

# Red River Basin Initiative

## Conservation Beyond Boundaries RRBI

The Red River basin spans 25 million acres and is home to a patchwork of prairies and wetlands. It's part of the Prairie Pothole Region, and serves as a critical migratory wildlife pathway. But 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.

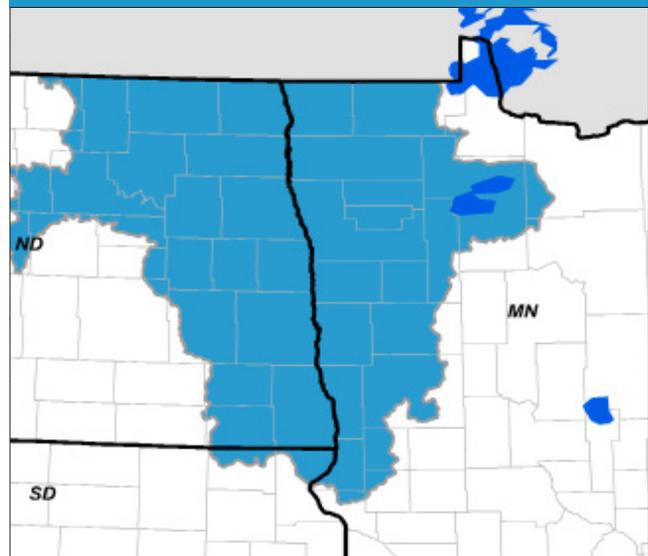
### NRCS and the Red River Basin

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

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers to help them implement a variety of conservation practices to address water quality and storage concerns. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) fund these efforts. Unlike the other typical wetland restorations, some of the wetlands created through RRBI help to reduce flood damage within the basin by allowing additional flood storage within the easement acres.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has echoed the importance of tackling environmental challenges in the basin, and in 2014 committed USDA to invest up to \$50 million over five years. The announcement builds on NRCS' previous commitments in the basin.

### Focus Areas



### Outcomes and Impacts

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

Assistance from Farm Bill conservation programs helps improve water quality while also helping farmers and landowners improve soil health, reduce soil erosion, reduce the delivery of nutrients and sediments to the lakes and their tributaries, make their agricultural operations more efficient, enable them to reduce input costs, employ innovative practices and make operations more resilient to climatic extremes.



The Red River basin is part of the Prairie Pothole Region, a critical migratory wildlife pathway.

Fiscal Year 2015 Red River Basin Initiative  
NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts

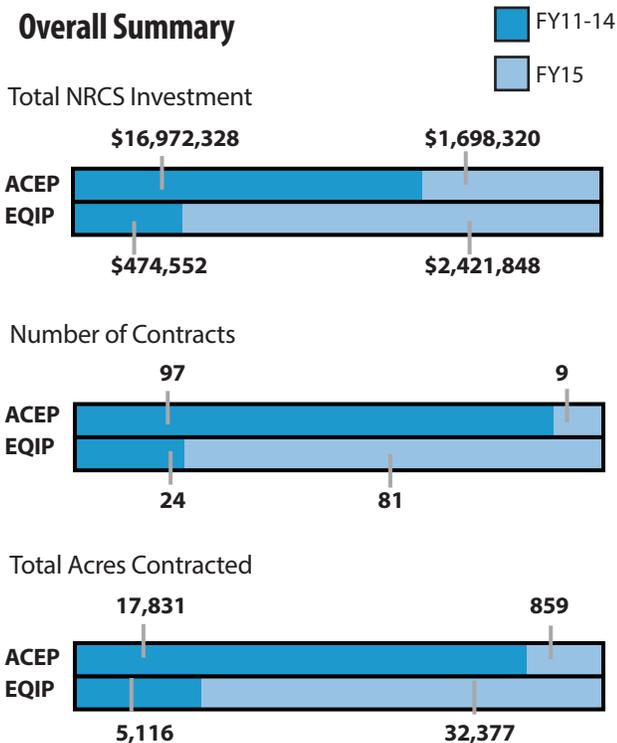
	EQIP			ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements		
	Contracts	NRCS Investment	Acres	Contracts	NRCS Investment	Acres
Minnesota	40	\$1,452,523	9,105	3	\$498,960	157
North Dakota	40	\$890,904	23,236	2	\$763,572	541
South Dakota	1	\$78,421	36	4	\$385,788	161
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>\$2,421,848</b>	<b>32,377</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$1,648,320</b>	<b>859</b>

Data source: ProTracts and State Office Data, October 2015.

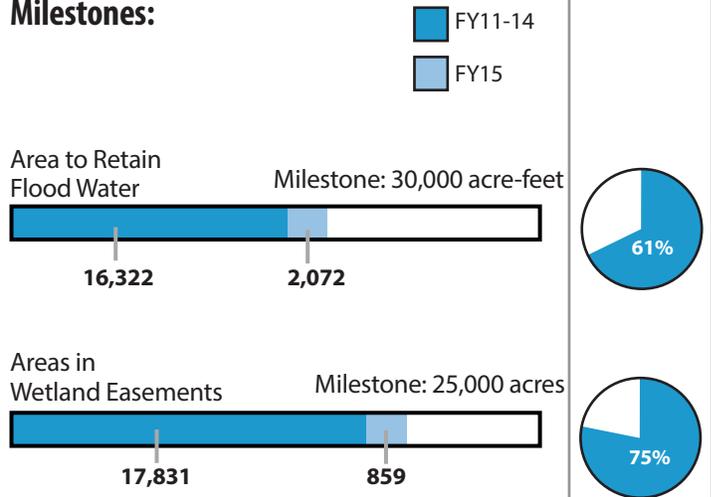
**NRCS GOALS**

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.

**Overall Summary**



**Milestones:**



Through RRBI, NRCS works with landowners to restore wetlands, which help store water.