



United States Department of Agriculture

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

DELAWARE

2013

Accomplishments Report



Helping People Help the Land

www.de.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



State Conservationist's Message

Fellow Conservationists and Friends

I am proud to present to you the 2013 Accomplishment Report for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Delaware. 2013 was a tremendous year for conservation in Delaware which highlighted the technical leadership demonstrated by the Delaware NRCS personnel and the Conservation Partnership. Within this vibrant relationship we have been able to address complex resource needs and concerns by providing the land users with a variety of technical assistance and resource planning to ensure a high level of prescribed conservation application is being implemented on the landscape.

Within my travels in the State I have had opportunities to meet with the employees and Conservation Partners alike to discuss and address the needs and resource concerns for the State. From these dialogues the one constant that continues to emerge is the tremendous technical leadership exuded by all parties thereby ensuring that we are helping people help the land.

While this report will highlight the accomplishments for 2013 it will not begin to address the ongoing needs for the State. These future accomplishments are being written now as we continue to provide the technical assistance within the State.

I encourage you to peruse this report with the intent of gaining a better insight for the delivery of the financial assistance within the State of Delaware. Also, peruse it to see how these funds will show the continued improvement of conservation delivery and the beneficial gain for all Delawareans.

Yours in conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kasey Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Kasey Taylor, Delaware State Conservationist

Inside this issue:

- **Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)**
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**
- **Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)**
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**
- **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)**
- **Soil Sciences**
- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**



Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides financial and technical assistance to farmers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

Farmers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management or transition to organic farming.

Historically underserved producers (limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged producers) may be eligible for a higher practice payment rate for the implementation of conservation practices and conservation

plans.

AMA is available in 16 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low: Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

2013 Accomplishments *

Delaware received six AMA applications in 2013. Delaware approved three contracts covering 58.4 acres for a financial assistance total of \$62, 407. Included in these numbers is one approved contract covering 15 acres assisting a beginning farmer, socially disadvantaged or limited resource producer with financial assistance totaling \$34, 142.

(*See page 9)

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program was authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill and replaced the Conservation Security Program (2002 Farm Bill). It is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving and maintaining existing conservation systems. CSP participants are maintaining and enhancing the treatment of soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plants, animals and energy. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, improved pasture land and nonindustrial private forestland.

CSP is available to all producers nationwide, regardless of operation size or crops produced. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis with announced ranking cut-off dates when the ranking and funding of applications on file will occur. Applications need to include the applicant's entire operation and are evaluated and ranked relative to other

applications that address similar resource concerns in Delaware. In the ranking process, applicants receive credit for both, conservation measures they have already implemented and for new measures they agree to add. The applications addressing the most resource concerns to the highest degree will receive the highest rankings.

2013 Accomplishments *

In FY 2013, Delaware NRCS provided \$236,132 in financial assistance through 12 new contracts during the 2013 sign-up period. Overall, DE NRCS currently is providing technical and financial assistance through 61 active CSP contracts that originated throughout FY 2010-2013 totaling \$2.7 million on 49, 909 acres.

(* See page 9)



Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program provides technical assistance supported by science-based technology and tools to help people conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources. The CTA program provides the technical capability, including **conservation planning**, design and implementation assistance, that helps people plan and apply conservation on the land. This assistance is provided to individuals, groups and communities who make natural resource management decisions on private, tribal and other non-federal lands.

NRCS, through the CTA Program, provides conservation technical assistance that addresses natural resource conservation issues at the local level that are of State and national concern.

The CTA Program provides the local delivery system and the foundational technical expertise for other NRCS programs. The CTA Program is unique because it provides a substantive level of technical expertise, background and support for Federal, State and local conservation programs. The working relationships that landowners and communities have with their local NRCS staff are unique. One-on-one help through flexible, voluntary programs occurs every day in local NRCS offices. It is the way that NRCS does business and it works.

What Exactly is Conservation Planning?

Conservation planning is a process from which conservation plans are developed by first understanding the resource needs and the landowner's desired land use goals. Based on sound scientific practices, NRCS provides hands-on assistance to help the landowner develop a conservation plan.

The benefits for the producer to develop a conservation plan are many. Conservation plans provide a strategic guide for reaching land-use and natural resource goals and provide a complete assessment/inventory of a landowner's resources. Implemented conservation plans can have a positive impact on the bottom line and improve the condition of their natural resources.



The technically sound experts of NRCS bring their expertise to the table to help farmers reach their operational and environmental goals.





Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers through contracts up to a maximum term of ten years in length. These contracts provide financial assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns and for opportunities to improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related resources on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland. In addition, a purpose of EQIP is to help producers meet Federal, State, Tribal and local environmental regulations.

EQIP provides financial assistance payments to eligible producers based on a portion of the average cost associated with practice implementation. Additional payments may be available to help producers develop conservation plans which are required to obtain financial assistance.

Historically underserved (HU) producers (limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged producers) may be eligible for a higher practice payment rate for the implementation of conservation practices and conservation plans. HU producers may also be eligible for advance payments up to 30 percent of the cost needed to purchase materials or contracting services to begin installation of approved conservation practices.

Producers may use a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) for technical assistance needed for certain eligible activities, services and the development of conservation plans.

Delaware's EQIP incorporates environmental priorities as identified at the state level (State Technical Committee) and local levels (Local Work

Group) into the selection of what specific program options will be offered, and what factors, questions and screening tools will be used in the application ranking process. Ranking worksheets for each program option include evaluation questions that reflect national, state and local priorities.

2013 Accomplishments *

Delaware received 335 EQIP applications in 2013.

Delaware approved 251 contracts covering 19,369 acres for a total financial assistance of \$5,395,198. Included in these numbers are 103 approved contracts covering 1,222 acres assisting beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers with financial assistance totaling \$1.9 million.

EQIP funding options:

- Beginning Farmers
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- Energy Initiative
- Limited Resource Farmers
- National Water Quality Initiative
- Organic Initiative
- Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative
- Socially Disadvantaged Producers

Top Practices:

- Heavy Use Area Pads
- Energy
- High Tunnels
- Irrigation (Water Management)
- Cover Crops

(*See page 9)



Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

The Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) is administered by the USDA NRCS and partners with eligible entities to secure easements on eligible agricultural land to maintain production capability. NRCS provides up to 50 percent of the Appraised Fair Market Value of the easement and partner entities along the landowner donation provide the remaining amount.

FRPP funds will continue to support The Delaware Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation. Through this joint effort, FRPP funds will contribute up to one half of the cost of the Appraised Fair Market Value of farmland protection easements.

2013 Accomplishments **

In Delaware, \$4.2 million of FRPP funding was obligated in 2013.

Twenty-five landowners had a NRCS FRPP easement funded in 2013. This included a total of 2,247 acres. The easement protects these lands from being converted to non-agricultural land uses.

(*See page 9)



Soil Sciences

The main goal of the soils staff in Delaware is to provide scientifically defensible and timely delivery of technical soil information to internal and external partners to meet their ever changing resource challenges. As everyone knows, accurate soils information is the foundation on which NRCS and most of our partners base their resource initiatives on.

Although soil mapping is no longer a principal workload in Delaware, the soils staff maintains an intermit relationship with the Major Land Resource Area MLRA office in Morgantown WV and Raleigh NC. The staff provides critical insight into the correlation, classification and interpretation of our soils for national initiatives.

Soils information is currently available online for the whole state through Web Soil Survey, Soil Data Mart, Geo-Spatial Data Gateway and the eFOTG (electronic Field Office Technical Guide). This year, all three counties were refreshed and made available through our web delivery systems. New to this most recent statewide download are interpretations

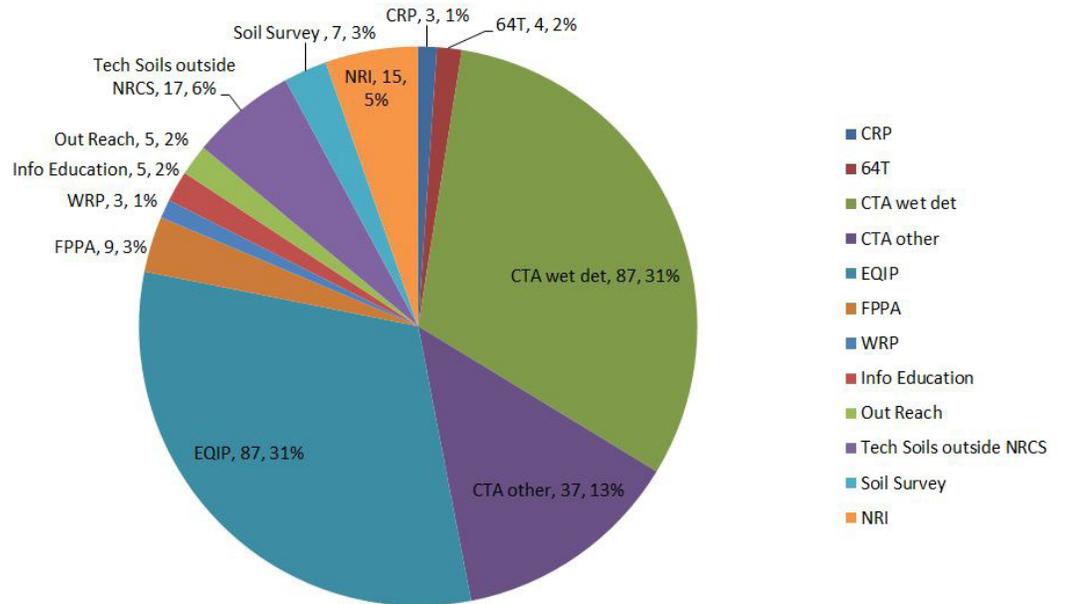
that are based on “national” calculations. They have been developed to provide uniformity and consistency in the population of various soil factors and to assist soil survey staff in efficient population of the soils database. Values for K-factor; T-factor; Wind Erodibility Group (WEG) and Index (I-factor); Hydrologic Soil Group (HSG); Steel Corrosion; and Concrete Corrosion have all been calculated.

The aforementioned tasks are typical duties carried out by the soils staff in most states. However, NRCS in Delaware is not typical in that we have a small staff, and must leverage our expertise in other areas, resulting in atypical collateral duties making up a large portion of our workload. For example, all Cultural Resource Reviews, Wetland Determination and GIS assistance is provided by the staff. Moreover, we assist other staff in NRI data collection. This list is not all inclusive.

The pie chart is a feeble attempt to try and graphically capture what the “soils staff” has accomplished in FY2013. Remember it is not all inclusive!

Soil Sciences (continued)

2013 Workload Distribution -Soils, GIS and Other



Detailed Key Explanations:

CRP - Conservation Reserve Program

64T - specific to time associated with soil tabular and spatial data edits

CTA wet det - Conservation Technical Assistance wetland delineation

CTA other- Conservation Technical Assistance for numerous NRCS programs and services

FPPA -Farmland Protection Policy Act

WRP -Wetlands Reserve Program

Info Education- Information Education

Out Reach -Outreach specific to soils, GIS or related activities

Tech Soils outside NRCS - Specific soils information obtained for use with non-traditional partners

Soil Survey- process of classifying soil types and soil properties to facilitate land use management

NRI -National Resources Inventory





Wetlands Reserve Program

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) has helped private landowners voluntarily restore, protect, and enhance wetlands and wildlife habitat on their lands since 1992. Through the WRP, NRCS provides technical and financial support to landowners.

The wetlands and associated uplands on these easement lands provide a variety of environmental benefits, including: migratory and resident wildlife habitat, water quality improvements, flood mitigation benefits, added economic value and carbon sequestration benefits.

2013 Accomplishments **

A total of three prior year funded WRP easements totaling 135 acres were closed and 119 acres of wetland restoration was completed in 2013. In FY 2013, \$669,000 financial assistance dollars were obligated. Of that, \$534,400 was obligated to two new agreements on more than 160 acres. The remaining \$135,000 was spent on settlement of existing enrollments and on restoration of previously closed easements.

(*See page 9.)

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Nearly two years ago, a partnership began between NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to combat the decline of seven specific wildlife species. Today, this Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) partnership is continuing to use agency technical expertise along with financial assistance from NRCS' Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to restore and protect the habitats of the following: New England cottontail, bog turtle, golden-winged warbler, gopher tortoise, greater sage-grouse, lesser prairie-chicken, and the Southwestern willow flycatcher.

Delaware's focus through the WLFW initiative is to help farmers and forest landowners restore and protect the habitats of bog turtles while also helping other valuable wildlife species.

NRCS will provide compensation for part of the cost of establishing and maintaining conservation practices that enhance and improve wildlife habitat and restore natural ecosystems for bog turtles. Historically underserved producers (limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged producers) may be eligible for a higher practice payment rate for the implementation for conservation practices and conservation plans.

2013 Accomplishments *

Delaware received eight WHIP applications in 2013. Delaware approved one contract covering 1.2 acres for a financial assistance total of \$9,200.

(*See page 9)



**The Natural Resources Conservation Service is an agency of
The United States Department of Agriculture.**

**Kasey Taylor
State Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
1221 College Park Drive, Ste. 100
Dover, DE 19904
(302) 678-4179
www.de.nrcs.usda.gov**

For more information, contact Dastina Wallace, public affairs specialist, at 302-678-4179.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Note:

* All data marked with this symbol has been pulled by NRCS' program specialists in Delaware through the Program Contracts System, known as ProTracts. This web-based system is used to manage program data for AMA, CSP, EQIP and WHIP.

** All data marked with this symbol has been pulled by NRCS' program specialists in Delaware through the National Easement Staging Tool (NEST). This web-based system is used to manage program data for NRCS' easement programs including FRPP and WRP.