



NRCS Field Office Technical Guide Standards

WHAT ARE THEY? WHY DO THEY CHANGE?

SONYA KEITH, PLANNING ENGINEER

KY STATE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, DECEMBER 8, 2016

KY Conservation Practice Standards

- ▶ Based off National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP)
- ▶ Developed over time to conserve or improve natural resources
 - ▶ Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals plus Humans (SWAPA+H)
- ▶ A state can adopt applicable national standards, if needed standards can be modified within guidelines to fit specific conditions in state.
- ▶ KY NRCS conservation practice standards can be found in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)
 - ▶ Available online, KY eFOTG (https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/efotg_locator.aspx)

[Refresh Menu](#)

Search

FOTG

Section IV

- Table Of Contents
- Conservation Practices
- Tools
- Technical Notes
- Archive Materials - Section IV

FOTG Home Page

What is FOTG?

Technical guides are the primary scientific references for NRCS. They contain technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air, and related plant and animal resources. Technical guides used in each field office are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs). Appropriate parts of the Field Office Technical Guides are automated as data bases, computer programs, and other electronic-based materials such as those included in these web based pages.

[...more](#)

For additional information and requirements please contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).

What's in FOTG?

- Section I - General References
- Section II - Natural Resources Information
- Section III - Conservation Management Systems
- Section IV - Practice Standards and Specifications
- Section V - Conservation Effects

[...more](#)

In The Spotlight



Tools

Technical Materials

What's Changed Recently



- [Structures for Wildlife \(649\) \(12/2/2016\)](#)
- [2017 EQIP Payment Schedule 12-1-16 \(12/1/2016\)](#)
- [2017 EQIP Payment Schedule \(12/1/2016\)](#)
- [2017 RCPP EQIP Managing Poo 11-29-16 \(11/30/2016\)](#)
- [2017 RCPP EQIP Horse Overgrazing 11-29-16 \(11/30/2016\)](#)
- [2017 RCPP EQIP Cerulean Warbler 11-29-16 \(11/30/2016\)](#)
- [2017 RCPP EQIP Ground Cover 11-29-16 \(11/30/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 154-IPM Herbicide Resistant Weed Conservation Plan \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 142-Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mngt Plan \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 138-Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 128-Agricultural Energy Mngt Plan \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 106-Forest Mngt Plan \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 104-Nutrient Mngt Plan \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 142 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Mngt Plan \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [CAP 128 Checklist \(11/28/2016\)](#)
- [672 - Building Envelope Improvement \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [670 - Lighting System Improvement \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [666 - Forest Stand Improvement \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [658 - Wetland Creation \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [654 - Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [649 - Structures for Wildlife \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [647 - Early Successional Habitat Development/Management \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [642 - Water Well \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [638 - Water and Sediment Control Basin \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [635 - Vegetated Treatment Area \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [634 - Waste Transfer \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [620 - Underground Outlet \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [614 - Watering Facility \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [612 - Tree/Shrub Establishment \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [600 - Terrace \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [600 - Terrace \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [595 - Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\) \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [590 - Nutrient Management \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [587 - Structure for Water Control \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [585 - Stripcropping \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [580 - Streambank and Shoreline Protection \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [578 - Stream Crossing \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [575 - Trails and Walkways \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [574 - Spring Development \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [561 - Heavy Use Area Protection \(11/22/2016\)](#)
- [560 - Access Road \(11/22/2016\)](#)

Conservation Practice Standards

- ▶ Standards evolve based on farming and ranching techniques
 - ▶ New standards are added
 - ▶ Energy, High Tunnels, etc.
 - ▶ “Old” standards are deleted
- ▶ NRCS policy is to review all standards (engineering and agronomic) on a five year rotation
 - ▶ Can be updated more frequently if needed (new technology or methodology)

FY16 KY Conservation Practice Standards Changes

31 Standards (Agronomic and Engineering) Were Revised or Added

- ▶ Main Engineering Standard Changes Were:
 - ▶ Animal Mortality (316): Catastrophic mortality information was removed and was made part of a new standard, called Emergency Animal Mortality Management (368).
 - ▶ Denitrifying Bioreactor standard (605) was added. This is a system placed at the end of a field drainage tile system to remove nitrates from underground tile drainage water.
 - ▶ Pond Sealing or Lining, Bentonite Treatment, Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Clay Treatment, and Pond Sealing or Lining, Soil Dispersant Treatment, were all deleted and replaced with a standard called Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Soil Treatment (520).

FY16 KY Conservation Practice Standards Changes

- ▶ A new standard called Pond Sealing or Lining, Concrete (522) was added as an alternative for lining animal waste storage structures.
- ▶ A new standard called Saturated Buffer (604) was added as another way to treat underground drainage from crop fields to reduce nutrients and pathogens.
- ▶ Animal Waste Facility standard contains modification of structural design criteria, changes to some language for storage requirements, safety criteria improvements, added a requirement for staff gauges on holding ponds, added criteria for solid waste stacking facilities and improved the “Plans and Specifications” and “Operations and Maintenance” sections.

FY16 KY Conservation Practice Standards Changes

Most of the other standards had revisions that dealt with clarifying criteria and/or purpose, removing passive voice language and in general were minor edits.



ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES UPDATE

State Technical Committee Meeting

December 8, 2016

Mark Ferguson, State Resource Conservationist

CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS (CIG)

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.

- Pilot projects
 - Field demonstrations
 - On-farm conservation research
-

STATE CIG TOPICS

Water Quality

Possible subtopics include:

- Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of bundling conservation measures to avoid, control, and trap nutrient losses from the field.
 - Innovative approaches to management, application and/or treatment of livestock manure to reduce nutrients prior to land application.
 - Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of methods to capture dissolved phosphorus from field runoff and subsurface drainage.
-

STATE CIG TOPICS

Water Quantity

Possible subtopics include:

- Demonstrate and evaluate technologies to enhance agricultural water use efficiency at field, farm, and/or watershed scales.
 - Demonstrate and evaluate technologies and approaches to mitigate the impacts of long-term drought on agricultural production.
 - Develop and demonstrate strategies for limited/deficit irrigation water management and quantify its impact on water resources and farm profitability.
-

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds are used to award competitive grants.
 - KY State CIG-\$300,000 allocated for FY 2017.
 - Funds for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a competitive grants process. \$75,000 maximum Federal funding. CIG recipients must provide non-Federal funding equal to the amount of Federal funds requested. Non-Federal funds must be derived from cash and/or in-kind sources. Any combination of cash and in-kind funding can be used to meet the non-Federal match.
 - Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice.
 - Final selections are made by the State Conservationist.
 - KY State CIG: Applications due March 10, 2017
-

SAMPLE OF CURRENT STATE FUNDED CIGs

- UK-Phosphorous Runoff Potential in Major Row Crop Soils of KY
 - Grow Appalachia-Delivery of Soil Health Innovations to Historically Underserved Producers in Appalachia KY
 - WFAN-Increasing Outreach to Women Landowners
 - KSU-Soil Health Assessment-Use of Manure, Cover Crops and Crop Rotation in Small Scale Farming
 - UK-Study of the Effect of Cover Crops on Soil Health and Nitrogen Fertilizer Response
-

NATIONAL CIG TOPICS

1. Historically underserved producer or veteran farmers or ranchers.

Projects that describe innovative environmental enhancement and protection approaches and technologies for the primary benefit of historically underserved producers, veteran farmers or ranchers, or organizations comprised of or representing these individuals may include:

- Technology transfer;
 - Demonstration of new or novel technology that can be easily and inexpensively adopted;
 - Projects that assess resource conditions and land capabilities;
 - Projects that emphasize program outreach; or
 - Projects that develop technical training.
-

NATIONAL CIG TOPICS

2. Data analytics for natural resources conservation.

NRCS seeks to support the development of publicly available technical tools. These tools are most often designed to help agricultural producers manage inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, fuel use) and increase yields, often through the use of precision agriculture techniques. The objective of the proposed tools should be to increase producer knowledge of conservation benefits and alternatives, and should be designed to stimulate adoption of conservation practices by farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. The tools may address water quality, water quantity, air quality, climate change, soil health, and wildlife habitat.

NATIONAL CIG TOPICS

3. Pay-for-success models to stimulate conservation adoption.

Pay-for-success (PFS) is an approach to contracting that ties payments to the achievement of measurable outcomes. PFS approaches require private financing to provide upfront capital for innovative projects. NRCS is inviting proposals that develop and demonstrate PFS approaches to stimulate conservation adoption on private lands.

NATIONAL CIG TOPICS

4. Precision conservation approaches.

NRCS invites proposals that design and implement precision conservation approaches, with priority given to approaches that are coordinated with and complement precision agriculture and data analytics technologies and tools.

NATIONAL CIG TOPICS

5. Projects that demonstrate the cost effectiveness of leveraged public and private impact investments in working lands conservation.

6. Water management technologies and approaches to maximize agricultural production efficiency and minimize off-site impacts.

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds are used to award competitive grants.
 - National CIG-\$25 million allocated for FY 2017.
 - Funds for single- or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, will be awarded through a competitive grants process. \$2 million maximum Federal funding. CIG recipients must provide non-Federal funding equal to the amount of Federal funds requested. Non-Federal funds must be derived from cash and/or in-kind sources. Any combination of cash and in-kind funding can be used to meet the non-Federal match.
 - Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice.
 - Final selections are made by NRCS Chief.
 - National CIG: Applications due January 9, 2017
-

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Mark Ferguson, State CIG Coordinator

mark.ferguson@ky.usda.gov 859-224-7370

State CIG Website: <http://www.ky.nrcs.usda.gov>*

*Navigate to Programs/Financial Assistance/CIG

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

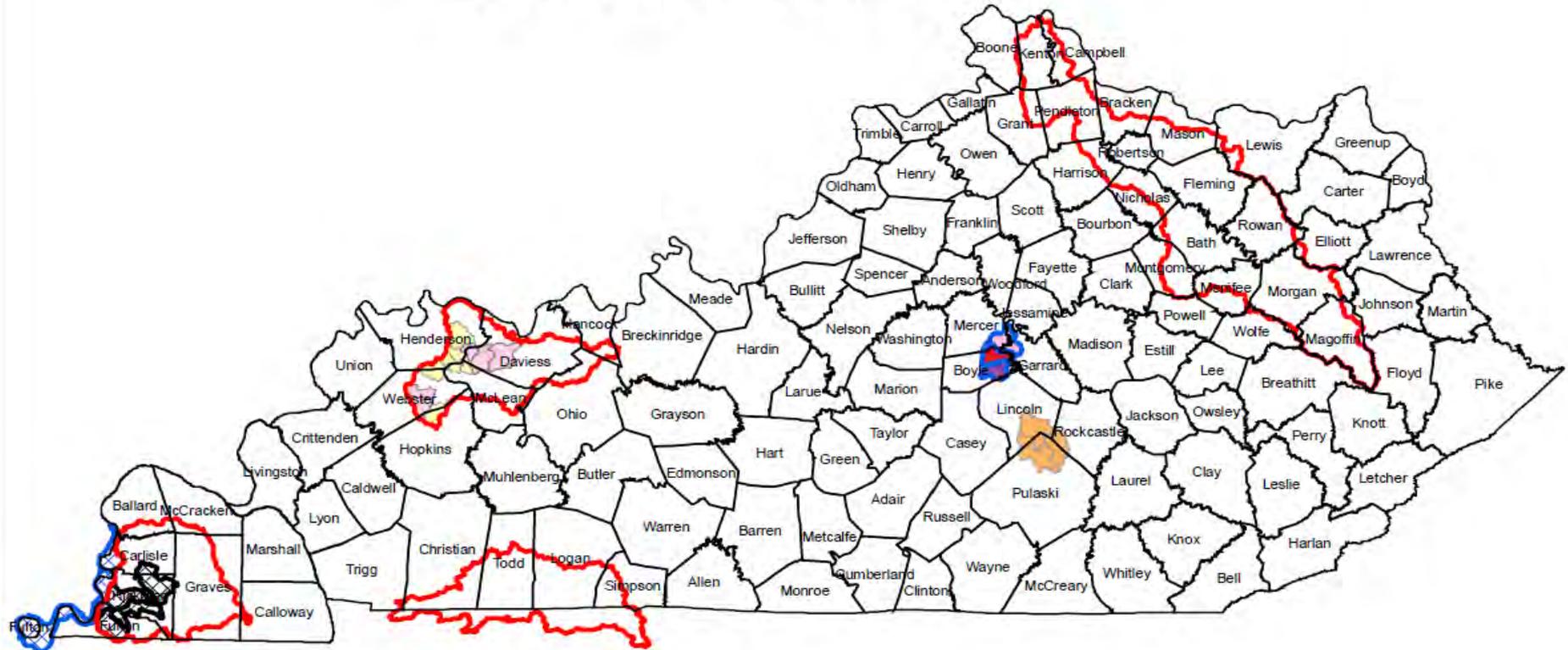
- National Nutrient Management Conservation Practice Standard Update in FY 17
 - FY 2014-2016
 - 17 Nutrient Management Plans written on approximately 8,000 acres by Technical Service Providers
 - Nutrient Management applied through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program on approximately 3,000 acres.
-

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

- NRCS Nutrient Management Planner/Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planner Certification Training
 - Currently have 6 NRCS employees certified
 - 6 additional employees are in process of being certified
 - Will be writing Nutrient Management Plans in Mississippi River Basin Initiative Focus Areas and National Water Quality Initiative Areas
 - Will be assisting in review of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans written by Technical Service Providers.
-

KY NRCS Initiatives

2017 Current Projects



Legend

MRBI Focus Areas (HUC8)

MRBI-WREP Project Areas

TNC Project 2015

Batture Project 2012 & 2015

NWQI (EQIP)

Cane Run-Dix River (2016-present)

Mocks Branch (2015-present)

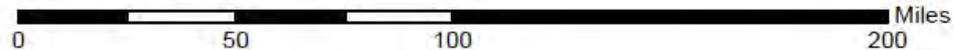
Clarks Run (2012-present)

MRBI-EQIP & CSP Project Areas

Central Lower Green (2016-present)

Upper Buck Creek (2016-present)

Southeast Lower Green (2015-present)



Questions?

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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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.

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

Fiscal Year 2016 Accomplishments

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

***Disclaimer:** The numbers shown in this presentation have been rounded and are for informational purposes. They are not meant to be used for “official” agency numbers for use outside of this presentation. Should official numbers be needed, please contact Deena Wheby.*

FY 2016 EQIP

- Final EQIP numbers
 - 704 contracts for \$15,707,000
 - StrikeForce Counties: 482 for \$9,673,400
 - 68 percent of contracts
 - 62 percent of funding
 - StrikeForce is 60 percent of counties (73/120)
 - Livestock percentage: 63.7 percent
 - Wildlife percentage: Exceeded the required 5 percent

Seasonal High Tunnels

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid*
SHT - A1	31	\$ 327,000	\$ 116,558	35.64%
SHT - A2	45	\$ 482,724	\$ 223,570	46.31%
SHT - A3	46	\$ 586,710	\$ 109,526	18.67%

* "Percent Paid" on these slides is as of late October 2016



Conservation Activity Plans (CAPS)

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
CAP General	41	\$ 88,500	\$ 15,525	17.54%
CAP CNMP	32	\$ 260,860	\$ 96,465	36.98%

CAPs are specific conservation plans written by NRCS certified
Technical Service Providers (TSPs)



Historically Underserved

(Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged,
Limited Resource Producer)

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
Beginning Farmer	53	\$ 1,700,000	\$ 422,000	24.82%
Limited Resource Producer	12	\$ 306,295	\$ 123,535	40.33%
Socially Disadvantaged	9	\$ 166,835	\$ 63,858	38.28%



Forestland

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
Forestland	58	\$ 791,300	\$ 58,900	7.44%

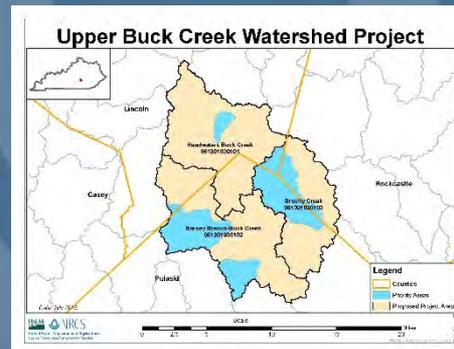
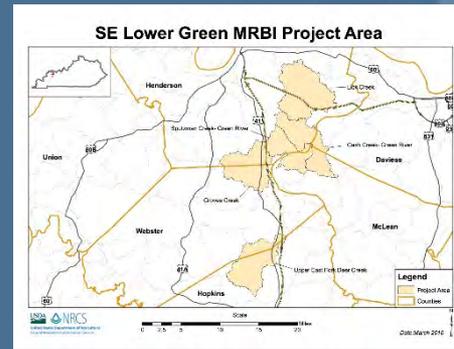
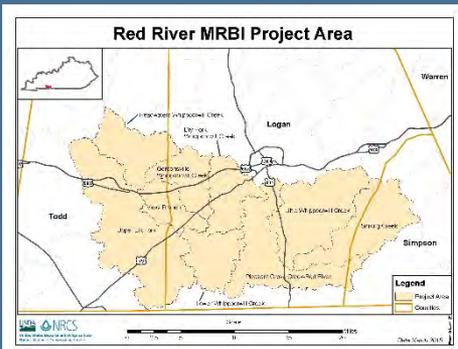
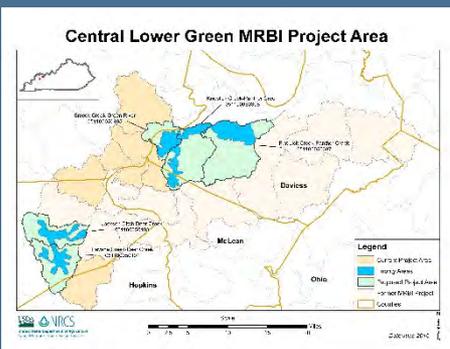
Wildlife

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
Wildlife	28	\$ 740,758	\$ 213,102	28.77%



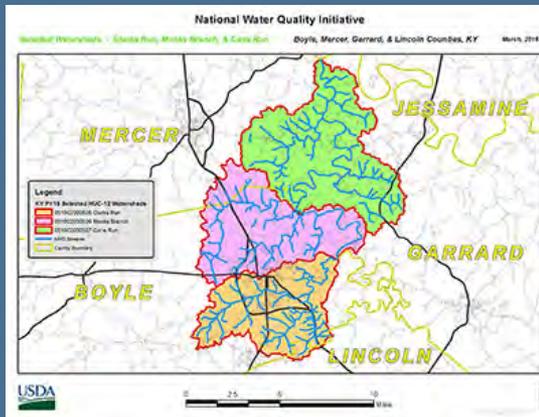
Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
MRBI Central Lower Green	3	\$ 208,100	\$ 5,263	2.53%
MRBI Red	17	\$ 409,000	\$ 45,585	11.15%
MRBI SE Lower Green	11	\$ 605,860	\$ 34,321	5.66%
MRBI Upper Buck	8	\$ 137,525	\$ 29,711	21.60%



National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
NWQI Cane Run	6	\$ 254,096	\$ 126,776	49.89%
NWQI Clark	2	\$ 31,473	\$ 18,290	58.11%
NWQI Mocks	1	\$ 11,000	\$ -	0.00%



Energy

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
Energy	39	\$ 1,401,076	\$ 542,770	38.74%

Organic

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
Organic Certified	3	\$ 78,675	\$ 20,900	26.56%
Organic Transitioning	27	\$ 258,745	\$ 45,150	17.45%



Southeast Kentucky Early Successional Habitat (SEKESH)

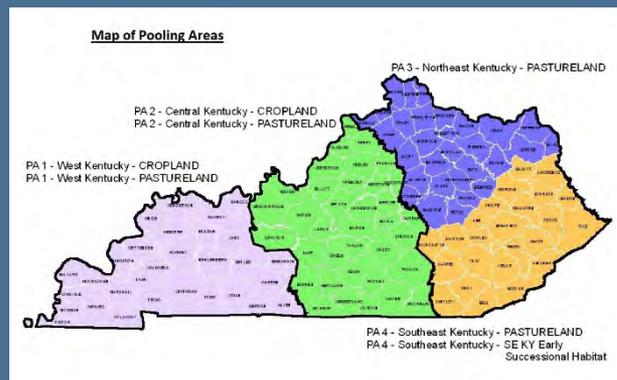
Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
SEKESH	26	\$ 291,423	\$ 48,322	16.58%

Joint Chiefs' Partnership (Triplett Creek)

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
Triplett Cr (Two Chiefs)	8	\$ 62,199	\$ 5,054	8.13%

General EQIP

Subaccount	Contracts	Obligations	Payments	Percent Paid
PA 1 Pasture	31	\$ 966,356	\$ 121,597	12.58%
PA 1 Crop	68	\$ 1,948,565	\$ 141,444	7.26%
PA 2 Pasture	51	\$ 1,953,165	\$ 272,178	13.94%
PA 2 Crop	10	\$ 641,855	\$ 119,898	18.68%
PA 3 Pasture	23	\$ 780,917	\$ 136,134	17.43%
PA 4 Pasture	15	\$ 161,939	\$ 29,064	17.95%



FY 2016 EQIP Total

- **704 contracts**
- **\$15,707,000 obligations**
- **\$3,185,500 paid as of 10/20**
(20.35%)
- **12/7 UPDATE: \$5.1 million paid**
(32.7%)

Unfunded Requests

- **Nearly 2,800 applications were not funded**
- **Estimated \$62 million**

What can we expect for FY 2017 Financial Assistance?

- Initial Allocation = \$16,127,000
 - EQIP: General (crop, pasture, high tunnels, forest, wildlife, historically underserved, etc.)
 - ❖ \$ 10,882,000
 - EQIP: Strike Force
 - ❖ \$ 4,004,000
 - EQIP: MRBI (existing watersheds)
 - ❖ \$ 941,000
 - EQIP: NWQI
 - ❖ \$ 300,000

FY 2017

- Accept applications on a continuous basis
- Identified “batching” periods:
 - November 18, 2016
 - Organic, energy, high tunnels, forestland, SEKESH, wildlife, beginning farmer, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, NWQI, MRBI, manure management
 - January 20, 2017
 - All fund pools above
 - Conservation activity plans (CAPs)
 - March 17, 2017
 - Regional fund pools (crop and pasture)
 - All fund pools above
- Formula for funding per account? Input welcome!

FY 2017

- New funding pool – Manure Management
- Seasonal High Tunnels added to Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Accounts

More EQIP to Come?

- Two Chief's Partnership?
- RCPP – prior year, current year, new
- No new NWQI project areas except for a planning effort in Gunpowder Creek (Boone County)
- Opportunity for Edge of Field Monitoring (spring?)



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

2016 Accomplishments

Congratulations to Caitlin and Nick!
Great pollinator Engagement Photo shoot!
Waiting for Wedding pictures-- 10-3-15!



Visit our USDA Pollinators-- Kentucky wildflowers and native grasses attract wild bees and other pollinators. . . contributing to our commitment to sustainability.

Potato Hill Farm CSP and EQIP Participants

- Bracken County beginning farmers
- Have completed one EQIP contract and is current on a second one (woodland practices)
- Have a 2012 CSP contract that finishes 12/31/2016
- Is eligible for a 5-year contract renewal
- Does AgriTourism including weddings
- Their first CSP contract included pollinator habitat

Farm and Ranchlands

Protection Program (FRPP)

Since it started as FPP in 1996, NRCS in Kentucky:

- Helped eligible entities acquire more than 200 permanent conservation easements to keep land in agriculture in 19 counties
- Covering more than 33,000 acres
 - Almost 88 percent of which are prime or of statewide important soils
- Federal investment of \$30 million
- Total investment of \$67 million (not including administrative, legal, technical, other costs)

FRPP Repealed in 2014 Farm Bill

- Replaced with Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP) – Ag Land Easements (ALE)
- Under ACEP-ALE, we currently have 35 easements on almost 4,000 acres which are nearing closing.

Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)

- Also repealed was the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP) and replaced with ACEP-ALE GSS (Grasslands of Special Significance).
- Main differences GSS vs GRP:
 - Similar to FRPP, requires an eligible entity
 - Does not provide any restoration activities

Eligible Entities for ACEP

- An agency of any state or local government, or a nongovernmental organization that was organized for the purpose of preserving/protecting land, habitat, and/or historically important lands.
 - Kentucky Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE), Inc.
 - Fayette County Rural Land Management Board
 - Scott County Rural Land Management Board
 - Compatible Lands Foundation
 - TNC
 - Shelby County
 - Bluegrass Trust
 - Bluegrass Conservancy

Entity Requirements

- Matching funds for easement value
- Able to hold and monitor easement in perpetuity
- Pay for appraisal, title work, legal and closing costs, survey (if needed)

Informational Meeting for Interested Entities

- NRCS will be hosting an **informational meeting for interested entities in January or early February.**
- If you know of any local entities (land trusts, government entities that are getting into the conservation easement business, etc.) that would be interested in hearing more about ACEP-ALE, please provide the name of the entity and contact information to Deena Wheby.



Questions?

***Disclaimer:** The numbers shown in this presentation have been rounded and are for informational purposes. They are not meant to be used for “official” agency numbers for use outside of this presentation. Should official numbers be needed, please contact Deena Wheby.*

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.



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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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 responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. 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, 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.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Changes FY 2017

The logo for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, featuring a large, stylized, light blue water drop shape. The text "Natural Resources Conservation Service" is written in white, stacked vertically to the right of the drop.

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

December 8th , 2016

Changes

- Categories:
 - Manual
 - Eligibility
 - Evaluation and Ranking
 - Conservation Activities
 - Payments
 - Contract Administration



New CSP Manual

- 440-CPM, Part 507
 - Effective for new enrollments during fiscal year 2017 and forward
 - Focus is specifically on addressing Resource Concerns
 - Provides greater flexibility for contract modifications
 - Streamlines CSP with Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Evaluation and Ranking



New Evaluation Tool:

- Evaluates applications based on how many natural resource concerns they meet at the time of application and by the end of the contract period

New Ranking Tool:

- The tool contains National, State, and Local ranking questions, as well as an efficiency score
- Ranking functionality matches EQIP

Conservation Activities

- More conservation activities are now available:
 - 127 enhancements
 - 13 bundles (groups of enhancements)
 - 45 conservation practices
- Enhancements are directly linked to practices.
- Enhancements now address specific resource concerns

Payments

Three payment types

- Existing Activity Payment
 - Payment for resource concerns addressed
 - Per acre payment based on land use
- Additional Activity Payment
 - Payment for specific activities implemented as scheduled in the contract
- Supplemental Payment
 - Payment for implementing specific long term crop rotations (infrequently used)

Contract Administration

- Participants must:
 - Maintain the number of resource concerns met at the time of enrollment for each land use in the contract
 - Maintain the number of resource concerns met or exceeded by the end of the contract for each land use in the contract
- Participants may:
 - Request a modification to substitute new activities, as long as they address the same resource concerns
 - Request a modification to reschedule new activities included in the contract

New CSP Philosophy

- Flexible
- Transparent
- Understandable
- Measurable
- Aligned with NRCS's focus on conservation planning and addressing resource concerns
- Streamlined with EQIP



United States Department of Agriculture

Questions?

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.



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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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 responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. 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, 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.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)



**Agricultural Conservation Easements
Program – Agricultural Land Easements –
Grasslands of Special Significance
(ACEP-ALE-GSS)**



United States Department of Agriculture

ACEP Components

Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE)

- Combines the purposes and functions of Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and Grassland Reserve Program (GRP).
- NRCS provides matching funds to eligible entities for the purchase of agricultural land easements.
- GSS is a component of ACEP-ALE



United States Department of Agriculture

Differences Between GSS and GRP

- In ACEP-ALE-GSS, a perpetual conservation easement is purchased.
- Annual rentals are not available in GSS.
- The cooperating entity purchases and holds the easement.
- NRCS provides matching funding to the cooperating entity to purchase the easement
- The cooperating entity is responsible for monitoring the easement



GSS Defined

Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE-GSS)

- Grasslands of Special Significance are grasslands that contain little or no noxious or invasive species; are subject to the threat of conversion to nongrassland uses or fragmentation; and the land is:
 - (1)(i) rangeland, pastureland, or shrubland on which the vegetation is dominated by native grasses, grass-like plants, shrubs, or forbs, or
 - (ii) Improved, naturalized pastureland and rangeland; and
- (2)(i) Provides, or could provide, habitat for threatened or endangered species or at-risk species,
- (ii) Protects sensitive or declining native prairie or grassland types, or
- (iii) Provides protection of highly sensitive natural resources



United States Department of Agriculture

ALE – Easement Compensation

- **USDA can pay up to 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement in most cases**
- **USDA can potentially pay up to 75 percent of the appraised fair market value of the easement for GSS Easements**
 - Voluntary landowner contribution/donation can make up half of the entity contribution



United States Department of Agriculture

Kentucky GSS Strategy

Spatially identify focus areas with possible GSS

Define specific features or criteria for GSS determination -> T&E/at risk species, habitat, etc.

Prioritize GSS features in state ranking criteria



United States Department of Agriculture

GSS in Kentucky

Under consideration for potential GSS focus:

Prairies, Barrens, and Glades

Current needs:

Identify and map focus areas

What features would make a good GSS candidate?

How can that be captured in ranking questions?



United States Department of Agriculture

Providing GSS Feedback and Suggestions

Contact:

Deena Wheby

Deena.Wheby@ky.usda.gov

Provide feedback by January 15, 2017



United States Department of Agriculture

Disclaimer: The numbers shown in this presentation have been rounded and are for informational purposes. They are not meant to be used for “official” agency numbers for use outside of this presentation. Should official numbers be needed, please contact Deena Wheby.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or by fax (202) 690-7442 or by email at program.intake@usda.gov. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

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

WRE Enrollment for FY-2016

West Area 1 – 5 projects totaling 1497 acres (\$5,056,289)
Calloway (2), Fulton, Graves, McCracken

East Area 1 – 5 projects totaling 1038 acres (\$3,764,021)
Caldwell, Henderson, Hopkins, McLean, Todd

Area 2 – 1 mitigation project of 5 acres (no NRCS cost)
Green County

Area 3 – 2 projects totaling 104 acres (\$246,407)
Knox, Whitley

FY-2017 Funding Overview

Kentucky's initial ACEP-WRE FA allocation is \$9,912,000

This compares favorably with last year's initial allocation of \$6,479,040

Remaining MRBI WREP (TNC) is \$6,132,443

Additional funds for the MRBI (MRT)

WRP (legacy) funds allocation is \$1,950,000

FY-2017 ACEP-WRE GARC

As in prior years, Kentucky uses Area-Wide Market Analysis values and appraisal values to establish easement offers in the state.

Relative to many of the surrounding states, We see a wide range in values for cropland in Kentucky.

Comments/input for establishing Geographic Area Rate Caps for FY-2018?

Looking to the future

Baseline funding for ACEP

FY2014 - 400 million

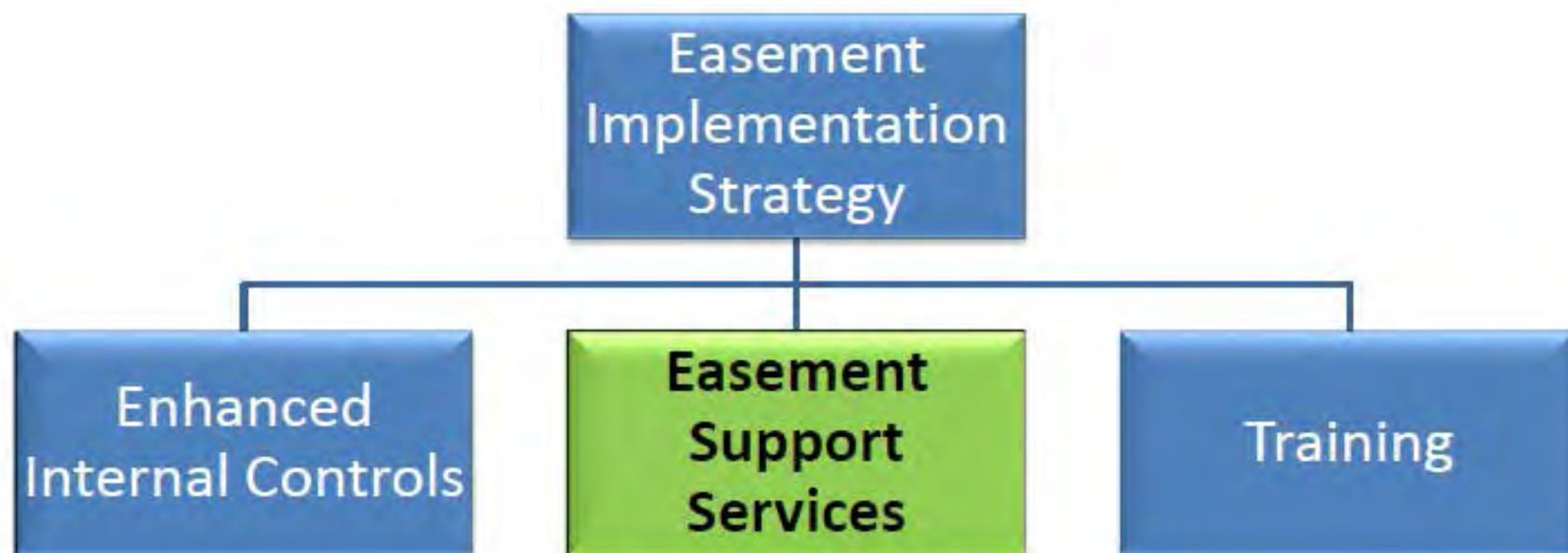
FY2015 - 425 million

FY2016 - 450 million

FY2017 - 500 million

FY2018 - 250 million

Easement Implementation Strategy (EIS)



Easement Implementation Strategy

1. Enhanced Internal Controls (IC)
 - Implemented January 2015
 - Short-term immediate controls to minimize financial findings
2. Training
 - Introductory
 - In-person sessions in FY 2016
 - Tailored to positions (i.e. STC vs. program specialist)
3. Easement Support Services (ESS)
 - Development and Pilot FY 14 – FY 15
 - Implementing in FY16 and FY17
 - Long-term approach to minimize risks and better utilize agency resources by centralizing specialized administrative and acquisition tasks

Easement Support Services (ESS)

NHQ EPD: Policy, Training,
Oversight of Program
Implementation, and
Support

State:
Outreach
Sign Up
Resource
Priorities

State:
Ranking
Land
Eligibility
Project
Selection

**National ESS
Branch:**
Contracted
Services
(Title, Records
Search,
Survey)
Obligation
Closing
Payment

State:
Restoration
Compatible
Use
Management

State:
Monitoring
Enforcement

Easement Support Services (ESS)

Responsibilities during Acquisition Phase

State

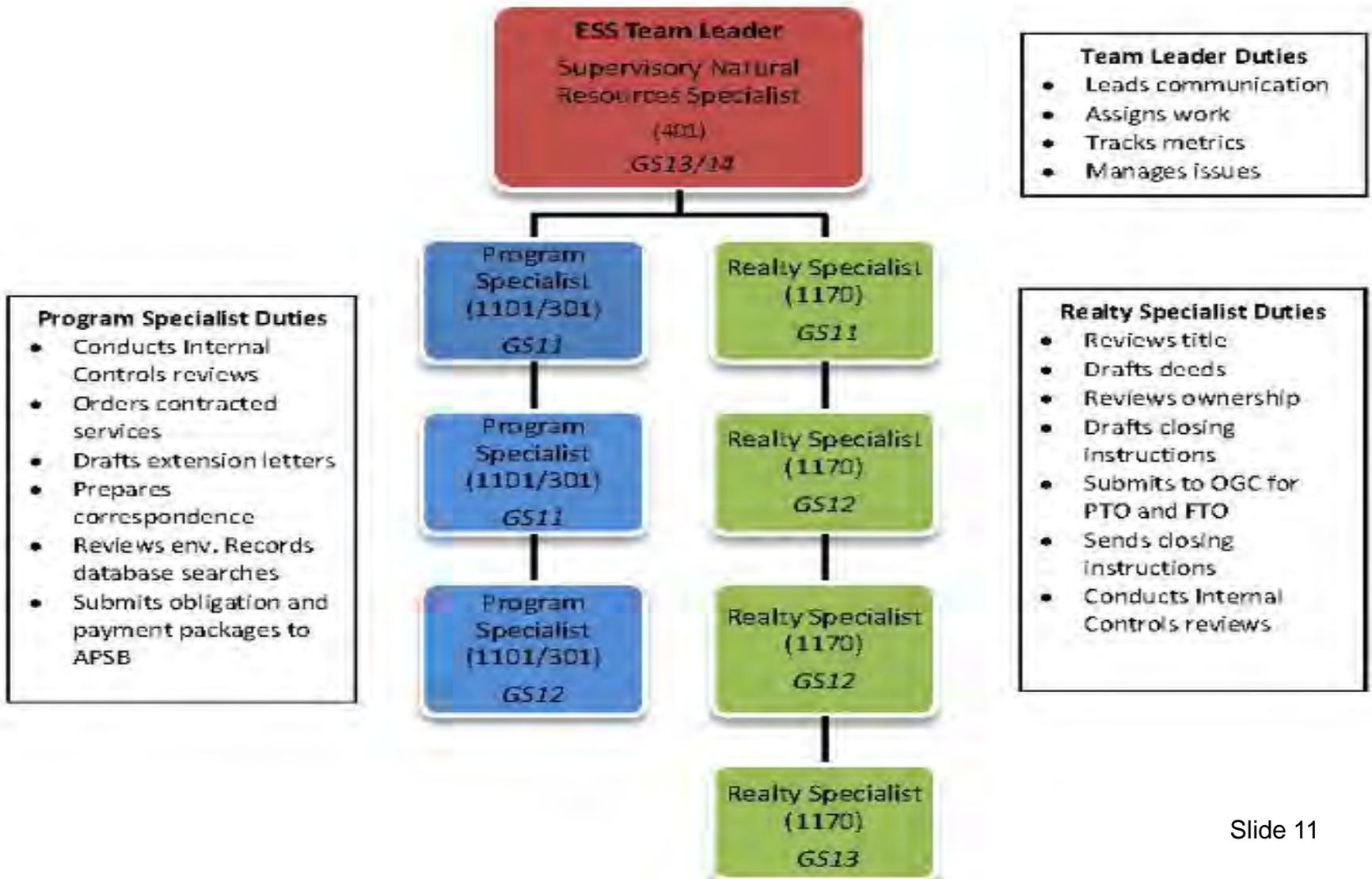
- Confirm legal boundary survey
- Complete Certificate of Inspection and Possession
- Sign Deed
- Complete ALE Plans/WRPO

ESS Team

- Contract survey and closing
- Manage Agreements – extensions, adjustments, ROOT and audit samples
- Prepare PTO/FTO packages and submit to OGC
- Prepare closing documents and review closing packages
- Submit payment requests to APSB

After Payment, Closing, and FTO are complete State resumes all responsibilities for the Easement or 30-year contract.

ESS Team Structure and Duties



Easement Support Services (ESS)

FY 2016 Status Update

Active ESS States

- ESS Team 1 - CA, IL, OH, and TN

States Transitioning

- RI and WY transitions are underway
- AK/HI will start to transition
- EPD is talking with States asking to come into ESS



Established in the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements.

A Request for Proposals is published annually and project submissions come from various groups/entities.

Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of EQIP, CSP, ACEP and HFRP; and in certain areas the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.



United States Department of Agriculture

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

FY 2015 Agreements

Managing Poo

Cerulean Warbler

FY 2016 Agreements

Precision Conservation Management

Scott County Conservation District
(SCCD) Ground Cover on Marginal
Lands

UK Horse Overgrazing



EQIP-RCPP

Managing Poo – Adoption of Nutrient Management and Conservation Practices

- Goal: Educational and conservation practice initiatives for landowners who may be facing regulatory action by the state due to water quality issues. The primary concern is reducing nutrient loading and sediment deposits in the waters of Kentucky due to livestock operation on private lands.
- Partners:
 - Kentucky Division of Conservation (lead partner)
 - Kentucky Dairy Development Council
 - Kentucky Cattleman's Association/Kentucky Beef Network
 - University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food, and the Environment
- No contracts have been entered under EQIP yet
 - \$1,268,000 available for EQIP
- State Cost-share has done several CNMPs
 - \$2.5 million SCS available
- EQIP RCPP Batching Periods are same as General EQIP
 - November 18, 2016
 - January 20, 2017
 - March 17, 2017

EQIP-RCPP

Cerulean Warbler

- Purpose: Enhance forest habitat for Cerulean Warblers and associated species, and demonstrate a positive response for these. Restore approximately 1,000 acres of reclaimed mine land to biodiverse forest, including American Chestnut plantings.
- Partners
 - Appalachian Mountain Joint Venture (American Bird Conservancy)
- Multi-state (Appalachian portions of the following states):
 - WV, PA, MD, WV
 - OH, KY
- Only available for southeast Kentucky counties on reclaimed mined land

- Total EQIP financial assistance: \$5,088,252
 - Kentucky Funding (through 5/5/2020): Estimated \$272,000

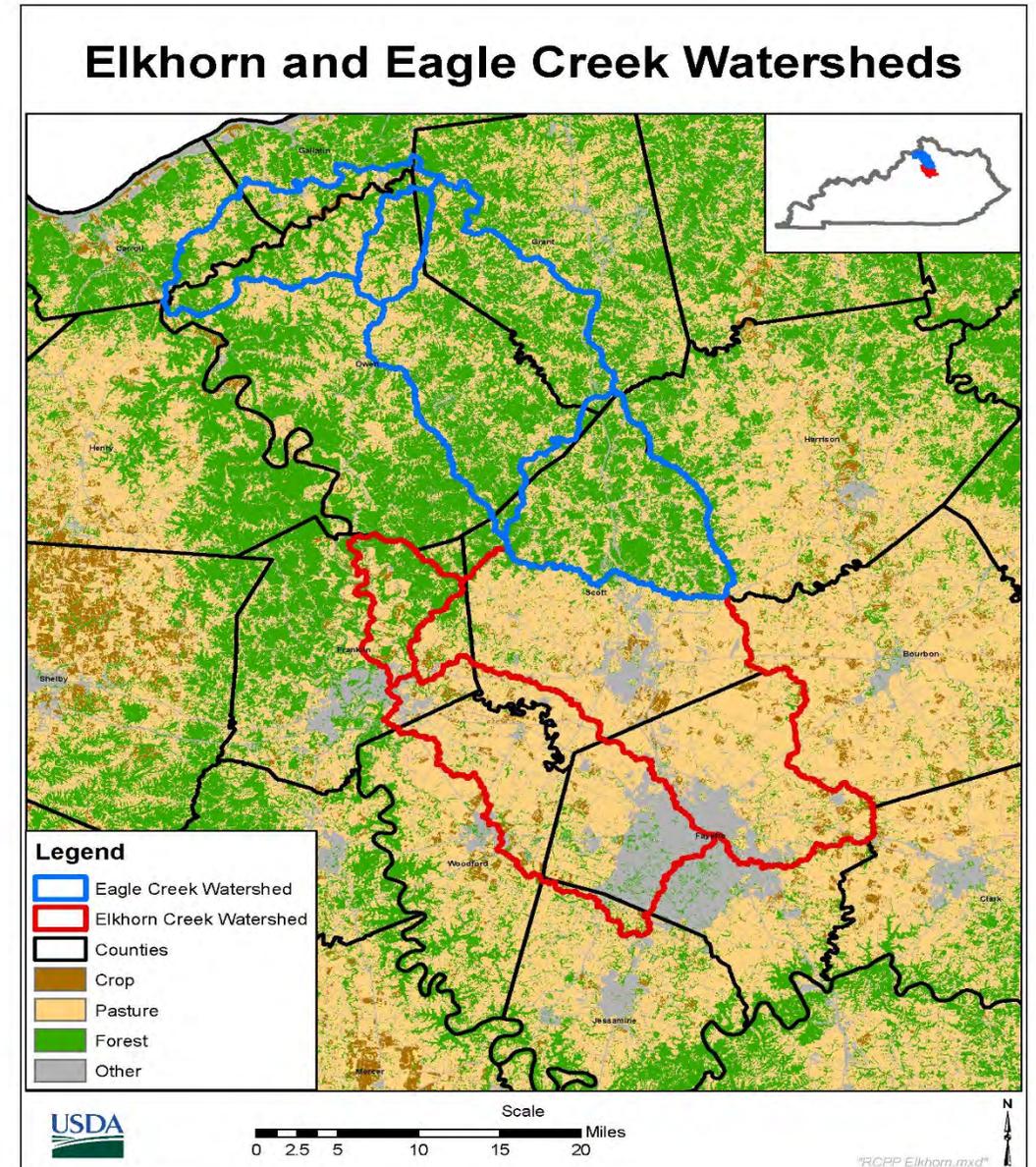
- Have entered one contract to date
- FY 2017 batching period February 17, 2017



EQIP-RCPP

Scott County Conservation District Ground Cover on Marginal Lands

- Goal: Convert HEL cropland to grass
- Partners:
 - Scott County Conservation District (lead)
 - Other SWCDs in the project area
- EQIP funding available: \$300,000 through 9/30/2020
- Eligible in the Elkhorn and Eagle Creek Watersheds
- Application batching periods:
 - January 20, 2017
 - March 17, 2017



EQIP & CSP - RCPP



Precision Conservation Management

- Partner:
 - Illinois Corn Growers Association (lead)
- Includes Counties in Illinois and Kentucky (MRBI focus areas)

Carlisle	Henderson
Christian	Hickman
Daviess	Logan
Fulton	McClellan
Graves	Todd

- Will begin financial assistance (EQIP and CSP) in FY 2018
- Funds available (through FY 2020):
 - EQIP: \$456,000
 - CSP: 20,000 acres



United States Department of Agriculture

EQIP-RCPP

Overgrazing and Soil Degradation on Horse Farms

- Partner: University of Kentucky Research Foundation
- Goal: Introduce small horse farms to the importance of rotational grazing and pasture management.
- UK will be writing Grazing Management Plans
- EQIP funds available to implement recommendations in those plans: \$296,909 (through 9/30/2020)
- EQIP FY17 batching cut-offs will be announced later this FY.



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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. 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, 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.