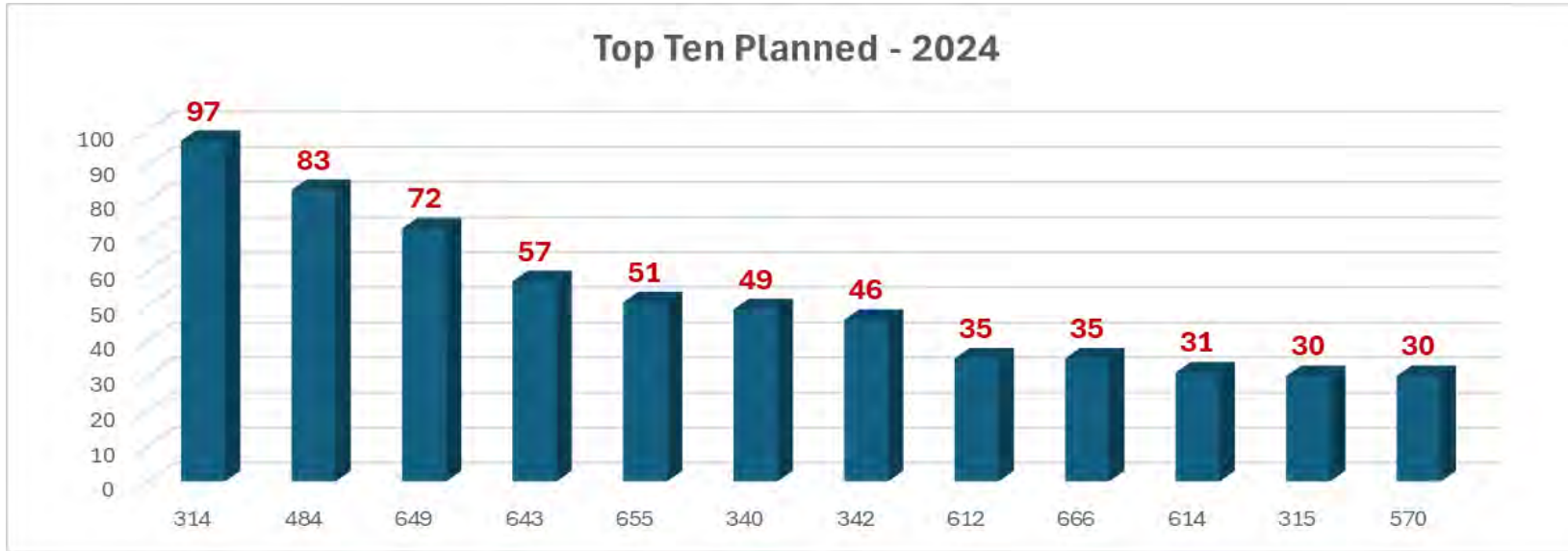


Ecological Sciences Update

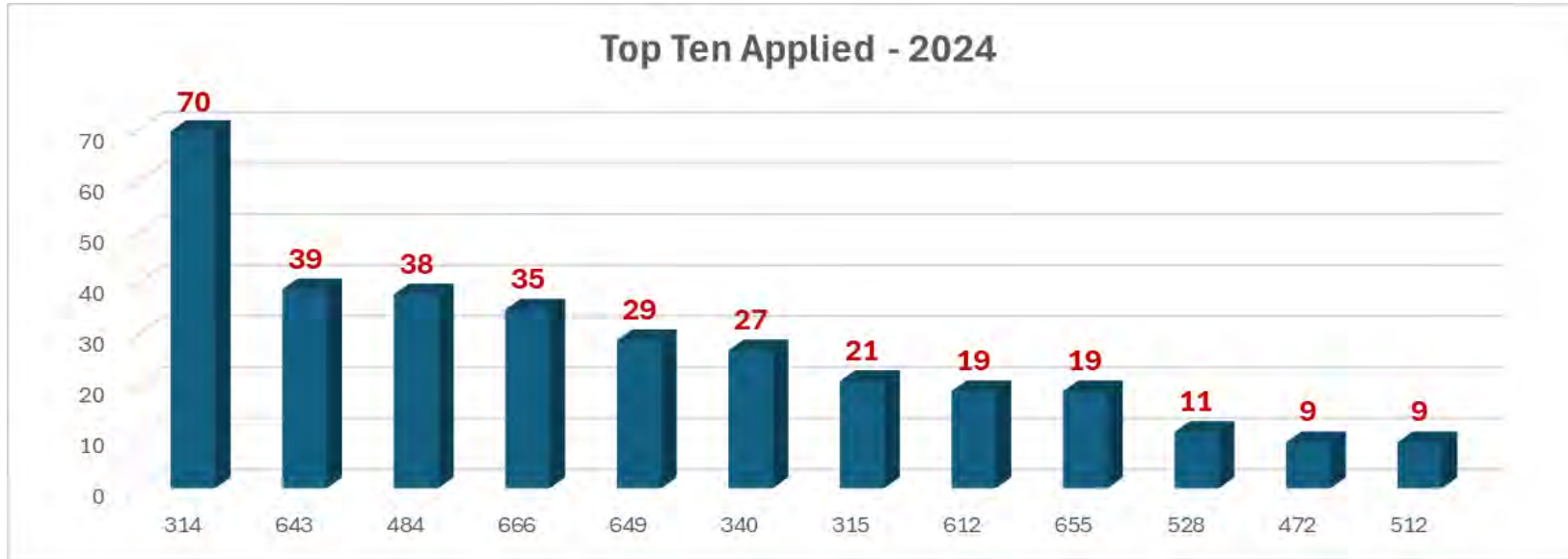
Cassius Spears, Jr.
State Resource Conservationist
NRCS Rhode Island





1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 8 9 10 10

Practice Code	Practice Name	Count Planned
314	Brush Management	97
484	Mulching	83
649	Structures for Wildlife	72
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	57
655	Forest Trails and Landings	51
340	Cover Crop	49
342	Critical Area Planting	46
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	35
666	Forest Stand Improvement	35
614	Watering Facility	31
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	30
570	Stormwater Runoff Control	30



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 8 9 10 10

Practice code	Practice Name	2024
314	Brush Management	70
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	39
484	Mulching	38
666	Forest Stand Improvement	35
649	Structures for Wildlife	29
340	Cover Crop	27
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	21
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	19
655	Forest Trails and Landings	19
528	Prescribed Grazing	11
472	Access Control	9
512	Pasture and Hay Planting	9

ECS Updates

Forestry

- Forestland In-Field Soil Health Assessment released
- Renewed focus on Agroforestry practices
 - Forest Farming, Alley Cropping, Silvopasture
- Increased interest in wildfire risk reduction
 - Fuel breaks (EQIP or CSP)
- No changes in FY25 for forestry conservation planning activities (CPA 106, DIA 165, CEMA 223)
- Completed review of 37 Forest Management Plans in FY24
- Held 6 forestry training sessions for field staff and TSPs
 - Topics: FSI as climate smart practice, plant ID, managing urban forests, BMPs for water quality protection, forest inventory

ECS Updates

Wildlife

- Approved to use IRA funding for oyster restoration projects
 - Working to develop an agreement to quantify GHG mitigation benefits of this practice
- Gear cycling for oyster growers re-introduced for FY24
- Endangered species consultation updates:
 - Tricolored bat proposed endangered
 - Monarch butterfly candidate for listing
 - Completed 7 site surveys for small whorled pogonia in FY24
- New interim practice Wildlife Habitat Site Preparation
 - Provides additional funding for mechanical/chemical control of existing vegetation prior to herbaceous seeding

RI CPS and ICPS Consultation

Conservation Practice Standards

- Soil Carbon Amendment (336) - 2025
- Forest Farming (379) - 2025

Interim Conservation Practice Standards

- Low Tunnel Systems (821) - FY2025
- Strategic Harvested Forage Management (827) - FY2025
- Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805) - FY2026
- Nonruminant Livestock Outdoor Management of Vegetative Cover (822) - FY2026
- Culturally Significant Plantings for Soil Health (825) - FY2026
- Wildlife Habitat Site Preparation (828) - FY2026

Next Step

STT Review of Conservation Practice Standards

Rhode Island State Technical Advisory
Committee Meeting

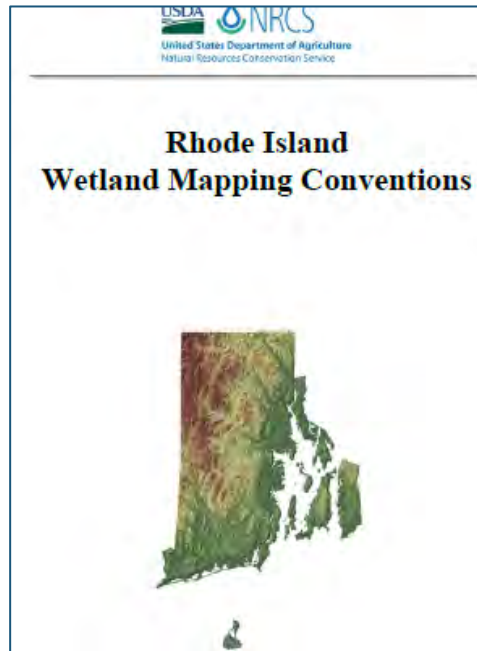
November 14, 2024

Rhode Island State Off-site Methods for Food Security Act Wetland Compliance



Purpose

- To make State Technical Advisory Committee aware of update to Rhode Island Wetland Compliance State Off-site Methods (SOSM)



Background

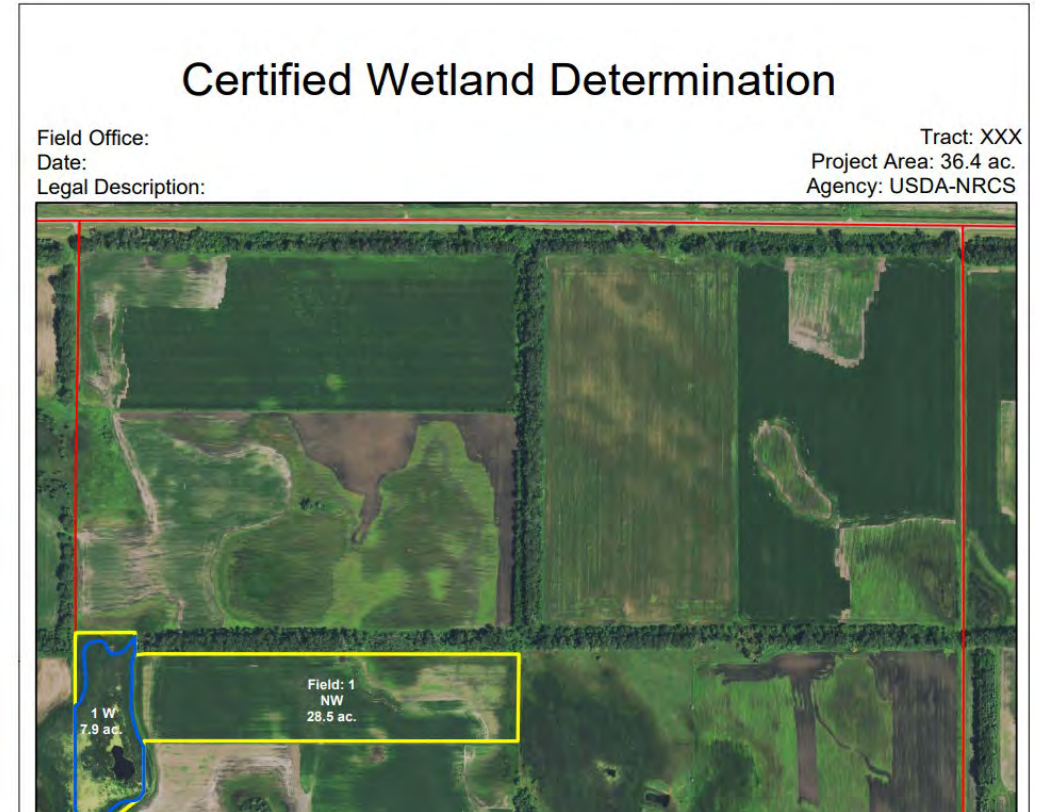
- **Food Security Act of 1985 (as amended)**
 - **Also known as the 1985 Farm Bill**
 - **Introduced the Swampbuster provisions (aka Wetland Conservation)**
 - To maintain eligibility for USDA programs, participants must self-certify that they have not
 - Produced crops on converted wetlands after December 23, 1985
 - Made production of a crop possible on a wetland after November 28, 1990
 - Clearing, draining, filling, land leveling, and excavation actions could potentially make production possible and land is evaluated by NRCS to ensure wetlands are not affected.
 - Requests for evaluation are done through filing AD-1026 from with Farm Service Agency
- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/certified-wetlands-determination>

NRCS Technical Determinations

- **NRCS is responsible for providing certified wetland determinations**
- **To USDA program participants so that they can make informed land management decisions and**
- **Stay in compliance with the Wetland Conservation Provisions detailed in the Code of Federal Regulations in 7 CFR Part 12.**
 - Guidance used in making determinations:
 - 1987 US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Wetland Delineation Manual, Technical Report Y-87-1
 - Regional Supplement to the Corps Manual
 - National Food Security Act Manual Part 514.8(A)
 - Food Security Act Wetland Identification Procedures

NRCS Wetland Determination Process

1. Wetland Identification
2. Wetland Compliance Label Assignment
 - Do any exemptions to the Wetland Conservation Provisions Apply?
3. Development of Wetland Determination Map (sizing)



State Off-site Methods (SOSM)

- Provides clarity and guidance for each step of wetland determination process
- Provides assessment for obvious non-wetland areas
- Identifies data sources that can be used for each wetland factor:

Hydric Vegetation



Hydric Soils



Hydrology = WETLAND



Next Steps

Rhode Island State Off-site Methods

- Shared with State Technical Committee (today)
- Sent to Federal Register for 30-day public comment period (completed)
- Approved for use FY 2025, adopt process, post on eFOTG

Contact:
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Soil Scientist
Jim.turenne@usda.gov



Thank you!

- Questions?



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