



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Resources/Soils

Conservation Practices
Planning Regions
Payment Schedule



State Resource Conservationist Staff

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Conservation Practice Updates



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Updates to Practices and Activities – FY26

624 Phosphorus Removal System (December 2025)

Definition: A system to remove dissolved phosphorus from surface runoff, subsurface drain, or ditch flows consisting of a phosphorus sorption media within a containment structure

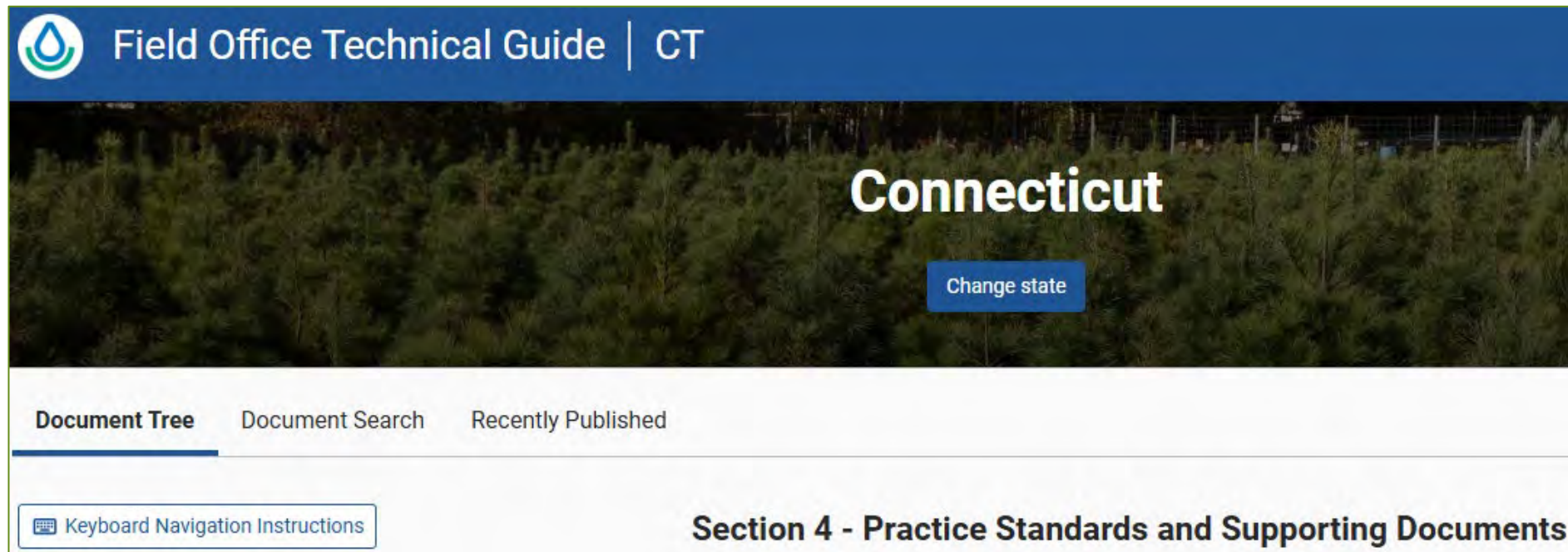
- Had been an interim practice, under review
- Permanent conservation practice in 2025
- Have not used in CT



Practice Standard Updates

Conservation Practice Standards – Nationally revised every 5 years (approx.)

- Updated technology
- Resources – references, citations
- Modifications based on practice implementation



Practice Standard Updates

National push to update Conservation Practice Standards

CT updated Ecological and Engineering Standards in need of revision prior to Nancy Ferlow's (State Resource Conservationist) and Jim Lyons' (State Engineer) retirements in summer and fall of 2025.

- Minor changes – updated national version only to ensure consistent for CT requirements
- Focus on specifications in designs and Implementation Requirements

United States Department of Agriculture

Clear Form

CT Tree/Shrub Establishment – 612

Implementation Requirements

Lifespan – 15 years

Client:		Location:	
Farm, Tract and Field(s):		Planner:	
Program:		Date:	



DEFINITION
Establishing woody plants by planting seedlings or cuttings, by direct seeding, and/or through natural regeneration.



Practice Standard Updates - Ecological

Code	Practice Name
327	Conservation Cover
333	Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum
384	Woody Residue Treatment
391	Riparian Forest Buffer
422	Hedgerow Planting
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment
647	Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
655	Forest Trails and Landings
660	Tree/Shrub Pruning

Practice Standard Updates - Engineering

Code	Practice Name
313	Waste Storage Facility
316	Animal Mortality Facility
378	Pond
430	Irrigation Pipeline
442	Sprinkler System
443	Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface
447	Irrigation and Drainage Tailwater Recovery
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet
500	Obstruction Removal
521	Pond Sealing or Lining, Geomembrane or Geosynthetic Clay Liner
554	Drainage Water Management
600	Terrace
606	Subsurface Drain
608	Surface Drain, Main or Lateral
614	Watering Facility
620	Underground Outlet
629	Waste Treatment
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin

Practice Standard Updates – Ecological and Engineering

Practices require consideration from both Ecological and Engineering staff

- Typically, installations with the potential to impact wildlife

Code	Practice Name
396	Aquatic Organism Passage
578	Stream Crossing
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection
656	Constructed Wetland



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

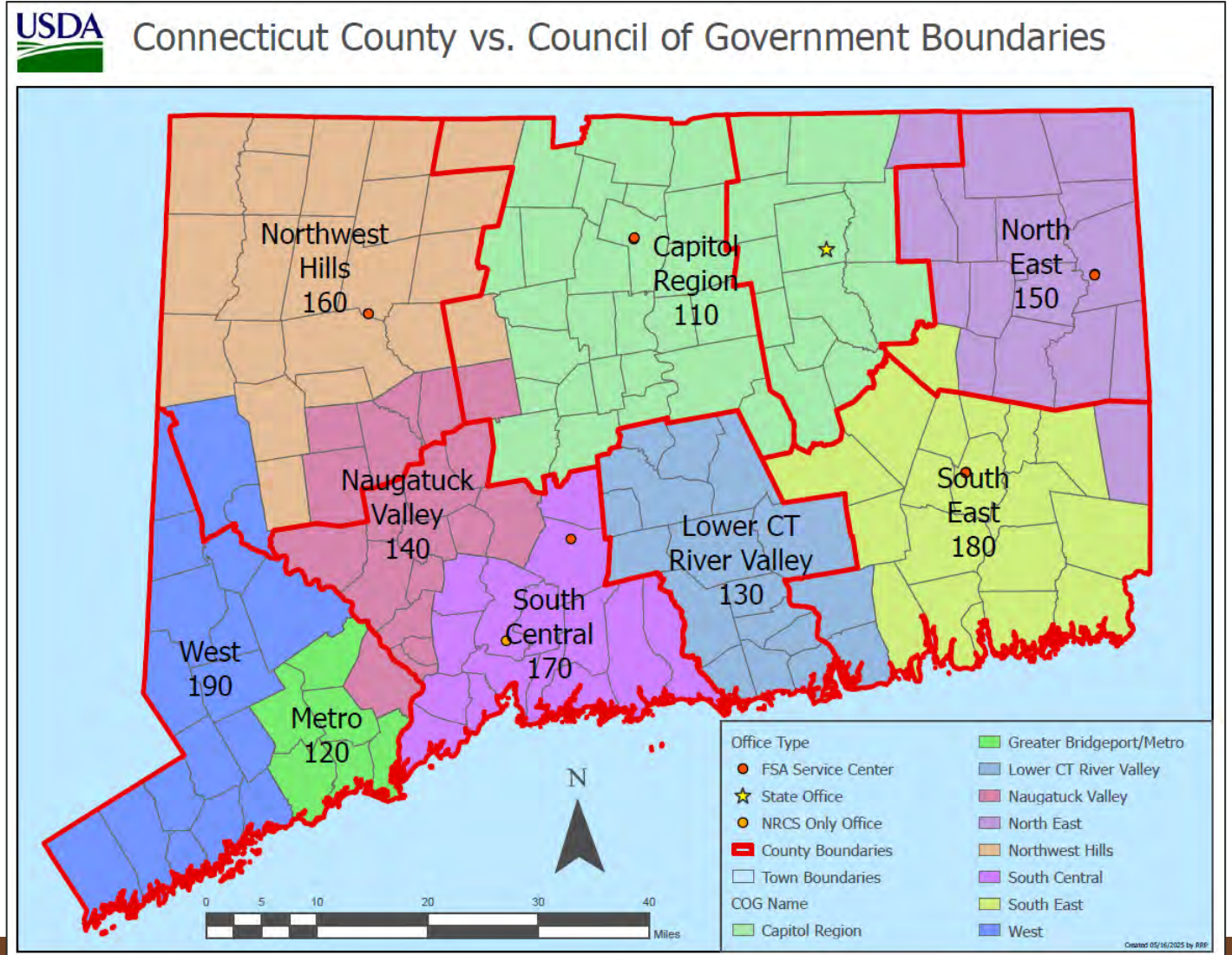
Counties to Planning Regions



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Counties to Planning Regions – FY2026

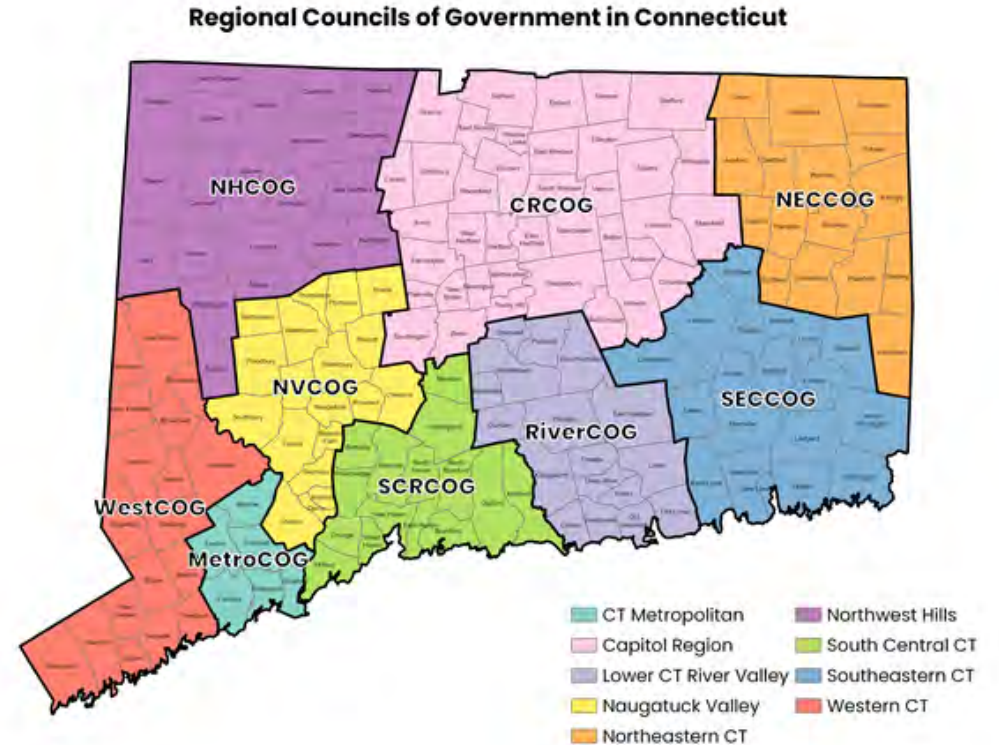
Effective 10/1/2025 USDA NRCS Service Center boundaries changed to align with the Connecticut Planning Regions, rather than county boundaries.



Counties to Planning Regions – FY2026

Since 2022, CT Planning Regions have been recognized as “county equivalents” under state and federal law.

Planning Regions are served by Councils of Governments (COGs) which are set up to coordinate between towns for land use and transportation.



[Contact Information for Regional Councils of Governments in Connecticut](#)

Counties to Planning Regions – FY2026

“Planning Regions” and “COGs” have been used (mostly) interchangeably. NRCS is using the Planning Regions name, rather than COGs.

Which federal agencies use CT Planning Regions?

- US Census since 2022
- USDA Risk Management Agency since 2024

 United States Department of Agriculture		A Risk Management Agency State Profile Connecticut Crop Insurance February 2025		2024 Crop Year
Crops	Insured Acres	Total Acres	Percent Insured	Indemnity
Apples	800	*1738	46	\$602,820
Corn	13,941	21,709	64	\$213,644
Fresh Market Sweet Corn	762	915	83	\$137,446
Fresh Market Tomatoes	25	55	45	\$136,002
Grapes	N/A	68	N/A	\$0
Peaches	177	151	100	\$163,709

Counties to Planning Regions – FY2026

USDA Farm Service Agency transitioned farm records to planning regions for Fiscal Year 2026.

NRCS uses FSA Farm Records

- Worked with our development teams August/September 2025
 - Testing and running scripts
- Deployed 10/1/2025



Counties to Planning Regions

What is the impact to clients?

- Should not be much – can continue to work with the NRCS Field Office they are used to, even if their Planning Region is associated with another office

What is the impact to NRCS planning staff?

- Planning and contracting
 - Some changes to Case Files
 - Additional file management for clients and contracts in other planning regions

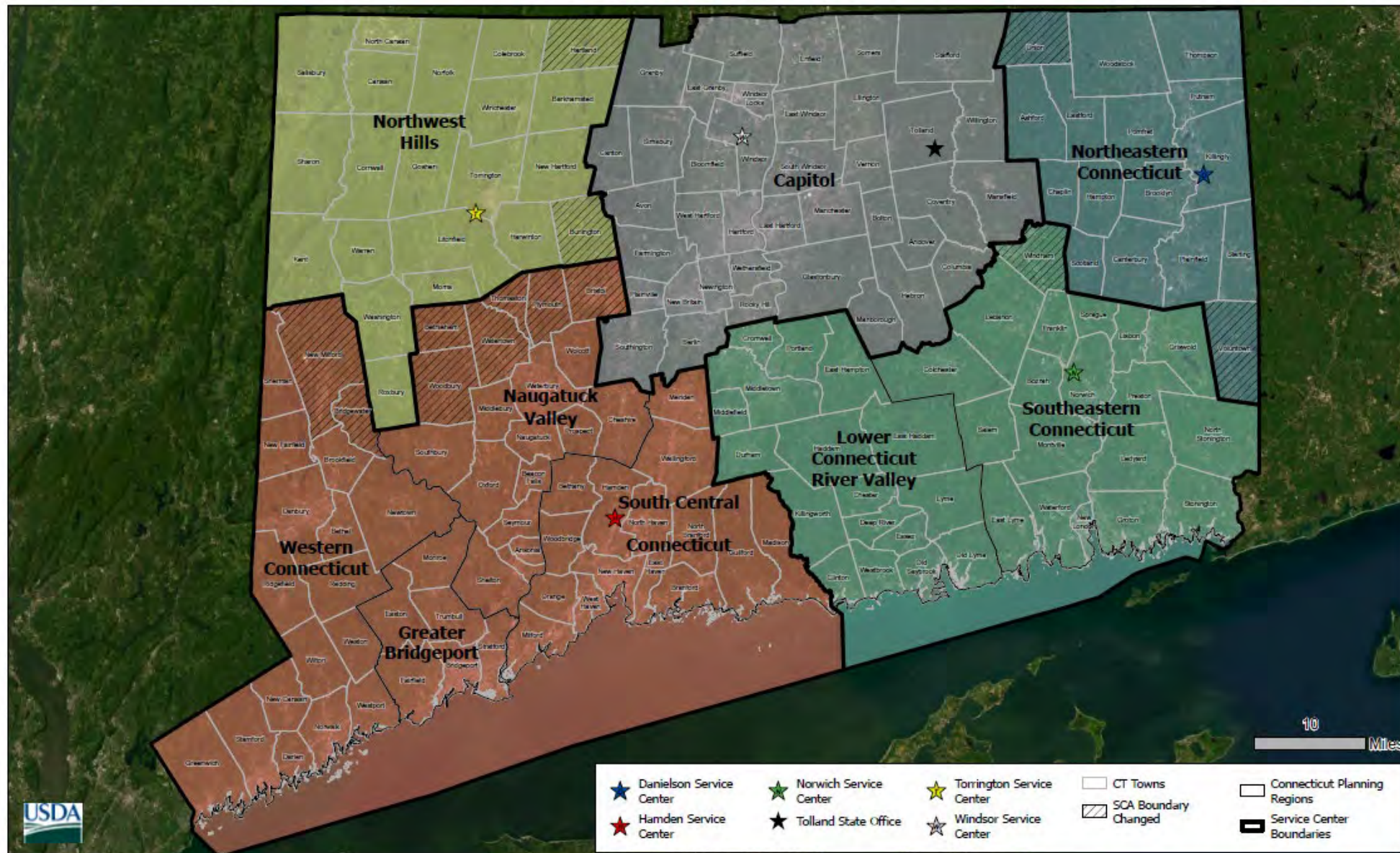




U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Connecticut NRCS Office Locations

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE





Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2026 Payment Schedule



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Chief's Priorities for NRCS



Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land



Modernize NRCS Infrastructure and Technology



Recenter Field Engagement and Technical Assistance



Strengthen Partnerships by Streamline Processes and Accountability



Shift to Outcome-Based Conservation and Farmer Empowerment

NRCS Payment Schedules



What are they?

- Method of establishing payment rates for NRCS practices
- Used for Conservation Programs
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Using this method since 2009



NRCS Payment Schedules

How are they used?

- Payments = Financial assistance for estimated costs incurred for conservation practices
- Not reimbursing producers based on individual expenses
 - Not collecting receipts
- Agency approved rates – used across the country and adjusted for states
- Payment is based on amount of a conservation practice that is installed
 - For example: Square Foot, Acre, Linear Foot, Gallon

Payment Schedules Website

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules>



Payment Schedules Website

- Publicly available
- Current year information only – export as PDF
 - Payment Schedules: All practices, scenarios and payment rates for programs
 - Practice Scenario Descriptions

NRCS Payment Schedules

Planning and Payments based on Practice Scenarios

- For example: 340 Cover Crop scenario options
 - Single species; Multi-species; Single species – organic
- Each scenario includes typical cost categories
 - Materials, equipment, labor, mobilization, acquisition of technical knowledge, administrative, forgone income
- Scenarios are not a design



2026 Payment Schedule - Updates

Focus on Streamlining

- Removed unused or duplicative scenarios
- Simplify Options - Scenarios that have common components and activities, planners select the best fit
- States not involved in scenario development

Issues

- Significant overhaul of scenarios
- 2025 unfunded applications have had to be rewritten



2026 Changes to Brush Management Scenarios

Scenarios offered in 2025 – not available in 2026

Scenario Name	Cost per Acre
Mechanical Control, Brush Hog	\$169.59
Mechanical Control, Light Infestation	\$625.61
Mechanical Control, Two to Four Inch Diameter Breast Height	\$1,021.56
Mechanical Control, Heavy Infestation	\$1,307.41
Chemical Control, Moderate Infestation	\$661.98
Chemical Control with Follow-up Treatment, Moderate Infestation	\$1,259.96
Chemical Control, Difficult	\$1,271.59
Chemical Control with Follow-up Treatment, Difficult	\$1,926.39
Mechanical Control, Hand Application and Follow-up Treatment	\$138.65
Chemical Control, Light Infestation	\$435.51
Mechanical Control, Less Than or Equal to One Acre	\$580.52

2026 Changes to Brush Management Scenarios

Scenarios offered in 2026

Scenario Name	2026 Cost per Acre	2025 Cost per Acre
Split Method (mechanical and chemical control)	\$178.96	\$1,479.71
Mechanical Control, Hand Application	\$1,871.44	\$103.97
Chemical Control, Individual Plant Treatment	\$49.17	\$49.19
Biological Control, Low Density	\$794.66	\$756.15
Mechanical Control, Less Than or Equal to One Acre	\$584.11	<i>new</i>
Biological Control, High Density	\$1,589.33	<i>new</i>
Mechanical Control for Small Shrubs, Medium Infestation	\$108.72	<i>new</i>
Mechanical Control for Large Shrubs, Medium Infestation	\$435.77	<i>new</i>
Mechanical and Chemical Control, Small Shrubs, Medium Infestation	\$137.07	<i>new</i>
Chemical Control, Ground Application	\$34.81	<i>new</i>
Chemical Control, Aerial Application	\$34.24	<i>new</i>

2026 Payment Schedule - Updates

Many Practices and Scenarios have been overhauled from the Streamlining Initiative

- Won't know full impact until contract obligation and implementation

FY2027

- We are hoping states will have input on scenarios





Questions & Answers



Disclaimer

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.