

Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

2016 Progress Report

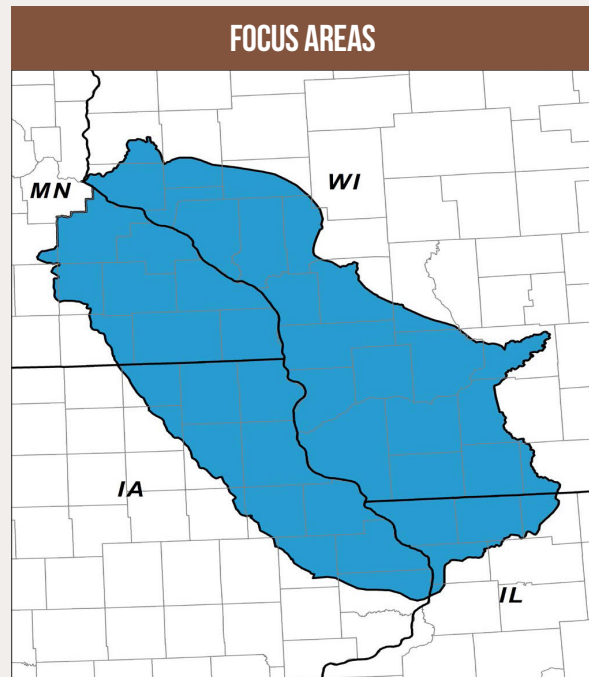
The Driftless Area is a stunningly beautiful, 24,000-square-mile landscape island once surrounded but never touched by giant sheets of glacial ice. This ancient landscape has evolved over thousands of years to reveal rocky bluffs, ridge-tops flanked with steep hillsides and more than 600 coldwater springs and creeks. The four-state Driftless Area is home to many rare species of birds, fish, plants and other wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. The area also provides critical food and habitat for migratory birds.

Water quality and habitat loss pose challenges for this unique region of working farms, pastures, forests, streams and prairies. Its soils are highly vulnerable to erosion, and when they erode, that soil loss threatens water quality and reduces the productivity and sustainability of farming in the area.

The conversion of forests, grasslands and lands with expiring contracts through USDA's Conservation Reserve Program to intensive agriculture further increases the risk to this delicate ecosystem. NRCS is working with agricultural producers to help protect this unique region through voluntary conservation efforts on private lands.

NRCS and the Driftless Area

Through the Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative (DALCI), NRCS helps producers use conservation practices to conserve the area's natural resources ensuring economic viability of cropland, pastureland and forestland. The initiative focuses on restoring coldwater stream corridors. Common practices include protecting streambanks from erosion, adding fences to manage livestock access to streams, removing obstructions in the water, adding stream crossings, enabling fish passage and managing habitat for wildlife.



Outcomes and Impacts

This initiative provides targeted assistance for producers. By taking action, producers can reverse the decline for targeted species and habitats, like brown trout and cold water streams, improving the overall health of the watersheds and their natural resources.

Coldwater streams are a key indicator of the health of this landscape. By targeting resources in priority watersheds, NRCS works with producers to best restore stream corridors and implement conservation practices that lead to better water quality downstream. Cleaner and cooler water, less erosion and more wildlife habitat is good for producers and the environment.

Restoring coldwater streams on private lands helps a variety of wildlife and fish including brown trout



Fiscal Year 2016 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) for Active and Completed Projects

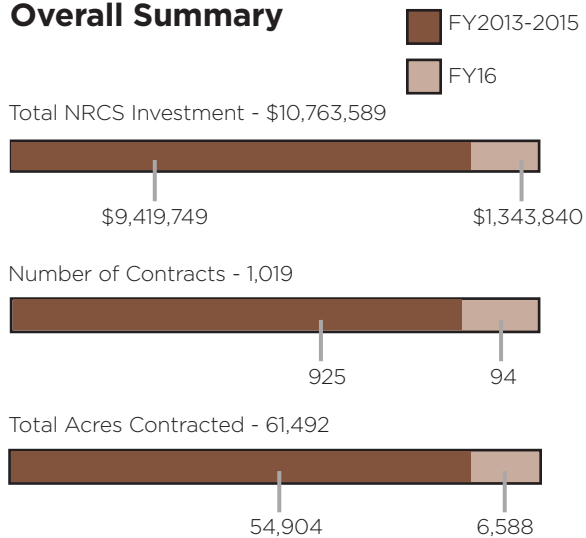
State	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Illinois	10,485	\$840,690	250
Iowa	4,268	\$1,129,047	48
Minnesota	23,883	\$3,267,534	261
Nebraska	2,295	\$767,976	18
Wisconsin	23,021	\$5,526,317	463
Total	61,657	\$10,763,588	928

Data source: NRCS Resource Economics, Analysis and Policy Division, November 2016.

NRCS Goals

Through the Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative, NRCS works with producers to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat in this sensitive region. NRCS is focusing efforts on restoring coldwater streams. By 2017, NRCS aims to restore 25 miles of streams, increase brown trout numbers by 30,000, reduce runoff of sediment by 150,000 tons and improve 20,500 acres of upstream habitat.

Overall Summary



2017 Milestones:

