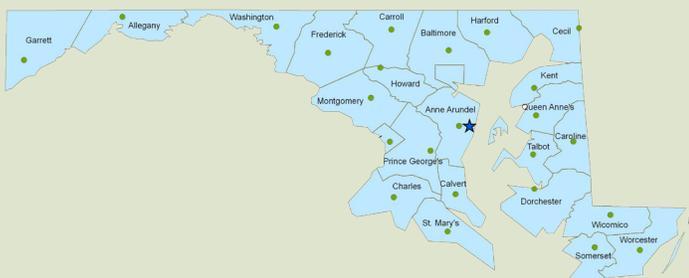


Natural Resources Conservation Service

Maryland Quick Facts

Number of NRCS Employees = 81
 Number of NRCS Field Offices = 23
 Acres of Farmland = 2 million or 32.8% of the state
 Acres of Cropland = 1.4 million
 Acres of Forestland = 400,000

Field Office Locations

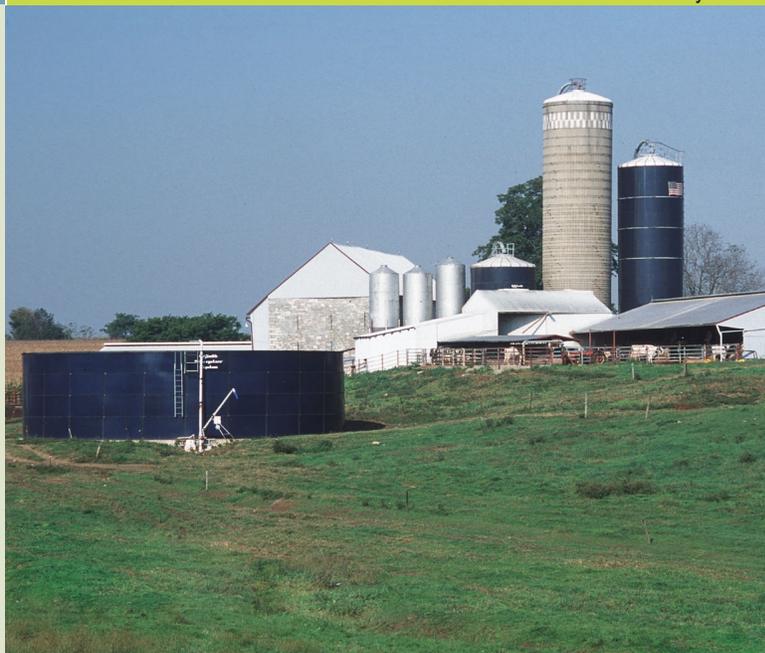


FY 2014 Financial Assistance Obligations

Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA): \$132,207
 Contracts: 5 Acres: 183
 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): \$34,810
 Contracts: 2 Acres: 619
 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): \$10,819,387
 Contracts: 314 Acres: 18,549
 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): \$712,523
 Contracts: 5 Acres: 250

FY 2014 Conservation Practices Receiving the Most Funding

1. Waste Storage Facilities
2. Roofs and Covers
3. Farmstead Energy Improvements
4. Heavy Use Area Protection
5. Nutrient Management



A Maryland dairy manages manure with a storage tank.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service—in partnership with soil conservation districts and a host of local, state and federal agencies—works with Maryland farmers and forest landowners to help them boost agricultural productivity and protect our natural resources through conservation.

Roughly 70 percent of land in the lower 48 states is privately owned. The health of our environment and natural resources is not going to be decided on public lands, but by farmers, ranchers and forest landowners.

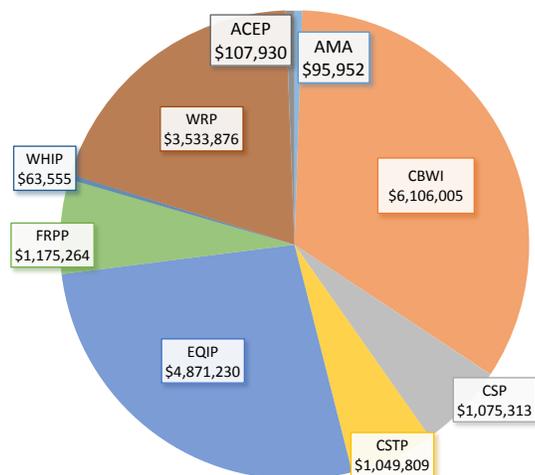
The United Nations projects a global population of 10.8 billion by 2100. Farmers and ranchers will have to produce as much food in the next 40 years as they have in the last 500. At the same time, we're facing impacts from climate change and extreme weather events. Severe droughts and flooding are becoming the norm. Our nation's agricultural land base is shrinking.

The conservation practices NRCS and our partners promote are helping producers prepare for what's ahead. Over the last few years, NRCS has adjusted its programs and practices to assist Maryland farmers in meeting new state regulations and achieving the water quality goals set for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

From systems that help improve the health of the soil and water to restoring wetlands and wildlife populations, we're helping to ensure the health of our natural resources and the long-term sustainability of agriculture in Maryland.

Putting conservation on the ground

At the same time NRCS is working to plan new conservation practices on the landscape and obligating the supporting financial assistance, staff and partners in every field office are working to put conservation on the ground. FY14 was an outstanding year for practice implementation in Maryland, with more than \$18 million in financial assistance provided to landowners for completed conservation practices. The graph to the right shows the breakdown of financial assistance provided for completed conservation practices by program.



Beginning farmers get a leg up

According to the Department of Agriculture’s most recent census, the average age of the American farmer is 57 years old and one-quarter of American farmers are age 65 or older. The future of American agriculture depends on the next generation of farmers. NRCS prioritizes Farm Bill funding for beginning farmers to ensure they receive fair and equitable access to conservation programs. In 2014, NRCS provided \$10,986,404 in 321 new EQIP, AMA and CSP contracts to Maryland landowners. More than 25% of this funding went to beginning farmers. This financial assistance coupled with NRCS’s technical assistance is ensuring a healthy and productive agricultural sector will remain strong in Maryland.

High tunnels take off

The Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops is a conservation practice available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This practice assists agricultural producers to extend the growing season for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner.

From Garrett to Wicomico Counties, Maryland farmers have shown a great interest in high tunnels and 44 new contracts for high tunnels were signed in FY14. One organic producer in Frederick County is using his high tunnel to grow figs, a crop he believes excels in flavor when locally grown. A Wicomico County producer is able to offer the first tomatoes of the season at his local market thanks to his high tunnel. Baltimore City growers have embraced high tunnels as a way to turn vacant lots into local food sources in urban communities.



New Farm Bill Creates Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), created in the 2014 Farm Bill, will fund a number of conservation activities across Maryland – with special funding available for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

RCPP competitively awards funds to conservation projects designed by local partners specifically for their region. Eligible partners include private companies, universities, non-profit organizations, local and tribal governments and others joining with agricultural and conservation organizations and producers to invest money, manpower and materials to their proposed initiatives. Through RCPP, partners propose conservation projects to improve soil health, water quality and water use efficiency, wildlife habitat, and other related natural resources on private lands. USDA’s \$1.2 billion in funding over the life of the five-year program can leverage an additional \$1.2 billion from partners for a total of \$2.4 billion for conservation. USDA made \$400 million in funding available in the first year.