



United States Department of Agriculture



Programs Team Report

7/18/2024 Leadership Report

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Financial Assistance (FA) Farm Bill Programs



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



Agricultural Assistance Management Program (AMA)



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)



FY 2024 Allocations By Program

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- General EQIP
\$3,813,167

Agricultural Assistance Management Program (AMA)

- \$126,000

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CST \$1,200,000





Final FY24 Obligations By Program To Date

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*

- Obligated: \$3,061,069
- Contracts: 164
- # App. Received 211

Agricultural Assistance Management Program (AMA)**

- Obligated: \$112,478
- Contracts : 10
- # App. Received 43

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)***

- Obligated: \$107,329
- Contracts: 23
- # App. Received 49



Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)



- Signed into law by President Biden in August 2022
- The IRA provided RI NRCS with **additional** funds for its **existing** conservation programs in 2024:
 - \$5.5 million Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - \$517K Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- **NHQ will hold national signups for:**
 - Regional Conservationist Partnership Program (RCPP)
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE) and Agricultural Lands Easement Program
- **The IRA does not create any new programs – it gives NRCS additional funds to **expand its existing climate efforts** and satisfy unmet demand**
- IRA funds began in **fiscal year 2023**; all IRA funds must be spent by **September 30, 2031**

FY 2024 IRA Allocations By Program

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- IRA EQIP \$1,649,782

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- IRA CST \$517,000

Original allocation was around \$5 million, but we were unable to spend full allocation and had to return funds





FY24 IRA Obligations By Program To Date

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*

- Obligated: \$847,330
- Contracts: 65
- # App. Received 98

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)***

- Allocation: \$380,765
- Contracts: 23
- # App. Received 32



NRCS Climate Smart Agriculture Practices (CSAF)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List for FY2024

Highlighted activities have been added to the list in FY2024. *Noted activities are added to the list as "provisional."*

Mitigation Categories ⁽¹⁾	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name ⁽²⁾ (practice unit)	Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities
Soil Health	322	Conservation Cover (acres)	E327A	Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects ⁽³⁾
			E327B	Establish Monarch butterfly habitat
	328	Conservation Crop Rotation (acres)	E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation
			E328B	Improved resource conserving crop rotation
			E328E	Soil health crop rotation
			E328F	Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E328N	Intercropping to improve soil health
			E328Q	Perennial grain crop conservation rotation
	329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres)	E329A	No till to reduce soil erosion
			E329B	No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E329C	No till to increase plant-available moisture
			E329D	No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
	332	Contour Buffer Strips (acres)		None Available
	336	Soil Carbon Amendment (acres) ⁽⁴⁾		None Available
	340	Cover Crop (acres)	E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion
			E340B	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E340C	Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E340D	Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health
			E340E	Cover crop to minimize soil compaction
			E340G	Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients
			E340H	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles
			E340I	Using cover crops for biological strip till
			E340J	Cover crop to improve moisture use efficiency and reduce salts
345			Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres)	E345A
	E345B	Reduced tillage to reduce tillage induced particulate matter		
	E345C	Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture		
	E345D	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		
	E345E	Reduced tillage to reduce energy use		

FACTSHEET • NOVEMBER 2023 FARMERS.GOV/CLIMATE-SMART

- FY24 list of NRCS climate-smart mitigation activities: nrcs.usda.gov/mitigation-activities.pdf
- Mitigation activities *reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve carbon storage*
- NRCS is continually evaluating mitigation activities and will update them as appropriate
- NRCS has many other conservation practices that can be used to address resource concerns on the farm. [Field Office Technical Guide](#)

Popular Conservation practices that qualify as CSAF Practices for Soil Health



Tree & Shrub Planting



Cover Crop



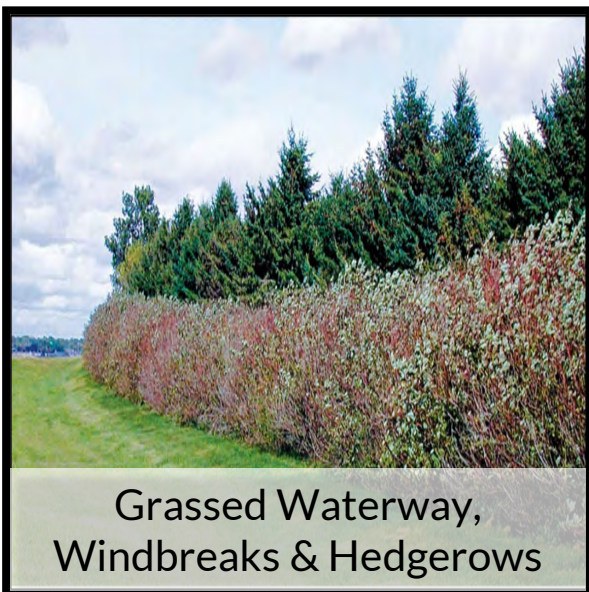
Minimum Tillage



No-Till Planting



Mulching



CSAF Practices for Water Quantity



Irrigation Practices

**Irrigation Pipeline system and renewable sources –
Used to reduce energy use.*



CSAF Practices for Energy Efficiency



Combustion System Improvement

- **NEW** - Replace high emitting equipment with electric equipment





CSAF Practices for Plant & Animal Health



Silvopasture



Rotational Grazing





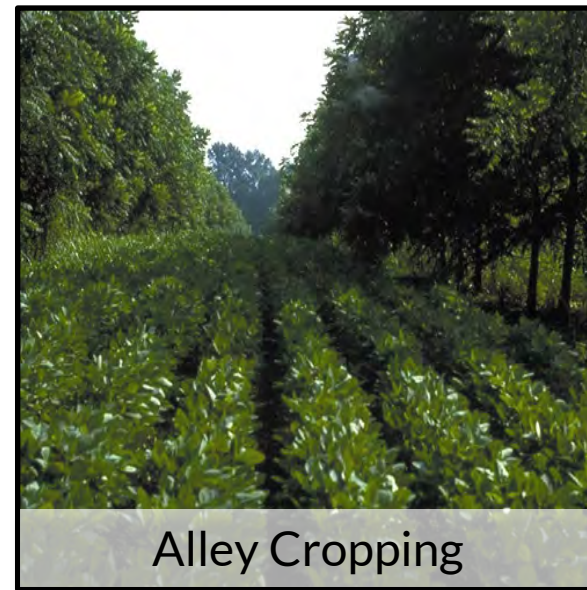
Forest Stand Improvement



Forest Farming



Wildlife Habitat Planting



Alley Cropping



Small-Scale Conservation Practice Scenarios

- Adjusted payment rates for conservation practices to better serve small-scale operations
- Many are Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Practices

Practice Name	Practice Code	National Scenario #s	FY22 Available	FY23 Available
Alter Cropping	311	259		X
Bush Management	314	355		X
Herbaceous Weed Treatment	315	65		X
Composting Facility	317	17	X	X
High Tunnel System	325	53-55, 85-87	X	X
Conservation Cover	327	88	X	X
Conservation Crop Rotation	328	82	X	X
Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till	329	3, 18	X	X
Cover Crop	340	6, 46, 62, 63	X	X
Critical Area Planting	342	56	X	X
Residue at Tillage Management, Mulch-Till	345	3, 56	X	X
Windbreak Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation	380	106		X
Fence	382	79		X
Field Border	386	69	X	X
Wildlife Habitat Planting	420	161		X
Irrigation Pipeline	430	62, 74, 75		X
Irrigation Reservoir	436	27	X	X
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441	4, 6, 37, 51	X	X
Sprinkler System	442	55		X
Surface & Subsurface Irrigation System	443	15, 23		X
Irrigation Water Management	449	38, 39	X	X
Land Leveling	464	6		X
Tree Shrub Site Preparation	490	48		X
Pasture and Hay Planting	512	66		X
Livestock Pipeline	516	83, 84		X
Prescribed Grazing	528	42		X
Roof Runoff Structure	558	4, 25	X	X
Stormwater Runoff Control	570	24		X
Trails and Walkways	575	40		X
Nutrient Management	590	3, 8, 29	X	X
Pest Management System	595	36, 37	X	X
Tree Shrub Establishment	612	97		X
Water Harvesting Catchment	636	3 (draft)		X
Tree Shrub Pruning	660	15		X
Soil Carbon Amendment	808/336	8, 102		X
Raised Beds	812	All		X
Low Tunnel Systems	831	All		X





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Common Urban & Small-Scale Practices





Rain Garden/Stormwater Management and Pollinator Planting



Soil Health Practices



Windbreak/Hedgerow

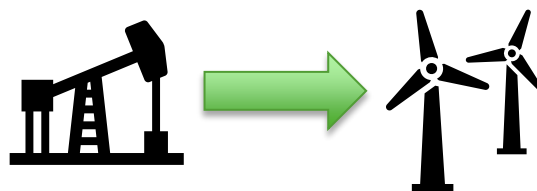
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Combustion System Improvement (372)

- Replacing existing diesel tractors with electric alternatives (funded through IRA)
- Replacing other high-emitting diesel mobile on-farm equipment (loaders, forklifts, irrigation pumps, motor graders and backhoes) with electric alternatives
- Replacing high-emitting diesel tractors with lower-emitting diesel tractors (funded through FB EQIP)



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Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Judge temporarily blocks disaster aid for women and minority farmers

The USDA program likely violated the constitutional rights of white men, the Texas court ruled.

Published June 12, 2024



Rhode Island's State CIG program was initially projected to offer \$275,050 in grant opportunities to fund climate-smart projects using 5% of RI's EQIP-IRA allocation



Due to a court injunction that halted the USDA's use of certain terminology that was included in the CIG template Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) all CIG NFOs were cancelled through FY2025.

Rhode Island will not be offering CIG in FY2024.



IRA-funding earmarked for CIG was returned to NHQ.





RCPP-Forest Health Works

- **Two Application Periods, one in FY2023 and one in FY2024**
- **US-Held Easements**
 - 30 Applications
 - Applications totaling 1,727 acres
 - 7 Application pre-selected, totaling 373 acres
- **Entity Held Easements**
 - 7 Applications
 - Applications from 5 land trusts
 - Applications totaling 168 acres
 - 2 Applications pre-selected, totaling 105 acres





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Rhode Island NRCS Easement





FY 2024 Easement Allocations By Program

Agricultural Lands Easement Program (ALE)

- \$622,400

Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WRE)

- \$338,000

Originally allocated \$556,000 for ALE but we requested additional funds



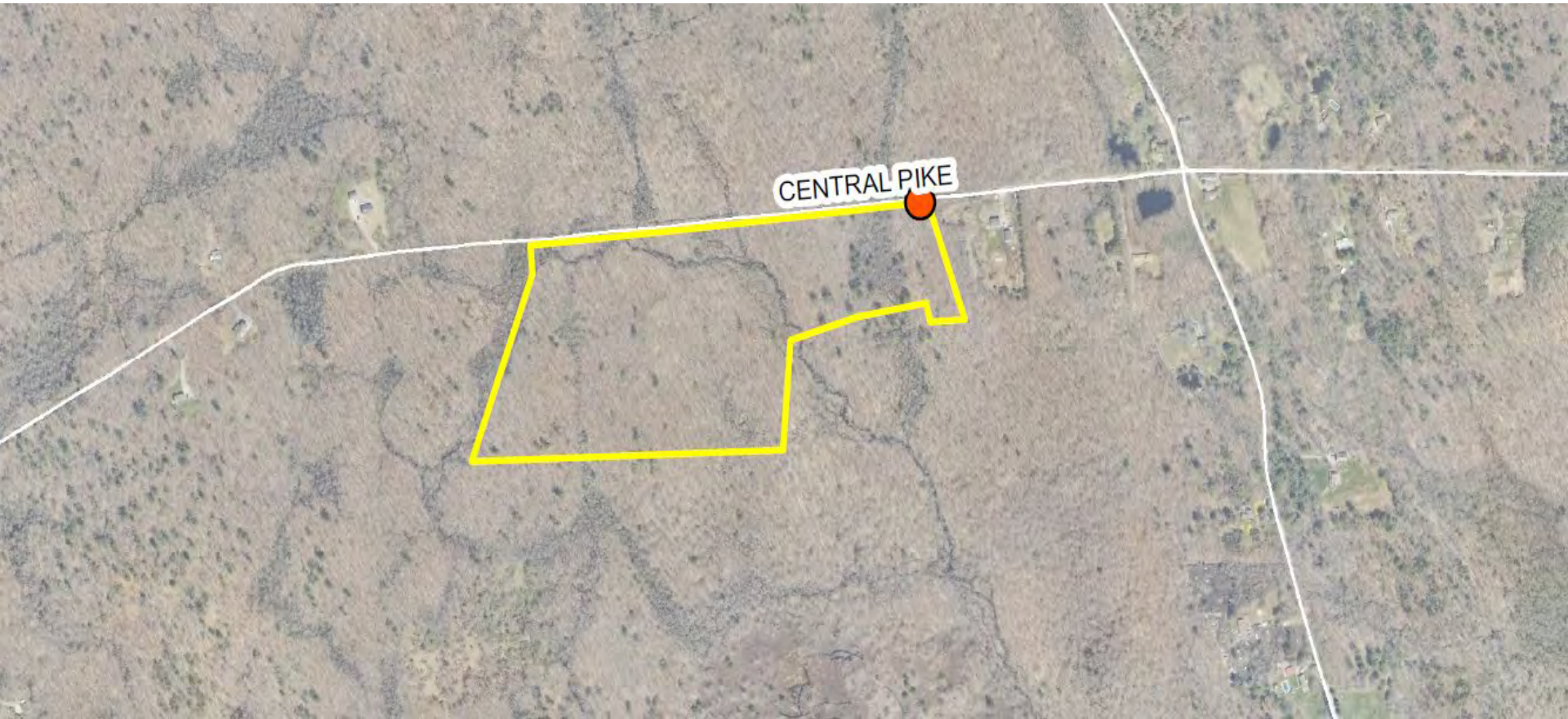
FY2024 Easement Closings

RCPP14 Healthy Forest Reserve Program

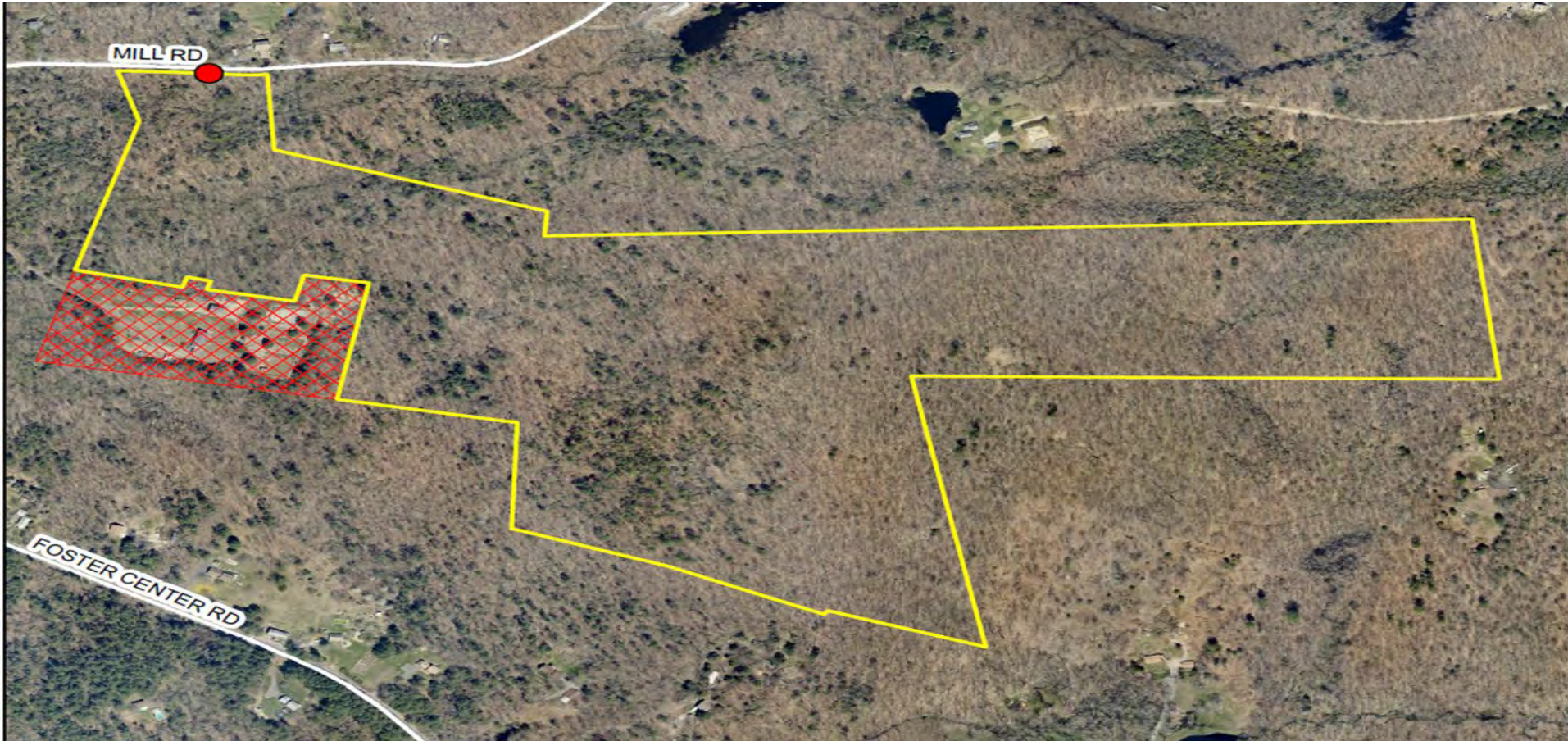
- 132.9 ac
- \$329,831 NRCS Cost
- 2 US Held Easements
- Foster

These Complete our RCPP14 Forest Reserve Easements
For the Southern NE Heritage Forest

36.02 acres of forestland conserved under RCPP14 located in Foster, RI.



96.9 acres of forestland conserved under RCPP14 located in Foster, RI



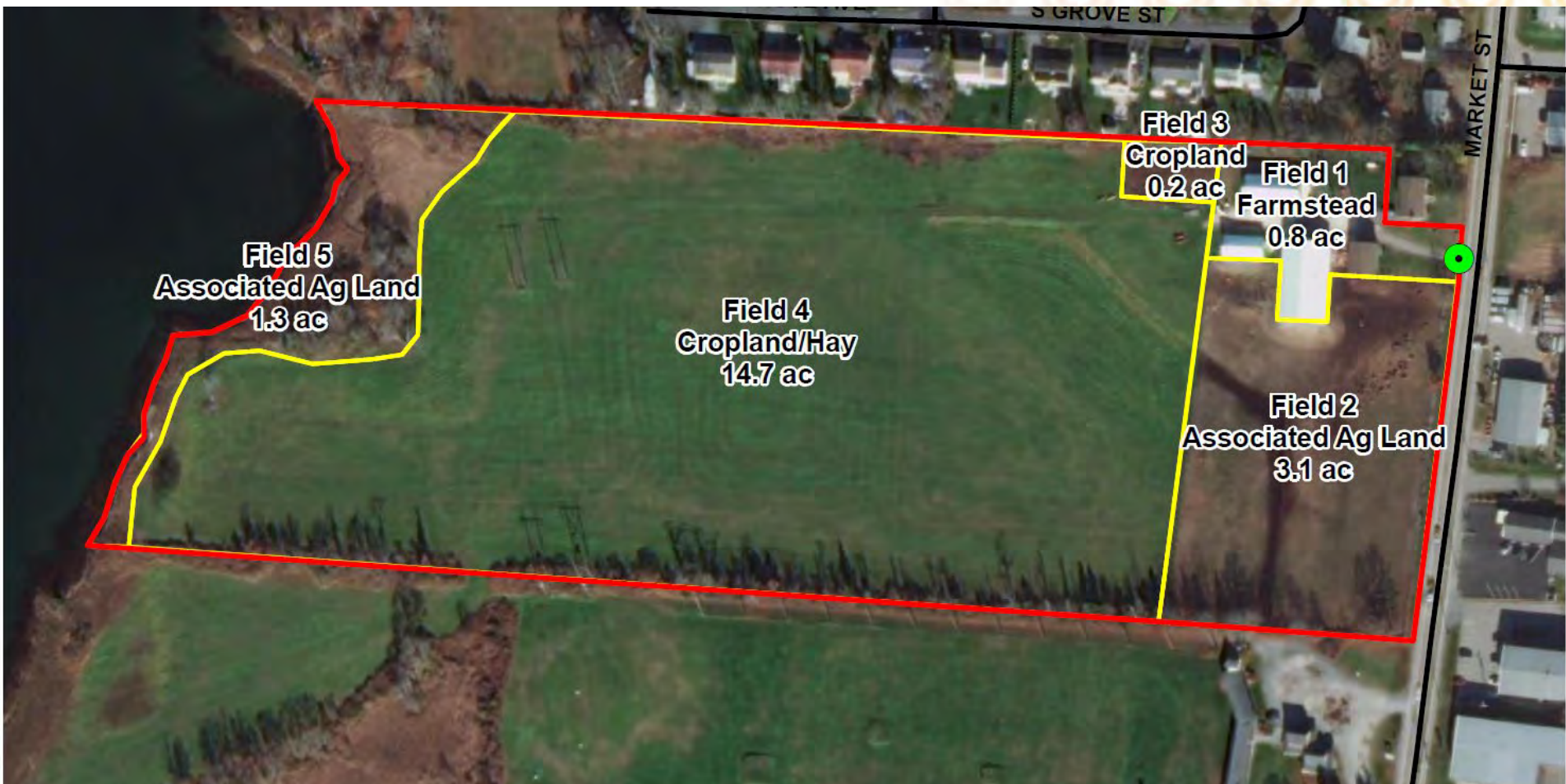
FY2024 Easement Closings

ACEP-Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

- 20.4 ac
- \$480,000 NRCS Easement Cost (50%)
- 1 Easement
- Warren



20.4 acres of cropland conserved under ACEP-ALE located in Warren, RI



Rocky Hill School – WRE Restoration Project

Restoration of runnels. Spoils were used to create islands for birds that utilize coastal marshes



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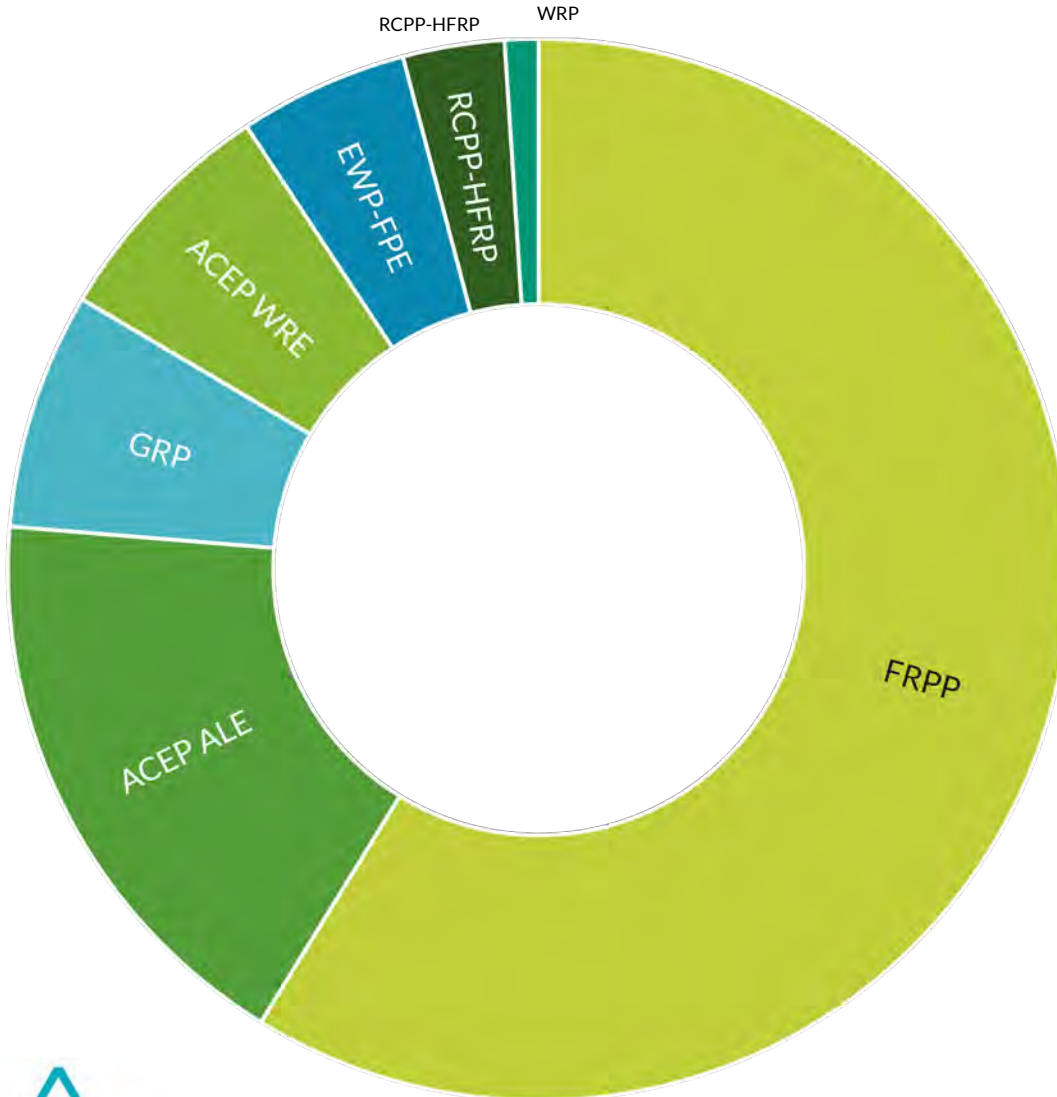
**Rocky Hill- Wetland Reserve
Easement - 23 Acres**
Creation of runnels



Creation of turtle nesting habitat



Rhode Island NRCS Easement Portfolio



Program	# Easements	Approx. Acres (ac)
ACEP ALE	17	372
ACEP WRE	7	478
FRPP	57	2866
WRP	1	30
RCPP-HFRP	3	275
GRP	7	119
EWP-FPE	5	111
Total	97	4251

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Next Steps

State Technical Team Items to Review and provide Comments:

1. **Wetland Reserve Easement and EWP Floodplain Easements Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) and Not to Exceed Rates (NTE)-** Annually NRCS must establish a maximum per acre payment rate (Not to Exceed) and the GARC which is the percentage of the fair market value that NRCS pays for the easement (FY 2024 was 95%). This is based on prior year appraisals, local assessed land values and agricultural land values.
2. **ACEP-Agricultural Lands Easement Program- Grassland of Special Significance (GSS) Definition-** ACEP-ALE allows NRCS to pay 75% of the easement value for GSS. Each State must develop a definition for the GSS to determine eligibility. The manual provides specific criteria.
3. **Wetland Reserve Easement Compatible Use Agreements-** NRCS may, in its sole discretion, authorize the landowner to conduct compatible uses on the easement or contract area. Such authorizations are time-limited and may be modified or rescinded at any time by NRCS. Compatible uses include activities like trails, mowing, grazing, forestry activities etc. WE have developed a list for Rhode Island that the STT can review and provided comment.
4. **Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) –** State Technical Committee and partners will be surveyed to provide input on the FY2025 CIG priorities.



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Thank You



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