

# NRCS and the Inflation Reduction Act

Fiscal Year 2024



## Implementation

Fiscal year 2024 was another record year across the nation for conservation. The dedicated team at USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), along with our conservation partners, successfully implemented practices on America's working lands while effectively managing the largest conservation funding opportunity the agency has ever received through the [Inflation Reduction Act](#).

NRCS made \$3.1 billion available from the Inflation Reduction Act for [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry \(CSAF\) Mitigation Activities](#) and \$2 billion through the Farm Bill for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The agency obligated 97.6% of all available fiscal year 2024 Inflation Reduction Act conservation program 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 developing a personalized plan to address their resource concerns and target climate-smart agricultural conservation practices for implementation.

In fiscal year 2024, NRCS invested an average of over \$15.5 million (Farm Bill and IRA) every day into agricultural conservation across the nation. In addition, the number of contracted individual CSAF practices and enhancements increased significantly when compared to fiscal year 2023. The table below highlights the five most popular CSAF practices obligated and highlights the increase from fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024.

PRACTICE	# OF INFLATION REDUCTION ACT PRACTICE OBLIGATIONS		# OF FARM BILL PRACTICE OBLIGATIONS		TOTAL	
	FY2023	FY2024	FY2023	FY2024	FY2023	FY2024
Cover Crop (340)	3,324	22,023	12,120	9,995	15,444	32,018
Prescribed Grazing (528)	1,446	10,830	9,169	9,188	10,615	20,018
Nutrient Management (590)	879	6,607	4,159	5,738	5,038	12,345
Forest Stand Improvement (666)	1,308	6,760	5,194	4,343	6,502	11,103
Pasture and Hay Planting (512)	764	6,544	5,540	3,966	6,304	10,510

Total customer demand for NRCS conservation assistance is strong. Despite the additional Inflation Reduction Act funding, NRCS still had unmet producer demand of over 106,000 applications for EQIP, CSP, and ACEP. NRCS received \$5.4 billion in RCP proposals. The total demand for climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices and projects was millions of dollars higher than available funding across all programs.

Across the United States, landowners are excited about this historic opportunity to work with NRCS. Hear directly from them: [Inflation Reduction Act in Action StoryMap](#).

## Delivering on Opportunities

NRCS worked hard 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 was allocated effectively, efficiently, and equitably by increasing capacity, streamlining programs, and building and expanding partnerships.



**END-OF-YEAR 2024 FINAL NUMBERS**

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>FY24 FUNDING AVAILABLE<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>TOTAL INFLATION REDUCTION ACT REQUESTS</b>	<b>CONSERVATION ON THE LANDSCAPE</b>
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$1.675 billion	Over 25,000 <sup>2</sup> applications	18,137 landowners received climate focused contracts on over 6.3 million acres
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	\$472 million	Over 6,900 <sup>2</sup> applications	5,269 landowners received climate focused contracts on 5.4 million acres
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)	\$189 million	Over 1,000 <sup>2</sup> applications (\$488 million)	26 ACEP-ALE agreements funded covering over 36,920 acres.
			68 ACEP-WRE agreements funded covering over 9,490 acres.
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)	\$754 million	Nearly \$5.4 billion requested through 323 proposals	More than \$1 billion is being invested to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 new projects and two renewals.

<sup>1</sup>Values reflect sequestered fiscal year 2024 program totals. <sup>2</sup>Totals include only valid, qualified applications.

### *Increasing Capacity*

NRCS continued its efforts to ramp up recruitment and hiring, training, retaining employees, and business planning to meet additional hiring needs to implement the Inflation Reduction Act. These strategies enabled NRCS to increase overall hiring in fiscal year 2024 by 53% and decrease separations by 6%. NRCS secured direct hire authority for over 1,600 new Inflation Reduction Act-funded core staff and anticipates that this authority will streamline hiring in the critical skills necessary to accomplish implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act.

### *Streamlining Programs*

NRCS improved and streamlined its programs to strengthen Inflation Reduction Act implementation. NRCS is rolling out several improvements to the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) and the [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#). For ACEP, NRCS is updating processes and increasing its use of partnerships to assist with acquiring the land surveys and has simplified the review process for producer-acquired land surveys. This will speed up the time it takes producers and landowners to enroll. For RCPP, improvements include streamlining the RCPP agreement process and refining guidance to streamline how applicants may apply for more than one program with a single application.

### *Building and Expanding Partnerships*

NRCS would not have been able to achieve its current level of success without engaged conservation partners. Through new Inflation Reduction Act pilot agreements, NRCS has expanded its partnerships by decreasing the administrative burdens on partnering organizations. NRCS also expanded and established partnerships with numerous state level agreements.

### *Quantification is Key*

The Inflation Reduction Act provides \$300 million to improve estimating the impact of management practices on carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas emissions. This work supports the broader USDA Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MMRV) effort. See [Greenhouse Gas Quantification and the Inflation Reduction Act](#).

## **Supporting Producers**

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 agricultural 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).

