



Financial Assistance Programs

Amber Till

Assistance State Conservationist for Programs



FY 2025 Disaster Assistance Timeline

Disaster Response - Act Now Pools	Application Sign-up	FSA Determination	Assess/Rank/Cost Estimate	Preapproval	Obligation
Florida EQIP Hurricane Disaster Assistance (Mulching, HTS, Center Pivots, Animal Mortality, Bivalves)	October 18-December 20, 2024	Prior to Contract Approval	Refer to biweekly batching schedule below		45 days after Preapproval
Florida EQIP IRA Hurricane Disaster Assistance (Forestlands, Pasturelands/Rangelands, Citrus Orchards)					

NOTE: The period of performance of an IRA contract may not extend beyond September 30, 2031, NRCS does not have authority to waive this limitation.

Disaster Response Act Now - Biweekly Batching Schedule			
Biweekly Batches	Application Signup Date	Assessment Ranking Deadline	Preapproval Date
1	10/18-11/1	11/15/2024	11/18/2024
2	11/2-11/15	11/29/2024	12/2/2024
3	11/16-11/29	12/6/2024	12/9/2024
4	11/30-12/13	12/20/2024	12/23/2024
5	12/14-12/20	1/3/2024	1/6/2024



FY 2025 CSP Timeline

CSP Renewals

- Signup – May 3, 2024
- Assessment/Ranking – April 18, 2024
- Preapproval – November 22, 2024
- Obligation – December 20, 2024

CSP Classic/IRA

- Signup – November 1, 2024
- Assessment/Ranking – March 7, 2025
- Preapproval – March 14, 2025
- Obligation – June 30, 2025



FY 2025 EQIP Timeline

EQIP Classic/IRA

- Signup – November 1, 2024
- Assessment/Ranking – April 18, 2025
- Preapproval – April 25, 2025
- Obligation – June 30, 2025

EQIP Act Now

- Signup – continuous until funds exhausted
- Assessment/Ranking – biweekly
- Preapproval – biweekly
- Obligation – 45 days after preapproval



FY 2025 Allocations

CSP Initial Allocation: \$19,870,000

- CSP Farm Bill – \$9,870,000
- CSP IRA – \$10,000,000

EQIP Initial Allocation: \$62,900,767

- EQIP Farm Bill – \$27,769,997
- EQIP IRA – \$40,130,770

Total Allocation: \$82,770,767



FY 2025 CSP Allocation

CSP Farm Bill – \$9,870,000

- General CSP – \$8,870,000
- General CSP Long Leaf Pine Initiative – \$1,000,000

CSP IRA – \$10,000,000

- General CSP IRA – \$10,000,000



FY 2025 EQIP Allocation

EQIP Farm Bill – \$27,769,997

- Disaster Act Now EQIP – \$12,000,000
- General EQIP – \$10,186,280
- Act Now EQIP - \$450,000
- Long Leaf Pine Initiative – \$1,779,305
- WLFW Gopher Tortoise – \$1,964,760
- WLFW Northern Bobwhite – \$889,652
- CIG EQIP - \$500,000

EQIP IRA – \$40,130,770

- General EQIP IRA – \$21,630,000
- Disaster EQIP IRA – \$14,000,000
- CIC EQIP IRA – \$4,000,000
- CIG IRA – \$500,000



FY 2025 Disaster Assistance

Disaster Assistance Act Now EQIP

EQIP Farm Bill – \$12,000,000

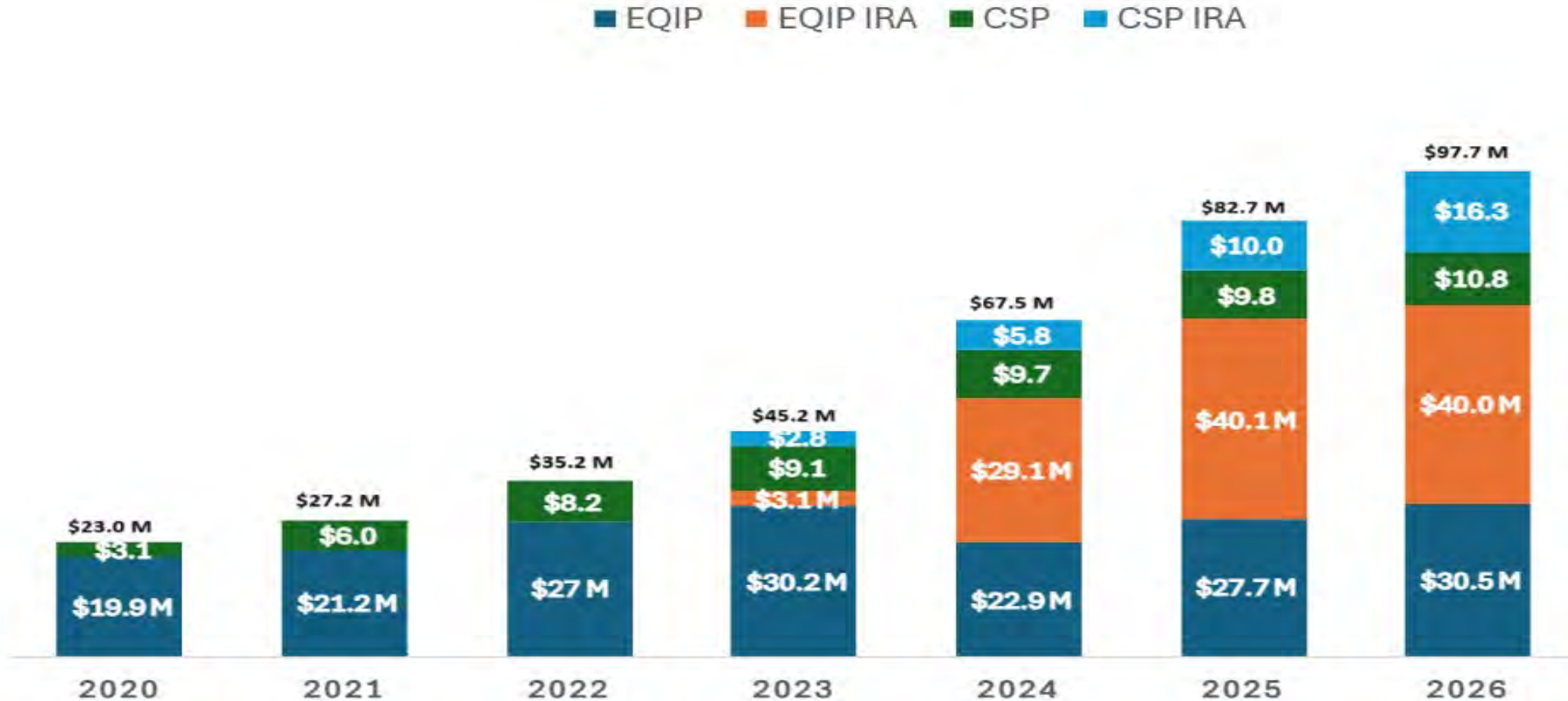
- Sprinkler System - Center Pivots – \$8,500,000
- Seasonal High Tunnel – \$1,000,000
- Mulching on Cropland – \$1,000,000
- Animal Mortality – \$500,000
- Bivalves – \$1,000,000

EQIP IRA - \$14,000,000

- Woody Residue Treatment on Forestland – \$10,000,000
- Woody Residue Treatment on Pasture/Range – \$2,000,000
- Citrus Orchards – \$2,000,000



EQIP/CSP Trend





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%



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE





FY2025 Easements Updates

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov



Marcus Shorter

ASTC Easements - FL



FY2024 Accomplishments

- Rated Top 5 in the nation for monitoring
- We acquired **4,819 acres** of Easement land
- We restored **22,568 acres** in Florida
- Received an additional **22 million dollars** in funding
- Developed the Florida WRCG document to establish policy and guidelines on how we rank, acquire, restore and maintain easements in Florida in accordance with national policy.
- Lead a National Audit of the Easement Department with satisfactory results





Sara May; *Easement Coordinator – ALE*

Crenel Francis; *Easement Coordinator - WRE*



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.



Scott Kuipers

Stewardship & Restoration Lead



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.



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.



Violations

- **2023/2024** = 7 violations (4 have been addressed, 3 in progress)
- **2025** = Monitoring is in progress, likely a handful of violations to come
- All violations will be entered and tracked through required monitoring applications





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 this option has been drafted and submitted for national office review.
- If approved, we will announce the application period for this option.
- Grazing rights will be retained on the easement at a reduced easement acquisition price.
- Grazing plans will be developed with native habitat restoration as the primary objective.



Restoration

- Acres needing to be restored according to NEST – **14,849 acres**: (10) WRE 8841 ac, RCPP HFRP 1200 ac, RCPP WRE 1482 ac, WRP 2775 ac)
- Acres restored in 2024 – **22,568 acres**
- Acres to be restored in 2025 – **10,923 acres**
- Enhancement acres in progress – **>16,000 acres**





Restoration

- 37** ongoing projects (Engineering-Restoration, Additional Restoration)
 - **13** – Design phase (DU, ESA, Dino, Donna)
 - **24** – Construction phase (DU, ESA, LOA)
 - **6-10** currently under active construction
 - Maintenance and repair projects added as they arise from monitoring reports.





Regional Conservation Partnership Program

FY24 Wrap-up and FY25 Overview

Denise Liggett
RCPP Coordinator



Regional Conservation Partnership Program

2024 RCPP Highlights

➤ Classic RCPP Projects Awarded (\$72 Million)

- Tall Timbers – Florida’s Big Bend Project
- Florida Conservation Group – Peace River Valley – Protecting Charlotte Harbor Headwaters
- Wildlands Conservation – Lake Wales Ridge Ecosystem Project

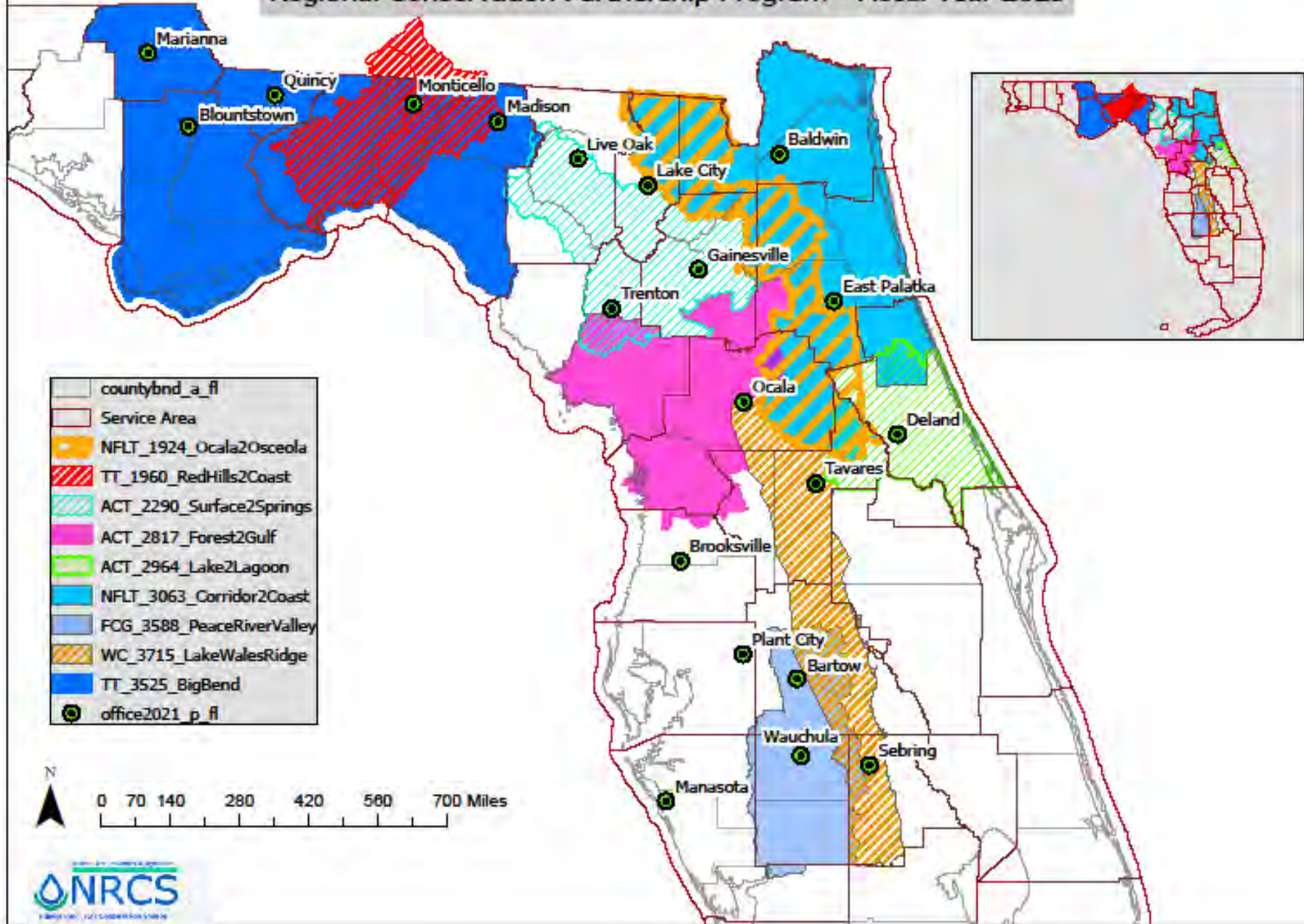
➤ Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA) RCPP Project Awarded:

- InterTribal Buffalo Council – Tribal Buffalo in the Southeast Region





Natural Resources Conservation Service Regional Conservation Partnership Program - Fiscal Year 2025





RCPP Land Management

FY2024

Applications Received: 61

Contracts Awarded: 57

Contract Funding Total: \$1,153,063

Acres: 9,805

FY2025

Applications Received: 75





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



Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program



Jason Strenth
State Conservation Engineer
EWP Program Manager
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
Gainesville, Florida



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.



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



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



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”.



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?

Must answer “Yes” to all these questions!



Disaster Events Eligible for EWP Assistance

- Fires
- Excessive rainfall
- Tornadoes
- Tropical systems (depressions, storms, hurricanes)



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

Can't be due to lack of maintenance.



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



Typical Eligible EWP Measures

- Debris and sediment removal from waterways
- Stabilization of stream, canal, ditch, and channel banks
- Gully repair



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



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)
- Damage was both debris and erosion



Hurricane Helene

- No requests for assistance received



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



Florida NRCS EWP Contact

- Jason Strenth, Program Manager
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Ecological Sciences Updates

Bianca Diaz

State Resource Conservationist
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service
Gainesville, Florida



Florida's Top 15 Conservation Practices

by order of most used in FY24.

1. Herbaceous Weed Treatment
2. Fence
3. Prescribed Burning
4. Brush Management
5. Firebreak
6. Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
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



FY 25 Updates

- Reinstatement of the Aquaculture Subcommittee
 - Meeting scheduled for March, June and September 2025. Dates TBD.
 - If interested in participating of this subcommittee, please email Bianca Diaz at bianca.diaz.deliz@usda.gov.



FY 25 Updates (Continuation)

- CPS Updated: High Tunnel System (CPS 325)
 - Changes include:
 - High tunnel structures **cannot exceed 30 ft width** and have a **total footprint of no more than 4000 sq ft.**
 - A **minimum clearance of 15 ft is required along all sides and ends of high tunnel walls** for cover installation and cover maintenance/management activities.
 - All components of the kit frame must be metal
 - Plastic or Wood frame is no longer allowed
 - Bow or rafter spacing must be 4 ft or less
 - The following number of **minimum 17-gauge steel** purlins (including ridgepole) are required:
 - 5 for tunnels >26 ft wide
 - 3 for tunnels between 15 and 26 ft wide
 - 1 (ridge only) for tunnels < 14 ft wide.
 - **Participant must sign IR**



FY 25 Updates (Continuation)

- Seeking Feedback from STAC:
 - We are looking for input and feedback on:
 - Existing conservation practice standards and available scenarios.
 - Do we need additional practices or managements to continue to achieve our conservation goals? (e.g. creating/removing/editing scenarios).
 - Any limitations to implement practices?
 - Others
 - Information on our existing conservation practice standards and supporting documents can be found at:
 - Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG): <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>
 - Information on existing payment schedules for each State can be found at:
 - Payment Schedule Webpage: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules>



Thank you for your time!

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