

## **Vermont State Technical Committee Meeting**

November 2, 2022

Hosted hybrid: USDA Office, Colchester and virtually via Microsoft Teams

### **NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 18, 2023**

**Attending (Colchester):** Travis Thomason (NRCS), Obediah Racicot (NRCS), Wynea Buford (NRCS), Bob Thompson (NRCS), Angela Hyldborg (NRCS), Lorrie Doering (NRCS), Dave Adams (VTFWS), Tom Berry (Senator Leahy's Office), James McNerney (Congressman Welch's Office), Eileen Powers (FSA), Jeff Farber (VACD), Chris Smith (USFWS), Brenda Gail Bergman (The Nature Conservancy)

**Attending (MS Teams):** John Roberts (FSA), Sinorakhoun Bounmasananh (NRCS), Joe Buford (NRCS), Andrew Thomason (NRCS), Alli Lewis (VACCD), Alissa White (AFT), Dave Blogdett (NRCS), Craig Privett (UVLT), Sarah Damsell (NRCD-OR), Diana Butler (VRWA), Julia Grey (NRCS), Kira Jacobs (EPA), Jennifer Byrne (NRCD-WR), Jesse Marksohn (Yellowbud Farm), Britt Haselton (VLT), Emily Nummer (VACD), Kaitlyn Jones (DEC), Sarah Larose (NRCS), Katherine Macfarland (USDA AgroForestry), Maggie Payne (NRCS), Laura Pinover (VACD), Marli Rupe (DEC), Stacy Cibula (VHCB), Heather Wetzstein (NRCS), Marybeth Whitten (NRCS), Will Stevens (Sen. Sanders), Jill Arace (VACD), Natasha Duarte (CAV), Maddie Kempner (NOFAVT), Sarah Waring (RD), Laura Ranker (SOV), Nina Gage (VAWQP), Margaret Fowle (Audubon VT), Mark LaBarr (Audubon VT), Benjamin Dejong (DEC), Nikki Lennart (Intervale Center)

### ***Vermont USDA State Technical Committee Meeting***

November 2, 2022

9:30 am-11:30 am

USDA Office, Colchester, or MS Teams

Location: 356 Water Tower Hill, Colchester

MS Teams link: [Click her to join the meeting](#)

For phone only, call 202-650-0123, passcode 306045363#

### **Agenda**

9:30 AM	State Conservationist Intro and NRCS Update	<b>Travis Thomason</b> , NRCS State Conservationist
9:40 AM	Farm Service Agency Update	<b>John Roberts</b> , FSA State Executive Director <b>Eileen Powers</b> , FSA Agricultural Program Specialist
9:50 AM	Legislative Update	<b>Tom Berry</b> , Senator Leahy's Office <b>James McNerney</b> , Congressman Welch's Office <b>Will Stevens</b> , Senator Sanders' Office
10:00 AM	NRCS Financial Assistance Programs FY22 summary and FY23 look ahead	<b>Obediah Racicot</b> , NRCS Assistant State Conservationist
10:30 AM	State Resource Updates	<b>Joe Buford</b> , NRCS State Resource Conservationist
11:00 AM	Partner Updates	<b>Sarah Waring</b> , Rural Development <b>Kira Jacobs</b> , EPA <b>Marli Rupe</b> , DEC
11:25 AM	Wrap-up	<b>Travis Thomason</b> , NRC State Conservationist

### ***Opening - Obe Racicot:***

- We are operating in a hybrid environment: Colchester, MS Teams, and phone. This meeting is being recorded.

### **Welcome, Introductions and NRCS Updates:**

*Travis Thomason, State Conservationist, NRCS Vermont*

I am coming to this meeting with gratitude and appreciation to all. (Introductions) This work is all about relationships, so it's important that we continue to get to know each other.

### **NRCS Updates**

*Presentation attached*

#### **NRCS has moved up the FY23 deadlines for a few reasons:**

- There is a focus on Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) this year. Last year we didn't adopt CSP as much as we should have and that hindered to get additional Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding.
- NRCS need to be at an obligated level of 80% by June 30, 2023.

#### **Today is all about the MISSION and VISION, the "why" of what we do**

- Review of Mission & Vision
- Review of FY23 NRCS Agency Priorities and the Vermont NRCS Strategic Plan 2021-2026

#### **Review of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) with brief overview of NRCS provisions**

- Signed in law August 18, 2022
- NRCS received approximately \$20 billion to support conservation programs
- Practices will focus on emission reduction and climate mitigation
- Awaiting on more details, (early 2023) to find out what IRA will mean for Vermont
- The funds are for ten years (9/30/2031)
- Table and bar graph showing funds for programs for next four fiscal years.
- There are also funds for conservation technical assistance, support to quantify carbon sequestration and to cover administrative costs.
- We have tremendous opportunities ahead for us and it's the State Conservations job to make sure Vermont NRCS is ready. More specifics are to come regarding IRA.
- We want to make sure that we're measuring, monitoring, and verifying some of the great work that we're doing is contributing to some of the climate solutions that are out there.
- Review of focus areas: staffing capacity, streamline the work we are doing and make it easier for producers and staff, and it must be with strong partnerships.

#### **Creating an Irrigation STAC Subcommittee**

- Want to be sure that NRCS is investing in irrigation a smart way.
- The challenge is when there isn't a viable source of water and how we manage that in Vermont.
- There are partners here that can help NRCS make better decisions when it comes to irrigation.
- We are still investing in irrigation if you have irrigation history and source already, but we want to invest in the right way for those who do not have a viable source right now.
- Bob Thompson, State Conservation Engineer, will lead this subcommittee.

***Action:*** Please contact Bob Thompson ([bob.thompson@usda.gov](mailto:bob.thompson@usda.gov)) to express interest in serving on the Irrigation STAC Subcommittee.

## **Farm Service Updates:**

*John Roberts, State Executive Director, FSA Vermont*

### **Welcome and Overview**

- FSA and NRCS work in close partnership with each other.
- FSA's focus is mainly with making money available to farmers for land purchases, operating loans, disaster relief funding, price support mechanisms and certain conservation programs, like CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program).
- Within the last month USDA has released several billion dollars as part of IRA to bring farmers who have been delinquent in loans back into "good standing".
  - This action enables the farmers to access USDA programs.
  - This debt relief has positively impacted 40+ farmers in Vermont.
- Working to sign up dairy farmers for the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program.
  - The DMC program offers protection to dairy farmers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed price (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.
  - In Vermont there is an added benefit because the State Legislature has provided assistance to dairy farmers to cover the cost of the premium for the DMC insurance.
  - This will run through 2023 (first come, first serve bases) and FSA will work closely with VAAFM to ensure the farmers are able to recoup their premium cost. Farmers must pay the premium for DMC to FSA first, before they are eligible to receive reimbursement from VAAFM.
- FSA has numerous other programs, which cover a wide range of agricultural activities. A good way to learn about them is to visit our website, [www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Vermont/index](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Vermont/index).

## **FSA Programs:**

*Eileen Powers, Agricultural Program Specialist, FSA Vermont*

*Presentation attached*

FSA has access to IRA funds, but they are mostly for farm borrowers and not with programmatic activities. Review of FSA activities from this year:

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP/CREP)
- Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)
- Organic and Transitional Education Certification Program (OTECP)
  - Pandemic level program, covers some expenses that the OCCSP does not cover, notably education and the transition costs of getting too organic and those applications have been coming in well for our service centers
- Annual program administration and tasks – acreage reporting, Dairy Margin Coverage, ARC/PLC, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producer eligibility for FSA & NRCS customers
  - Acreage reporting - data is loaded onto a dashboard to pull up by crop, county, state, what is planted, etc., makes it easier to review data
  - Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) – keeps growing, partly a result of the pandemic program offerings
- Hoping to have an FSA State Committee in place before year's end

### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP/CREP):**

- Want to be sure everyone is aware of the waiver that Vermont has because of a provision in the 2018 Farm Bill and because Vermont has required agricultural practices for Vermonters to participate in the CRP and CREP programs, we must get permission from Washington, DC to

enroll our land. This is known as the waiver process.

- Vermont continues to be the only state in the country that's responsible for going through this process. A lot fewer projects going through than could be going through in a normal year.
- It's frustrating for everybody, including Vermont Land Trust, NRCS, our agency of Agriculture partners and certainly the producers that are trying to put their land into our CRP program.

**Comment:** *Tom Berry:* I would encourage the delegation members who will be working on the new Farm Bill to make note of this. Senator Leahy had a run at it in the last Farm Bill, but for reasons that would take a long time to explain, we didn't quite get there. Adrienne Wojciechowski is intimately familiar with this issue, having worked on it herself as a staff person.

**Question:** *Wynea Buford (NRCS)* - How many waiver requests are we waiting on?

**Answer:** *Eileen Powers (FSA)* - There are two requests in Washington DC. There's a third one ready to go. The response time has improved dramatically from Washington DC, from months to one week (recently) and I credit that to the Acting CREP Program manager in Washington DC.

**Comment:** *Jennifer Byrne (WRNRCD)* - I've spoken with John Roberts and other FSA folks before and wondering about the Conservation Districts within the CREPS program. We are asked to sign off on the conservation plan, but we're not really included in this process until that signature. I feel uncomfortable about signing off on a plan that I don't know about. In both cases that I've been asked so far, I have never even been to the site. I would like to flag this as an opportunity for improvements in this process. I'm pretty sure in other states districts are more involved in the planning process of CREP. And I would love to have that discussion about how we can really be a meaningful part of the process and help promote the program and get producers enrolled.

**Comment:** *Sarah Damsell (OCNRCD)* - Signing off on CRP plans happens in my office too and I agree with Jennifer.

*Action: Encourage future discussions on how the Conservation Districts can be more involved with CREP to promote the program and get producers enrolled, rather than just signing off on them.*

#### **By the Numbers:**

- Compiled by our national office:
  - How many acres in the program as of 9/30/2022
  - How many enrolled in the program last fiscal year (including new acres and re-enrolled acres)
  - Payments that have gone out for FY22

#### **New:**

- Mid Contact Management (MCM)
  - Travis and other stakeholders recommended that it was not necessary for new contracts after 9/20/2022 to perform MCM activity in a 15-year contract period, but that perhaps on re-enrollment.
- Revised cost share amounts (hopefully soon)

**Comment:** *Chris Smith (USFWS)* Regarding MCM - Can I second that Eileen? We appreciate that too, because the partner program was picking up a lot of the MCM when the landowners couldn't do it. We appreciate that flexibility.

#### **Working with NRCS:**

- CRP Grasslands - Expand enrollment and delivery (challenge - single sign-up, national ranking)
- Creating a state grassland priority zone (Franklin, and Orleans Counties), proposed to

Washington, DC

- Offered cross training sessions to NRCS & FSA staff, including Conservation Districts

**Working with VAAFM:**

- Great partnership
- Two VAAFM-CREP planners are critical to program enrollment and project maintenance

**Question:** Sarah Damsell (OCNRCD) *Do we have a sense on how Vermont landowners will compete nationally in the CRP grassland? Is it favorable or not?*

**Answer:** Eileen Powers (FSA) *Fair question. I do not have much of an answer.*

**Question:** Sarah Larose (NRCS) *What is the definition of grassland and does FSA make that determination?*

**Answer:** Eileen Powers (FSA) *I'll defer to Joe Buford with NRCS to cover this in his presentation of CRP grasslands.*

**Answer:** Joe Buford (NRCS, via the chat) *Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Grasslands Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers to help landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The grasslands CRP program is a working lands program that emphasizes support for grazing operations under the greatest threat of conversion.*

**Question/Concern:** Jennifer Byrne (WRNRCD) *A concern of mine for a while regarding CRP is an equity issue because this program does not have an application process. You have to have a relationship with the VAAFM-CREP planners to get a CRP application in. The application is highly technical, it cannot be completed without TA.*

**Question:** Sarah Damsell (OCNRCD) *How does NRCS fund portions of the VAAFM-CREP agreement?*

**Answer:** Wynea Buford (NRCS) *We can discuss the process for partnership agreements at the next District Manager meeting.*

**Comment:** Chris Smith (USFWS) *I think there is an application process for CREP.*

**Answer:** Eileen Powers (FSA) *There is an application process. Some outreach through GovDelivery. VAAFM-CREP does most of the outreach. We do due diligence for producers that visit the office, for NRCS working with producers. The application for CRP we partner with VAAFM is on a rolling, continuous process. There isn't an application that someone fills out, it's a producer expressing interest in the program.*

**Comment:** Chris Smith (USFWS) *I want to make sure that we all don't think that VAAFM-CREP are deciding who to talk to. A lot of CREP interest comes through NRCS or FSA.*

**Answer:** Eileen Powers (FSA) *VAAFM-CREP does target some farmers if they believe they are a good fit. The program is only for agricultural producers. Although it is FSA's program, very rarely in my time as a program technician did producers come in saying they have a resource concern. Producers came in asking about DMC payments. We do depend on NRCS and VAAFM-CREP promoting the program.*

**Comment:** Chris Smith (USFWS) *I think there is opportunity for NRCD, that we found there are capacity issues in many instances. Might be a good opportunity, Eileen, for a CRP subcommittee meeting. Lastly, when we start to talk climate, repairing buffers are going to be one of the rubber bands. The elasticity they have to help species move, to help our water resources as climate change, as we work on climate change, it's going to be critical. This is a program that basically has as much money to deliver it repairing and buffers and restore repairing and buffers as you can want. I really think that this is going to be critical as we talk about climate change and the initiatives this is going to be a critical program to do that.*

**Comment:** John Roberts (FSA) I think this is a very important program and as many of you know, I worked for the Agency of Agriculture as a Water Quality Specialist. VAAFMM often went to farms, who we as inspectors reported had serious water quality issues. I think one of the things that will become apparent (and I applaud the idea of having a subgroup to discuss this whole application process more), is if we really do advertise and have an open application process, we're going to have to multiply VAAFMM-CREP planners a few times over in order to get that done. It is a great program.. I just signed off the other day with Eileen on a proposal on a farm in the northern part of the state and a CRP program there is going to be a tremendous water quality benefit.

**Comment:** Sarah Damsell (OCNRCD) since Orleans is a priority, can I have someone share this info with our producers via the OCNRCD? With an understanding what land base would compete best and what would be worth the time to invest bringing a producer forward.

*Action: Create a subgroup to discuss the application process and capacity for CRP/CREP (FSA is the lead)*

## Legislative Updates

*Tom Berry (Senator Leahy's Office)*

- Thank you to USDA and FSA for rolling out the IRA debt relief program so quickly. Some Vermont producers shared that this is a life changing opportunity.
- Looking back, this Congress, between American Recover Act, Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act and now the IRA, has pushed more resources into domestic programs than any time since the New Deal.
- Congress/Administration/President Biden has been in full support of this. These are not one-year programs, but multiple year programs.
- Looking at the end of Congress and annual appropriations the Federal Gov't is on a Continuing Resolution (CR) through December 14, 2022. Hopefully there will be a plan before that date, but it could come down to late December to get a full budget in place.
- High priorities in the planned funding bill: Agriculture emergencies programs (serious drought, critical margin squeeze, feed prices, organic dairy).
- Leahy's office will not be involved with the 2023 Farm Bill.
- The IRA is front loading the 2023 Farm Bill (5-year spending).

*James McNerney (Congressman Welch's Office)*

- Not many updates, transition period coming soon, covering in the interim.
- Working to determine staffing as primary point person for upcoming Farm Bill issues.

*Will Stevens (Senator Sander's Office)*

- Unknown with the IRA numbers and how they will impact the Farm Bill.
- UEI issue (Unique Entity Identification number, which replaces the "DUNS" number system):
- **NOTE:** NRCS does not require a UEI for program participation anymore (i.e. EQIP/CSP do not require a producer to register with [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov))

## NRCS Financial Assistance Programs FY22 Summary and FY23 Look Ahead

*Obediah Racicot, ASTC Programs, NRCS Vermont*

### FY 2022 Summary

- \$15 million in total financial assistance obligations

- \$368,000 – RCPP LMR FB18 (8 contracts)
  1. Short Day Corn program RFRN land rental scenario – new flexibility under RCPP FB18  
*Sarah Damsell (ORNRCD):*
  2. Get the cover crop in earlier, producers seed down by Sep 21<sup>st</sup>
  3. UVM Extension to provide agronomic support
  4. Better residue cover through vulnerable months
  5. Ideally produces a healthier stand of forage in the spring because that tiller growth is more successful in the fall, then farmers can crop it as another feed source
  6. Hoping to track successes and report out to STAC and other local farmers
  7. Three-year contract
- \$31,000 - RCPP-EQIP FB14 (12 contracts)
- \$3,693,000 – ACEP (15 parcels enrolled)
- \$231,000 – AMA (14 contracts, primarily irrigation & high tunnels)
  1. In FY23 irrigation will be through EQIP
- \$420,000 – CSP (33 contracts)
  1. Increase over 2018, but still returned \$700,000 at end of year
  2. Focus area for improvement in FY23 and future years
- \$10,300,000 – EQIP (277 contracts)
  1. Review of details, see chart in presentation

### Getting Ready for FY 2023

- Review of meetings and subcommittees, including goals of each subcommittee and workgroup
- How the work roles into the Vermont Strategic Plan 2021-2026
- Other Program Deliver Goals:
  - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
  - Balanced Program Delivery for ALL programs
  - Early obligation targets – June 30, 2023 for most programs
- Sign-up dates **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**
  - CSP Classic – October 21, 2022 (possible 2<sup>nd</sup> sign-up)
  - EQIP, AMA & RCPP (FB14) – November 18, 2022
  - RCPP (FB18) – January 13, 2023
- State Priority Resource Concerns **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**
  - 2023 EQIP PRCs – Storage and Handling of Pollutants, Field Sediment Loss, Wind and Water Erosion, Concentrated Erosion, Soil Quality Limitations, Terrestrial Habitat, Aquatic Habitat, and Degraded Plant Condition
  - 2023 CSP PRCs –Field Sediment Loss, Concentrated Erosion, Soil Quality Limitations, Terrestrial Habitat, Aquatic Habitat, and Degraded Plant Condition, Pest Pressure, Livestock Limitation
- Other Considerations **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**
  - Prioritize application in 303(d) or TMDL watersheds
  - Prioritize direct discharge

### 2023 Ranking Pool and Spending Plan **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**

Initial 2023 Financial Assistance Allocations:

- AMA - \$132, 000
- CSP - \$1.5 million
- EQIP - \$9.54 million
- RCPP FB14 and RCPP FB18 available - \$7.8 million for LMR contracts



### **Other Relevant Information REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**

- Irrigation will be through EQIP and not AMA
- First year of Locally Led Funding Pools
  - Orleans County request of \$125,000 for invasive treatment
  - Orange/Windsor Counties request of \$30,000 towards local energy conservation initiative
  - Windham County request of \$125,000 for invasive treatment
- Community Scale and Urban Agriculture (new terms)
- Grazing will be funded through RCPP 2132 – VT DEC Water Quality BMPs II (instead of EQIP)
- 2023 EQIP-Conservation Incentives Contracts (CIC)
  - Postponed to better integrate with IRA, national hold

### **Elevated Payment Rates and SWP REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**

- 2018 Farm Bill allows for an enhanced payment rate on select EQIP Practices statewide
- Multiple Top 10 lists “Pr” and “Wp” – see slides
- Top 81 practice list in source water area – see slides
- Expanded Source Water Protection Areas – see map in presentation

**Comment:** Kira Jacobs, EPA Source Water Protection Coordinator – be sure to try not to focus on just rivers, think water supplies and wellhead protection areas

### **Easement Programs**

- Sign-up dates: **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**
  - ACEP-ALE – February 10, 2023
  - ACEP-WRE – February 10, 2023
  - RCPP US Held Easements – January 13, 2023 (Tentative)
- 2023 ALE Recommendations **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**
  - Increase the Impervious surface limitations to the max allowed by statute (to 10%)
  - No change to the current soils waiver criteria
  - Issue state-specific buy-protect-sell policy
- 2023 WRE Recommendations **REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**
  - Use USPAP appraisals for WRE valuation in 2023
  - Updated Wetland Restoration Criteria Guidelines: amend to change primary nesting season for birds, April 15 – August 1 (vs the nationally established deadlines)
  - Create HU-specific category to prioritize ranking of historically underserved landowners

### **State Resource Updates**

Joe Buford, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS Vermont

### **VT NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant's (CIG) Spotlight for FY22**

- VAAFM
  - Project Title: Linking Farm Phosphorus Reduction Planner (FarmPREP) to Agricultural Soil Health and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Modeling in Vermont
  - Awarded: \$487,000
- UVM
  - Project Title: Building Soil Health through Farmer Peer Network
  - Award Amount: \$263,000

### **FY23 NRCS Funding Priorities & Notice of Funding REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC**

- Conservation Innovation Grant's (CIG's) provide an opportunity for public and private partners to evaluate and accelerate resource protection.



- Notice of Funding out mid-November to December 2022
- Up to \$1 million for 1 or more awards
- [CIG website link](#) (Project, Award Year)

#### **Technical Service Provider (TSP)**

- Meeting held Monday, ~20 attendees, many non-forestry
- Encourage TSPs to update their profile
- [Website change for CPAs, DIAs and CEMAs](#) or [Field Office Technical Guide \(section 3\)](#)
- Forest Management Plan – allows for agroforestry practices to be planned within the CPA and not required to be a licensed forester
- USDA Agroforestry Strategic Framework: Alley cropping, Forest farming and Silvopasture, Riparian Forest buffers, Windbreaks

#### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – Grassland [REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY STAC](#)**

- Late August, directive was given for establishing a State Grassland CRP Priority Zone
- Limited to no more than 25 percent of the total acres of hay, pasture, and rangeland within the State
- Guidance included considering the following criteria:
  - Grazing lands subject to woody encroachment
  - Grazing lands of special significance
  - Tribal lands
  - Historically underserved communities
  - Areas where wildlife can be protected or enhanced
  - Proximity to protected public grassland or native prairie preserves
- Required to select entire county, not sections of a county only
- Selected Counties: Franklin, Orleans, (correction: Windham not selected)

**Comment:** *Eileen Powers (FSA Vermont)* Windham County not in the proposal as the total acreage would have exceeded the 25% allowed statewide, as written in the directive.

#### **Golden Winged Warbler – Working Lands For Wildlife (WLFW)**

- FY 2022 - VT NRCS was approved for the National WLFW Golden-winged Warbler
  - Kickoff year, \$100,000
- FY 2023 – Working with State Forester/Biologist and Forester
- Information geospatially loaded into Conservation Desktop and background of CART
- Project areas need to be in a deciduous, forested landscape

#### **National Water Quality Initiatives**

- Emphasizes “systems approach” that addresses priority concerns in selected watersheds
- Incorporate practices that address the concept of avoiding, controlling, or trapping pollutants (“ACT”)
- Practices that would benefit and support drinking water sources in VT priority watersheds
- Practices include protecting drinking water supplies from potential contaminants such as nitrates, pesticides, herbicides, sediments, petroleum products, bacteria, metals, and other chemicals.

#### **Watersheds**

- List of Watersheds selected
- NWQI: Coming towards end of implementation funding for Rock River, Hungerford Brook, East Creek
- Need to be looking at a readiness plan for FY23 other priority Watersheds in Vermont

## **Special Thanks** (list in slides)

### **Urban Ag Subcommittee**

- Committee to advise the State Conservationist
- Urban Ag / Community Scale Fund Pool

***Action:** If interested in joining the Urban Ag Subcommittee, send email to Lorrie Doering (lorrie.doering@usda.gov).*

### **Soils Subcommittee (Soil Health/SH)**

- Recommendation that there be a SH Fund Pool for FY23

***Action:** If interested in joining the SH Subcommittee, send email to Lorrie Doering (lorrie.doering@usda.gov).*

## **Partner Updates**

### **Rural Development (RD)**

*Sarah Waring, State Director for Vermont and New Hampshire*

- Meat and Poultry Processing Program
  - Press release soon on over \$1 million investment in VT livestock, slaughter, and processing in Ferrisburgh
  - Secretary will announce over \$200 million nationwide investment in meat and poultry processing
  - Increase outreach to other slaughterhouses and custom meat processing facilities and need help to make sure VT processors are eligible and have the technical assistance they need to get into the program and get the investments they need to expand
- Rural Energy for America Program
  - IRA puts millions of additional dollars into the program
  - Just closed the grant application for fall (likely another opening for the spring)
  - Over \$130 million a year for the next 10 years
  - Outreach to both Ag producers and rural small businesses
  - Uses are very broad, including anaerobic digesters, small hydroelectric wind, solar biomass, and also lighting, heating, cooling, ventilation fans, coolers, insulation, etc.
  - Focus to lower costs to producers by making investments now

### **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

*Kira Jacobs, Source Water Protection Coordinator*

- Partner group submitting a \$600,000 proposal to the Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Program for a 13-state regional project (NE) to build partnership on forest and water. Due next week, should know in March

### **Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)**

*Marli Rupe, Agricultural Water Quality Section Chief*

- RCPP – a lot happening
  - Hired RCPP Coordinator, Caitlin Jones
  - Contracted with VACD and Red Start Consulting to work as technical assistance providers, training next week
  - Handout to add to the minutes
  - Website update, with more data to come

**NRCS website**

- Recent update with a focus on producers
- If your links are “dead” contact Andrew Thomason, Acting Public Affairs Specialist (andrew.thomason@usda.gov)

**Wrap-up**

Future meetings there will be time for Q&A.

Notes and action items will be published including meeting dates for the coming year.

Hope to include a tour in the field with all the partnership for one of the meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 11:44 am

**Future meetings:**

January 18, 2023, 9:30-12:00 pm

April 19, 2023, 9:30-12:00 pm

June 21, 2023, 9:30-12:00 pm



United States Department of Agriculture



# NRCS Vermont

November 2022 – State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting  
Travis Thomason, State Conservationist

Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)



## *Mission*

*We deliver  
conservation solutions  
so  
agricultural producers can  
conserve natural resources  
and  
feed a growing world.*

## *Vision*

*Resilient lands  
with  
clean and abundant water,  
healthy soils,  
and  
thriving agricultural  
communities.*



# FY23 Agency Priorities



1. Ensure equity in the delivery and implementation of all NRCS programs and services.
2. Increase assistance for climate-smart agriculture and forestry to support producers in mitigating climate change and building resiliency across their operations.
3. Expand conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of urban farmers and communities nationwide.
4. Cultivate a complete and diverse workforce that has the right tools, technologies, and training to uphold the scientific integrity of NRCS.
5. Leverage innovative partnerships to expand NRCS's ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently.



Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)



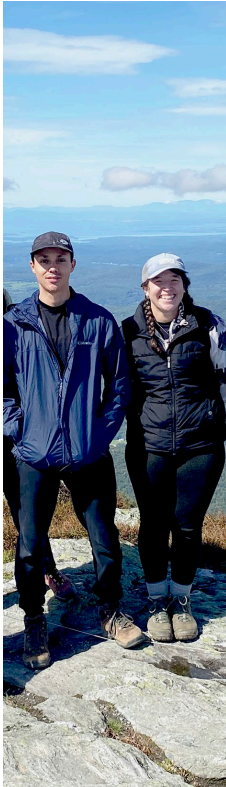
# VT Strategic Plan 2021 -2026

**Goal 1. Conservation** - Champion climate-smart conservation practices on private land resulting in improved soil health, enhanced water quality, and sustainable ecosystems.

**Goal 2. Customers** - Maximize conservation impacts by meeting customer needs and expanding the customer base.

**Goal 3. Employees** - Build, prepare, and retain an engaged workforce dedicated to conservation and customer service.

**Goal 4. Partners** - Strengthen coordination, collaboration, and communication with partners to achieve shared objectives.



Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)





# Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

## Brief Overview of NRCS Provisions

- Signed into law August 18, 2022
- Single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history
- Will help producers stay on the farm and increase access to conservation assistance.
- Promotes climate-smart agriculture and forestry
- Protects communities from climate impacts
- Provides approximately \$20 billion to support conservation programs that yield climate-related benefits

# IRA Charge to all NRCS Staff

- Charge –
  - Seamlessly expand opportunities for producers, including underserved producers, to participate in our core conservation programs: EQIP, CSP, RCPP, and ACEP
  - Disburse and track IRA funds with scientific integrity and accountability

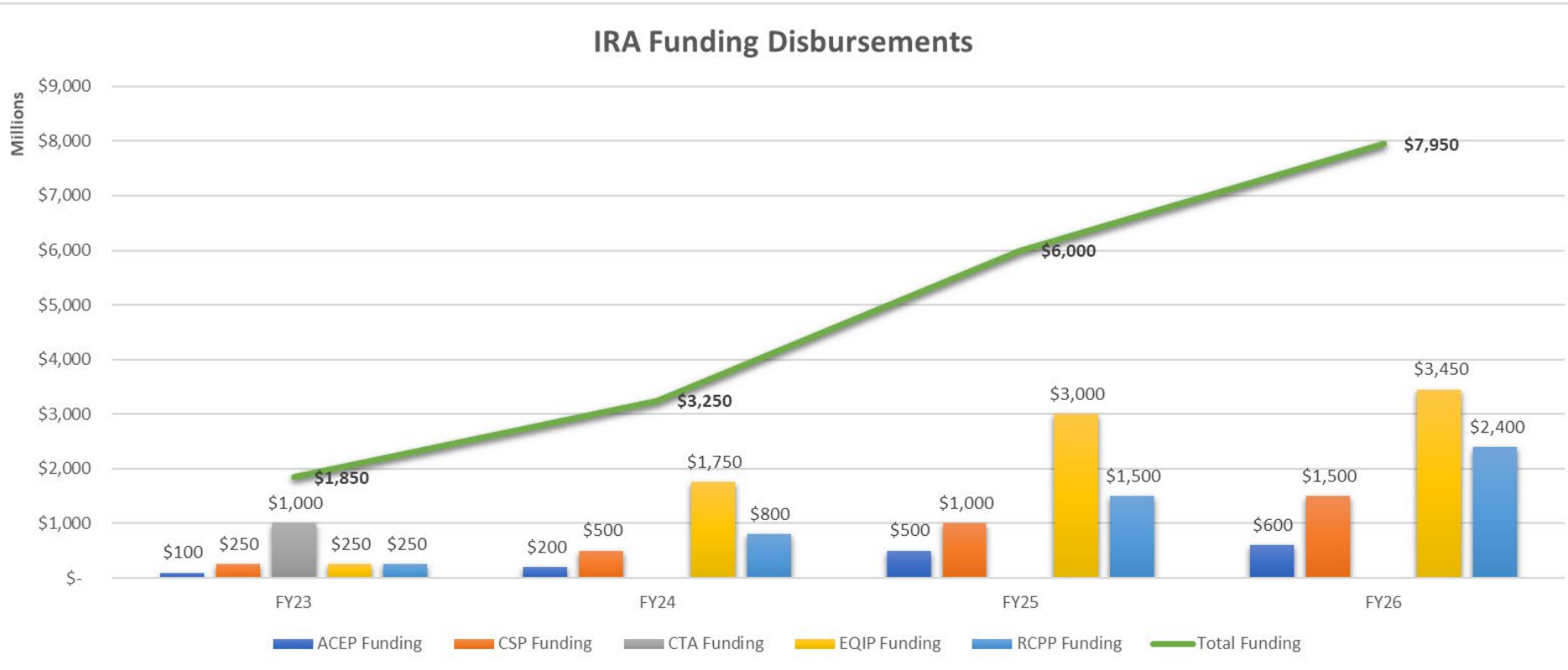
# What makes IRA different

- Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Focus
  - Practices need to focus on emission reduction
  - Climate mitigation
- Funds expiration
  - IRA agreements cannot be for a term beyond September 30, 2031.
  - Additionally, the funds have an expiration date of September 30, 2031, and ***MUST BE EXPENDED*** by that date.

# IRA Funding

	Fiscal Year (dollars in millions)					
Program	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Notes
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	-	250	1,750	3,000	3,450	
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	-	250	500	1,000	1,500	
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	-	250	800	1,500	2,400	
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	-	100	200	500	600	
Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA);	1,000					Available until September 30, 2031
Quantify Carbon Sequestration Program (\$300)	300					Available until September 30, 2031
Administrative Costs for this section	100					Remain available until September 30, 2028,

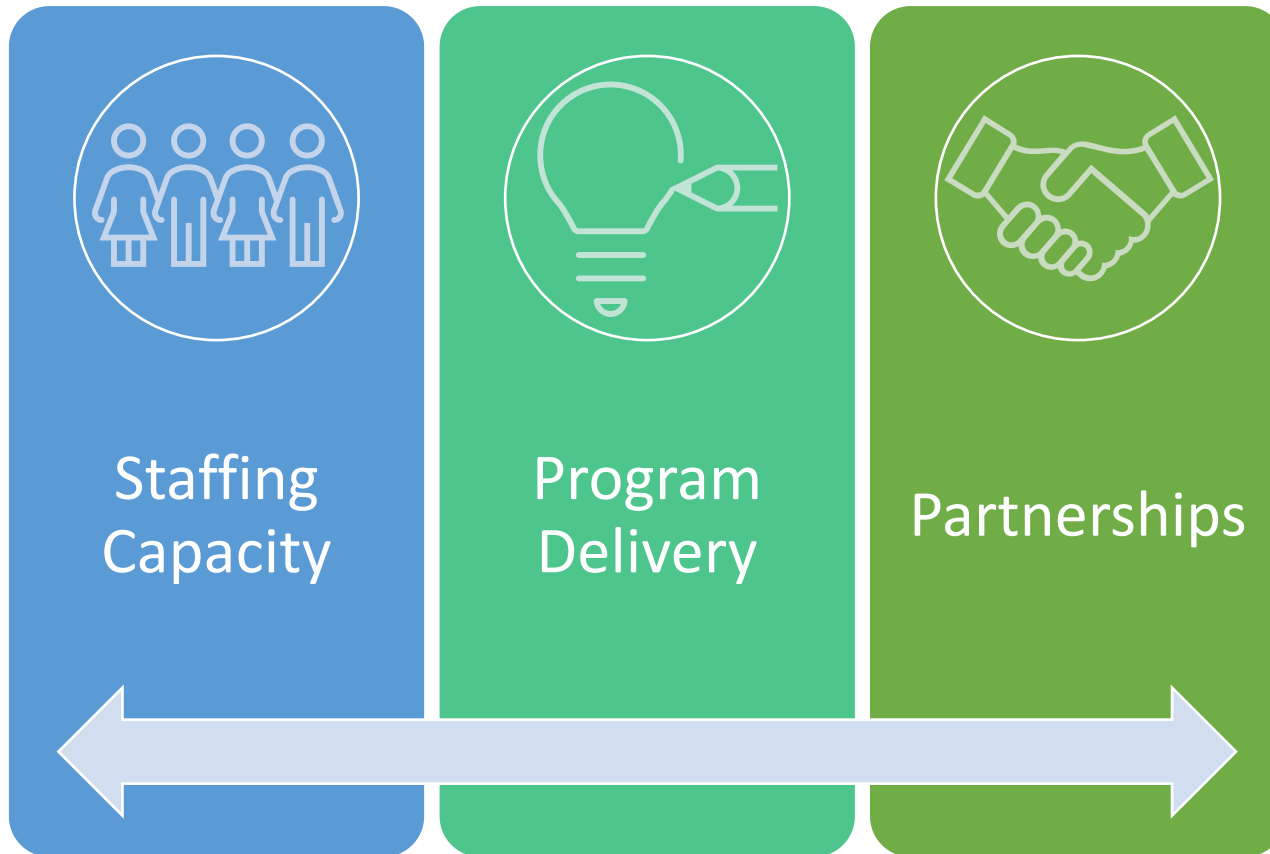
# IRA Funding Disbursements



\*CTA Funds Not Given Disbursement Schedule—Assume FY23 Full Amount

\*Funds Expire  
Sept 30, 2031

# Major Focus Areas for Success



# Irrigation STAC Subcommittee

- Make recommendations on how NRCS invests in irrigation through financial assistance programs
- Address water source challenges
- Convene in January 2023
- Email Bob Thompson with interest
  - [Bob.Thompson@usda.gov](mailto:Bob.Thompson@usda.gov)





United States Department of Agriculture



# NRCS Vermont

November 2022 – State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting  
Travis Thomason, State Conservationist

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[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)



# FSA UPDATE

To the Vermont State Technical Committee  
November 02, 2022



## ACTIVITY

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP/CREP)
- Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)
- Organic and Transitional Education Certification Program (OTECF)
- Annual program administration and tasks – acreage reporting, Dairy Margin Coverage, ARC/PLC, Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), producer eligibility for FSA & NRCS customers
- Hoping to have an FSA State Committee in place before year's end



## CRP/CREP

### WAIVER STILL NECESSARY

Vermont continues to be the only state in the country subject to program ineligibility based on the existence of state agricultural rules (RAPs). But a new Farm Bill is in the works ... and ... ???

### MEAGER GAINS, BUT GAINS!

Waivers are being processed more quickly, none (so far) having been disapproved.

### BY THE NUMBERS ...

Acres under contract as of 9/30/2022	2,089.3 acres
Total Acres Enrolled during FY2022	122.5 acres
NEW Acres Enrolled during FY2022	32.5 acres
RE-ENROLLED Acres Enrolled During FY2022	90.0 acres
Annual Rental Payments	\$234,547
PIP Payments	\$77,195
SIP Payments	\$3,253
Cost Share Payments	\$167,855

### WHAT'S NEW

New contracts enrolled after 9/20/2022 will not have to perform Mid Contract Management activity per NRCS recommendation. Re-enrollments may be subject to MCM.

Cost share amounts are being revised





## WORKING WITH NRCS

### EXPANDING CRP

Hoping to enroll acreage under the CRP Grasslands signup to increase conservation efforts in line with national and statewide goals

### TRAINING

Several cross training sessions between FSA and NRCS so far this year

General CRP training offered to NRCS and FSA staff included colleagues from Conservation Districts



## WORKING WITH VAAFM

### VITAL OUTREACH

VAAFM CREP planners are critical to program enrollment and project maintenance

### SUBMISSIONS TO FSA NATIONAL OFFICE

Alternate Soil Rental Rate proposal to combat falling SRRs proposed using deficient NASS data

Compilation and submission of state data for inclusion in the Annual CREP Report to Congress





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

November 2, 2022

VT State Technical Committee



# NRCS Programs Update



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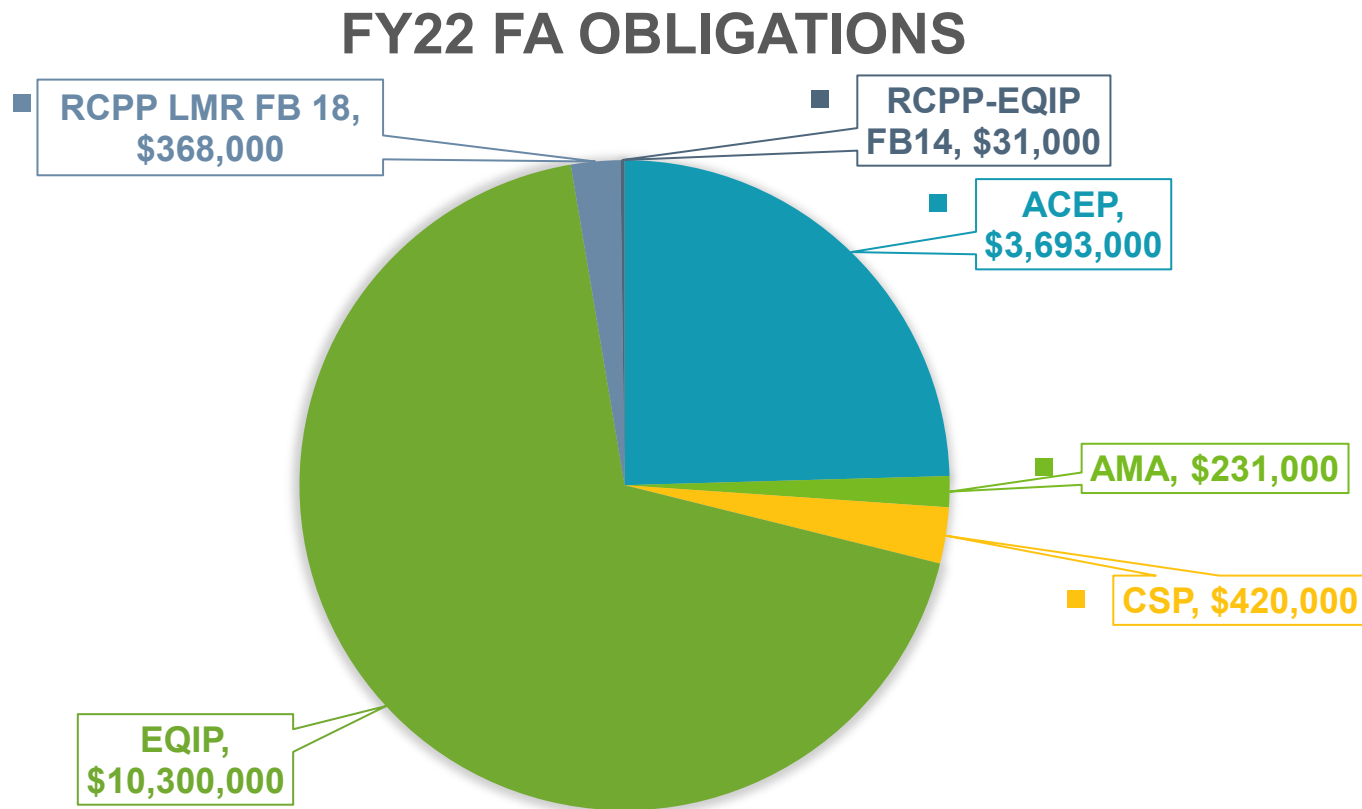
[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)



# FY 2022



- \$15,000,000 in total financial assistance obligations



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[www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov)

# FY 2022 Summary – ACEP (easements)

USDA/NRCS Vermont Final Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Assistance Obligations - Calculated 9.15.2022						
Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	FY2022 Proposed Allocated*	FY 2022 Actual Obligated*	FY 2022 Contract Count	Total Obligations by Program
ACEP	2022_VT_ACEP_WRE_General	Statewide	\$ 554,000.00	\$ 519,000.00	1	\$ 3,693,000.00
	2022_VT_ACEP_ALE_General	Statewide	\$ 3,400,000.00	\$ 3,055,000.00	14	

- **\$3.7 million**
- **15 parcels enrolled**

# FY 2022 Summary – AMA



## USDA/NRCS Vermont Final Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Assistance Obligations - Calculated 9.15.2022

Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	FY2022 Proposed Allocated*	FY 2022 Actual Obligated*	FY 2022 Contract Count	Total Obligations by Program
AMA	2022_VT_AMA_General	All categories	\$ 129,000.00	\$ 121,000.00	5	\$ 231,000.00
	2022_VT_AMA_RMA	All categories	\$ 151,000.00	\$ 110,000.00	9	

- **\$231,000 obligated**
- **14 contracts**
- **Primarily irrigation and high tunnels**

# FY 2022 Summary – CSP



## USDA/NRCS Vermont Final Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Assistance Obligations - Calculated 9.15.2022

Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	FY2022 Proposed Allocated*	FY 2022 Actual Obligated*	FY 2022 Contract Count	Total Obligations by Program
CSP - Renewals (2022)	All CSP Renewals (all)	All categories	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 146,000.00	13	\$ 420,000.00
CSP-Classic	All CSP Classic (all)	All categories	\$ 1,080,000.00	\$ 274,000.00	20	

- **\$420,000**
- **33 contracts**
- **Of note: returned \$700,000 in CSP at the end of the year**



# FY 2022 Summary – EQIP

## USDA/NRCS Vermont Final Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Assistance Obligations - Calculated 9.15.2022

Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	FY2022 Proposed Allocated*	FY 2022 Actual Obligated*	FY 2022 Contract Count	Total Obligations by Program
EQIP	Conservation Innovation Grants	Statewide	\$ 550,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	2	\$ 10,300,000.00
	2022_VT_EQIP_CIC	All categories	\$ 477,000.00	\$ -	0	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Emergency_Disaster	Disaster Area	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -	0	
	2022_VT_EQIP_General_Statewide	Farmstead	\$ 3,700,000.00	\$ 4,132,000.00	12	
		Cropland	\$ 1,200,000.00	\$ 1,053,000.00	31	
		Grazing	\$ 400,000.00	\$ 965,000.00	24	
	2022_VT_EQIP_NWQI	Implementation	\$ 721,000.00	\$ 598,000.00	4	
		Source Water	\$ 518,000.00	\$ 67,000.00	1	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Forestry_Wildlife	Statewide	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,112,000.00	57	
	2022_VT_EQIP_CPA_DIA_CEMA	Forest	\$ 340,000.00	\$ 179,000.00	59	
		All Other			1	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Specialty_Crop	All categories	\$ 125,000.00	\$ 615,000.00	41	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Beginning_Farmer	Statewide	\$ 477,000.00	\$ 502,000.00	28	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Socially_Disadvantaged	Statewide	\$ 477,000.00	\$ 199,000.00	10	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Organic	Statewide	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	6	
	2022_VT_EQIP_On-Farm_Energy	Statewide	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 28,000.00	1	
	2022_VT_EQIP_WLFW_GWW	Project Area	\$ 110,000.00	\$ -	0	

- \$10.3 million
- 277 contracts

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# FY 2022 Summary – RCPP

USDA/NRCS Vermont Final Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Assistance Obligations - Calculated 9.15.2022						
Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	FY2022 Proposed Allocated*	FY 2022 Actual Obligated*	FY 2022 Contract Count	Total Obligations by Program
RCPP-EQIP - 2014 Farm Bill	RCPP_Cold_Hollow_Woodlots_Program (1548)	Project Area	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 31,000.00	12	\$ 31,000.00
	RCPP_Connecting_the_Connecticut_River_Watershed (1710)	Project Area	\$ 463,663.00	\$ -	0	
	RCPP_VACD_Nutrient_Management_II (1696)	Project Area	\$ 233,334.00	\$ -	0	
RCPP Producer Contracts - 2018 Farm Bill	Accelerated Implementation....Water Quality BMPs (2132)	LMR Producer	\$ 1,650,000.00	\$ -	0	\$ 368,000.00
	Lake Memphremagog Water Quality Partnership (2280)	LMR Producer	\$ 345,000.00	\$ 331,000.00	7	
	Regenerative Agriculture for Western New England (2311)	LMR Producer	\$ 432,338.00	\$ -	0	
	Vermont Stream Restoration and Protection (2517)	LMR Producer	\$ 1,053,640.00	\$ -	0	
	Northern Tier Stream Restoration (1865)	LMR Producer	\$ 194,200.00	\$ 37,000.00	1	
RCPP Easements - 2018 Farm Bill	US Held Easements - Accelerated...Water Quality BMPs (2132)	Restriction Low/Med/High	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ -	0	\$ -
	Entity Held Easements - Accelerated...Water Quality BMPs (2132)	Restriction Low/Med/High	\$ 2,250,000.00	\$ -	0	
	US Held Easements - Northern Tier Stream Restoration (1865)	Restriction Med	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	0	

- RCPP 2018 Farm Bill was still not fully rolled out

# Getting Ready for FY 2023



**June 3 – Locally Led Proposals**

**June 7 – Soils Subcommittee/Urban Agriculture**

**June 13 – Forestry and Wildlife**

**June 21 – NRCS Field Office level feedback**

**July 7 – NRCS SME workgroup**

**July 8 – Working Lands subcommittee (EQIP/CSP)**

**July 21– ALE subcommittee**

**July 25 – WRE subcommittee**

**August 4 – NRCS ACT NOW workgroup**

**August 8 – RCPP Partner Coordination Meeting**

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# Getting Ready for FY 2023



## Goals of each subcommittee and workgroup:

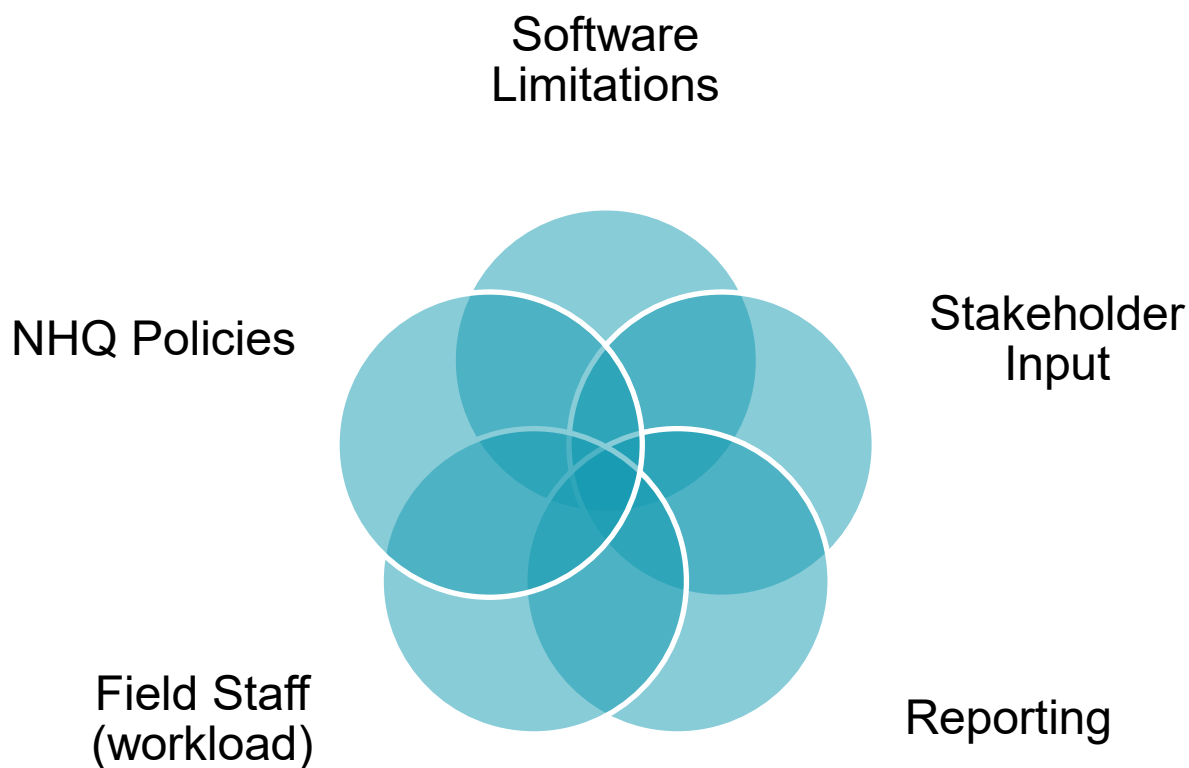
- 1) Identify State priority resource concerns
- 2) Identify State priority conservation practices
- 3) Identify State priority geographic areas
- 4) Identify other State priorities
- 5) Recommend Statewide ranking pools
- 6) Provide input into the State spending plan
- 7) Recommend screening/prioritization to manage workload
- 8) Advise on coordination of technical assistance
- 9) Document input on delivering financial assistance to best provide equity to all customer

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# Getting Ready for FY 2023

## Multiple Factors to Balance



# Getting Ready for FY 2023



## VT Strategic Plan 2020 -2025

**Goal 1. Conservation** - Champion climate-smart conservation practices on private land resulting in improved soil health, enhanced water quality, and sustainable ecosystems.

**Goal 2. Customers** - Maximize conservation impacts by meeting customer needs and expanding the customer base.

**Goal 3. Employees** - Build, prepare, and retain an engaged workforce dedicated to conservation and customer service.

**Goal 4. Partners** - Strengthen coordination, collaboration, and communication with partners to achieve shared objectives.

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# FY 2023 Program Delivery Goals

- 1) **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility**
- 2) **Balanced Program Delivery for ALL programs**
- 3) **Early obligation targets – June 30, 2023 for most programs**





# Working Lands Programs

# Sign-up Dates Up-Front

## **CSP Classic - One sign-up**

- **October 21, 2022**
- **Possible sign-up 2**

## **EQIP, AMA & RCPP (2014) – One sign-up**

- **November 18, 2022**

## **RCPP (2018) – One sign-up**

- **January 13, 2023**



# State Priority Resource Concerns

**Establish 2023 EQIP State Priority Resource Concerns as follows:**

Resource Concern Category	Description
Storage and Handling of Pollutants	Water Quality
Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pesticide Loss	Water Quality
Wind and Water Erosion	Soil Quality/Soil Health/Water Quality
Concentrated Erosion	Soil Quality/Soil Health/Water Quality
Soil Quality Limitations	Soil Quality Limitations
Terrestrial Habitat	Forestry and Wildlife
Aquatic Habitat	Forestry and Wildlife
Degraded Plant Condition	Forestry and Wildlife

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# State Priority Resource Concerns

**Establish 2023 CSP State Priority Resource Concerns as follows:**

Agricultural Land Ranking Pools	Non-Industrial Private Forestland Ranking Pools
Degraded Plant Condition	Degraded Plant Condition
Pest Pressure	Fire Management
Livestock Production Limitation	Pest Pressure
Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pesticide Loss	Aquatic Habitat
Soil Quality Limitations	Soil Quality Limitations
Terrestrial Habitat	Terrestrial Habitat
Concentrated Erosion	Concentrated Erosion
Wind and Water Erosion	Wind and Water Erosion





# Other Considerations



Priority Geographic Areas for FA resources as follows:

- 1) Do not establish any specific priority watersheds for FA resources other than NWQI and Source Water Protection
- 2) Do prioritize applications within a 303(d) and TMDL watershed
  - 1) Suggest how to tease out areas that are primarily impaired by agriculture vs impaired by non-agricultural sources
- 3) Prioritize applications that meet the definition of discharge (formerly significant contributor)
- 4) Re-weight applications where the application will solely bring operation into / maintain compliance with State Environmental laws
  - 1) Enforcement may require resources that are beyond participant means
  - 2) Often prefers large farms

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# 2023 Ranking Pool and Spending Plan

## Initial 2023 Financial Assistance Allocations:

- AMA - \$132,000
- CSP - \$1.5 million
- EQIP - \$9.54 million
  - Less EQIP than subcommittees used as the planning number
  - Changes to recommendations
- RCPP14 and RCPP 18 available - \$7.8 million for LMR contracts

# 2023 Ranking Pool and Spending Plan

FY 2023 Financial Assistance Ranking Pools and Spending Plan v1

Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	ProTracts/CDA Sign-up	Ranking Date (NHQ title) AKA: Application Deadline/Sign-Up Deadline/Request for Assistance	CART Assessment and Ranking Deadline	Field Office Approval Deadline (DC moves application to "Approve")	Deadline for Submission to State Office Obligation Log or Internal Controls	Final Obligation Target Date (100% obligation)	FY2023 Allocation Based on 2023 Allocation Letter
EQIP	Conservation Innovation Grants	Statewide			Reserved				\$475,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Emergency_Disaster	Disaster Area			Reserved				\$81,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_ACT_NOW	Project Area			Reserved				\$0
	2023_VT_EQIP_CIC_Cropland	Statewide			Reserved				\$475,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_CIC_Pasture	Statewide							
	2023_VT_EQIP_Orleans_Local_Pool	Invasives							\$125,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Orange_Windsor_Local_Pool	Energy Conservation							\$30,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Windham_Local_Pool	Invasives							\$125,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_General_Statewide	Livestock Partnership (vice Farmstead)							\$3,000,000
		Cropland							\$1,225,000
		Grazing and Pasture							\$0
	2023_VT_EQIP_Source_Water	Source Water - Black Creek/Hardwick Lake Dam-Lamoille River/Headwaters Brown River/Headwaters Passumpsic River/Jail Branch/Lords Creek/New Haven River/Sodom Pond Brook-Winooski River/South Stream Walloomsac River/Stony Brook-Black River/Vernon Dam/Connecticut River							\$500,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Forest_Upland_Habitat	Statewide	1	11/18/2022	3/17/2023	5/12/2023	6/10/2023	6/30/2023	\$1,300,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_CPA_DIA_CEMA	Forest CPAs - DIAs - CEMAs All Other							\$260,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Community_Scale_Urban_Agriculture (vice specialty crop and HT)	Statewide							\$1,000,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Beginning_Farmer	Statewide							\$300,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Socially_Disadvantaged	Statewide							\$175,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_Organic	Organic - Practices Organic - CPA_DIA_CEMA							\$75,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_On-Farm_Energy	Statewide							\$20,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_NWQI	Implementation - Rock River/East Creek/Hungerford Brook							\$300,000
	2023_VT_EQIP_WLFW_GWW	Project Area							\$100,000

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# Other Relevant Information

- In FY 2023 all irrigation will be through EQIP and not AMA
  - Be on the lookout for an “Irrigation Subcommittee” this summer
- First year of Locally Led Funding Pools
- Community Scale and Urban Agriculture
- Grazing will be funded through RCPP 2132 – VT DEC Water Quality BMPs II
- 2023 EQIP-Conservation Incentives Contracts
  - Roll-out has been postponed to better integrate with the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
  - More to come in the future on EQIP-CIC



# Elevated Payment Rates

## Elevated Payment Rates (Top-10) – Pr prefix

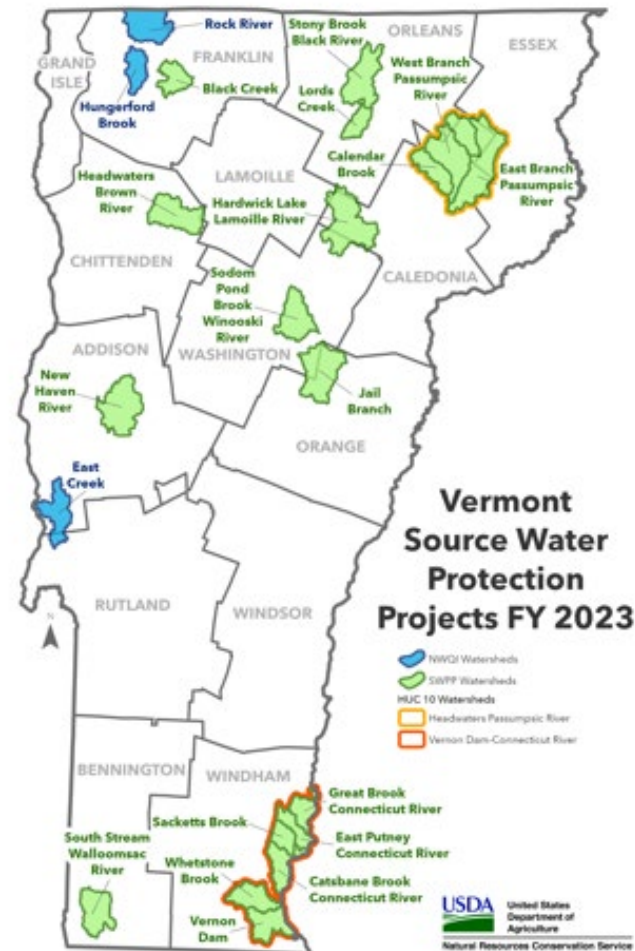
- The 2018 Farm Bill allows for an enhanced payment rate on select EQIP Practices Statewide:

Code	Name	HU_	Wp_	Pr_
313	Waste Storage Facility	YES	YES	YES
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	YES	YES	YES
340	Cover Crop	YES	YES	YES
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	YES	YES	YES
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	YES	YES	YES
393	Filter Strip	YES	YES	YES
512	Pasture and Hay Planting	YES	YES	YES
590	Nutrient Management	YES	YES	YES
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	YES	YES	YES
634	Waste Transfer	YES	YES	YES

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# Expanded Source Water Protection Areas

**East Branch Passumpsic River, West Branch Passumpsic River, Calendar Brook, Stony Brook Black River, Hardwich Lake Dam Lamoille River, Lords Creek, Black Creek, New Haven River, Sodom Pond Brook Winooski River, Headwaters Brown River, South Stream Walloomsac River, Jail Branch, Great Brook Connecticut River, East Putney Connecticut River, Catsbane Brook Connecticut River, Whetstone Brook, and Vernon Dam.**



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# NWQI Enhanced Payment Rates

## Elevated Payment Rates (Top-10) – Wp prefixes

- Expanded the list of elevated payment rate for NWQI practices to 89 – Avoid Control Trap (ACT)

Attachment A - SB\_VT\_440-23-01 - EQIP Practices Eligible for an Enhanced Payment Rates

Code	Name	HU	Wp	Pr
207	Site Assessment and Soil Testing for Contaminants Activity	YES	YES	NO
216	Soil Health Testing	YES	YES	NO
217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	YES	YES	NO
224	Aquifer Flow Test	YES	YES	NO
309	Agrichemical Handling Facility	YES	YES	NO
311	Alley Cropping	YES	YES	NO
313	Waste Storage Facility	YES	YES	YES
314	Brush Management	YES	YES	NO
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	YES	YES	NO
316	Animal Mortality Facility	YES	YES	NO
317	Composting Facility	YES	YES	NO
319	On-Farm Secondary Containment Facility	YES	YES	NO
327	Conservation Cover	YES	YES	NO
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	YES	YES	NO
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	YES	YES	YES
330	Contour Farming	YES	YES	NO
332	Contour Buffer Strips	YES	YES	NO
333	Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum Products	YES	YES	NO
338	Prescribed Burning	YES	YES	NO
340	Cover Crop	YES	YES	YES
342	Critical Area Planting	YES	YES	NO
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	YES	YES	YES
350	Sediment Basin	YES	YES	NO
351	Well Decommissioning	YES	YES	NO
353	Monitoring Well	YES	YES	NO
355	Groundwater Testing	YES	YES	NO

# RCPP – 2014 FB and 2018 FB

FY 2023 Financial Assistance Ranking Pools and Spending Plan v1

CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	ProTracts/CDAAs Sign-up	Ranking Date (NHQ title) AKA: Application Deadline/Sign-Up Deadline/Request for Assistance	CART Assessment and Ranking Deadline	Field Office Approval Deadline (DC moves application to "Approve")	Deadline for Submission to State Office Obligation Log or Internal Controls	Final Obligation Target Date (100% obligation)	FY2023 Allocation Based on 2023 Allocation Letter		FY 2023 Allocation %						
RCPP_Connecting_the_Connecticut_River_Watershed (1710)	Project Area	1	11/18/2022	3/17/2023	5/12/2023	6/10/2023	6/30/2023	\$463,663								
RCPP_VACD_Nutrient_Management_II (1696)	Project Area							\$233,334								
2132_LMR_Producer_FY23 - (DEC Water Quality II)	LMR Producer - Agronomic	1	1/13/2023	4/21/2023	6/9/2023	7/14/2023	8/11/2023	\$3,675,000	\$3,400,000							
	LMR Producer - Forest Erosion															
2132_Easement_Restoration_FY23	Easement Restoration							Reserved			\$275,000					
2280_LMR_Producer_FY23 - (Lake Memphremagog Water Quality Partnership)	LMR Producer							1/13/2023			4/21/2023	6/9/2023	7/14/2023	8/11/2023	\$264,265	
2311_LMR_Producer_FY23 - (Regenerative Agriculture for Western New England)	LMR Producer							1/13/2023			4/21/2023	6/9/2023	7/14/2023	8/11/2023	\$1,812,819	
2517_LMR_Producer_FY23 - (Vermont Stream Restoration and Protection)	LMR Producer							1/13/2023			4/21/2023	6/9/2023	7/14/2023	8/11/2023	\$1,053,640	
1865_LMR_Producer_FY23 - (Northern Tier Stream Restoration)	LMR Producer							1/13/2023			4/21/2023	6/9/2023	7/14/2023	8/11/2023	\$330,646	

- **RCPP14 and RCPP 18 available - \$7.8 million for LMR contracts**
- **RCPP projects in the implementation phase:**
  - **1710 Connecting the Connecticut**
  - **VACD Nutrient Management – “Soil Health”**

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# RCPP – 2014 FB and 2018 FB

- **1696 - VACD Nutrient Management**
  - **Serves as the Statewide Soil Health Funding Pool**
- **2132 - DEC Water Quality BMPs II – Statewide with primary focus on agronomic practices and forestry erosion practices**
  - **Offers enhanced payments rates specifically for this project**
  - **Offers land rental arrangements for cover crop and nutrient management**
  - **Serves as the Statewide grazing funding pool**
  - **“Bundled applications” – applicants are encouraged to apply through the Lead partner, SA recipient, or other contributing partner**

# Sign-up Dates (Again)



## **CSP Classic - One sign-up**

- **October 21, 2022**
- **Possible sign-up 2**

## **EQIP, AMA & RCPP (2014) – One sign-up**

- **November 18, 2022**

## **RCPP (2018) – One sign-up**

- **January 13, 2023**





# Easement Programs

# Sign-up Dates Up-Front

## ACEP-ALE

- February 10, 2023

## ACEP-WRE

- February 10, 2023

## RCPP US Held Easements

- January 13, 2023 (Tentative)





# 2023 ALE Recommendations

- **Increase the Impervious surface limitations to the maximum allowed by Statute**
  - Currently set at 7%, increase to 10%
- **No change to the current soils waiver criteria**
  - 50% Prime and/or Statewide soils in the Lake Champlain Basin and Connecticut River
  - 35% Prime and/or Statewide soils in all other parts of the State
- **Issue State-specific buy-protect-sell policy**
  - Three state-specific criteria for ACEP-ALE buy-protect-sell projects to demonstrate need for transitional ownership

# 2023 ALE Recommendations

- State-specific buy protect sell policy

State Criterion	Example	Supporting Information* *To be provided by the BPS eligible entity
Financial barriers to acquisition	Current landowner no longer wishes to hold the property and eligible entity has identified a lessee who would assume ownership but lacks capital to do so.	Proposed landowner identified at time of application
Exigent situations	Existing landowner faces time pressures to sell a property with no clear transition plan to maintaining agricultural production.	Documentation of death, bankruptcy, or other unanticipated change in management structure.
Land use changes	Opportunity for bringing an underutilized property back into agricultural production OR transitioning to a less intensive use.	Deed language for agricultural use

**Note: Approved State-specific buy-protect-sell policy may also pertain to RCPP entity-held easements, as applicable**

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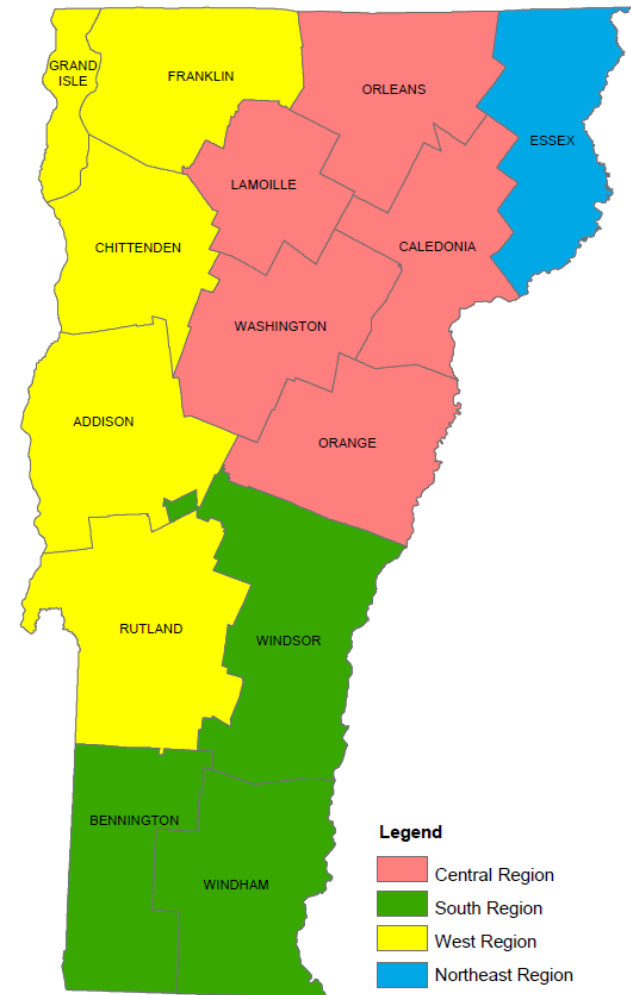
# WRE Recommendations

## 2023 Valuation methodology

Region	All acreage ranges and land use categories	Appraisal GARC percentage	Not-to-exceed rate/acre*
Central	<i>Appraisal only</i>	90%	\$5,000
South	<i>Appraisal only</i>	95%	\$5,000
West	<i>Appraisal only</i>	95%	\$5,000
Northeast	<i>Appraisal only</i>	95%	\$5,000

\* Offered amount will be the lowest of: appraised GARC value or landowner offer.

- **USPAP appraisals only in FY23 with GARC percentage caps from FY22 geographic areas and not to exceed rate of \$5,000/acre**



### Legend

- Central Region
- South Region
- West Region
- Northeast Region

# WRE Recommendations – continued

- **Wetland Restoration Criteria Guidelines update**
  - **Amend the WRCG to change the Primary Nesting Season for birds to April 15 - August 1 vs the Nationally established deadlines**
- **Historically Underserved producers**
  - **Create HU-specific category to prioritize ranking of historically underserved landowners**



# RCPP US Held Easements



- **2132 – DEC Water Quality BMPs II**
  - **Working on a set of deeds for moderate restriction level US Held Easements (75% easements)**
  - **Easements under this project will meet the stated conservation values of:**

## **Witnesseth:**

Purposes and Intent. The purpose of this easement is to further the restoration, protection, management, maintenance, enhancement, and monitoring of the conservation value of the Easement Area described below in Part I consistent with the conservation benefits of a Regional Conservation Partnership Program project on the Easement Area (the “Conservation Values”). The Conservation Values specifically include:    
maximizing the functional values of forests, wetlands, riparian areas, and other lands for the enhancement and protection of water quality; providing for the reduction of nutrients and sediments from entering into lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and other waterbodies; and to support sustainable and healthy ecosystems.

# Sign-up Dates (Again)



## ACEP-ALE

- February 10, 2023

## ACEP-WRE

- February 10, 2023

## RCPP US Held Easements

- January 13, 2023 (Tentative)



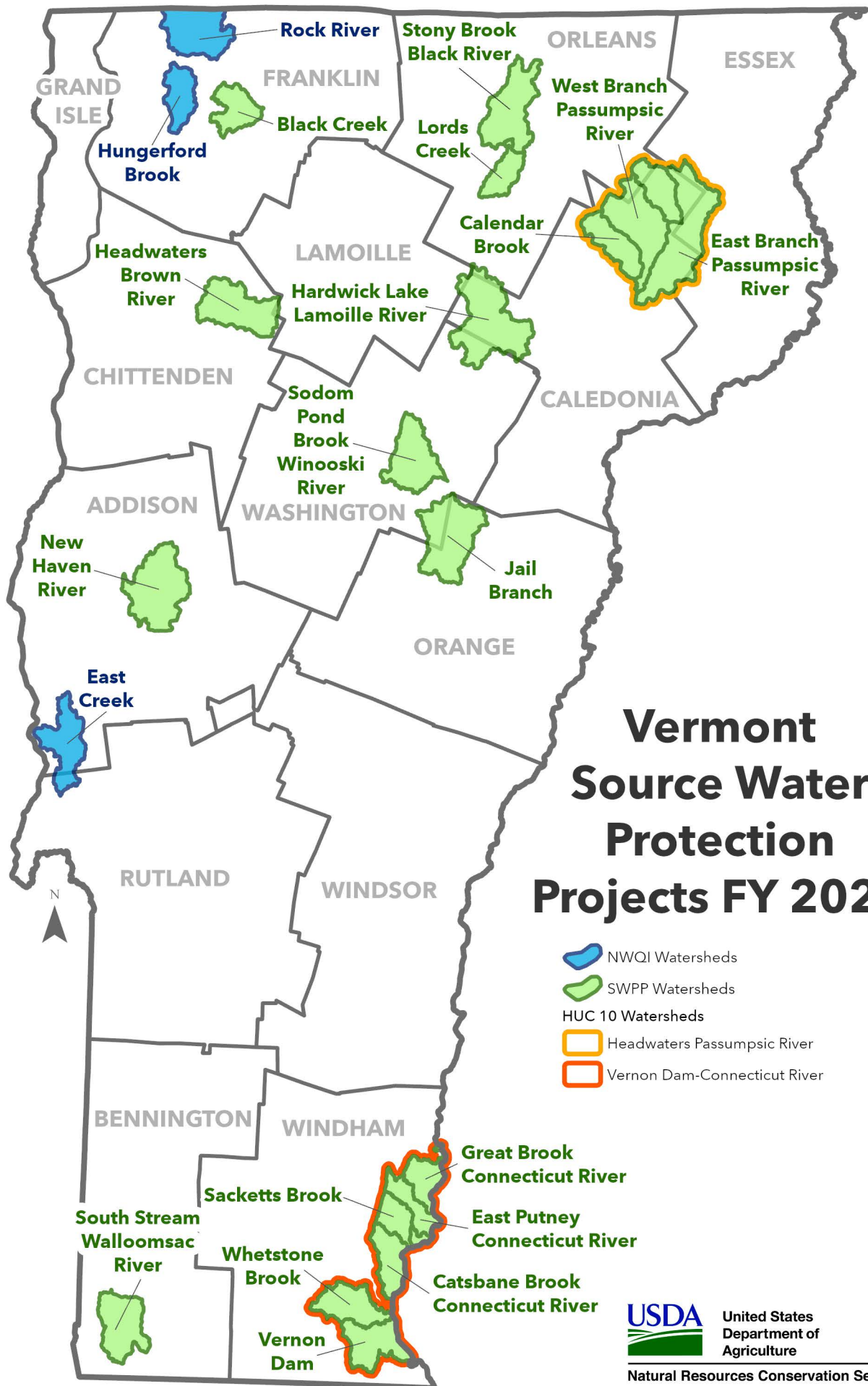


# QUESTIONS



# USDA/NRCS Vermont Final Fiscal Year 2022 Financial Assistance Obligations - Calculated 9.15.2022

Program	CART Ranking Pool Name	CART Category	FY2022 Proposed Allocated*	FY 2022 Actual Obligated*	FY 2022 Contract Count	Total Obligations by Program
ACEP	2022_VT_ACEP_WRE_General	Statewide	\$ 554,000.00	\$ 519,000.00	1	\$ 3,693,000.00
	2022_VT_ACEP_ALE_General	Statewide	\$ 3,400,000.00	\$ 3,055,000.00	14	
AMA	2022_VT_AMA_General	All categories	\$ 129,000.00	\$ 121,000.00	5	\$ 231,000.00
	2022_VT_AMA_RMA	All categories	\$ 151,000.00	\$ 110,000.00	9	
CSP - Renewals (2022)	All CSP Renewals (all)	All categories	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 146,000.00	13	\$ 420,000.00
CSP-Classic	All CSP Classic (all)	All categories	\$ 1,080,000.00	\$ 274,000.00	20	
EQIP	Conservation Innovation Grants	Statewide	\$ 550,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	2	\$ 10,300,000.00
	2022_VT_EQIP_CIC	All categories	\$ 477,000.00	\$ -	0	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Emergency_Disaster	Disaster Area	\$ 100,000.00	\$ -	0	
	2022_VT_EQIP_General_Statewide	Farmstead	\$ 3,700,000.00	\$ 4,132,000.00	12	
		Cropland	\$ 1,200,000.00	\$ 1,053,000.00	31	
		Grazing	\$ 400,000.00	\$ 965,000.00	24	
	2022_VT_EQIP_NWQI	Implementation	\$ 721,000.00	\$ 598,000.00	4	
		Source Water	\$ 518,000.00	\$ 67,000.00	1	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Forestry_Wildlife	Statewide	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,112,000.00	57	
	2022_VT_EQIP_CPA_DIA_CEMA	Forest	\$ 340,000.00	\$ 179,000.00	59	
		All Other			1	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Specialty_Crop	All categories	\$ 125,000.00	\$ 615,000.00	41	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Beginning_Farmer	Statewide	\$ 477,000.00	\$ 502,000.00	28	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Socially_Disadvantaged	Statewide	\$ 477,000.00	\$ 199,000.00	10	
	2022_VT_EQIP_Organic	Statewide	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	6	
	2022_VT_EQIP_On-Farm_Energy	Statewide	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 28,000.00	1	
	2022_VT_EQIP_WLFW_GWW	Project Area	\$ 110,000.00	\$ -	0	
RCPP-EQIP - 2014 Farm Bill	RCPP_Cold_Hollow_Woodlots_Program (1548)	Project Area	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 31,000.00	12	\$ 31,000.00
	RCPP_Connecting_the_Connecticut_River_Watershed (1710)	Project Area	\$ 463,663.00	\$ -	0	
	RCPP_VACD_Nutrient_Management_II (1696)	Project Area	\$ 233,334.00	\$ -	0	
RCPP Producer Contracts - 2018 Farm Bill	Accelerated Implementation....Water Quality BMPs (2132)	LMR Producer	\$ 1,650,000.00	\$ -	0	\$ 368,000.00
	Lake Memphremagog Water Quality Partnership (2280)	LMR Producer	\$ 345,000.00	\$ 331,000.00	7	
	Regenerative Agriculture for Western New England (2311)	LMR Producer	\$ 432,338.00	\$ -	0	
	Vermont Stream Restoration and Protection (2517)	LMR Producer	\$ 1,053,640.00	\$ -	0	
	Northern Tier Stream Restoration (1865)	LMR Producer	\$ 194,200.00	\$ 37,000.00	1	
RCPP Easements - 2018 Farm Bill	US Held Easements - Accelerated...Water Quality BMPs (2132)	Restriction Low/Med/High	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ -	0	\$ -
	Entity Held Easements - Accelerated...Water Quality BMPs (2132)	Restriction Low/Med/High	\$ 2,250,000.00	\$ -	0	
	US Held Easements - Northern Tier Stream Restoration (1865)	Restriction Med	\$ 50,000.00	\$ -	0	
<div> <div>*Rounded to nearest thousand</div> <div>FINAL TOTAL OBLIGATIONS ALL PROGRAMS</div> </div>						\$ 15,043,000.00



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<b>Attachment A - SB_VT_440-23-01 - EQIP Practices Eligible for an Enhanced Payment Rates</b>				
<b>Code</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>HU_</b>	<b>Wp_</b>	<b>Pr_</b>
101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	YES	NO	NO
102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	YES	NO	NO
106	Forest Management Plan	YES	NO	NO
110	Grazing Management Plan	YES	NO	NO
116	Soil Health Management Plan	YES	NO	NO
120	Agricultural Energy Design	YES	NO	NO
138	Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition	YES	NO	NO
140	Transition to Organic Design	YES	NO	NO
144	Fish and Wildlife Habitat Design	YES	NO	NO
148	Pollinator Habitat Design	YES	NO	NO
157	Nutrient Management Design and Implementation Activity	YES	NO	NO
158	Feed Management Design	YES	NO	NO
159	Grazing Management Design	YES	NO	NO
160	Prescribed Burning Design	YES	NO	NO
161	Pesticide Management Conservation System Design	YES	NO	NO
162	Soil Health Management System Design	YES	NO	NO
163	Irrigation Water Management Design	YES	NO	NO
164	Improved Management of Drainage Water Design	YES	NO	NO
165	Forest Management Practice Design	YES	NO	NO
199	Conservation Plan	YES	NO	NO
201	Edge-of-Field Water Quality Monitoring-Data Collection and Evaluation	YES	NO	NO
202	Edge-of-Field Water Quality Monitoring-System Installation	YES	NO	NO
207	Site Assessment and Soil Testing for Contaminants Activity	YES	YES	NO
209	PFAS Testing in Water or Soil	YES	NO	NO
216	Soil Health Testing	YES	YES	NO
217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	YES	YES	NO
218	Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment	YES	NO	NO
221	Soil Organic Carbon Stock Measurement	YES	NO	NO
222	Indigenous Stewardship Methods Evaluation	YES	NO	NO
224	Aquifer Flow Test	YES	YES	NO
228	Agricultural Energy Assessment	YES	NO	NO
309	Agrichemical Handling Facility	YES	YES	NO
311	Alley Cropping	YES	YES	NO
313	Waste Storage Facility	YES	YES	YES
314	Brush Management	YES	YES	NO
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	YES	YES	NO
316	Animal Mortality Facility	YES	YES	NO
317	Composting Facility	YES	YES	NO
319	On-Farm Secondary Containment Facility	YES	YES	NO
325	High Tunnel System	YES	NO	NO
326	Clearing and Snagging	YES	NO	NO
327	Conservation Cover	YES	YES	NO
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	YES	YES	NO
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	YES	YES	YES
330	Contour Farming	YES	YES	NO
332	Contour Buffer Strips	YES	YES	NO
333	Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum Products	YES	YES	NO



## 2023 Practices Eligible for Enhanced Payment Rates

334	Controlled Traffic Farming	YES	NO	NO
338	Prescribed Burning	YES	YES	NO
340	Cover Crop	YES	YES	YES
342	Critical Area Planting	YES	YES	NO
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	YES	YES	YES
350	Sediment Basin	YES	YES	NO
351	Well Decommissioning	YES	YES	NO
353	Monitoring Well	YES	YES	NO
355	Groundwater Testing	YES	YES	NO
360	Waste Facility Cover	YES	YES	NO
362	Diversion	YES	YES	NO
366	Anaerobic Digestation	YES	YES	NO
367	Roofs and Covers	YES	YES	NO
368	Emergency Animal Mortality Management	YES	NO	NO
372	Combustion System Improvement	YES	NO	NO
374	Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation	YES	NO	NO
378	Pond	YES	YES	NO
379	Forest Farming	YES	NO	NO
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation	YES	YES	NO
381	Silvopasture	YES	YES	NO
382	Fence	YES	YES	NO
384	Woody Residue Treatment	YES	NO	NO
386	Field Border	YES	YES	NO
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	YES	YES	NO
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	YES	YES	YES
393	Filter Strip	YES	YES	YES
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	YES	YES	NO
396	Aquatic Organism Passage	YES	NO	NO
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	YES	YES	NO
412	Grassed Waterway	YES	YES	NO
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting	YES	NO	NO
422	Hedgerow Planting	YES	YES	NO
430	Irrigation Pipeline	YES	YES	NO
436	Irrigation Reservoir	YES	YES	NO
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	YES	YES	NO
442	Sprinkler System	YES	YES	NO
443	Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface	YES	YES	NO
449	Irrigation Water Management	YES	YES	NO
464	Irrigation Land Leveling	YES	YES	NO
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	YES	YES	NO
472	Access Control	YES	YES	NO
484	Mulching	YES	YES	NO
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	YES	NO	NO
500	Obstruction Removal	YES	NO	NO
511	Forage Harvest Management	YES	YES	NO
512	Pasture and Hay Planting	YES	YES	YES
516	Livestock Pipeline	YES	YES	NO
520	Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Soil Treatment	YES	NO	NO
521	Pond Sealing or Lining, Geomembrane or Geosynthetic Clay Liner	YES	NO	NO
522	Pond Sealing or Lining - Concrete	YES	NO	NO

## 2023 Practices Eligible for Enhanced Payment Rates

528	Prescribed Grazing	YES	YES	NO
533	Pumping Plant	YES	NO	NO
554	Drainage Water Management	YES	YES	NO
557	Row Arrangement	YES	YES	NO
558	Roof Runoff Structure	YES	YES	NO
560	Access Road	YES	YES	NO
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	YES	YES	NO
570	Stormwater Runoff Control	YES	YES	NO
574	Spring Development	YES	YES	NO
575	Trails and Walkways	YES	YES	NO
576	Livestock Shelter Structure	YES	NO	NO
578	Stream Crossing	YES	YES	NO
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	YES	YES	NO
582	Open Channel	YES	YES	NO
585	Stripcropping	YES	YES	NO
587	Structure for Water Control	YES	YES	NO
590	Nutrient Management	YES	YES	YES
592	Feed Management	YES	NO	NO
595	Pest Management Conservation System	YES	YES	NO
601	Vegetative Barrier	YES	YES	NO
603	Herbaceous Wind Barriers	YES	YES	NO
604	Saturated Buffer	YES	YES	NO
606	Subsurface Drain	YES	NO	NO
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	YES	YES	YES
614	Watering Facility	YES	YES	NO
620	Underground Outlet	YES	YES	NO
629	Waste Treatment	YES	YES	NO
632	Waste Separation Facility	YES	YES	NO
633	Waste Recycling	YES	YES	NO
634	Waste Transfer	YES	YES	YES
635	Vegetative Treatment Area	YES	YES	NO
636	Water Harvesting Catchment	YES	NO	NO
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin	YES	YES	NO
342	Water Well	YES	YES	NO
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	YES	YES	NO
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	YES	YES	NO
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	YES	NO	NO
647	Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt	YES	NO	NO
649	Structures for Wildlife	YES	NO	NO
654	Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment	YES	NO	NO
655	Forest Trails and Landings	YES	NO	NO
656	Constructed Wetland	YES	YES	NO
657	Wetland Restoration	YES	YES	NO
659	Wetland Enhancement	YES	YES	NO
660	Tree-Shrub Pruning	YES	NO	NO
666	Forest Stand Improvement	YES	NO	NO
670	Energy Efficient Lighting System	YES	NO	NO
672	Energy Efficient Building Envelope	YES	NO	NO
782	Phosphorus Removal System	YES	NO	NO
805	Amending Soil Properties with Lime	YES	NO	NO

## 2023 Practices Eligible for Enhanced Payment Rates

808	Soil Carbon Amendment	YES	NO	NO
810	Annual Forages for Grazing Systems	YES	NO	NO
812	Raised Beds	YES	NO	NO
821	Low Tunnel Systems	YES	NO	NO

**EQIP and RCPP-EQIP Enhanced Payment Rates:** EQIP Regulations authorize the use of the payment rates up to 90% of the typical install cost. Planners will refer to the components in the program specific cost list to ensure that they are selecting the correct payment rate. There are three types of elevated payment rates; Historically Underserved ("HU"), High Priority Practices ("Pr"), and Source Water Protection practices ("Wp").

**HU:** Practice components beginning with "HU\_" are for Historically Underserved clients who have self-certified their status on their application form, NRCS-CPA-1200. "HU" prefixes must not be used on non-Historically Underserved producers to achieve an enhanced payment rate.

**Pr:** High Priority Practices, also known as the EQIP "Top-10," are listed in the cost list in components starting with "Pr\_". High Priority Practices are eligible statewide to any participant through an EQIP or RCPP-EQIP 2014 contracts.

**Wp:** Source Water Protection practices ("Wp") are specifically for applications located in either an EQIP National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) watersheds or an EQIP Source Water Protection Area (SWPA) watersheds. These practices may not be included in contracts outside of these designated watersheds.

**Hierarchy:** In situations with a Historically Underserved producer where the "HU", "Pr", and "Wp" prefix payment rates apply, planners must select the "HU" prefix above either "Pr" or "Wp". In cases where "Pr" and "Wp" apply, the planner must select the "Wp" prefix above the "Pr" prefix.

**RCPP18:** RCPP18 Land Management and Rental contracts utilize project specific negotiated cost lists. These cost lists may have "above covered program" rates equivalent to or higher than the 90% enhanced payment rates. This list does not cover any RCPP18 project specific cost lists and should not be confused.



# Ecological Sciences Updates

Joe D. Buford, State Resource Conservationist

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# Highlights

- **Conservation Innovation Grant**
- **Technical Service Providers**
- **Conservation Reserve Program**
- **Working Lands for Wildlife**
- **National Water Quality Initiative**

# VT NRCS CIG Spotlight for FY22

## **Awardee:**

**Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets**

## **Project Title:**

**Linking Farm Phosphorus Reduction Planner (FarmPREP) to  
Agricultural Soil Health and Greenhouse Gas Emissions  
Modeling in Vermont**

## **Purpose:**

**Is to provide agricultural soil health, and agricultural  
greenhouse gas tracking, quantification, verification, and  
reporting for the State of Vermont utilizing the Farm  
Phosphorus Reduction Planner (Farm-PREP).**

## **Award Amount:**

**\$487,000**

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# VT NRCS CIG Spotlight for FY22

## **Awardee:**

**University of Vermont**

## **Project Title:**

**Building Soil Health through Farmer Peer Network**

## **Purpose:**

**Improve soil health and reduce non-point source pollution into Lake Champlain by engaging farmers in soil health monitoring and evaluating the soil health benefits associated with adoption of water quality basic metabolic panel (BMPs)**

## **Award Amount:**

**\$263,000**

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# FY23 NRCS Funding Priorities & Notice of Funding

- **CIG's provide an opportunity for public and private partners to evaluate and accelerate adoption of new approaches to natural resource protection.**
- **A State CIG Notice of Funding will be offered in FY23 with a funding allocation of up to 1 million dollars for one or more awards. The recommended priorities will be same as FY 22.**
- **Plan is have the Notice of Funding out by Mid-November to December for FY 23**
- **CIG Website Link**

# Technical Service Providers

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## FY23 EQIP CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs

[Home](#) > [Programs & Initiatives](#) > [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) > [FY23 EQIP CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs](#)

Learn about FY23 EQIP Conservation Planning Activities (CPAs), Design and Implementation Activities (DIAs), and Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMAs).

[LINK](#)

# Conservation Reserve Program- Grassland

**Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Grasslands Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers to help landowners and operators protect grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and certain other lands, while maintaining the areas as grazing lands. The grasslands CRP program is a working lands program that emphasizes support for grazing operations under the greatest threat of conversion.**

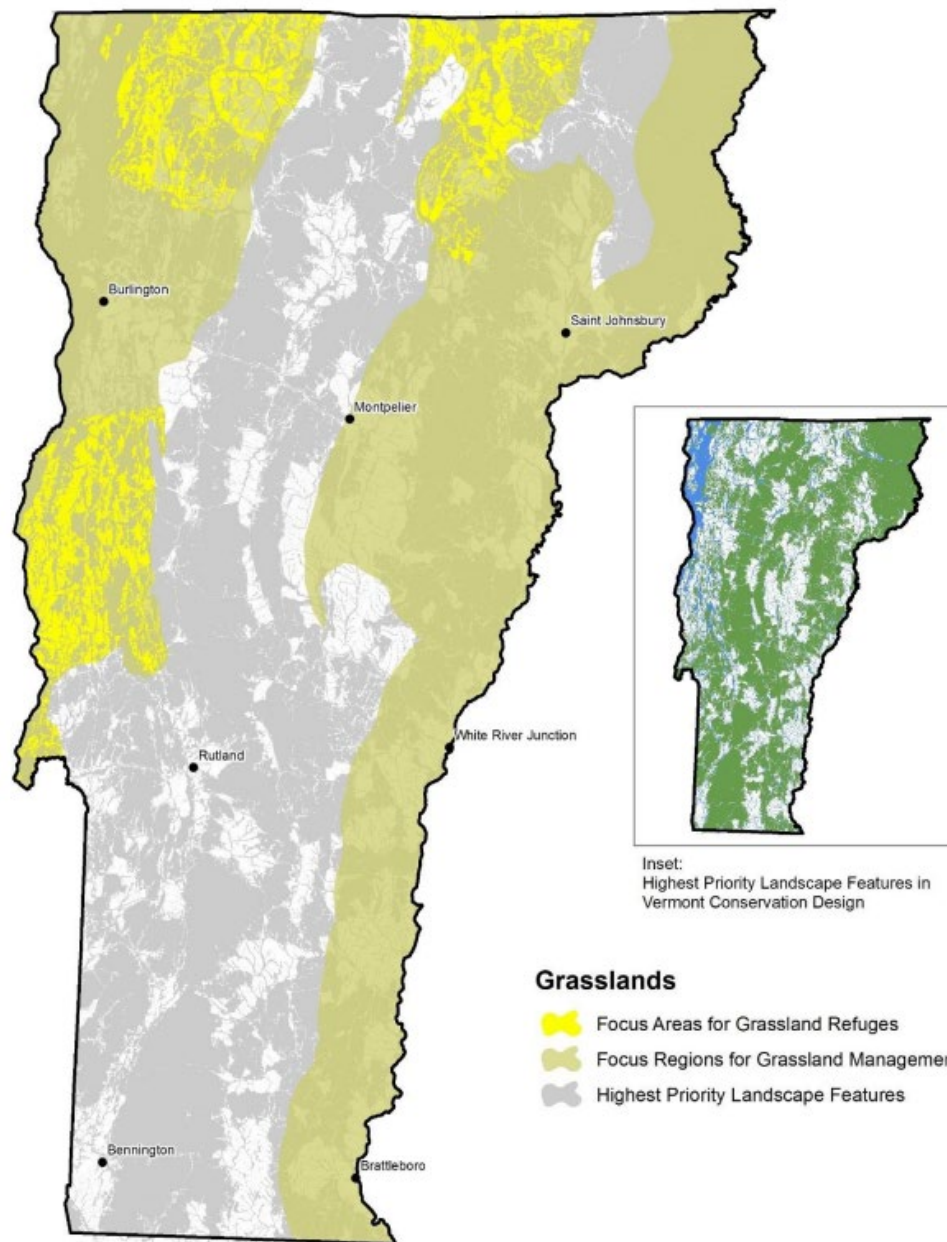
**\* VT Conservation Design**

# CRP-Grassland Directive

**In late August, directive was given for establishing a State Grassland CRP Priority Zone. The Grassland Zone was limited to no more than 25 percent of the total acres of hay, pasture, and rangeland within the State. Guidance included considering the following criteria:**

- **grazing lands subject to woody encroachment**
- **grazing lands of special significance**
- **tribal lands**
- **historically underserved communities**
- **areas where wildlife can be protected or enhanced**
- **proximity to protected public grassland or native prairie preserves.**





Map 10. Focus areas within which the Highest Priority 7,500 acres of grassland refuge could be established. Specific grasslands cannot be mapped due to a lack of spatial information. To avoid conflicts with other ecological functions, grasslands should be managed outside of the highest priority landscape features.



# Grassland Bird Priority Area Selection

		County	Max Acres	Acreage at 25%
50001	VERMONT	ADDISON	145,421	36,355.25
50003	VERMONT	BENNINGTON	25,461	6,365.25
50005	VERMONT	CALEDONIA	47,127	11,781.75
50007	VERMONT	CHITTENDEN	63,883	15,970.75
50009	VERMONT	ESSEX	9,396	2,349.00
50011	VERMONT	FRANKLIN	96,777	24,194.25
50013	VERMONT	GRAND ISLE	21,052	5,263.00
50015	VERMONT	LAMOILLE	27,754	6,938.50
50017	VERMONT	ORANGE	50,102	12,525.50
50019	VERMONT	ORLEANS	74,005	18,501.25
50021	VERMONT	RUTLAND	68,139	17,034.75
50023	VERMONT	WASHINGTON	37,987	9,496.75
50025	VERMONT	WINDHAM	26,665	6,666.25
50027	VERMONT	WINDSOR	52,953	13,238.25
			746,722	186,680.50

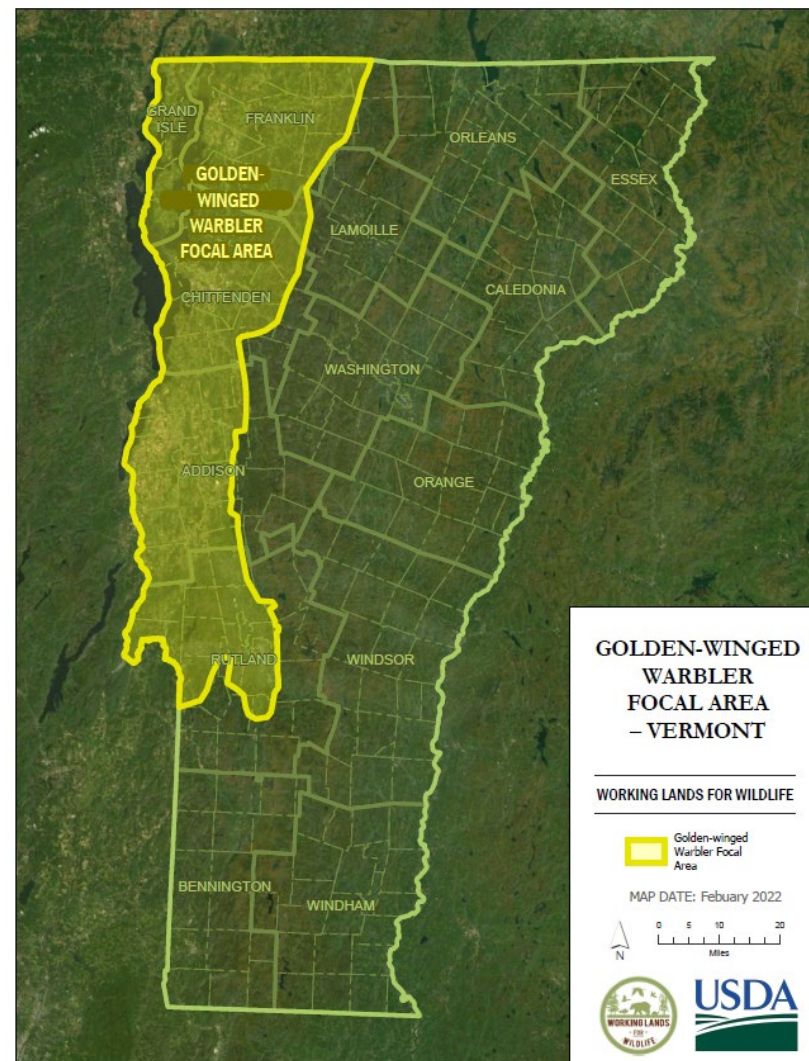
## Selected Counties:

- Franklin
- Orleans
- Windham

# Golden Winged Warbler – Working Lands For Wildlife

**In FY 2022 - VT NRCS was approved for the  
National WLFW Golden-winged Warbler**

- Champlain Valley and adjacent areas
- Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide is required
- New Forester hired through Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Rough Grouse Society/American Woodcock Society – Luke McNally
- Site visits are ongoing
- Young forests/old field habitat





# Golden Winged Warbler – Working Lands For Wildlife

## Project areas need to be in a deciduous, forested landscape

- Traditionally Vermont has only managed old fields and pastures for these and other shrubland birds
- WLFW requires some Forest Mgt.
- Staff should be looking for high graded forests – high UGS ratio in stand
- Typical treatment would be low density shelterwood similar to a “patch cut” with more tree retention



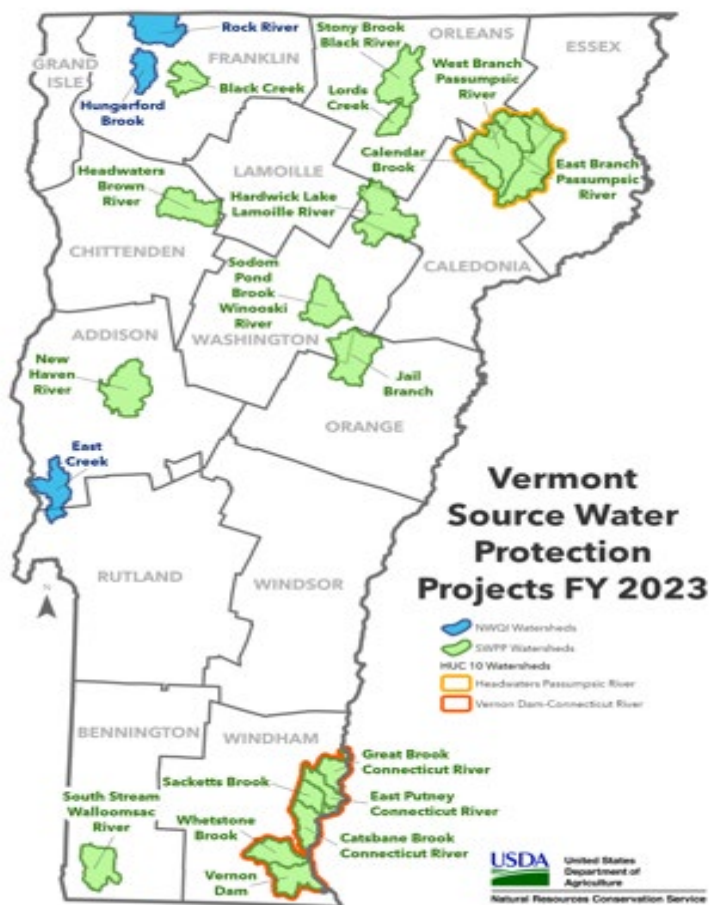
**GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER**



# National Water Quality Initiatives

- **NWQI emphasizes a “systems approach” to address priority natural resource concerns. A cornerstone of this approach is to encourage producers to implement a system of practices that has been determined to address specific high-priority resource concerns in selected watersheds and incorporate practices that address the concepts of avoiding, controlling, or trapping pollutants, or “ACT.”**
- **Practices identified on the list were identified by the public water systems stakeholders in Vermont as practices that would benefit and support drinking water sources in Vermont priority watersheds.**
- **These practices have many benefits, including protecting drinking water supplies from potential contaminants such as nitrates, pesticides, herbicides, sediments, petroleum products, bacteria, metals, and other chemicals.**
- **The core and supporting practice(s) must have a water quality purpose.**

# Watersheds



1. Black Creek
2. Hardwick Lake Dam-Lamoille River
3. Headwaters Brown River
4. Headwaters Passumpsic River
5. Jail Branch
6. Lords Creek
7. New Haven River
8. Sodom Pond Brook-Winooski River
9. South Stream Walloomsac River
10. Stony Brook-Black River
11. Vernon Dam-Connecticut River

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# SPECIAL THANKS

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# Urban Ag Subcommittee

- Identifying local urban agriculture needs, emerging practices, resource concerns, and potential partnering entities to support urban, small-scale, and innovative production;
- Identifying local barriers to successful implementation of conservation strategies by urban, small-scale, and innovative agriculture, especially for new and beginning farmers;
- Assessing natural resource priorities for urban agriculture and providing recommendations for conservation practices to help NRCS meet the needs of local urban and small-scale producers;
- Advising the State conservationist on policies to improve participation in NRCS conservation programs among urban, innovative, and small-scale producers locally, regionally, and nationally;
- If interested in joining this subcommittee please send an email to [Lorrie.Doering@usda.gov](mailto:Lorrie.Doering@usda.gov)

# Soils Subcommittee

- The SH Committee consists of Vermont NRCS Leadership Staff and Partners to direct initiatives and funding and advises and solicits input from the Vermont SH Team.
- SH Committee is the larger body that directs where to spend money and focus efforts. The Committee helps direct the Team and the Team provides feedback to the Committee.
- The committee can prioritize future years for SH Fund Pools, meeting end of the year program deadlines and re-prioritization of the use of fiscal and staffing resources, as needed.
- If interested in joining this subcommittee please send an email to [Lorrie.Doering@usda.gov](mailto:Lorrie.Doering@usda.gov)



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# QUESTIONS

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**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 [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) 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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).**

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# Natural Resources Conservation Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

MENU

## NEWS

### Welcome to the New NRCS Website

PUBLISH DATE: October 21, 2022







Our new website is designed for you – the farmers, ranchers and forest landowners who use NRCS conservation programs, and our partners who collaborate with us on data.

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Welcome! We're excited to unveil our new website, which was designed for you, whether you're a farmer, rancher or forest landowner who uses Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs or one of our partners who helps us deliver on the conservation mission.

The new NRCS site has been designed to support and enhance our mission by delivering relevant, timely, customer-focused information in an easy-to-navigate platform.

Key features include:

- It's been designed using the U.S. Web Design System, so you'll see a certain "family resemblance" among USDA and other federal websites, including farmers.gov.
- It's accessible (or 508 conformant), meaning the site is designed for use by people with disabilities.
- It's mobile responsive, meaning that it should work on a phone or tablet at easily as on a desktop computer.

Be sure to check out our:

- [Guides and Instructions](#) - Search by resource type, NRCS program, natural resource concern, and state.
- [Getting Assistance](#) - Learn more about available technical and financial assistance and how you can get support online as well as with the NRCS at your local Service Center.
- [Conservation by State](#) - Find information on NRCS programs, services and other information in your state.

If you can't find something that you used to find on our website, [contact us](#) and we can help.



# AskUSDA

One central entry point for you to access information and help from USDA

 [Ask.USDA.gov](https://ask.usda.gov)

 1-800-ONE-USDA

 [askusda@usda.gov](mailto:askusda@usda.gov)

ASK A QUESTION



**Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
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## Resources

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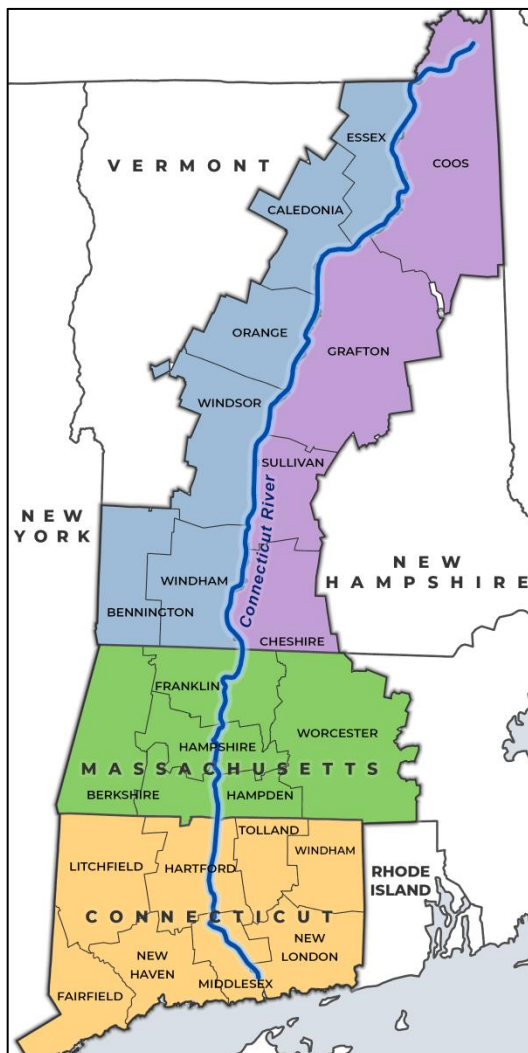
You Tube



## American Farmland Trust RCPP Regenerative Agriculture for Western New England

American Farmland Trust has partnered with USDA-NRCS to incentivize the adoption of regenerative agriculture practices on western New England livestock farms. This project is funded by the [USDA-NRCS RCPP Program](#) and partner and donor contributions, and includes partners from the [University of Connecticut](#), [University of Vermont](#), the [Xerces Society](#), the [Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts](#), and the [Consider Pastures](#) brand from Pete and Gerry's Organics.

Livestock producers (whose primary product is livestock-based) in select counties in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont will be eligible for technical assistance on topics such as soil health, water quality, pollinator habitat, nutrient management and more. There will also be four sources of financial assistance:



- **Land Management Cost Share (NRCS Funds)** – Cost share will be provided for beneficial pasture and cropland practices for livestock producers. Practices will include Nutrient Management (590), Prescribed Grazing (528), Cover Crop (340), Wildlife Habitat Planting (420), Forage Harvest Management (511), Soil Carbon Amendment (808) and others.
- **Land Rental Cost Share (NRCS Funds)** – Land rental payments will be offered based on forgone income for practices like planting a shorter season corn and more robust, longer lasting cover crop mix.
- **Outcome-Based Payments (AFT Funds)** – AFT will offer outcomes-based payments to farmers for the modeled sequestration of carbon through soil health practices.
- **Microgrants (AFT Funds)** – AFT's competitive microgrant program will provide farmers up to \$10,000 for projects that improve soil health through the adoption of regenerative agricultural practices.

### Eligible counties:

- ❖ Vermont: Essex, Caledonia, Orange, Windsor, Windham, Bennington
- ❖ New Hampshire: Coos, Grafton, Sullivan, Cheshire
- ❖ Massachusetts: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, Worcester
- ❖ Connecticut: Litchfield, Fairfield, Hartford, New Haven, Tolland, Middlesex, Windham, New London