Natural Resources Conservation Service

Andy Hart USDA NRCS
State Forester

The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer
Who We Are...

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is the federal agency that works with landowners on private lands to conserve natural resources. NRCS was formerly called the Soil Conservation Service or "SCS" and was created during the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s.

Dust storms and gullies ravaged the Nation’s farmland, stripping away millions of tons of topsoil.
Who We Are...

Since that time, NRCS has kept its commitment to protecting and conserving soil and other natural resources on America’s private lands.
Who We Are...

We work with customers to help them reduce erosion, protect wildlife, promote good land and water use, and preserve the Nation’s natural resources.

“Because the farmers...touch the water and the soil more than the city people, we've got to take care.”
—Wei Chong Ho, HI
How Can NRCS offer assistance?

- Conservation Technical Assistance
- Farm Bill Programs
  - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  - Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
  - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

In order to participate in USDA farm programs, Federal law requires that all persons that produce agriculture commodities must protect their highly erodible cropland from excessive erosion. In addition, anyone participating in USDA farm programs must certify that they have not produced crops on converted wetlands and did not convert a wetland.
EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals.

Offers financial and technical assistance with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural and non-industrial private forestry land.

Sign-up rankings are usually in the fall, but eligible participant can sign up at anytime during the year.

Contracts for practice implementation from 1-10 years.
Basic EQIP Eligibility

- Be an agricultural producer who is engaged in livestock or agricultural production, including non-industrial private forestland.

- Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract period. *(Deed, Rental Agreement, or other...)*

- Be in compliance with farm bill provisions.
  - Wetland and Highly Erodible Land (HEL) certifications.

- Be within appropriate payment limitation and adjusted gross income.

- **Must Have A Forest Management Plan**
How EQIP Works

- Producers can apply in person at their local service center or complete an application online and mail to their local service center.
- NRCS staff will assist in completing the application.
- NRCS staff will make a site visit to determine the appropriate practices needed to address the resource concern.
- Applications are ranked at specific times of the year to determine funded applications.
How EQIP Works

- Applicants are notified of pre-approval via certified letter.
- NRCS develops a conservation plan outlining the practices under contract.
- Contract is developed and signed by both parties.
- All NRCS programs are voluntary!
Common EQIP Practices

- Forest Management Plan CAP-106
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Brush Management
- Woody Residue Treatment
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Herbaceous Weed Control
- Road Trail and Landing Closure and Treatment
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt
- Tree and Shrub Site Preparation
The CSP Footprint

70 million acres of productive ag and forest land

Active conservation on working lands

An array of resource benefits for the American people

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
• Land Eligibility
  • **Private** agricultural land
  • Agricultural Indian lands
  • **Nonindustrial private** forest land
Application Type

- Agricultural land applications will compete separately from NIPF applications.
- Applicants with both Ag land and NIPF may elect to apply for:
  1. One application for NIPF
  2. One application for agricultural land
  3. Two applications, one for each land type
Planning Steps

Evaluation to determine if stewardship threshold requirement is met (CAET)

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Stewardship Threshold Eligibility

• An application must meet TWO resource concerns for each land use and land management system at the time of application

• At a minimum, an applicant must meet or exceed ONE ADDITIONAL resource concern for each land use by the end of the stewardship contract

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CAET – Planning

• The tool also:
  • integrates and supports the processes of inventorying resources, determining existing land stewardship and identifying new conservation activities
Planning: Field Verification

- NRCS will examine the field conditions and written records to determine if planning criteria or evaluation criteria is met during the CAET process.
Planning - Resource Concerns Met

- Soil Erosion
- Soil Quality Degradation
- Excess Water
- Insufficient Water
- Water Quality Degradation
- Air Quality Impacts
- Degraded Plant Condition
- Fish and Wildlife - Inadequate Habitat
- Livestock Production Limitation
- Inefficient Energy Use
Planning - Additional Activities

Compaction

Status at Time of Application: *Cause Not Met*

- 324 - Deep Tillage
- 326 - Conservation Crop Rotation
- 334 - Controlled Traffic Farming
- 340 - Cover Crop

E3261071 - Improved resource conserving crop rotation to improve soil compaction

- **E326107R** - Resource conserving crop rotation to improve soil compaction

E334107Z - Controlled traffic farming to reduce compaction

E340107Z - Cover crop to minimize soil compaction

Will the Resource Concern Cause be met or exceeded with selected Conservation Activities?  

Yes
CSP at work

Epperson Property
Vilas County
Arbor Vitae

• Improved Timber Productivity
• Improved Plant Health
• Improved Wildlife Habitat

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM
Payments

- Annual Payments may vary from year to year depending on the management system agreed to at the time of enrollment and the extent of additional activities completed each year.

- Minimum $1500/yr for applicants without existing contract
Forestry Enhancements
Something for Everyone

- E612101Z - Cropland conversion to trees for long term water erosion control
- E612130Z - Planting for high carbon sequestration rate
- E666132Z2 - Reduce forest stand density to improve a degraded plant community.
- E666133Z1 - Creating structural diversity with patch openings
- E391136Z - Increase riparian forest buffer width to enhance wildlife habitat
- 40 forestry enhancements possible and 15 for wildlife
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
FORESTRY PRACTICES
CRP History and Eligibility

- Voluntary program created by originally in the 1985 Farm Bill.
- The program provides long-term contracts to take land under production and establish/restore land to a conservation cover.
- Cover practices range from grass and tree covers to wetland restorations.
- Producers must have owned or operated land for at least 12 months to submitting offers.
- Eligible land must meet crop history requirements 4 of 6 years (2008-2013).
- Land must meet a resource concern and meet needed/feasible for certain covers.
General CRP Signups

- General CRP Signups are announced by the Secretary of Agriculture

- Offers are given points based on certain criteria based on six factors. Points are based on certain criteria including, cover offered, soils, slope, etc..

- General signups allow eligible producers to submit offers as long as the land meets one of the following:
  - Erodible Index of >8
  - Located in a State Priority Area
  - Located in a National Conservation Priority Area
  - Expiring CRP contract
Continuous CRP Signup

- Continuous CRP doesn’t have a specific enrollment period like a General signup.
- Continuous CRP requires the land to meet a resource concern and be needed/feasible to be offered.
- A resource concern could be protecting a farmstead, to protecting a ditch/water resource.
- Eligible areas are normally minimal in size but have large impacts to the environment.
CRP Forestry Practices

- General CRP Signups have limited eligible tree covers
  - CP-3 - Softwood Tree Planting
  - CP-3A - Hardwood Tree Planting
  - CP-4B and CP-4D Permanent wildlife corridor or Permanent wildlife habitat
  - CP-25 - Rare & Declining Habitat (Oak Savana)

- Continuous CRP Signups have a couple more available tree covers
  - CP-3, CP-3A, CP-4D, CP-25 (eligible on Highly Erodible Land signup)
  - CP-16A - Shelterbelts
  - CP-17A - Living Snow Fences
  - CP-22 - Riparian Buffers
  - CP-38E-25 - SAFE - Rare & Declining Habitat (Oak Savana)
General Signup practice and eligible for Continuous Signup under the Highly Erodible Land Incentive (HELI) Signup.

Practice is designed to plant only softwood trees.

Depending on the offer, a grass cover may be specified to increase wildlife potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligible Species</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balsam Fir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Spruce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern White Pine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Pine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern White Cedar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Pine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamarack</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Spruce</td>
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Hardwood Tree Plantings are designed to provide long-term wildlife and environmental benefits.

The planting must be at least 50% hardwoods. Wisconsin is moving towards a 80-20 planting structure with only 20% of the field being in softwood trees. This is to create the long-term wildlife benefits and also provide diversity with the softwoods. Softwoods are normally considered “trainer trees” in a CP-3A.

Wisconsin has an extensive list of eligible hardwood trees. Example Species are provided on the next slide.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Basswood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Beech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Ash*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Cherry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Oak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Walnut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Willow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bur Oak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butternut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Cottonwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Ash*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hackberry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Red Oak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Birch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quaking Aspen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red Maple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Birch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Maple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shagbark Hickory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Maple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swamp White Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag Alder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Ash*</td>
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*Ash species are limited to 10% or less of new plantings and not allowed in EAB quarantined counties.
Can be offered during a General Signup and a CP-4D for HELI signup also.

These practices are designed to create permanent habitats for wildlife.

Typically are a mixture of grass/forbs, shrubs and trees.

Trees are a mixture of softwood and hardwood species.

Typical plantings have at least one third of the planting in native grasses and forbs with the remaining acreage in the shrub/tree portion.
CP-25 – Rare & Declining Habitat (Oak Savanna)

- Can be offered during a General Signup and Continuous Signup (HELI and SAFE signups)
- Oak Savanna’s are a combination of native grass/forb plantings and hardwood tree’s.
- Tree planting is low rates and planted in a more sporadic planting

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<tr>
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<td>Shagbark Hickory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swamp White Oak</td>
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</table>
Eligible only under Continuous Signup

Requires a resource concern and needs to meet needed/feasible

Shelterbelts are protect farmsteads and livestock areas. This should provide shelter from wind and conserve energy.

Shelterbelts incorporate multiple species including shrubs, hardwood and softwood trees.
CP-17A – Living Snow Fences

- Eligible for Continuous Signup only
- Must meet the resource concern and needed/feasible.
- These are designed to reduce snow loads on lanes, roads, railroads and public facilities.
- Living snow fences will also provide living screens
Continuous and CREP signups

Must meet a resource concern and needed/feasible

Eligible land along streams, ditches and other eligible areas are planted to shrub/tree plantings.

Eligible acres can have grass planting in coordination with the woody plantings.

Eligible species are similar to CP-3A and CP-3, with the ability to install shrubs.
Questions