

Inflation Reduction Act in Action:

Helping Stabilize Agricultural Land in Southeastern Colorado

Baca and surrounding counties in Southeastern Colorado have very highly erodible land. Past drought conditions and high winds have caused agricultural producers in that area to struggle to keep their soils intact. Thanks to the **Inflation Reduction Act**, these producers are receiving technical and financial assistance as they implement climate-smart conservation practices that help stabilize their wind-stricken lands.

“Landowners are tired of their land blowing away,” said James Brenner, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) resource team lead and district conservationist in Springfield, Colorado. “Inflation Reduction Act funding [has enabled] them [to] install conservation measures that will help.”

The Inflation Reduction Act provides an additional \$19.5 billion for NRCS to deliver technical and financial assistance to producers for **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities** through existing USDA conservation programs. This funding helps producers implement climate-smart agriculture practices on their operations.

As a result, Colorado landowners are utilizing these funds to install tens of thousands of acres of cover crops and thousands of acres of wildlife habitat that benefit both soil health (improved carbon stocks) and wildlife such as **lesser prairie chickens**. The lesser prairie-chicken is a nationally identified target species of the NRCS-led **Working Lands for Wildlife** partnership, a collaborative approach to conserve habitat while keeping working lands working.



Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, producers in Southeastern Colorado are receiving technical and financial assistance as they implement climate-smart conservation practices that help stabilize their wind-stricken lands. Photo credit: Joseph Mort, NRCS.

Vance Alfrey and Becki Schroder are Baca County producers in Springfield making a difference on their farm and ranch using Inflation Reduction Act funding made available through the NRCS’s **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP).

Vance and Becki have planted cover crops including mung bean, turnip, radish, millet, and Sorghum Sudangrass. Grass, legume, and forb cover crops planted for seasonal vegetative cover provide many benefits. These crops not only sequester carbon in the soil but also enable Vance and Becki to keep their soil from eroding and help their cattle operation.

Quick Farm Facts

Location: Baca County, Colorado

Operation Type: Livestock

Climate-Smart Practices:

Cover Crops

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

IRA represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. It provides an additional \$19.5 billion over five years for climate-smart agriculture through existing NRCS conservation programs: nrcs.usda.gov/inflation-reduction-act.

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF)

is an integrated approach that enables farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to respond to climate change by reducing or removing GHG emissions (mitigation) and adapting and building resilience (adaptation), while sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes. View the [practice list](#).

How to Apply

Learn more about the exciting opportunities to use Inflation Reduction Act funds for forest land conservation at your local USDA Service Center, which you can find at: farmers.gov/working-with-us/USDA-service-centers.



James Brenner, resource team lead and district conservationist for NRCS, talks with Baca County producers Vance Alfrey and Becki Schroder about the success of their cover crops, and how it has impacted their operation. Photo credit: Joseph Mort, NRCS.

Cover crops are not harvested cash crops but instead are planted to build soil health and carbon stocks by reducing erosion, incrementally increasing organic matter, and building soil structure while reducing soil compaction. Producers who plant cover crops may also see the co-benefits of improved water quality, suppressed weed pressure, and broken pest cycles.

“The cover crops help with the field not blowing [away] and [with us] not having the expense to spray weeds since chemical prices are up,” said Vance.

The cover crop systems include a variety of plant mixes and installation schedules. A mix of plant species and planting rotation, along with limited disturbance of residue, helps protect topsoil from wind and improves biodiversity and organic matter in soil, improving its health.

“Cover crops have helped the fields environment by helping suppress weeds [and they] add organic matter and nutrients to the soil with the legumes,” said Becki. “Having [them] has saved our feed bill during dry times and [gives us] a place to put our cows lands working.



Producers Vance Alfrey and Becki Schroder in field of cover crops planted following wheat harvest. Vance and Becki farm together with Becki's husband and two sons, Derek and Jeb.