



United States Department of Agriculture

# NRCS AQAC Update

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NRCS Air Quality and Atmospheric Change Team

AAQTF Meeting  
Fort Collins, CO  
December 5, 2014

# USDA and Partners Complete First-of-Its-Kind Sale of Carbon Credits from Working Ranch Grasslands



L to R Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI), General Motors Global Public Policy Executive Director Greg Martin, Ducks Unlimited Paul Schmidt, The Climate Trust Executive Director Sean Penrith, and USDA Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Under Secretary Robert Bonnie

# Storing Carbon and Preserving Working Ranch Lands

## Easements

Ranchers, working with Ducks Unlimited, voluntarily place grasslands under permanent conservation easements to prevent tilling.

## Keeping Working Lands Working

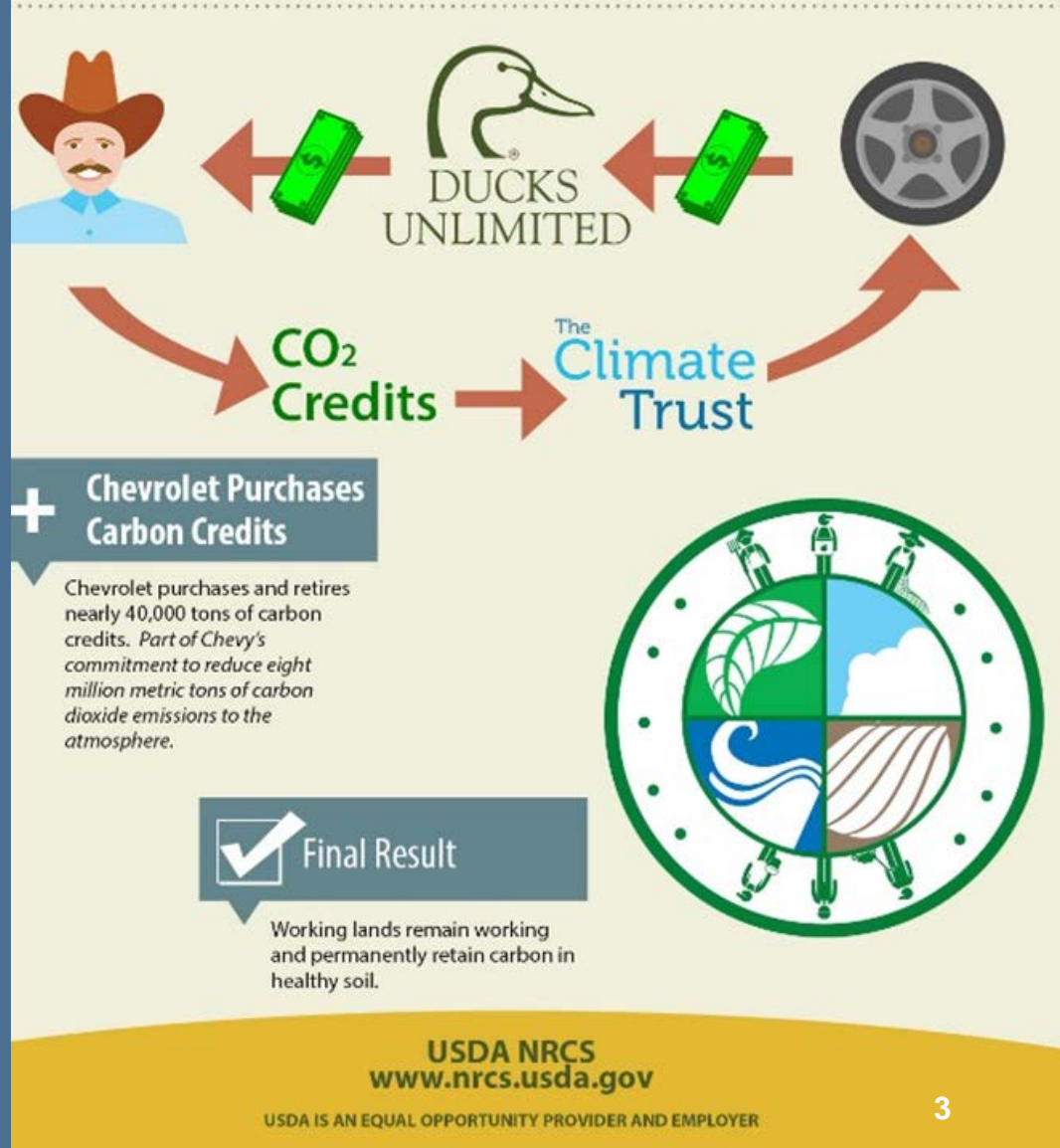
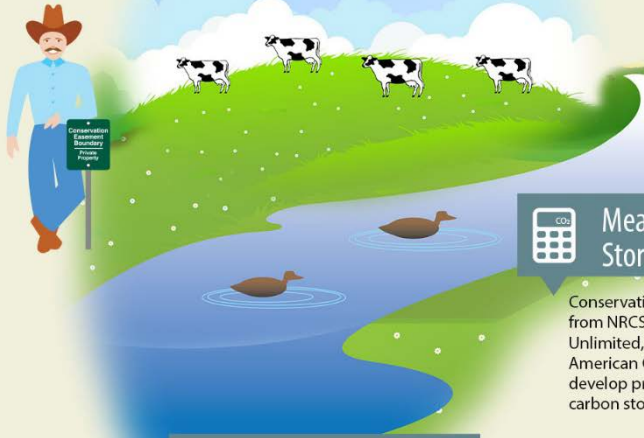
Land grazed and hayed – soil is undisturbed, storing carbon.

## Measuring Carbon Stored in Soil

Conservation Innovation Grant from NRCS is used by Ducks Unlimited, The Climate Trust, and American Carbon Registry to develop protocol for calculating carbon stored in the soil.

## Selling Carbon Credits

Carbon stored in soil is quantified, third-party verified, and turned into tradable carbon credits by Ducks Unlimited and partners.



# Webinar Series with USDA-ARS

- November 2013 – Introduction to Livestock GRACEnet
- January 2014 – Feed Management for Beef Feedlots
- February 2014 – Feed Management for Dairies
- May 2014 – Acid Scrubbers for Ammonia Removal
- August 2014 – Ammonia Recovery from Manure Storages
- Recorded webinars on [conservationwebinars.net](http://conservationwebinars.net)

# NAQSAT Update

- National Air Quality Site Assessment Tool
- Demo to NRCS National Technical Guide Committee (NTGC) on November 18
- NTGC meeting on December 16 to discuss possible integration of NAQSAT

# NRCS Air Quality Practices

- Main 4 NRCS Air Quality practices up for review in FY15
  - 371 – Air Filtration and Scrubbing
  - 372 – Combustion System Improvement
  - 373 – Dust Control on Unpaved Roads and Surfaces
  - 375 – Dust Control from Open Lot Surfaces
- Possible adoption of 756 (Field Operations Emissions Reduction) as a national standard

# USDA/EPA Ammonia & Agriculture Workgroup Update

- Monthly meetings since June 2014
- Topics discussed so far:
  - Overview of EPA regulatory programs and charge
  - Overview of current USDA and EPA research activities related to ammonia
  - Discussions of EPA modeling approaches

# USDA/EPA Ammonia & Agriculture Workgroup Update

- For the future:
  - Collaborative work on case studies to better characterize emissions from agricultural sources in EPA modeling
  - Identification and assessment of agricultural ammonia mitigation strategies



# NRCS National Air Quality Initiative

- 2008 Farm Bill included provisions for the use of EQIP to assist producers with air quality resource concerns and to meet Federal, State, and local regulatory requirements
  - Authorized \$37.5 million per year
- NRCS designed the NAQI to help producers meet air quality compliance requirements and provide opportunities to install air quality conservation practices

# NAQI – 2009-2014

- NRCS originally designed the program based on nonattainment areas and the number of acres of agricultural production in those counties
  - Great success in CA
  - Mixed results in other states
    - Lack of agricultural contribution to nonattainment issues
    - Focus on nonattainment left some real agricultural air quality issues unaddressed or inadequately addressed

# NAQI Changes for FY15

- 2014 Farm Bill left language pretty much intact, but reduced authorization to \$25 million per year
- NRCS has decided to supplement this amount to fund \$37.5 million for FY15

# NAQI Changes for FY15

- States are no longer allocated funds based on nonattainment/agricultural production formula
- States apply for funds by submitting a “Request to Participate”
  - By December 1, 2014 for FY15
  - 10 states submitted RtPs

# NAQI Changes for FY15

- 3 National priority areas/funding pools
  - National nonattainment
    - Right now, limited to CA and AZ
  - Regional air quality
    - Multi-state projects
  - State air quality
    - Single state projects

# NAQI Changes for FY15

- Better ability to address true agricultural air quality issues, not just nonattainment
  - States will have more flexibility and say in what and how to address
- Ability to address regional issues
- Partner participation is encouraged and prioritized

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