

Red River Basin Initiative

2016 Progress Report

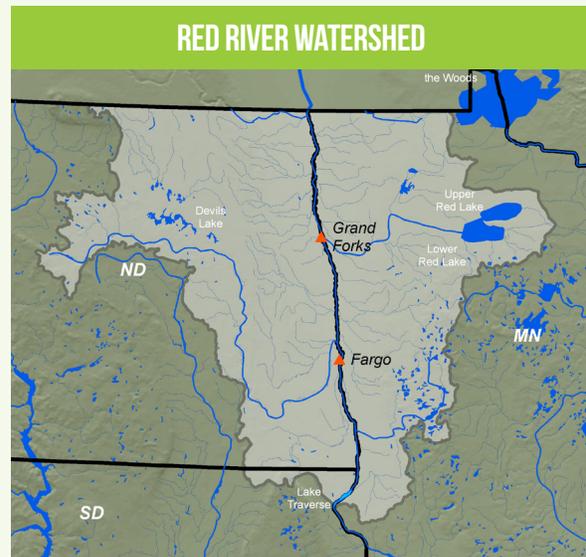
The Red River basin spans 25 million acres and is home to 16 million acres of cropland and patchworks of prairies and wetlands. It's part of the Prairie Pothole Region and serves as a critical migratory wildlife pathway. Severe flooding over the past 20 years continues to impact this landscape, decreasing habitat, hurting water quality and threatening homes and business. Higher than normal rainfall coupled with rapid snow melts has caused serious erosion, adversely affecting water quality in the area.

Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Red River Basin

In 2011, NRCS launched the Red River Basin Initiative (RRBI), which covers parts of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota, to reduce the frequency and severity of flooding, reduce erosion, and improve water quality and wildlife habitat through voluntary conservation efforts on private lands.

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through Farm Bill conservation programs to help agricultural producers implement a variety of conservation practices and to establish conservation easements. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds practices that improve soil health and reduce runoff from working agricultural land. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides funding to restore degraded wetlands and protect them with a voluntary conservation easement. This helps reduce flood damage within the basin by detaining runoff water within the restored wetlands and easement acres.

Through RRBI, NRCS works with local, state and federal groups to develop strategies to focus conservation efforts in locally-identified and selected priority landscapes. For example, NRCS is partnering with the Red River Retention Authority, which has a goal to reduce flooding in the basin by 20 percent.



Outcomes and Impacts

Practices implemented by farmers and landowners participating in the Red River Basin Initiative improve soil health and reduce soil erosion; improve soil water management for crop production; restore wetlands, and enable them to reduce input costs and make their operations more efficient and resilient to weather extremes. Conservation easements insure that restored wetlands remain in place and continue to provide benefits for the full term of the easement as agreed to by the landowner—either 30 years or in perpetuity.

This improves water quality through reduced delivery of nutrients and sediments to lakes, streams and rivers. Flood damage in the Red River Basin is reduced through detention of runoff water within restored wetlands and easement acres, and from improved water infiltration on agricultural land. Restored wetlands benefit migratory waterbirds and other water dependent species by increasing the quantity and quality of wetland habitat.

Wetlands provide resting and nesting habitat for migratory birds



Fiscal Year 2016 Red River Basin Initiative
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) for Active and Completed Contracts

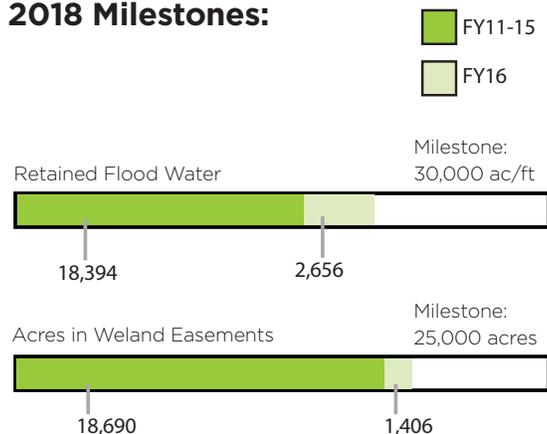
State	EQIP			ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements		
	Contracts	NRCS Investment	Acres	Easements	NRCS Investment	Acres
Minnesota	97	\$3,324,656	33,835	4	\$559,134	354
North Dakota	27	\$407,033	13,581	4	\$1,740,422	942
South Dakota	1	\$1,980	76	2	\$367,269	110
Total	125	\$3,733,669	47,492	10	\$2,666,825	1,406

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

NRCS Goals

Through RRBI, NRCS works with producers to make conservation improvements on private lands that reduce flooding and improve water quality and wildlife habitat. The RRRRA has a goal to reduce flooding in the basin by 20 percent by creating 1 million acre-feet of flood water retention in the basin. To help the RRRRA meet this goal, NRCS is working with producers to create 30,000 acre-feet of floodwater storage and restore 25,000 acres of wetlands with conservation easements by 2018.

2018 Milestones:



Overall Summary

