



# Supporting Our Veteran Farmers

## Overview

Veterans of the U.S. Armed Services receive preference for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs offered in the 2014 Farm Bill. These voluntary conservation programs benefit both agricultural producers and the environment, and include financial and technical assistance as well as easements.

## Eligibility

### An eligible Veteran Farmer or Rancher:

- meets the definition of a Beginning Farmer or Rancher (*see back*)
- has not operated a farm or ranch; or hasn't operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 consecutive years
- was discharged or released, under conditions other than dishonorable, from the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, its reserve components and the National Guard

For a legal entity or joint operation to be considered a Veteran Farmer or Rancher entity, all members must meet the above definition. Veteran Farmers or Ranchers may also qualify as a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher by meeting additional criteria.



*Vonita Murray served in the United States Navy from 1994 to 1996. She was injured in the line of duty and was honorably discharged.*

## Benefits

Preference will be given to eligible Veteran Farmers or Ranchers applying for several types of conservation financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. These include improved water and air quality, conserved surface and ground water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

CSP helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

## Beginning Farmer/Rancher

EQIP allows a higher payment rate for participants who meet Beginning Farmer/Rancher criteria. Review the criteria below to determine if you might be eligible for either of these options. If you feel that you are eligible, you will be able to select either option on your EQIP application.

### A Beginning Farmer/Rancher means an individual or entity who:

- Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity, and
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.

In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or state where the farm is located.

In the case of a contract with an entity, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each of the members provide some amount of the management, or labor and management necessary for day-to-day activities, such as if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

### How to Apply:

Visit your local USDA Service Center to apply or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted).

### For More Information:

To learn more about assistance for veterans provided by other USDA agencies, visit: [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov), or [www.outreach.usda.gov/Veterans.htm](http://www.outreach.usda.gov/Veterans.htm)

### Find Your Local USDA Service Center:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

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



*NRCS Agricultural Engineer, Ha Truong (right) discusses soil quality with Veteran farmer, Vonita Murray to design a conservation plan to fit her farming needs.*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

[www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)