watershed Programs. In addition to continuing our work with rural Alaska communities to respond to severe storms through our Emergency Watershed Protection Program, we also secured new funding this year to address a myriad of other watershed issues through our Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program. We are just at the beginning of what is sure to be a long journey ahead. Watershed programs present many opportunities for rural Alaska communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change including relocating homes and infrastructure.

Our partnerships continue to grow. For example, NRCS is part of the

Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy, working with the U.S. Forest Service, Rural Development and partners in Southeast Alaska to help support a diverse economy, enhance community resilience, and conserve natural resources. Through this strategy, USDA is consulting with Tribes and Alaska Native corporations, and engaging partners and communities in a collaborative process to invest in sustainable opportunities for economic growth.

We continue to focus on the Department's overarching priorities of Equity and Inclusion; Climate Smart Agriculture; and Urban Agriculture.



Alan D. McBee
State Conservationist



Natural Resources Conservation Service

800 E Palmer-Wasilla Highway, Suite 100
Palmer, Alaska 99645

Phone: 907-761-7760

www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov

ALASKA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

EQIP FY14-22

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

1,522 APPLICATIONS

816 CONTRACTS

\$69.2M OBLIGATED

92% OF CONTRACTS WITH HU PRODUCERS
(TOTALING \$63.5M)

CSP FY14-22

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

57 APPLICATIONS

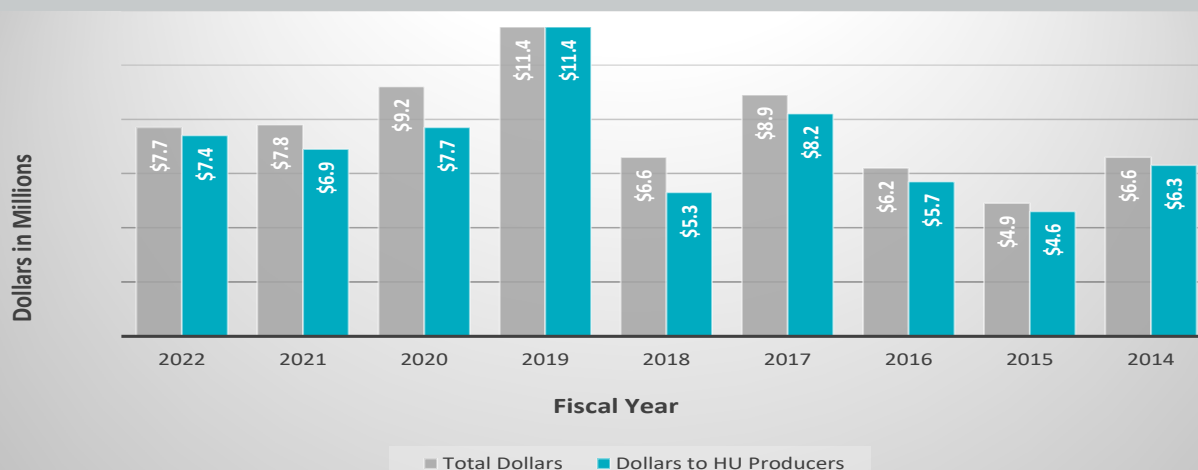
33 CONTRACTS

\$4.4M OBLIGATED

64% OF CONTRACTS WITH HU PRODUCERS
(TOTALING \$3.5M)

ALASKA EQIP DOLLARS 2014 - 2022

(State totals and Historically Underserved)



HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED (HU) PRODUCER GROUPS

- Socially Disadvantaged**
 Member of a socially disadvantaged group that has been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Includes American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders and Hispanics.
- Beginning Farmer/Rancher**
 Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, and who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
- Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher**
 A producer with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
- Veteran Farmer/Rancher**
 Served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof and was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable; and has not operated a farm or ranch, or has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

ALASKA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

EQIP FY22

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

74 APPLICATIONS

32 CONTRACTS

25,576 ACRES

\$7.7M OBLIGATED

95% OF CONTRACTS WITH HU PRODUCERS
(TOTALING **\$7.4M**)



Tonya Kaloa, manager of the Tyonek community garden, harvests zucchini in a seasonal high tunnel.

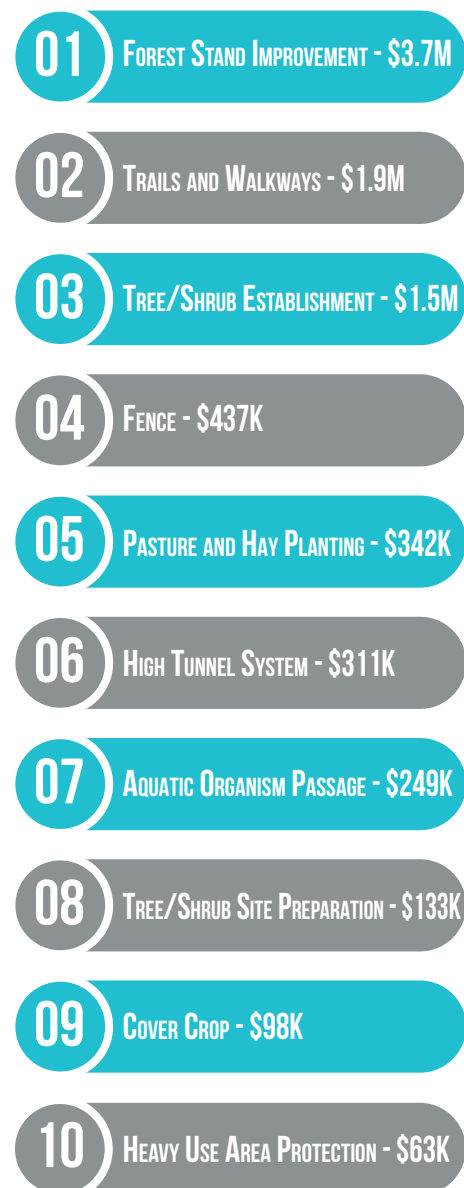


WEST TEAM SPOTLIGHT

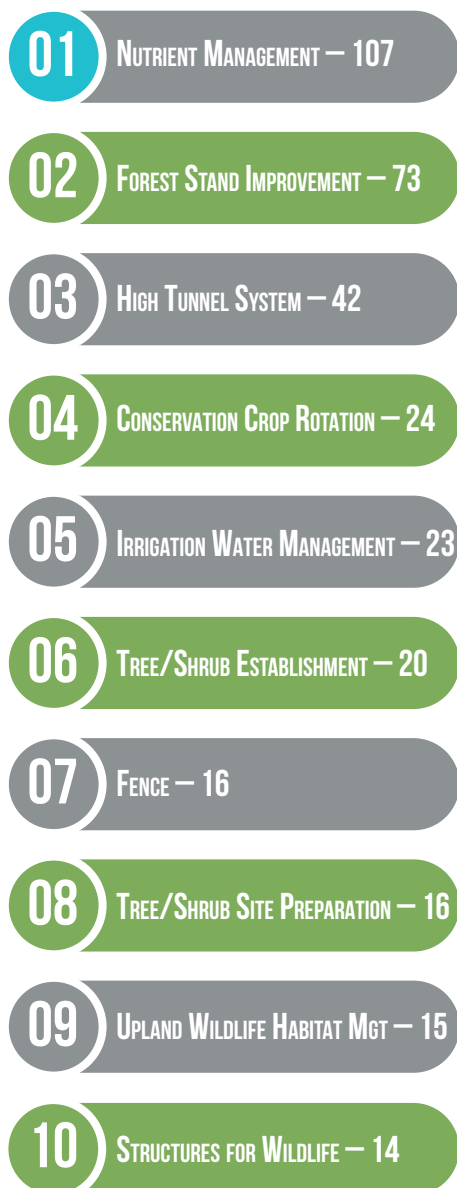
The Kenai and Homer Field Offices are continuing EQIP work on small-scale agricultural operations with a focus on urban agriculture. Partnerships with the Homer and Kenai Soil and Water Districts play a critical role in getting conservation on the ground. Forestry work continued this year on the Sterling Fuel Break project with Kenai Natives Association that provides enhanced wildfire protection for communities along the border of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Other forest projects include large scale forest management units in the Kodiak archipelago which also improve wildlife habitat; and forest/wildlife improvement toward the head of Kachemak Bay. Staff are collecting inventory and evaluations for the Working Lands for Wildlife program on the Kenai Peninsula which aims to improve fish passage and salmon habitat. Fish passage work continues elsewhere in the region including salmon-friendly culvert replacements with the Native Village of Tyonek.

ALASKA CONSERVATION PRACTICES

TOP 10 PRACTICES BY PAYMENTS



TOP 10 PRACTICES BY COUNT



Conservation practices help landowners and agricultural producers conserve natural resources such as soil, water, air, plants, animals and energy.



INVESTING IN ALASKA

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP) IN ALASKA

PROJECT NAME	LEAD PARTNER	FY AWARDED	FY EXPIRATION	PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS	NRCS CONTRIBUTIONS
Restoring Fish Habitat in Copper River Watershed	Copper River Watershed Project	2021	2026	\$4.2M	\$2.8M
Tanana River Watershed RCPP	The Conservation Fund	2020	2025	\$1.3M	\$1.3M
Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (<i>renewal</i>)	Sealaska Corporation	2020	2025	\$1.8M	\$1.8M
Copper Basin Subsistence Landscape Resiliency	Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission-AITRC	2018	2023	\$597K	\$1.7M
Keex' Kwaan' Community Forest Partnership	Sealaska Corporation	2018	2023	\$225K	\$2.1M
Implementing Education, Outreach and Conservation Practices on Tribal Land for Socially Disadvantaged Producers	Tyonek Tribal Conservation District	2014	2021	\$1.8M	\$1.6M
Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (<i>original</i>)	Sealaska Corporation	2014	2021	\$540K	\$2.3M
TOTAL RCPP INVESTMENTS IN ALASKA				\$10.4M	\$14.6M

CENTRAL TEAM SPOTLIGHT

The Wasilla Field Office (FO) worked to support an RCPP agreement with the Copper River Watershed Project, the goal of which is to improve anadromous fish passage and habitat throughout the Copper River Basin. NRCS was represented by Wasilla FO staff at the Alaska Peony Cooperative field tour, and assisted with hosting a statewide grazing and pasture management training. Field inventory of forest lands near Chitina and Chistochina was completed in support of potential moose habitat and fire management projects.



NRCS Wasilla FO Planner Braden Pitcher (center left) joined Scott Yeats, Amanda Jackson, and Bruce Cain (left to right) of Ahtna, Inc. to access sites along the Copper River where subsistence/traditional use resources are being impacted by uncontrolled recreational use. (June 2022)



Braden Pitcher (right), Wasilla FO Planner, works with Kate Morse of the Copper River Watershed Project to conduct minnow trapping on Little Tonsina Creek (9/22).



NRCS Wasilla Field Office Planner Braden Pitcher measures tree spacing during a field evaluation of completed fuel break near Gakona. (10/21)

CIG FY22

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS

**BUILDING SOILS AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS ALASKA -
A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT**

CALYPSO FARM AND ECOLOGY CENTER

RECEIPT

\$359,880 FEDERAL DOLLARS

DESCRIPTION:

This project aims to address the issue of soil health from a conservation perspective. This collaborative group of community-focused agricultural producers are using a selection of well-researched soil building methods specially adapted to specific locations in the state with an emphasis on use of local materials and low-tech methods that are transferable to any Alaskan community.



**UTILIZING LOCAL FISHERIES AND TIMBER INDUSTRY
WASTE PRODUCTS TO CREATE COMPOST FOR
SOIL HEALTH AND HEAT FOR GREENHOUSES ON A
SOUTHEAST ALASKA COMMERCIAL VEGETABLE FARM**

FOUR WINDS FARM

RECEIPT

\$27,995 FEDERAL DOLLARS

DESCRIPTION:

This project aims to address the issue of soil health from a conservation perspective. The project will explore compost using local waste while capturing and utilizing the heat from the compost.

PROTECTING ALASKA

NRCS CONSERVATION EASEMENTS IN ALASKA

Easement Program	# of Easements	Acres
Agricultural Land Easement	3	205.7
Wetland Reserve Program	1	15.7
Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easement	5	63.07
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program	4	156.54
Grassland Reserve Program	2	163.35
Public Law 566 Watershed Easement	1	52.08
Grand Total of NRCS Easements in Alaska	16	656.44

TRAILS AND WALKWAYS PRESERVE ACCESS TO SUBSISTENCE AREAS

Maintaining safe access to hunting, fishing and gathering areas is a critical need for rural Alaska communities who depend on subsistence activities for their livelihood. Wild game like caribou, moose and bear, and aquatic species like salmon are key staples to fill freezers so that residents have enough food to last through the long winter. The Trails and Walkways conservation practice is one way that NRCS helps support subsistence agriculture in Alaska. Trails and Walkways facilitate the movement of people, animals or off-road vehicles while protecting the soils from erosion and protecting ecologically sensitive sites. This year, construction was completed on a 1.6-mile walkway on Kodiak Island that connects the head of Larsen Bay to the



Karluk River, a popular fishing area for local natives. The trail protects the soil from erosion and provides safe, reliable access for human foot-traffic and all-terrain vehicles. Alaska Native

Regional Corporation Koniag, Inc. completed the project in partnership with NRCS using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

ALASKA WATERSHED PROGRAMS

EWP FY22

EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION (EWP)

7 PROJECTS TALLING **\$12.6M**

4 NEW PROJECTS FUNDED:
\$7.4M

- Akiak
- Alakanuk
- Atmautluak
- Buckland

3 PROJECTS CONSTRUCTED:
\$5.2M

- Kwigillingok
- McGrath
- Tuntutuliak

EWP SINCE 1993

EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION (EWP)

ALASKA INVESTS **\$55M**



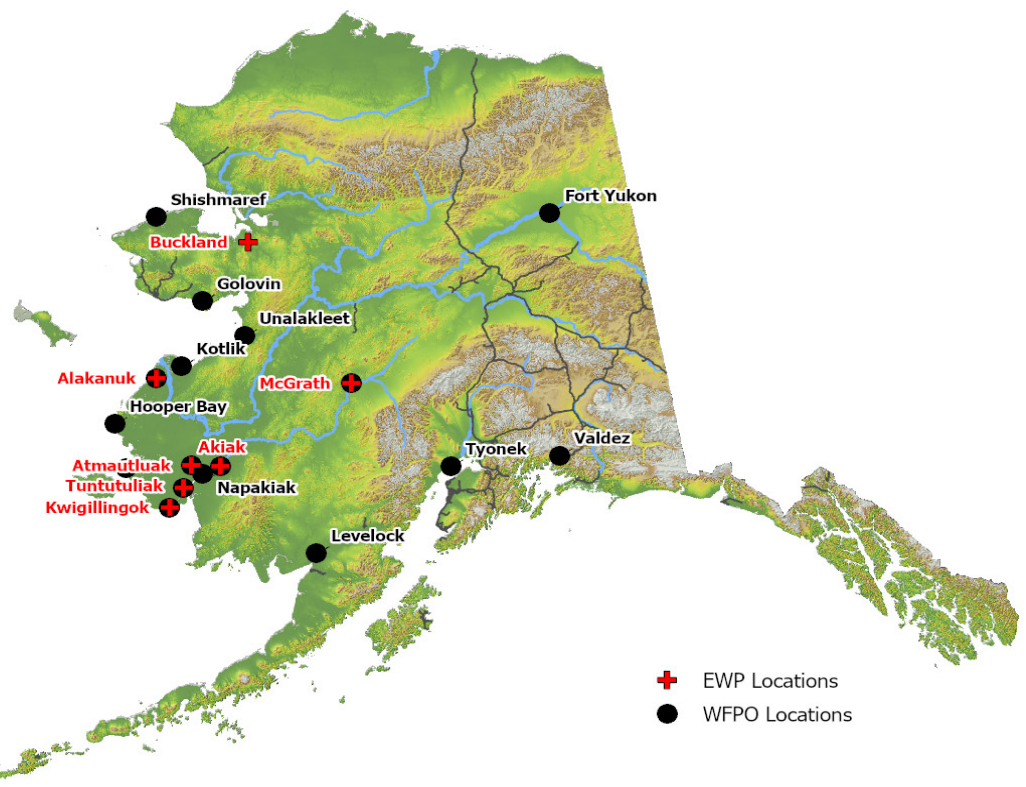
WFPO FY22

WATERSHED AND FLOOD PREVENTION
OPERATIONS (WFPO)

18 PROJECTS TOTALING **\$40.3M**

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Akiak | 10. Levelock |
| 2. Alakanuk | 11. McGrath |
| 3. Atka | 12. Napakiak |
| 4. Atmautluak | 13. Shishmaref |
| 5. Fort Yukon | 14. Tuntutuliak |
| 6. Golovin | 15. Tununak |
| 7. Hooper Bay | 16. Tyonek |
| 8. Kotlik | 17. Unalakleet |
| 9. Kwigillingok | 18. Valdez |

Total costs shown reflect the total federal investment and the NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance and do not include sponsor investments.



ALASKA SURVEYS

SOIL SURVEYS COMPLETED IN FY22

- AK746 - North Ogilvie and Yukon - Old Crow Basin Area
- AK749 - Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - Davidson Mountains and Coleen River Area
- AK750 - Arctic National Wildlife Refuge - Brooks Range West Area
- AK783 - Aleutian Islands - Semisopotchnoi Island Area
- AK784 - Aleutian Islands - Amchitka Island Area
- AK785 - Aleutian Islands - Little Simkin, Khvostof, Segula and Davidof Islands Area
- AK786 - Aleutian Islands - Kiska Island Area
- AK787 - Aleutian Islands - Agattu Island Area
- AK788 - Aleutian Islands - Attu Island Area
- AK792 - North Ogilvie Mountains - Step Mountains Area
- AK635 - Southern Wood-Tikchik Area Update Project – Reimbursable Agreement with Alaska Department of Natural Resources
- AK625 – Totchaket Area, Alaska Backlog Projects Completed
- AK 692– Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve- Gustavus Area, Alaska
- Sitka National Park Report



NRCS soils staff met with Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy in June to discuss soil properties in the Nenana-Totchaket Agricultural Project area. The soil survey was updated this year.

SOIL SURVEY FY22

20,404,657 ACRES MAPPED

SNOW SURVEY FY22

Alaska's snow survey team successfully maintained 84 automated data collection sites and 162 manual data collection sites across the state. The team also installed two additional new sites this year—an automated Snow Telemetry (SNOTEL) site at Dahl Creek (near Kobuk) and a semi-automated SNOLITE site in Haines.



ALASKA'S FIELD SUPPORT



Cover crops in Delta Junction

NORTH TEAM SPOTLIGHT

The North Team geographic area covers Northern Alaska from the Bering Sea to the Canadian border and includes Field Offices in Fairbanks and Delta Junction. Conservation practices planned include 8 with practices Trails, High Tunnel, Nutrient Management, Cover Crop, and Residue Management. The Delta Junction Office hosted a Soil Health Workshop this summer and the Fairbanks Office Staff attended the National Indian Timber Symposium. Alaska NRCS recently hired a new District Conservationist for the North Team to fill a vacancy and plans to fully staff the Fairbanks and Delta Junction Offices. The North Team vision for this next year is to connect with partners and producers by hosting field days in Fairbanks, Delta Junction, and Tok.

SOUTHEAST TEAM SPOTLIGHT

NRCS supported forest and wildlife management throughout southeast Alaska by providing technical and program assistance to Alaska Native Corporations and collaborative partnerships. In addition to projects funded through EQIP and Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership, NRCS continued RCPP work with the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership and Keex Kwaan Community Forest Partnership to improve stream habitat for salmon, forest habitat for deer and bear, and support local workforce development with the assistance of local tribes and Alaska Native Corporate landowners. The Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy (SASS) provided additional opportunities that are typically outside of the scope of NRCS's typical Farm Bill Programs, supporting the Southeast Alaska Farmers Summit, the regional 4H program to help with early education about traditional and subsistence resources, and the Southeast Alaska Watershed Symposium.



NRCS has assisted with wildlife habitat and forest management as part of the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership since 2014. Pictured left to right are The Nature Conservancy's Forester Julia Nave, Sealaska's Lands Manager and Chief Executive Officer Michelle Metz and Anthony Mallott, The Nature Conservancy Southeast's Director Christine Woll, Sealaska's Natural Resources Department Manager Jason Gubatayo, NRCS Alaska's Kathy Dilley, Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Coordinator Ian Johnson, the Forest Service Hoonah District Ranger Michael Downs, and NRCS Alaska's Katie Russell.

(May 24, 2022)