Helping People Help the Land

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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*All content and data in this annual report is reported from ProTracts.*
Greetings

For more than 85 years, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin has worked directly with America’s farmers and forest landowners to put conservation on the ground, protecting our natural resources. We are helping people make investments in their operations and local communities to keep our working lands working.

This year has brought many opportunities for NRCS to work with private landowners and Tribal Nations through the 2018 Farm Bill. In 2021, the bill has allowed NRCS to strengthen and expand support to producers who address significant natural resource concerns through adoption of conservation practices. Each NRCS program has improvements to strengthen conservation opportunities at the local level. The Farm Bill allows NRCS to support conservation that ensures cost effective financial and technical assistance for improved soil health, water and air quality and other natural resources benefits.

In this annual report, you’ll learn about our 2021 program successes, along with highlights of the work we do. Through our continued focus and emphasis on conservation planning, we are connecting with customers on farms and in field offices across the state to develop and implement plans to protect, conserve and enhance our natural resources. This year, we continued to increase our virtual presence, using online meetings and www.farmers.gov as a vital resource for farmers to connect with us remotely, sign contracts, check program status and more. We will continue to meet the unique natural resource and business goals of those who grow our nation’s food and fiber. We are ‘Helping People Help the Land’ to ensure our natural resources are regenerative for future generations.

Angela Biggs
Wisconsin State Conservationist

Our Agency

NRCS works with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners across the country to help them boost agricultural productivity and protect our natural resources through conservation.

Our Staff

NRCS in Wisconsin has over 230 staff across the state to meet the unique resource needs of our farmers and landowners. Every county in Wisconsin is supported by 54 USDA Service Centers located in many counties across the state. Our offices (see right) provide customer service at the local level.
Conservation Results

748,369
ACRES OF CONSERVATION APPLIED TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY.

475,982
ACRES OF CROPLAND WITH CONSERVATION APPLIED TO IMPROVE SOIL QUALITY.

553,877
ACRES WITH CONSERVATION APPLIED TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY.

305,387
acres were covered under conservation plans.

23,152
acres of grazing land with conservation applied to improve the resource base.

82,275
acres of cropland with conservation applied to improve soil health and sustainability.

13,887
acres of grazing land with conservation applied for a sustainable forage-animal balance.

23,458
acres of non-federal land with conservation applied to improve fish and wildlife habitat.

1,816
acres with conservation applied to improve agricultural irrigation water management.

State Resource Priorities

1 Water Quality Degradation
2 Soil Erosion
3 Soil Quality Degradation
4 Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife
5 Degraded Plant Conditions
6 Livestock Production Limitation
7 Excess Water and Insufficient Water
8 Air Quality Impacts
9 Insufficient Energy Use
The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides voluntary conservation promoting agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality to help install or implement structural, agronomic or management conservation practices to protect soil and water quality. In fiscal year 2021, NRCS staff worked to establish 1,170 contracts, enrolling 135,242 acres. Conservation results are below.

- **Funding Impact**
  - **$2.8 MIL.** Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
  - **$18.1 MIL.** Conservation Stewardship Program
  - **$30.5 MIL.** Environmental Quality Incentives Program
  - **$51.4 MILLION** Provided through Conservation Programs to Private Lands.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

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- **$2.8 MIL.** dollars provided in 98 EQIP contracts on 35,215 acres through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- **$18.1 MIL.** dollars provided in 55 EQIP contracts covering 2,256 acres for New and Beginning Farmers.
- **$30.5 MIL.** dollars provided in 14 EQIP contracts covering 351 acres for On-Farm Energy.
- **7.5 MIL.** dollars provided in 103 EQIP contracts covering 2,010 acres for the Honey Bee Pollinator Initiative.
- **1.15 MIL.** dollars provided in 225 EQIP contracts covering 16,449 acres for Conservation Activity Plans.
- **427,000** dollars provided in 10 EQIP contracts covering 3,311 acres for the National Water Quality Initiative.
- **487,928** dollars provided in 11 EQIP contracts covering 3,746 acres for Mississippi River Basin Initiative.
- **130,911** dollars provided in 12 EQIP contracts covering 267 acres for the Organic Initiative.
- **194,778** dollars provided through EQIP to 7 Tribes covering 1,316 acres for conservation improvements.
- **1.69 MIL.** dollars provided in 28 EQIP contracts for the Soil Health Initiative.
- **2.01 MIL.** dollars provided in 10 EQIP contracts for High Tunnel Systems.
- **85,855** dollars provided for Socially Disadvantaged Groups.
- **169,458** dollars provided in 10 EQIP contracts covering 3,311 acres for the National Water Quality Initiative.
- **356,000** dollars were awarded to 3 state Conservation Innovation Grants to improve soil health, ground water quality, and agro-forestry.
**TOP 10 EQIP PRACTICES by Financial Investment**

1. **Cover Crop**
   - Practice count implemented: 683
   - Funds obligated: $5,130,187

2. **Waste Storage Facility**
   - Practice count implemented: 24
   - Funds obligated: $2,678,175

3. **Pond Sealing or Lining - Concrete**
   - Practice count implemented: 17
   - Funds obligated: $2,283,126

4. **Waste Facility Closure**
   - Practice count implemented: 46
   - Funds obligated: $1,074,675

5. **Grade Stabilization Structure**
   - Practice count implemented: 109
   - Funds obligated: $1,021,195

6. **Nutrient Management**
   - Practice count implemented: 18
   - Funds obligated: $811,298

7. **Grassed Waterway**
   - Practice count implemented: 244
   - Funds obligated: $707,022

8. **Heavy Use Area Protection**
   - Practice count implemented: 49
   - Funds obligated: $697,122

9. **Fence**
   - Practice count implemented: 155
   - Funds obligated: $642,716

10. **Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till**
    - Practice count implemented: 109
    - Funds obligated: $552,405
TOP 10 EQIP PRACTICES by Practice Count

1. COVER CROP
   - Practice count implemented: 683
   - Funds obligated: $5,130,187

2. MULCHING
   - Practice count implemented: 281
   - Funds obligated: $520,208

3. GRASSED WATERWAY
   - Practice count implemented: 244
   - Funds obligated: $707,022

4. FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN -WRITTEN
   - Practice count implemented: 206
   - Funds obligated: $340,398

5. PRESCRIBED GRAZING
   - Practice count implemented: 195
   - Funds obligated: $375,661

6. CRITICAL AREA PLANTING
   - Practice count implemented: 160
   - Funds obligated: $35,149

7. BRUSH MANAGEMENT
   - Practice count implemented: 157
   - Funds obligated: $186,396

8. FENCE
   - Practice count implemented: 155
   - Funds obligated: $642,716

9. SPOIL DISPOSAL
   - Practice count implemented: 122
   - Funds obligated: $119,409

10. TREE AND SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT
    - Practice count implemented: 118
    - Funds obligated: $347,949
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands, wetlands and their related benefits. Wetland Reserve Easements provide technical and financial assistance directly to private landowners and tribes to restore, protect and enhance wetlands through the purchase of a Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE). Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) provide financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing easements that protect the agricultural use and conservation values of eligible land. In the case of working farms, the program helps farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. Highlights for fiscal year 2021 include:

- **2.8 MIL.** dollars were provided for 5 ACEP-WRE agreements covering 544 acres.
- **592,633** dollars were provided in WRE repair, maintenance and management projects.
- **507,000** dollars were provided for 4 ACEP-ALE easements covering 334 acres.
- **349 ACRES** were restored through Wetland Reserve Easements.
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- **507,000** dollars were provided for 4 ACEP-ALE easements covering 334 acres.
- **349 ACRES** were restored through Wetland Reserve Easements.

Conservation Stewardship Program

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. The CSP provides assistance to landowners who practice good stewardship on their land and are willing to take additional steps over the next five years. Highlights for fiscal year 2021 include:

- **1 Grassland Conservation Initiative contracts.**
- **250 renewed Conservation Stewardship Program contracts.**
- **228 classic (new) Conservation Stewardship Program contracts.**
- **251,702 acres were enrolled in new Conservation Stewardship Program contracts.**
- **$18.1 MILLION** was provided in financial assistance through CSP.
The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) uses partnerships to multiply conservation investments and reach goals on a regional or watershed scale, promoting coordination between partners to deliver assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance through partnership agreements and program contracts or easement agreements.

$1.3 MILLION WAS PROVIDED IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH RCPP.

Partnerships in Focus

Partnerships make our mission possible by leveraging existing funds to put more conservation on the ground. In fiscal year 2021, NRCS Wisconsin collaborated with conservation partners to enter into 20 new agreements. These agreements leverage NRCS financial investments with partner contributions to accomplish conservation priorities and address natural resource concerns. NRCS Wisconsin thanks the following partners for their collaboration and financial commitment in making conservation work.

Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership
Grant County Conservation, Sanitation and Zoning Department
Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council
Northcentral Technical College
Oconto County Land & Water Conservation Department
Pheasants Forever
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sand County Foundation
Savanna Institute
University of Wisconsin—La Crosse, Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center
University of Wisconsin—Madison, College of Agricultural & Life Sciences
University of Wisconsin—Madison, Division of Extension
Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Association
Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council
Wisconsin Wetlands Association

$4.9 MILLION INTO AGREEMENTS, WITH FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS FROM PARTNERS TOTALING OVER $1.6 MILLION.

2,100 acres were enrolled through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

88 contracts were established in 2021 through RCPP Environmental Quality Incentives Program.