

# NRCS and the Inflation Reduction Act

Fiscal Year 2023



## Implementation

Fiscal year 2023 was truly groundbreaking. The dedicated team at USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) along with our conservation partners successfully implemented conservation practices on America’s working lands while rolling out the largest conservation funding opportunity the agency has ever received through the Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda.

NRCS made \$850 million available from the Inflation Reduction Act for climate-smart agriculture and forestry mitigation activities through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The agency obligated 99.8 percent of all available FY 2023 Inflation Reduction Act financial assistance funds to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners across America. In addition to conservation program enrollments, NRCS provided Conservation Technical Assistance to producers interested in better understanding the implementation of conservation practices.

Demand for NRCS conservation assistance is strong. Despite the additional Inflation Reduction Act funding, NRCS had significant unmet producer demand for EQIP and ACEP. NRCS received \$2.2 billion in Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposals but was only able to fund half of the projects. The total demand for climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices and projects was millions of dollars higher than available funding.

### END-OF-YEAR 2023 FINAL NUMBERS

PROGRAM	FY23 FUNDING AVAILABLE	TOTAL INFLATION REDUCTION ACT REQUESTS	CONSERVATION ON THE LANDSCAPE
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$250 million	Nearly 8,000 applications (\$405 million)	2,812 landowners received climate-focused contracts on 762,698 acres of land
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	\$100 million	Over 250 applications (\$180 million)	27 landowners received ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement climate-focused contracts on 53,476 acres of grasslands
			42 landowners received ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easement climate-focused contracts on 4,806 acres of land
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	\$250 million	Over \$2 billion requested	More than \$1 billion is being invested to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 projects
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	\$250 million	Over 3,300 applications (\$230 million)	2,406 landowners received climate-focused contracts on 3,312,492 acres of land





## Delivering on Opportunities

NRCS worked hard in FY 2023 to ensure that this unprecedented opportunity to get even more conservation on the ground will continue to be met. NRCS took action to ensure Inflation Reduction Act funding is allocated effectively, efficiently, and equitably by increasing capacity, streamlining programs, and building and expanding partnerships.

### *Increasing Capacity*

NRCS focused its efforts on ramping up recruitment and hiring, training, retaining employees, and business planning to meet the additional hiring needs to implement the Inflation Reduction Act. These strategies resulted in NRCS increasing overall hiring by 30% and decreasing separations by 33%.

### *Streamlining Programs and Simplifying Processes*

NRCS improved and streamlined its programs to strengthen Inflation Reduction Act implementation. This included an effort to streamline the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) and the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#). In addition, NRCS refined its program application process and form. Customers may now apply for more than one program with a single application. To further streamline the application process, NRCS recently adopted the “Act Now Policy.” Act Now allows NRCS’s state offices to automatically pre-approve applications for funding when an eligible application meets or exceeds a state-determined minimum ranking score. NRCS also launched a pilot with several partners to reduce administrative burden by grouping multiple state agreements under one national “umbrella” agreement.

### *Building Partnerships and Expanding Opportunities*

NRCS would not have been able to achieve its current level of success without engaged conservation partners. After putting out the call for input through a Federal Register Request for Information, NRCS received over 450 comments on ways to improve program delivery by removing administrative burdens, streamlining, and expediting program enrollment; building agency and partner capacity to deliver services more quickly; and providing more equitable services. These suggestions helped accelerate the implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act, and NRCS is already implementing most recommendations submitted. USDA and NRCS also engaged additional partners and increased opportunities for implementing Inflation Reduction Act funding. For example, NRCS added 15 practices and 10 enhancements to the [NRCS Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities list](#) and expanded the national priority areas eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for ACEP easements for fiscal year 2024.

## Quantification is Key

Inflation Reduction Act provides \$300 million to quantify carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through the collection and use of field-based data to assess conservation outcomes. USDA hosted a webinar [USDA Invests in Improved GHG Measurement, Monitoring](#), that included an overview of the MMRV Inflation Reduction Act Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Quantification work.

## “We Got This!”

President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act, the single-largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history, provides billions of dollars to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, encourage new economic activity in rural areas, and protect the communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. USDA investments include \$19.5 billion to help producers implement practices and projects that reduce emissions, enhance soil carbon sequestration, and provide other climate benefits. There has never been a better time for producers to work with NRCS to apply conservation on the ground. Agricultural customers interested in learning more about the assistance available from NRCS should call or visit their local NRCS field office:

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state)

