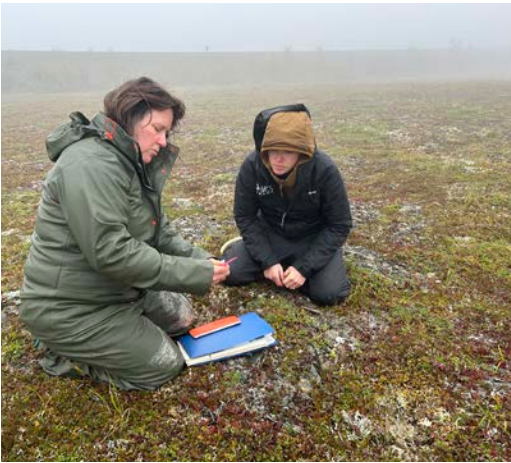


# Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
ALASKA

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**Cover Photo: A Matanuska Colony Barn in the Matanuska Valley of Alaska, August 26, 1972. Photo courtesy of the Palmer Museum of History and Art, Soil Conservation Service Collection.**

Photos on this page from top to bottom:

*Chris Meade of the Juneau Field Office at Heen Latinee Experimental Forest, NRCS photo by Samia Savell.*

*Karin Sonnen, State Range Specialist, and Emily Donaldson, Natural Resources Specialist based in Fairbanks, collect grazing data on the Seward Peninsula, NRCS photo by Josh Schrecengost.*

*A producer holds a handful of soil on a farm in Fairbanks. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard.*

*Kenai Field Office staff Kris Nichols, Soil Conservationist, and Jesse Hunter, Civil Engineer, inspect a micro-irrigation system inside a seasonal high tunnel. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard.*

# State Conservationist Message

Fiscal Year 2025 was a time to look forward and a time to look back.

Looking back... on April 27, 2025, NRCS celebrated its 90th anniversary. Our agency was founded in 1935 when the U.S. was in the middle of a man-made natural disaster now remembered as the Dust Bowl. It was an ongoing series of severe dust storms that destroyed farms, killed people and livestock, and contributed to the economic ruin and displacement of thousands of people who were forced to abandon their homes and farms. In the midst of these storms, Hugh Hammond Bennett, known as the “father of soil conservation” led the U.S. government’s nationwide effort to halt the “national menace” of unchecked erosion. Through Bennett’s leadership, Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act in 1935 which created the Soil Conservation Service, renamed as the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 1994.

Since then, for 90 years, NRCS has been the leader in private lands conservation across the nation. We have worked with private landowners to “Help People Help the Land” and by doing so helped provide clean water, air, reduced soil erosion, improved wildlife habitat, and so much more. All of this has been done working in partnership with America’s agricultural producers; farmers, ranchers, forest producers, Tribes, Tribal entities, Indigenous producers, and more to improve natural resources with a customized, science-based conservation plan on each individual land unit.

Looking forward... we welcomed a new Administration and new national leadership appointments including Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins; NRCS Chief Aubrey J.D.

Bettencourt; NRCS West Region Assistant Chief Hans D. Hunt; Acting West Region Deputy Assistant Chief Emily Fife; and many other new leaders throughout the agency. We are streamlining programs and procedures to put “Farmers First” and to improve customer experience with improvements to programs, processes, and business tools. Farmers First includes all of America’s agricultural producers including those managing lands for subsistence agriculture. We are in an era of opportunity and working hard to improve the way we do business at NRCS.

No matter what change comes our way, we remain focused on serving Alaska’s agricultural producers and building diverse partnerships with non-governmental organizations, local/state/federal agencies, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Tribal Conservation Districts, and other partners. The enhancement and conservation of our nation’s natural resources is a monumental effort that can only be accomplished if we work together. Today and into the future, we at NRCS are continuing Hugh Hammond Bennett’s legacy – helping people help the land – by implementing conservation practices to conserve air, water, soil, and habitat.



*- Alan D. McBee*

NRCS Alaska State Conservationist



## Land Ownership in Alaska

Total Acreage:

**375 million**

Land Ownership:

**86% Public**

**14% Private**

Private Lands  
Managed by Alaska  
Native Producers:

**44 million  
acres**

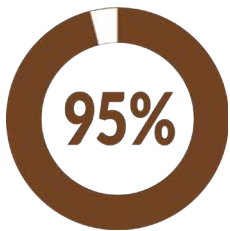
Number of Federally-  
Recognized Tribes:

**229**

# FY25 Financial Assistance Programs

PROGRAM	CONTRACTS	FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ALASKA PRODUCERS
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	49	\$28,797,881
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	7	\$237,374
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>\$29,035,255</b>

Source: NRCS Resource Economic and Policy Division.

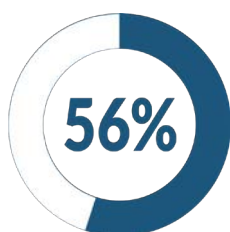


**In Fiscal Year 2025, 95% of program funding supported historically underserved producers.**

Farm Bill legislation and in USDA policy recognizes specific groups of people as Historically Underserved (HU). Members of these groups have been

historically underserved by, or subject to discrimination in, federal policies and programs. Four groups are defined by USDA as Historically Underserved, including farmers or ranchers who are: **Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource.**

USDA recognizes the need to be inclusive of all people and ensure equitable access to services. Special provisions, including specific incentives, waivers, priorities, set asides, and other flexibilities, are available within USDA programs for producers who meet the definition for Historically Underserved producers. Increased financial assistance for conservation practices, dedicated conservation funding, and access to advance payments for conservation practice implementation are offered to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners that fit into any of the four Historically Underserved groups.



**In Fiscal Year 2025, 56% of contracts supported new and beginning farmers/ranchers.**

Alaska ranks second in the nation in the percentage of farms operated by new and beginning producers.

## 10 Years of EQIP in Alaska: FY16 to FY25

NRCS Alaska has consistently provided the majority of its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds to Historically Underserved producers.

**1,318**

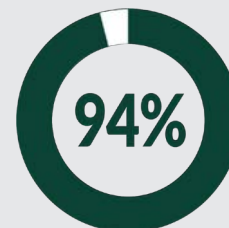
Applications

**746**

Contracts

**\$111.1 million**

Total Financial Assistance



**Financial Assistance to Historically Underserved Producers (\$104.2 million)**

# Top 10 Conservation Practices by Funding in FY25



**Grazing Management**  
\$23.2 million



**Fence**  
\$353,201



**Tree/Shrub Establishment**  
\$2.8 million



**Woody Residue Treatment**  
\$131,514



**Forest Stand Improvement**  
\$1.1 million



**Low Tunnel Systems**  
\$101,452



**Tree/Shrub Pruning**  
\$429,008



**Irrigation Pipeline**  
\$53,057



**High Tunnel System**  
\$370,283



**Pumping Plant**  
\$47,581

# Top 10 Conservation Practices by Count in FY25

1. Tree/Shrub Establishment
2. Forest Stand Improvement
3. Irrigation Water Management
4. Low Tunnel System
5. Woody Residue Treatment
6. Structures for Wildlife
7. Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
8. High Tunnel System
9. Grazing Management
10. Tree/Shrub Pruning



Structures for Wildlife: Matt Kugel, soil conservationist in the Wasilla Field Office, inspects a wildlife habitat brush pile that was installed on forestland. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard.



Upland Wildlife Habitat Management can be used to create, restore, maintain or enhance areas for food and cover for upland wildlife such as moose. Stock photo.



Pasture and Hay Planting in Delta Junction, Alaska. NRCS photo by Elizabeth Bezinque.

# Watershed Programs

## Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

EWP is a recovery program that relieves imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters. All projects must have a project sponsor which may be a city, borough, conservation district, or any Federally-recognized Tribe. In Alaska, EWP is commonly used to relocate homes and buildings away from severe streambank erosion. Other examples of EWP work can include removing debris clogging stream channels and stabilizing eroding streambanks.

### 6 EWP projects in progress in FY25:

- Chevak
- Hooper Bay
- Huslia
- Kwethluk
- Nunapitchuk
- Saint Michael

### 1 EWP project completed in FY25:

- Hooper Bay



NRCS staff assess the rebuilding of the Hooper Bay Trail Project. The boarded walkway trail was damaged by Typhoon Merbok in 2022 and was rebuilt with EWP assistance. The project was completed in FY25. NRCS photo by Ann Fischer.

## Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program (WFPO)

WFPO provides technical and financial assistance to local governments and Tribes to plan and implement watershed-scale projects. These are long term, multi-year projects that can address flood prevention, watershed protection, public recreation, public fish and wildlife, agricultural water management, municipal and industrial water supply, and water quality management. This program can be used to assist rural villages with managed retreat and/or village relocation efforts. Alaska has 18 WFPO projects in progress.

### In FY25, Phase 1, Preliminary Investigation and Feasibility Reports, were completed for WFPO projects in 7 communities:

- Hooper Bay
- Kwigillingok
- Levelock
- Shishmaref
- Tuntutuliak
- Tununak
- Unakleet

As of the end of FY25, all 18 WFPO projects are now completed with Phase 1 and NRCS will start work on Phase 2, Watershed Planning, for one or two of the most critical need projects in FY26.

### Total WFPO Projects in Alaska:

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Akiak        | 10. Levelock    |
| 2. Alakanuk     | 11. McGrath     |
| 3. Atka         | 12. Napakiak    |
| 4. Atmautluak   | 13. Shishmaref  |
| 5. Fort Yukon   | 14. Tuntutuliak |
| 6. Golovin      | 15. Tununak     |
| 7. Hooper Bay   | 16. Tyonek      |
| 8. Kotlik       | 17. Unalakleet  |
| 9. Kwigillingok | 18. Valdez      |

# Central Team

In Fiscal Year 2025 the Wasilla Field office contracted 18 applications; four of those were CSP applications and 14 were EQIP. The total EQIP contracted amount was \$358,000. EQIP contracts mostly consisted of high tunnels, low tunnels, forestry practices, wildlife practices, and hay and pasture planting. There were numerous completed projects throughout the Wasilla Service Center area. Most of the completed projects were high tunnels, low tunnels, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, and forestry practices.

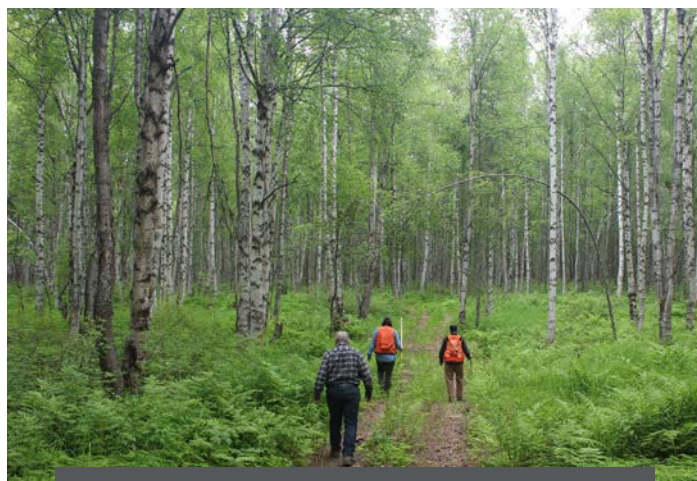
The total CSP contract amount is \$134,000. These contracts were mainly focused on improving wildlife habitat, forest stand improvement, and reducing contaminants to surface and ground water. During the fiscal year the Wasilla field office helped numerous producers reach their conservation goals, with the majority of funds going to new and beginning farmers.

Wasilla Field Office staff attended numerous outreach events and helped to coordinate local events to connect producers with each other and NRCS partners. The outreach events were used to share knowledge on conservation and how the NRCS can assist producers and their land to reach their potential in production and conservation goals.

The Wasilla Field Office partnered or collaborated with numerous partners. Projects were completed in conjunction with native entities, the Palmer and Wasilla Soil Water Conservation Districts, and state/federal land managers to help identify needs and resource concerns in Central Alaska. Wasilla worked with Copper River Watershed to help tribal entities navigate the eligibility process for USDA programs.



*The Central Team helped producers in South Central Alaska improve crop health and productivity with the installation of low tunnels. NRCS photo by Troy Hildreth.*



*Above: A fuel break on forestland in the Upper Susitna Basin. Right: Soil Conservationist Matt Kugel examines soil properties on forestland. NRCS photos by Tracy Robillard.*

# Central Team

## Preserving a Legacy: NRCS and Alaska Farmland Trust protect historic Grover Farm in Palmer, Alaska with conservation easement

In the heart of Alaska's rich agricultural region, the Alaska Farmland Trust Corporation (AFTC), in partnership with NRCS, permanently protected the 115.22-acre Grover Farm through a conservation easement that ensures the land will remain in agricultural use forever.

Established in 1948 by Clifton and Vera Grover, the farm has stood for over seven decades as a pillar of family farming in the Matanuska Valley. Originally a dairy operation, they shifted over time to running cattle and began to lease portions of the property to other local farmers— continuing a legacy of local food production and stewardship.

With the Matanuska-Susitna Valley facing increasing development pressure as the region's population grows, safeguarding productive farmland is of critical importance to NRCS and easement partners.

The Grover Farm conservation easement — which closed on June 13, 2025 — represents not only the protection of valuable farmland but also a deeply personal legacy. The Grover family will retain ownership of the land while receiving financial compensation for permanently retiring development rights. This means the land will never be subdivided or paved over — and future generations of farmers will have the opportunity to grow food on it.

The easement was made possible through the NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).



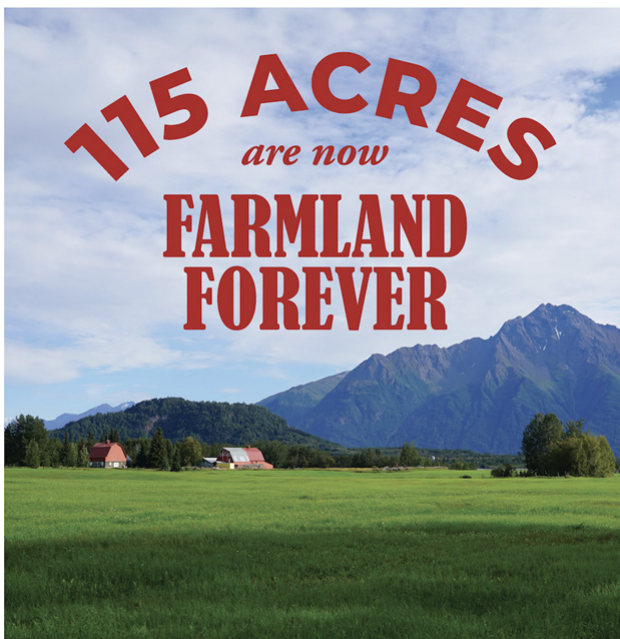
Grover Farm in Palmer, Alaska. Photo courtesy of AFTC.



The Grover Family and project partners at an easement signing ceremony, June 13, 2025. Photo courtesy of AFTC.

Back Row, from left to right: Jackie Kragel, USDA-NRCS; Leslie Senden, Board President AFTC; Abby Austin, Executive Director AFTC; Sabra Fiscus, daughter of Bonnie and Wesley Grover; Carol Kenley, Former Board member AFTC; Bob Jones, Board Member AFTC; Debbie Niekamp, daughter of Bonnie and Wesley Grover; Garth Grover, son of Bonnie and Wesley Grover; Kristy Saunders, daughter of Bonnie and Wesley Grover.

Front Row, from left to right: Margaret Adsit, Lands Coordinator, AFTC; Bonnie Grover, Landowner; Wesley Grover, Landowner



# North Team

In Fiscal Year 2025, the North Team welcomed a new conservation planner, greatly increasing the Team's ability to assess the land, evaluate resource concerns, and develop a plan, always within the scope of producers objectives.

The North Team officially contracted nearly \$23 million in financial assistance to producers, representing well over 2 million acres worth of conservation throughout the region. Seventy percent of these contracts supported new and beginning farmers/ranchers which is the fastest growing demographic in the state.

North Team contracts represent the full measure of NRCS's capabilities, spanning everything from high tunnels and nutrient management to prescribed grazing, trails and walkways, and forestry management. North Team conservation planners have laid the groundwork for several full-farm assessments focused on producer's goals and objectives through 2026 and beyond.

The North Team had several opportunities to participate in locally-led conservation efforts throughout the year. Staff frequently collaborated with Soil and Water Conservation Districts and University of Alaska Extension regarding soil sampling, soil result analysis, recommendations for amendments, and continued evaluation of high tunnel capacity within the Interior and beyond. Staff attended on-farm events, working together with partner agencies to offer a network of support and information to Interior producers.



*Lichen on tundra habitats provides nutritional forage for reindeer and caribou. NRCS photo by Emily Donaldson.*



*Karin Sonnen, State Rangeland Specialist (left), and Emily Donaldson, Natural Resources Specialist, collect grazing inventory data on the Seward Peninsula. NRCS photo by Josh Schrecengost.*

# North Team



Conservation Planners in the Fairbanks Field Office Emily Donaldson and Blaine Spellman visit with Tom Zimmer of Calypso Farm and Ecology Center. In FY25 the Center completed a soil health project that helped remote villages build soil health using readily available compostable materials, funded by an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard.



A seasonal high tunnel in Delta Junction. NRCS photo by Elizabeth Bezinque.



Natural Resources Specialist Emily Donaldson and Sam Knapp, owner and operator of Off-Beet Farm in Fairbanks, discuss crop productivity as a result of implementing soil health practices such as cover crops and residue management. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard.



Residue and tillage management in Delta Junction. NRCS photo by Elizabeth Bezinque.

# Southeast Team

What do fish and deer have in common, other than sharing top billing on most southeast Alaskan's dinner plates? They both require healthy forests and streams to thrive.

In FY25, NRCS's Southeast Alaska Team continued working with the region's forest landowners to improve forest health and stream habitat to support both forest resources and important foods for rural residents – fish, deer, and moose, along with berries and medicinal plants that grow in the forest understory.

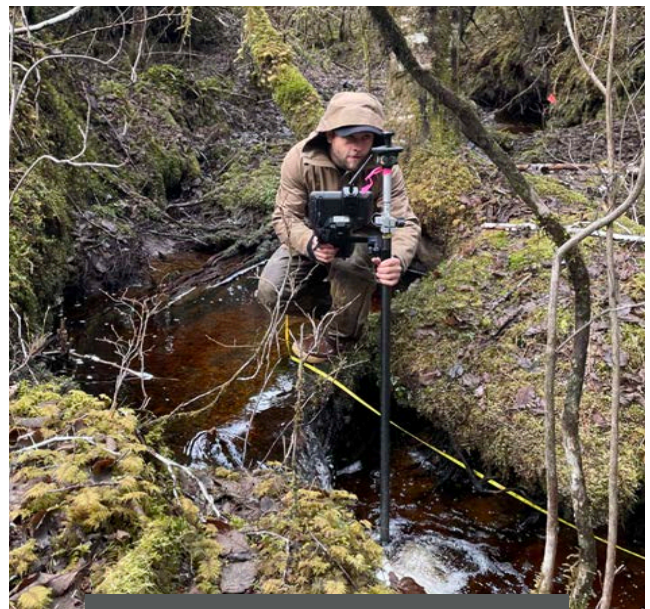
Projects included forest stand and stream habitat improvement, developing engineering designs for aquatic organism passage, and pruning to help increase understory forage production for wildlife and people. The Southeast Team also helped a forest landowner remove culverts and failing bridges on underutilized and unmaintained roads, which will continue to provide access for hunting, gathering, and recreational use while remaining stable over the long term.



Sealaska's intern (right) gives a thumbs up while NRCS's Katie Russell (left) works with long-time forestry consultant Clare Doig (center) to evaluate a culvert on an eastern Prince of Wales Island salmon stream. Photo courtesy of Gary Mills.



NRCS engineer Lonnie Steinke readies his survey gear while balancing on the edge of a beaver dam on Revillagigedo Island. NRCS photo by Katie Russell.



NRCS Civil Engineer Jesse Hunter surveys a stream on northern Chichagof Island to develop a plan for improving fish passage and habitat. NRCS photo by Chris Meade.

## Southeast Team

The Southeast Team continues to work with the region's small-scale agricultural producers to find ways to conserve natural resources while growing vegetables in a challenging climate. High tunnels, irrigation system design and water management practices, crop rotation, cover cropping, and nutrient management are common practices for southeast Alaska's producers.

The NRCS Juneau Field Office worked in tandem with other USDA agencies to support coordinated resource stewardship efforts in the region. NRCS staff regularly met with Rural Development, U.S. Forest Service, and Farm Service Agency staff, along with tribal and nonprofit partners throughout the region to collaboratively work

on food security, resource conservation, and community development projects that impact southeast Alaska's residents and businesses. That included participating in the Southeast Alaska Farmers Summit, the Metlakatla Garden and Local Foods Workshop, and Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska's Environmental Conference.

Southeast Team looks forward to next year with multiple projects in development, including continued support of forest partnerships in Hoonah, Kake, and on Prince of Wales Island. Agricultural producers in Haines, Tenakee, Wrangell, and Juneau are developing conservation plans with Juneau's staff, which will support the region's food security.



*NRCS District Conservationist Samia Savell collects forest stand data to support conservation planning on Prince of Wales Island. Photo courtesy of David Edenshaw.*



*NRCS Soil Conservationist Kathy Dilley examines soil at a small farm in Gustavus. The information will be used to develop conservation compliance documentation and a conservation plan. NRCS photo by Karin Sonnen.*

## West Team

The West Team utilized geotechnical services from NRCS Washington to help with the planning and design process for an ATV/UTV bridge in a village on the Southern Kenai Peninsula. The potential project would protect salmon habitat and improve human access to subsistence areas using the NRCS Trails and Walkways conservation practice.

Additional large-scale work was accomplished on a survey of the a fishing platform site in the Kodiak region that may also lead to a future Trails and Walkways project.

Implemented projects include two new fish passage culverts in Tyonek; two microirrigation systems in the Soldotna area; an irrigation pipeline in Homer; and a heavy use area protection project on a livestock operation in the Kenai/Soldotna area.

Forestry work included almost 2,000 acres planted, approximately 600 ares of thinning for tree establishment, and approximately 110 acres of thinning and slash treatment for the purpose of a fuel break.



*NRCS supported project partners in Tyonek, Alaska with the completion of another salmon-friendly culvert replacement project, shown here at Roberts Creek in August, 2025. The Tyonek Tribal Conservation District continues to plan and implement fish passage culvert projects to restore salmon access to spawning and rearing habitat that was previously restricted due to undersized and failing culverts. NRCS photo by Kris Nichols.*



*A peony farm in Anchor Point that has improved its water use efficiency with an irrigation system, installed with support from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. NRCS photo by Kera Venhuizen.*

## West Team



NRCS Soil Conservationist Emily MacDonald (right) works with a producer in Homer on improving crop productivity with the use of low tunnels. NRCS photo by Kera Venhuizen.



NRCS Soil Conservationist Kris Nichols (right) and engineer Jesse Hunter work with a producer in Sterling to install an irrigation pipeline and irrigation system that improves water use efficiency for crops grown inside a seasonal high tunnel. NRCS photos by Tracy Robillard.

# Snow Survey

Alaska's snow survey team and partners successfully performed 504 snow course and aerial marker readings this year.

Two new SNOLITE stations were installed near Dillingham called "Snake Lake" and "Aleknagik". These are both on native Corporation land owned by Choggiung LTD, and Aleknagik Natives Limited, respectively.



*New SNOLITE stations installed this year Aleknagik (left) and Snake Lake (right) near Dillingham, Alaska. NRCS photos by Daniel Fisher.*

Several stations were outfitted with improved snow height and air temperature sensors along with the up-to-date model of data loggers. Many stations received improved power systems. All SNOTEL stations were maintained including two which experience significant bear damage.

The snow survey crew installed two sensor studies, focused on better precipitation measurements, in partnership with the NRCS Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting program and the NRCS National Water and Climate Center.



*NRCS Snow Hyrdologist Joe Vorderbruggen measures the Wolf Run snow course in the White Mountains National Recreation Area, northeast of Fairbanks. NRCS photo by Daniel Fisher.*



*Data Collection Officer Lauren Austin measures the Boundary snow course located between Chicken and Dawson City, 10 miles west of the Canada border. NRCS photo by Daniel Fischer.*

# Soil Survey

NRCS soil surveys provide critical information about soil characteristics and properties and their limitations and potentials. They help land managers make informed decisions about land use. Surveys are available to the public online via Web Soil Survey at [websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov](http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov).

## Provisional Ecological Site Descriptions

The Alaska Soil Survey Region, part of the NRCS Soil and Plant Sciences Division, completed all provisional Ecological Site Descriptions across Alaska's Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA). Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) provide land managers information needed for evaluating land suitability for various land-uses. This year 260 ESDs across 25 MLRAs were completed, resulting in all soil components in Alaska now being correlated to a published ESD.

## Kenai Road Corridor Project Soil Survey

Alaska's Soil Survey team published the Kenai Road Corridor Survey to current standards. . The Kenai Road Corridor was completed in 1989 by NRCS soil scientists and published in paper form. After decades in paper form, the survey is now available in Web Soil Survey and updated to current Soil and Plant Science Division standards. Having tabular and spatial data available digitally allows for a wide range of soil interpretations and reports that can be utilized by conservationists, engineers, foresters, and the public. The survey covers 250,000 acres and is in AK706 and AK707 Chugach National Forest – Kenai Peninsula West and East Areas. Additional soil survey work was performed in the Kenai Road Corridor project areas and data collection will likely continue in FY26.

## Willow National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR) Soil Survey Published

The Willow NPRA survey in soil survey area AK760 was published on Web Soil Survey.

## Digitized 1974 Juneau soil survey

This year the Soil Survey team digitized linework from the 1974 soil survey in Juneau and made this information accessible to the public on Web Soil Survey.



Above: Spodosol from the Kenai Road Corridor Project soil survey. NRCS photo by Phil Barber.



Right: Stephanie Schmit, MLRA Soil Survey Leader in the Homer Field Office digs a soil pit. NRCS photo by Mike Sousa.



*Top left: NRCS State Forester Chris Tcimpidis checks a forest stand improvement project. NRCS photo by Tracy Robillard. Top right: Lettuce grown under a low tunnel within a seasonal high tunnel on Kodiak Island. Photo courtesy of Ian Zacher.*

*Bottom left: Kodiak producer Ian Zacher and his daughter install irrigation inside a greenhouse. Photo courtesy of Ian Zacher. Bottom right: Soil survey staff conduct field work out of the Homer Field Office. NRCS photo courtesy of Soils and Plants Science Division.*

