

STAC Meeting Minutes

1/14/2025

Welcome-Juan Hernandez, Florida State Conservationist

- I. Financial Assistance, what NRCS accomplished 2024
 - a. On the news FL NRCS hurricane impact, most time took up most of NRCS response in 2024.
 - i. NRCS accomplished a lot within that timeframe with $\frac{3}{4}$ of the state being impacted by back to back hurricanes
 - ii. FY25 Florida EQIP Hurricane Disaster Assistance funding
 1. Allocation: \$12 million
 2. Preapprovals: \$9,925319.10
 3. Balance: \$2,074680.90
 - iii. FY25 Florida EQIP IRA Hurricane Disaster Assistance
 1. Allocation: \$14 million
 2. Preapprovals: \$8,734,792.06
 3. Balance: \$5,265207.94
 - b. Hurricane Equip is separate from regular EQIP funds
 - c. FSA has limitations of what they are able to offer so NRCS came up with an agreement together with an ongoing learning process.
 - i. Many times, double work was done between FSA and NRCS so an agreement was made to join efforts to effectively serve our FL producers during Hurricane Disasters
 - d. NRCS will only offer practices not offered by FSA during disaster assistance sign ups
 - i. This eliminates time wasted with both agencies and will allow work to move along faster in the application process.
 - e. Farm Bill Dollars-half funding has been approved for contracts. Projected to use most of the funds but not all.
 - f. As NRCS moves forward, they will learn what works best, what practices are sought after most to then approve our hurricane disaster practices to best serve Florida's producers.
 - g. State Conservationist clarifies the 2-million-dollar balance will be reallocated for other demands FL has
 - i. If demand is there for other practices, funds will shift to other practices
 - ii. What ever balance is left, will be reallocated for other emergency purposes.
 - h. Unique this year:
 - i. A strategy was adapted to assess damage in a 5-Step Process
 1. The process allows to assess a landowner's property of damage and categorize it into 1 of 4 categories (Light, Moderate, Severe, Catastrophic damage)
 2. By using this model, it has saved time and accurately assesses damage to obligate funds properly.

- ii. State Conservationist stands behind this model as it was very successful since Hurricane Ian
 - 1. Producers are now coming in with correct percentage of damage since model has been working.
 - 2. With relationship with AFIS has made this model effective.
 - 3. Goal this year and next year is to push this model even further to make it more effective and user friendly.
 - i. FSA has deeper pockets for the emergency disaster assistance so NRCS will be limited at what they are able to help with but will continue to be available to assist where they can.
- II. Metrics-percentage of applications
 - a. As a state, 30% success rate of applications, walking out with contracts and funding.
 - i. 70% waiting for funding
 - b. Florida has a significant demand for applications coming for funding.
 - c. State Conservationist wants to be very precise of where to approach outreach to best serve Florida.

Financial Assistance Programs Updates-Amber Till, Assistant State Conservationist-Financial Assistance Programs

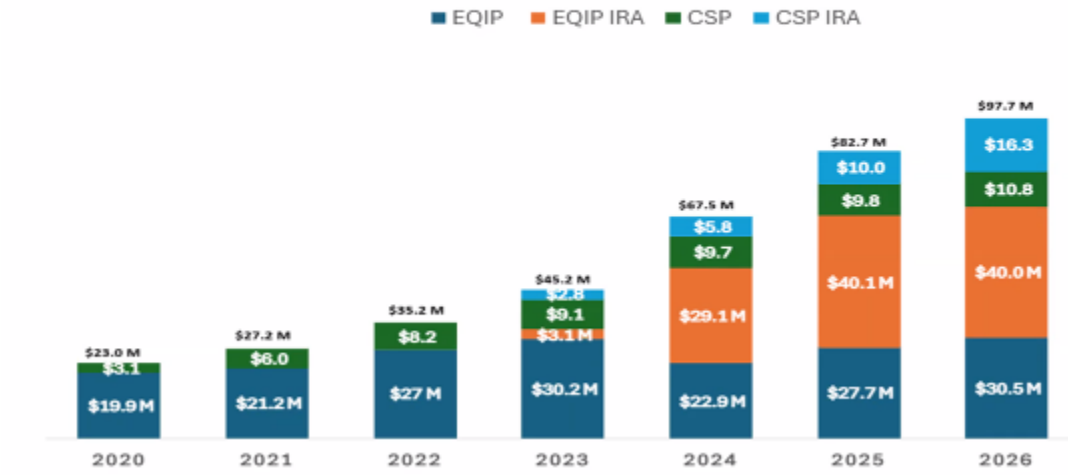
- I. FY2025 Disaster Assistance Timeline
 - a. Florida EQIP Hurricane Disaster Assistance and Florida EQIP IRA Hurricane Disaster Assistance have the same timeline
 - i. Application sign-up period-October 18, 2024- December 20, 2024
 - ii. FSA Determination-Prior to Contract Approval
 - iii. Assess/Rank/Cost Estimate and Preapproval-completed on a biweekly batching schedule.
 - 1. Applications were worked on as they were received instead of waiting until the end of the sign-up period.
 - 2. This helped speed up the process and move to obligation soon to better serve NRCS customers.
 - iv. Obligation-45 days after Pre-approval
 - b. Customers can apply during several biweekly batches and take them in the order they are received
 - c. Did this to get contracts into the hands of producers as soon as possible. A way to work on the applications as we attain them, instead of waiting until the very end of the application period. Saves on time and gets contracts made sooner.
- II. FY2025 CSP Timeline
 - a. CSP Renewals timeline
 - i. Sign-up-May 3,2024
 - ii. Assessment/Ranking-April 18, 2024
 - iii. Preapproval-November 22, 2024
 - iv. Obligation-December 20, 2024

1. Renewals gives opportunities to compete to continue current contract through regular assessment and obligation.
 - b. CSP Classic/IRA Timeline
 - i. Sign-up-November 1, 2024
 - ii. Assessment/Ranking-Assessment/Ranking-March 7, 2025
 - iii. Preapproval-March 14, 2025
 - iv. Obligation-June 30, 2025
 - c. Classic-Farm Bill funding IRA-reduction act funding
 - i. Assessment is coming up, now processing applications
 - d. Wanting to put CSP before EQIP to promote CSP
- III. FY 2025 EQIP Timeline
- a. EQIP Classic/ IRA Timeline
 - i. Sign-up-November 1, 2024
 - ii. Assessment/Ranking-Assessment/Ranking-March 7, 2025
 - iii. Preapproval-March 14, 2025
 - iv. Obligation-June 30, 2025
 - b. EQIP ACT Now Timeline
 - i. Sign-up- Continuous until funds are exhausted
 - ii. Assessment/Ranking-biweekly
 - iii. Preapproval-biweekly
 - iv. Obligation-45 days after preapproval
 1. ACT Now process is unique as it is a continuous process until funds are used up to the fullest extent.
- IV. FY 2025 Allocations
- a. CSP Initial Allocation: **\$19,870,000**
 - i. CSP Farm Bill - \$9,870,000
 1. General CSP- \$8,870,000
 2. General CSP Long Leaf Pine Initiative - \$1,000,000
 - ii. CSP IRA - \$ 10,000,000
 1. General CSP IRA- \$10,000,000
 - b. EQIP Initial Allocation: **\$67,899,997**
 - i. EQIP Farm Bill - \$ 27,769,997
 1. General: 1\$18,136,280
 2. Gopher Tortoise Initiative: \$1,964,760
 3. Long Leaf Pine Initiative: \$1,779,305
 4. WLFW Northern Bobwhite: \$889,652
 5. Disaster Assistance: \$5,000,000
 - ii. EQIP IRA - **\$ 40,130,770**
 1. General EQIP IRA - \$21,630,770
 2. Disaster EQIP IRA - \$14,000,000
 3. CIC EQIP IRA - \$4,000,000
 4. CIG IRA- \$500,000
 - iii. Total Allocations: **\$87,770,767**

- c. Opportunities for states to go to headquarters for more funding
 - i. If FL did not use all funds, other states could request for reallocation of unused funds
- d. General EQIP
 - i. As disasters occur, a portion of allocations above will be put into the disaster fund
 - ii. All other are required to funds to be used.
 - iii. Allocations are subdivided into several ranking pools
 - 1. Area levels 1-4
 - a. Funding available for specific types of funding pools based on the need of the area instead of applications competing against the entire state.
 - b. Allows for better funding opportunities for the applicant to receive funding based on the area the producer lives in and what is needed in that area.
 - c. Are the applicants ranked against whole state or just area?
 - i. If applicable an applicant could be ranked against whole state pool
 - ii. If applicable an applicant could be ranked in area, field office, or state pools.
 - iii. In our quest to help as many people as possible, we dissect funding into smaller pools to better serve NRCS customers
 - iv. CIC-
 - 1. 5 Year contract, similar to CSP
 - 2. Funding must be set aside for this
 - 3. Climate smart mitigation activities related to soil health, wildlife, grazing, energy,
 - a. The list of activities is long, it is not as limiting

V. EQIP/ CSP Trends

EQIP/CSP Trend



- VI. Demand over available funding
 - a. Less obligations in CSP contracts could be due to size of the contracts
 - b. Overall, pretty steady number of contracts being funded.
 - i. Many circumstances of not getting contracts.
 - ii. Obligating around 30% of applications.
 - iii. Deferred applicants are okay to work on this year as we have worked with these customers before

FY 2023/2024- Percent Obligated

| FY2023 | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Program | Applications | Contracts | Deferred | Cancelled | Ineligible | Percent Obligation |
| EQIP | 2739 | 775 | 1205 | 515 | 244 | 28% |
| CStwP | 474 | 258 | 88 | 103 | 25 | 54% |
| Grand Total | 3213 | 1033 | 1293 | 618 | 269 | 32% |
| | | | | | | |
| FY2024 | | | | | | |
| Program | Applications | Contracts | Deferred | Cancelled | Ineligible | Percent Obligation |
| EQIP | 2790 | 777 | 1364 | 515 | 134 | 28% |
| CStwP | 557 | 217 | 219 | 100 | 21 | 39% |
| Grand Total | 3347 | 994 | 1583 | 615 | 155 | 30% |

Easement Updates-Marcus Shorter ASTC Easements

- I. Accomplishments 2024
 - a. 2022 monitoring was not high priority with Easements, so it was made a priority for easements team to improve on monitoring
 - i. Rated Top 5 in nation for monitoring!! Well done!
 - b. Acres both WRE and ALE
 - c. Resorted 22,568 acres in Florida
 - i. Prior to FY 2024 Florida was on the “Most Unrestored Acres” in the US.
 1. This is no longer true as this is a major improvement from prior years.
 - d. Received 22 million in additional funding
 - e. Developed WRCG document to establish policy and guidelines on how the Easements team rank, acquire, restore, and maintain easements in Florida in accordance with national policy.
 - f. Audit FY 2024
 - i. Every single document was pulled and looked at by the national audit team
 - ii. They stated FL had some of the best documentation in the country
- II. FY 2025-Crenel Francis- Easement Coordinator
 - a. Will request more funding for FY 2025 to meet demand of Easements
 - b. Approval to pay up to 80% of the value of the market value of easement
 - c. Ranking pool is available on NRCS FL website
 - d. Closed 3 easements-13 million in first Quarter of FY 25
 - e. Interest comes from education however, more education on what lands are eligible is needed.
 - f. Hoping to lower acreage amount from 75 acres to 40 acres so more landowners can be eligible.

Acquisition

Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)

- FY 24/25 = 12 applications
- Closed 3 easement FY25-
Totaling \$12,956,200.00
- 2 easement pending closing-
Totaling \$4,923,256.00
- \$8.6 million received in IRA funding.



Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

- FY2025 IRA Batch 1: 4 applications, all selected for funding.
- FY2025 IRA Batch 2: 5 applications. Will be ranked and selected by February 2025.
- \$23,044,500 Federal Funds Requested via FY25 ALE-IRA applications.
- \$8,649,129 ACEP IRA allocation.
- \$4,302,615 allocation for State ALE pool.
- Will request additional ACEP-IRA funds to meet the gap.
- 9 active ALE parcel contracts from FY23 and FY24.

- III. Stewardship & Restoration-Scott Kuipers
 - a. Okeechobee, FL staff have taken over monitoring
 - i. New easements are to be monitored every year for first 3 years
 - ii. Over 200 thousand acres needing to be monitored every year.
 - iii. New Technology is making it easier to monitor however it is not available to all staff yet.
 - iv. Goal is to monitor each easement every year and meet with landowner face to face to make goals for the land yearly.

Monitoring

- Kicked off 2025 monitoring with FWC on 10/22/24
- All monitoring will be entered through new online GIS monitoring tool.
- WRP/WRE **149** easements to monitor.
- **25** FRPP, **12** GRP and **4** OSL easements also need monitoring.
- FWC scheduled to complete **82** WRP/WRE onsite monitoring events.
- NRCS staff will complete the remaining monitoring events.
- 100% FY24 monitoring were completed.

b. Stewardship Funding for Landowner Agreements Ranked with Tool:

- 100% of cost covered for stewardship contracts
- Site specific grazing plans have been made for landowners for more native habitats than nonnative habitats
- A lot goes into the Compatible use agreements to make sure restoration is still main goal of land.
- 8 contracts funded for management activities. Hoping to fund the remaining amount to then request more stewardship funds for coming year.

Stewardship Funding for Landowner Agreements Ranked with Tool:

- A quantitative ranking, developed in collaboration with the FWC, was utilized to determine priority based heavily on wildlife values.
- Easement stewardship projects are selected for consideration based on annual monitoring reports data and onsite inspections conducted throughout the year on all easements.
- Currently managing 47 active stewardship contracts and 11 restoration contracts.
- Updating Compatible Use Agreements as needed in Conservation Desktop with all supporting documentation.
- Also utilize multiple partners to implement additional restoration and stewardship activities.
- Easement projects that were not able to be funded are deferred to the next year to be considered against additional projects identified in the next fiscal year.

c. Violations

- FY23-24-7 easement violations (4 have been address)
- FY25- Monitoring still in progress
 1. Most violations are simple conversation with landowner
- All Violations will be entered and tracked through required monitoring applications per policy.

d. ACEP WRE Reserved Grazing Rights Option

- Florida is currently seeking approval to offer a reserved grazing rights option as part of the Wetland Reserve Easement Program.
- Deed appendix language for the option has been drafted and submitted for national office review
 1. If approved, FL NRCS will announce the application period for this option.
- Grazing rights will be retained on the easement at a reduced easement acquisition price.

- iv. Grazing plans will be developed with native habitat restoration as the primary objective.
- e. Questions:
 - i. Are you getting pushback generation a profit off WRE?
 - 1. Not really-Scott
 - 2. We don't mechanisms to have landowners maintain property
 - 3. Financial incentive to graze for income and helps manage the land with grazing.
 - ii. Headquarters recognizing?
 - 1. Not yet, plan submitted to headquarters
 - iii. Violations, from a land trust perspective,
 - 1. Do you have a legal defense fund?
 - a. Yes-at headquarters
 - i. If not resolved in state, could be brought to headquarters. There is a full process that can go full onto court to resolve.
 - b. Landowners could be fined, dined to restore it back to what it should be, ect
- iv.

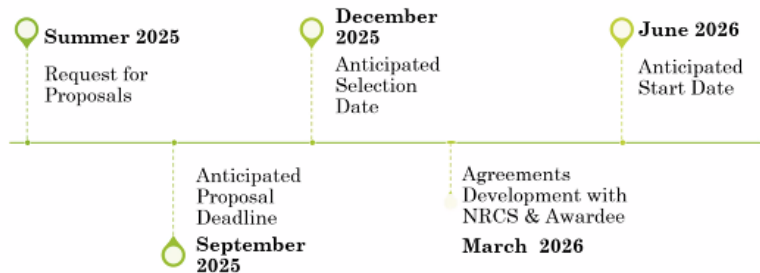
Partnerships and Initiatives Updates-Hilary Barnhart, Assistant State Conservations

Partnerships and Initiatives

- I. Florida State CIG
 - a. CIG-no sign up FY2024, expecting to complete sign-up CIG 2025 with a Notice of Funding Opportunity coming soon!
 - i. Priorities:
 - 1. Urban Agriculture
 - 2. Water Conservation
 - 3. Soil Health
 - 4. Carbon Sequestration
 - b. Requests for Proposals: TBD-Aiming for Spring/Summer 2025
 - c. Eligible Applicants
 - i. All U.S. based non-Federal entities (NFE) and individuals are eligible to apply for projects carried out in Florida
 - ii. Total Planned funding available: \$1,000,000
 - 1. Might have to bump down available funding with new administration, but plan to have \$1,000,000
 - 2. Individual Award floor: \$25,000
 - 3. Individual Award Ceiling: \$250,000
 - iii. Contributions
 - 1. Applicants contribute 1:1 match.
 - 2. HU applicants may provide 25% of total project costs.
 - 3. Tribal Applicants are not required to have any match
 - iv. Duration

1. Projects can be between 1-3 years
- v. Timeline

Overview of Dates/Timeline

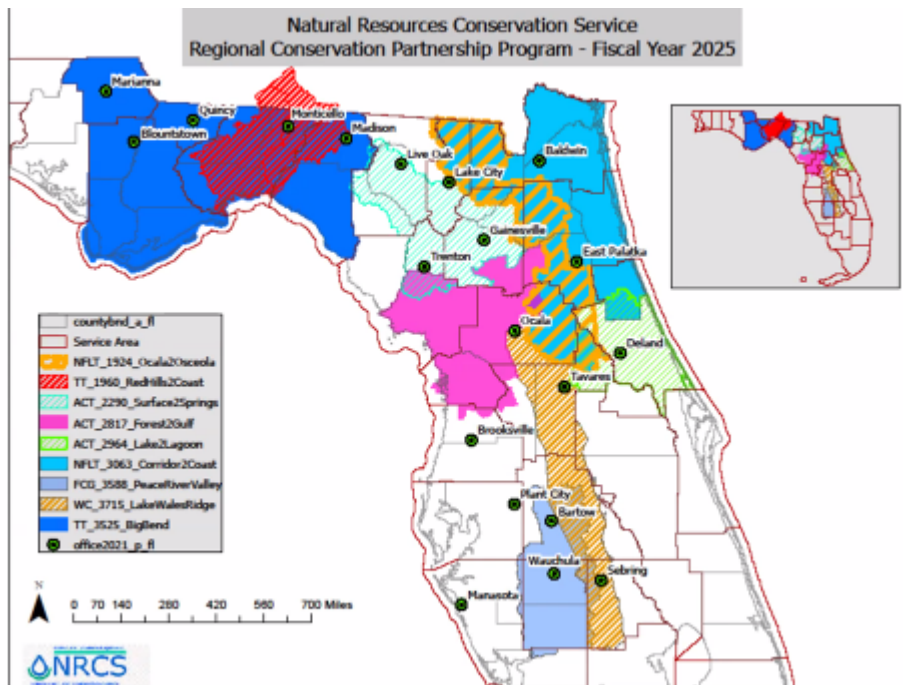


1. Anticipated dates, may change
 2. Webinar will be held, news release ect.
- d. Feedback on CIG accounts
- i. Should more money be put here? Should less money be there? Or is good the way it is?
 1. Committee is ok with how much money has been placed in CIG funding.
 - ii. CIG brings significant value for more research and new ideas for Florida. Gives us ideas for new practices
 - iii. Will have briefing on what CIG agreements have been bringing to the table in Florida
 - iv. Is there a current webpage on projects that have been awarded?
 1. There is a national NRCS page, Florida has a few available on the FL NRCS website
 2. When projects wrap up, presentations will be given on what was found on those projects.
 - v. What are these projects like?
 1. They bring in a new initiative that is not a practice yet.
 - a. Examples
 - i. Blackbeard-virtual fencing
 1. Can we test this in forestry?
 - a. State Conservationist suggests putting a proposal together to test this out this practice in the forest.
 2. Main goal is to test new initiatives, complete research
 - vi. Are there restrictions on what they can do and not do?
 1. Discussion on invasive species being planted or not planted.
 - a. No actual restrictions
 2. Talk to producer early on so nothing gets through the loops
 - vii. Urban Ag that are vetting funded these days?

II. RCPP updates-Denise Liggett RCPP Coordinator

a. 2024 Highlights

- i. FY2024 NFO brought in a lot of applications and was a tough competition.
- ii. Classic RCPP Projects Awarded-\$72,000,000
 1. Tall Timbers Research, Inc – Florida’s Big Bend Project
 - a. \$25,000,000 awarded
 2. Florida Conservation Group – Peace River Valley – Protecting Charlotte Harbor Headquarters
 - a. \$21,250,000 awarded
 3. Wildlands Conservation – Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem Project
 - a. \$25,000,000 awarded
- iii. Negotiations have been ongoing to complete all 3 Programmatic Partnership Agreements (PPA’s) to best serve the partner and NRCS
- iv. Florida taking part of an AFA project in Oklahoma as a non-lead state
 1. InterTribal Buffalo Council – Tribal Buffalo Restoration in the Southeast Region
 - a. Awarded - \$21,250,000
 - b. Other states involved: Kansas and Nebraska



b. Notice of Funding Opportunity: hopefully coming in March

- i. Funding
 1. Farm Bill 300 million
 2. 1.2 Billion from IRA
 3. Will lead to many more proposals coming in FY 25
- ii. Be strategic with proposals

1. Be nimble enough to be able to lower funding from 25 million to 10 million if IRA funding does not come through

c. Land management

i. FY2024 stats

1. Applications Received 61
2. Contracts Awarded: 57
3. Contracts Funding Total: \$1,153,063
4. Acres: 9,805

ii. FY 2025

1. Applications Received 75
2. Working through the process to get applications awarded to contracts and obligated.

iii. Numbers do not include newly awarded projects

iv. RCPP contracts very much like EQIP but are very project focused

v. Partners have a say in the ranking process

vi. Work closely with partners to implement project goals

vii. Hoping to have deadline sooner than regular EQIP

RCPP Easements

FY2023

- 3 Closed Easements for 1 project.
- Value: \$1,271,000 (NRCS \$635,500)
- Acres: 685



FY2024

- Applications Received: 22 active applications over 4 projects
- Estimated Value: \$57,874,972 (NRCS \$28,937,391)
- Acres: 6,890

FY2025

- Applications Received: 6 active applications over 4 projects
- Estimated Value: \$12,434,325 (NRCS \$6,217,118)
- Acres: 1,591

d.

e. RCPP Easement

i. FY2023 Stats

1. 3 closed Easements for 1 Project
2. Value \$1,271,000 (NRCS Portion \$635,500)
3. Acres: 685

ii. FY2024 Stats

1. Applications received: 22 active over 4 projects
2. Estimated Value: \$57,874,972 (NRCS portion: \$28,937,391)
3. Acres: 6,890

iii. FY2025 stats (so far)

1. Applications received: 6 active over 4 projects
2. Estimated value: \$12,434,325 (NRCS portion: \$6,217,118)

iv. RCPP Easements team does plan to have another sign up Spring FY 25

v. Many partners are working with FDACS as they are holding easements so working with FDACS schedule.

- vi. IRA impact is easement acquisition side of RCPP, gives major funding availability
- f. Question:
 - i. What other partners besides FDACS have been partnered with for Easement deed holders?
 - 1. Volusia County-ACT 2817 project
 - 2. Polk County-Wildlands
 - 3. US fish and wildlife
 - a. Federal lands not eligible
 - b. However, can buy residual rights on easement
 - i. Has been enacted in other states and in the talks of working that out in FL

Engineering Updates-Jason Srenth, State Conservation Engineer

I. Emergency Watershed Protection Program Tutorial

Program Purpose

- Assist Sponsors with implementation of emergency recovery measures to relieve imminent hazards to life or property caused by a natural disaster that creates a sudden impairment of a watershed. Assistance is through a locally led cooperative agreement where NRCS provides financial and technical assistance.
- EWP is disaster recovery and Not disaster response.

- a.
 - i. NOT a Response Program, it is a Recovery Program

Availability of the EWP Program

EWP technical and financial assistance may be made available (depending on funding) when one of the following occurs-

- President has declared an emergency
- NRCS State Conservationist has declared a local or state emergency
- Secretary of Agriculture has declared a drought emergency

- b.
 - i. In 22 years, FL has not done a Drought Emergency
 - ii. Presidential we always hear about for big storms
 - iii. Over years there have been several State declarations of emergency
 - 1. Tornado as an example

Eligible Sponsors

- Any legal subdivision of the State (such as a city, county, state agency, general improvement district, conservation district) or any Native American tribe or tribal organization
- Homeowner’s associations are not eligible sponsors
- Private land is eligible but private landowners can’t serve as sponsor

c.

EWP Funding

- There is no annual appropriation. Funding is by Congressional Supplement.
 - NRCS National Headquarters (NHQ) maintains an EWP fund pool.
 - Standard cost share ratio for construction: 75% Federal and 25% Sponsor.
 - For Limited Resource Areas (LRA), cost share ratio for construction: 90% : 10%.
 - Currently there are no LRA's in Florida.
 - If funding is not available at time of Damage Survey Report (DSR) submittal, DSR goes on a waitlist. Waitlist funded by first come, first served once funding is available.
 - Funding is for reimbursement and not a "Match".
- d.
- i. LRA-Limited Restoration Area
 - 1. Mostly due to unemployment rate
 - ii. Funding is not a match, it is a cooperative agreement that is 75% reimbursed to who completed the project. They do the work and then NRCS pays back 75% of the project. STC has ability to match FIMMA funding

Eligibility Criteria

- Was damage a result of a natural disaster?
 - Is the recovery measures for runoff retardation or soil erosion prevention?
 - Is there a threat to life and/or property?
 - Did the event cause a sudden impairment in the watershed?
 - Was an imminent threat created by this event?
 - Were structural repairs, not made more than once within ten previous years?
 - Is the site economically defensible?
 - Proposed action technically viable?
- e. **Must answer "Yes" to all these questions!**
-
- i. Big questions:
 - 1. Cause runoff or erosion?
 - 2. Sudden impairment?
 - ii. Only can-do structural repairs 2 times in 10 years
-

Disaster Events Eligible for EWP Assistance

- Fires
 - Excessive rainfall
 - Tornadoes
 - Tropical systems (depressions, storms, hurricanes)
- f.
- i. Majority of disaster events are Tropical System events
 - ii. Fires are Rare

Watershed Impairment

Anything that impacts the drainage system, natural or man-made, to make it not function properly or safely.

Examples include:

- Debris and/or sediment in waterways
- Erosion in or along the banks of waterways/channels

- g. Can't be due to lack of maintenance.
- i. FMMA will only help in man-made, NRCS will help with any type of waterway that impacts a watershed.
 - ii. Erosion hard to determine on banks of waterways/channels
-

Eligible EWP Measures

- Must protect something of value such as a road, bridge, home, business, utility, or other infrastructure (protecting land itself is not eligible)
- Measures must be for runoff retardation or soil erosion prevention
- Debris removal for navigation purposes is not eligible
- Protection of a federal highway can't be main purpose of project
- Must be environmentally and economically defensible – value of items protected must exceed cost or repair

h.

Typical Eligible EWP Measures

- Debris and sediment removal from waterways
 - Stabilization of stream, canal, ditch, and channel banks
 - Gully repair
- i.
- i. Gully repair typically in panhandle

Requesting Assistance

- Sponsor submits a letter requesting assistance within 60 days of the event
 - Sample letter is available showing the pertinent information needed for the request
 - No work prior to a formal agreement between NRCS and the sponsor is eligible for reimbursement
- j.
- i. Some exceptions for 60-day letter request deadline but very few
 - ii. Cooperative agreement must be in place before work is completed.

Hurricane Ian

- Funded 71 DSR's for 23 sponsors – total of \$137.8 million (construction)
- 1 sponsor (8 DSR's) declined participation
- 1 sponsor (1 DSR) withdrew
- Total obligation for 21 sponsors is \$103.4 million
- 12 sponsors have completed work
- Total paid to sponsors currently is \$51.3 million (not all 12 completed have had final payment made)
- k. • Damage was both debris and erosion
 - i. Half of 12 have been paid out

Hurricane Helene

- No requests for assistance received

l.

Hurricane Milton

- 60 day window for requests ended December 10th
- Received requests for assistance from 15 sponsors
- Currently 1 sponsor has been funded
- In process of submitting DSR's for the other 14 sponsors
- All DSR's should be submitted by mid-February
- Similar to Ian, damage is both debris and erosion
- m. i. Up to 16 total sponsor requests. Added 1 after deadline date
- n. Funds are first come first serve but never any guarantees
 - i. It is a national pool, so Headquarters have the ability to shift all funds to a certain disaster event based on who has the most damage. They reserve some discretion of where the funds go.
 - ii. This funding does not compete with producer funding in FL.
- o. Questions:
 - i. Cannot apply more than once in 10 years?
 1. You cannot repair the same site 2 times in 10 years for structure repair.
 2. Debris removal can be applied for every year if necessary and if eligible.
 - ii. More outreach to small towns needs to happen so they know this is available funding for them.

Ecological Sciences Updates- Bianca Diaz Deliz, State Resource Conservationist

- I. FY 2024 Overview-SRC will put all information on the presentation
 - a. Conservation that has gotten on the ground
 - i. Top 15 practices by order in FY24

1. Herbaceous Weed Treatment
2. Fence
3. Prescribed Burning
4. Brush Management
5. Firebreak
6. Tree/shrub Site Prep
7. Tree/Shrub Establishment
8. Prescribed Grazing
9. Cover Crop
10. Obstruction Removal
11. Nutrient Management
12. Woody Residue Treatment
13. Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage
14. Pasture and Hay Planting
15. Watering Facility

ii. Most common practices represent what is the most needed throughout the state

II. FY 2025 Approach-

- a. What can we do?
- b. What are our limitations?
- c. Going to hold quarterly meetings to see progress being made
 - i. Anyone interested in sub committee please contact Bianca
- d. Learned with hurricane what the needs are
- e. What “what if” scenarios can be brought to the table?
- f. Conservation Practice that created issues 2024
 - i. High tunnels
 1. We have opportunity to up date this practice
 2. Changes made
 - a. Sizing limitations-not bigger than 400,000square foot
 - b. Set back 15 ft limitation
 - i. May need to produce a waiver to get passed this but
 - c. Baseboard has to be provided by manufacture kit, they need to be incorporated for stability
 - d. Sides must cover to all the way to the ground with ability to roll up for ventilation
 - e. 30 ft wide sides
 3. Questions?
 - a. Approved vendor list available?
 - i. NRCS does not sponsor any manufacture over another. There has been lists in the past, but if manufacture changes specs so we are not able to keep up with list. We state who we have worked with in the past. Customer needs to work with

- manufacture to make sure all NRCS standards are met.
 - ii. Field office available to help review the standards of the manufacturer.
 - iii. Don't be afraid to consult with NRCS Team.
 - b. Is there a list of practices available?
 - i. <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>
 - ii. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-state/florida/payment-schedule>
 - iii. Information is public.
 - 1. Field Office Technical Guide
 - 2. Payment schedule webpage

General Discussion

- a. Feedback on CIG accounts
 - iv. Should more money be put here? Should less money be there? Or is good the way it is. Will discuss after P&I presentation on CIG
 - 1. Keeping funding as proposed.
- c. Urban Ag that are vetting funded these days?
- d. Process for requesting in increasing reimbursable rates?
 - i. Addressed in STAC meeting
 - ii. FL offering upper limit of cost share
- e. Payment schedules questions
 - i. Do you only get a percentage of rate provided on payment schedule?
 - 1. Bianca gives brief explanation
 - 2. Doesn't look like cost share rate, it is a fixed share rate. It will be influenced by many factors at how much will be obligated to contract.
 - 3. Based by region and several other factors that have to be agreed upon in the region.
 - 4. RCPP have different projects, so each has a different cost share, some are combined is because they have the same cost share amount with approved practices for that particular project.
- f. Conservation Planning training Part 2 for partners?
 - i. Yes, it will be offered
- g. Conservation practices payment schedules
 - i. Work with NRCS to find the right practice for producer
- h. What documentation is needed to justify cost?
 - i. Receipts, quotes, ect

Action Items:

- 1) Who would be interested in level 2 Conservation Planning training? Get this question answered to see if FL NRCS will need to provide more than one training session?
- 2) Input on if we are providing enough at these meetings. What more would you like? Want field component? Different presentations? Any other parameters wanted? –
 - a. Bring suggestions to June meeting.
 - b. Perhaps to go to individual groups meetings-Prescribe burning association will contact NRCS
 - c. Joe Walsh Comment: I've been trying to figure out best timing of our Local Working Group and how best to engage your info with our stakeholders Definitely be hearing from Hillsborough SWCD on the scheduling-
 - i. Answer to Joe: Local Working Groups should be held in the spring. NRCS will be sending out a bulletin to host the meetings and have input submitted through the District Conservationist. Please look for that bulletin to come out through your local DC.
 - d. Overview is great, RCPP presentation from partner would be very beneficial

Follow up STAC Committee meeting in June 2025