

Assistance to Montana's Tribal Ag Producers

Fiscal Year 2023



NRCS Montana focuses conservation efforts on Montana's Tribal nations and producers with staff assigned to each reservation and annual funding allocated through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Nationally, 5% of EQIP and CSP funds are required to be set aside for historically underserved producers of which Tribal applications are included. Montana sets aside 10% on average for Tribal farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners. Over the past four years, socially disadvantaged producers in Montana have received more than 24% of the general EQIP funding available each year. In 2023, the most recent complete fiscal year, the EQIP funding pool for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR) was just over \$2 million. However, voluntary conservation by Tribal producers, the largest SDFR segment, exceeded that amount by over \$4 million totaling 29% of Montana's general EQIP allocation. The total amount obligated to Tribal contracts includes \$366,000 of Inflation Reduction Act funding in 5 contracts.

Agricultural producers and partners are encouraged to work with their conservation district and NRCS staff to develop a Targeted Implementation Plan (TIP) that focuses on a specific, local natural resource concern and compete for even more funding. There are currently about 15 TIPs that include lands encompassed by reservation boundaries. Visit your local office for more information.

Fiscal Year	Montana EQIP General Allocation	EQIP Tribal Allocation	EQIP Tribal Funds Obligated	EQIP Tribal Contracts	EQIP General Obligated to Tribal Contracts
2020	\$17,093,000	\$1,709,300	\$4,679,867	56	27%
2021	\$16,562,000	\$1,652,000	\$3,082,738	33	19%
2022	\$18,785,000	\$2,054,448	\$4,071,200	76	22%
2023	\$21,664,000	\$2,166,400	\$6,366,104	54	29%

Fiscal Year	Montana CSP Allocation	SDFR CSP Allocation	SDFR CSP \$ Obligated	SDFR CSP Contracts	SDFR CSP Acres
2020	\$13,650,767	\$685,064	\$618,997	8	46,923
2021 Renewal	\$9,300,000	\$465,000	\$495,433	4	57,513
2021 Classic	\$10,760,000	\$538,000	\$29,595	2	1,101
2022 Renewal	\$6,628,000	\$331,400	\$306,044	3	21,987
2022 Classic	\$15,824,000	\$771,200	\$17,424	1	11
2023 Renewal	\$10,900,000	\$530,000	\$0	0	0
2023 Classic	\$16,708,372	\$835,419	\$792,420	6	76,017

There were no applications from Tribal producers or Tribes in the FY22 Classic cycle. 2023 renewal contracts impacted by lack of Farm Bill and associated payment limitations.

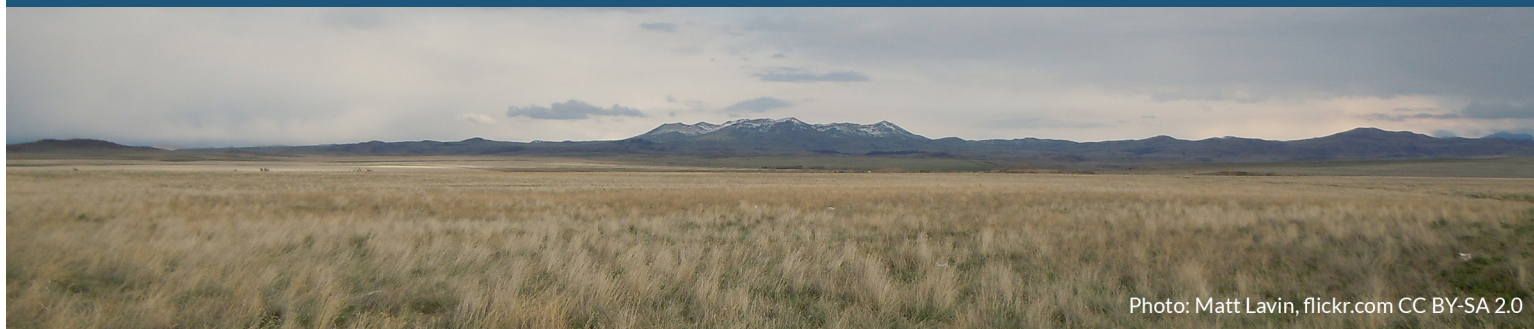
Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

The Tribal Conservation Advisory Council provides a tribal voice to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on conservation matters that are important to Montana tribes at state and national levels to better assist tribal producers. The council is comprised of representatives from each of Montana's Federally recognized tribes and meets twice per year. The council representatives also participate in State Technical Advisory Committee meetings.

Learn More

Learn more about NRCS conservation assistance, Montana Focused Conservation, and local funding opportunities at www.nrcs.usda.gov/montana. See Outreach and Civil Rights in Montana > Montana Tribal Assistance for information about getting started and our newsletter.





Alternative Funding Arrangements

In 2023, two of the first EQIP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) in the country were developed. This type of project provides a more flexible means for NRCS to support Tribal conservation projects. Under the AFA, the Tribal nation can directly manage approved funding, qualify for higher funding amounts, and promote the use of traditional

ecological knowledge among other accommodations. Both projects support the conservation efforts of Tribal producers to improve forage quantity and quality in areas that have experienced prolonged drought. The conservation objectives of the projects include development of livestock water source and delivery systems that provide efficient redistribution of

livestock on grazing lands, therefore providing drought resiliency and improving forage quantity and quality by protecting from over-utilization.

- ♦ Chippewa Cree Range Unit Drought Resiliency - \$300,000
- ♦ Fort Belknap Indian Community Livestock Water Development - \$200,000

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

Of the ACEP Agricultural Land Easement IRA funding, one of the three contracts is a parcel owned by a Tribal member. The investment in that easement will generate approximately \$2.4 M in economic stimulus to that community.

An investment in a large ACEP Wetland Reserve Easement project owned by a Tribal member will generate approximately \$364,406 in economic stimulus in the community.



Regional Conservation Partnership Program

NRCS Montana was approved for three new RCPP projects in 2023. One of them is with the Blackfoot Tribe and partners in the Blackfoot Irrigation Improvement project. The project will provide sprinkler irrigation as on-farm/ranch improvements to address conservation priorities as established by the Blackfoot Agricultural Resource Management Plan. These conservation activities will be located along rivers and streams in all six of the Blackfoot Nation's watersheds and will provide tribal producers with the opportunity to improve forage production for their livestock operations. The project funding request is for \$15.3 million.

