



# Wisconsin

Helping People Help the Land

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### Quick Facts

Number of Employees ..... 258  
 Number of Field Offices ..... 55  
 Number of RC&D Councils ..... 7  
 Number of Land Conservation Committees ..... 72  
 Acres of Cropland..... 14 million  
 Total NRCS 2010 Budget..... \$73 Million  
*Includes financial and technical assistance*

### NRCS Celebrates 75 Years

2010 marks the 75th anniversary of NRCS and the beginning of the federal commitment to conservation on private lands. Originally established by Congress in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), NRCS has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring private lands are conserved, restored, and more resilient to environmental challenges, like climate change. Seventy percent of the land in the United States is privately owned, making stewardship by private landowners absolutely critical to the health of our environment.

NRCS succeeds through partnerships, working closely with individual landowners, counties, government agencies, Tribes, and many other people and groups that care about the quality of America's natural resources.

### Conservation Stewardship Program Opens in 2010

CSP is a voluntary program that encourages good conservation on farm and forest land. The program is open to all farmers nationwide, regardless of size or type of operation. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland, and tribal agricultural lands.

CSP Payments per Acre Wisconsin Last Signup			
	Low	High	Average
Cropland	\$7.51	\$44.03	\$18.94
Pasture*	\$4.79	\$42.25	\$18.12
Forested	\$1.10	\$23.97	\$4.33

In all, 968 farmers and forestland owners enrolled in CSP during the two ranking periods held in 2010. Over \$6 million in annual payments will be made to these farmers beginning in November, 2010. The average payment first year is \$6800 per contract, and contracts last for five years.

In the last signup, average cropland payment per acre was \$18.94 and average pastureland payment per acre was \$18.12.

From the 968 contracts, 320,442 acres were cropland, and 39,547 acres were forested lands.

\*Includes both pasture and pastured cropland land use

### ARRA - Floodplain easements

Wisconsin led the nation in receipt of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds for Emergency Watershed Protection Program Floodplain Easements. Wisconsin received over \$25 million in floodplain easement funding through the stimulus effort. With this money NRCS funded 35 easements in 9 counties totaling 5,124 acres.

Statewide, the cost of easements to be paid to landowners is \$22 million, with an additional \$1 million going to restoration costs for construction, engineering, earth-moving, seeding, and tree-planting. Over 2000 acres of tree planting and grass seeding were completed, mainly in southern Wisconsin counties; in addition to construction and earth moving. The parcels range in size from 7 acres to 1,900 acres.

Floodplains reduce flood damages downstream, provide excellent fish and wildlife habitat, and improve water quality by reducing erosion and ag chemical runoff. And by restricting development or cropping, floodplain easements reduce need for future public disaster assistance.

## Farm Bill Program Funding\*

FY 2009

FY 2010\*

NRCS Program	Dollars Obligated	Number of Contracts/ Easements	Dollars Obligated	Number of Contracts/ Easements
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)			\$6.65 million	968
Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)			\$23 million	35
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	\$16.3 million	1051	\$17 million*	1042
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	\$24.8 million	34	\$10.6 million	28
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)	\$1.4 million	4	\$1.83 million	9
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)	\$683,578	1	\$1.16 million	2
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	\$1.06 million	64	\$489,000	57

\*The numbers reflect Financial Assistance (FA) that is provided directly to landowners. Technical Assistance (TA) funding was also received by the Agency for professional planning and expertise to help carry out the conservation activities.

EQIP includes general sign-up, Mississippi River Basin Initiative and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (\$1.6 million)

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program** - The Environmental Quality Incentives Program is NRCS's workhorse program, providing over \$17 million in costsharing per year to conservation on working lands. In 2010, there were 1002 conservation contracts funded through the general EQIP in Wisconsin, for a total of over \$15,460,000. These totals included the Organic Initiative, which resulted in over \$1.1 M being contracted with 89 certified organic producers or producers transitioning to organic. Another special initiative focused on stream restoration in the Driftless Area, in partnership with Trout Unlimited. Nutrient management, prescribed grazing, cover crops, grassed waterways, and waste storage continue to be some of the most requested conservation practices.

**Wetlands Reserve Program** — FY2010 \$10.6 million obligated on 28 easements, enrolling over 2500 acres into the program. For 2010 NRCS has a backlog for 65 contracts. A Memorandum has been signed with eight partners to continue/expand biologist positions to promote and support the program. WRP totals to date: 55,000 acres enrolled, 578 easements filed.

**Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program** — Streambank stabilization and stream habitat projects continue to account for the majority of WHIP funds. 57 contracts approved for \$485,000 with much of the funding dedicated to projects in the Driftless Area of the state.

**Great Lakes Restoration Initiative** — Farmers in the Lower Fox and the Manitowoc/Sheboygan River watersheds were eligible for a special conservation initiative to help clean up the Great Lakes. Wisconsin, one of eight states in the Initiative, received \$1.6 million for agricultural conservation practices to reduce erosion, sediment and nutrient loss to Lake Michigan.

**Mississippi River Basin Initiative** — Two key watershed projects in Dane and Walworth counties were selected for an intense agricultural conservation effort for the next few years. In all, 76 projects in 12 states were funded in 2010. Through watershed partnerships, additional EQIP funds are focused on farmland practices to reduce nutrients and sediment flowing to the Upper Mississippi Basin.

**Farm and Ranchland Protection Program** — In 2010, NRCS signed agreements with six entities for \$1.8 million in Conservation Easements. The partner entities are the Natural Heritage Land Trust, Town of Windsor, Town of Dunn, Jefferson County, Wisconsin Dept of Natural Resources, and Drumlin Area Land Trust.

For the first time this year, Wisconsin's new PACE Program (Purchase of Conservation Easements) qualified for FRPP matching funds, for a total of \$1.4 million. Through PACE and FRPP, 1646.7 acres in five counties will be protected as farmland. NRCS currently holds 80 FRPP Easements on 12,200 acres in 11 counties.

## Wisconsin NRCS Report to the WALCE Board

### Program Updates

General EQIP and WHIP Sign Up Application Deadline: January 14<sup>th</sup>

- \$13.3 M available statewide for all land uses in this sign-up

EQIP Organic Initiative: March 4<sup>th</sup>

- \$1.1 M available statewide for transitioning and certified organic operations

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) sign-up deadline has been extended to January 21<sup>st</sup>.

- Wisconsin's acreage allocation for the 2011 sign-up is as follows:

- Ag land (Cropland & Pastureland): 152,310 acres

- Non-Industrial Private Forest Land: 31,569 acres

### NRCS Budget

Currently operating under a continuing resolution through March 4. Operating under a deficit budget assumption which limits travel, training and operating costs. Participation in some programs is down which will reduce our ability to earn reimbursable funds.