

## NEWS RELEASE



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### Conservation Plans Solve Problems on the Farm

INDIANAPOLIS, October 17, 2006—While USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers financial assistance through conservation programs, the most valuable thing the agency offers may be free. The agency's Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program allows conservation planners to work directly with farmers to develop customized conservation plans on their farms.

According to NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty, "We offer financial assistance to farmers to apply conservation practices, but we also offer the technical assistance needed to develop farm conservation plans for free. As a federal agency, NRCS utilizes its CTA budget to offer conservation planning at no cost to the landowner. It's a big part of how we meet our mission, which is *helping people help the land*," says Hardisty. "And, by developing conservation plans now, farmers can move to the front of the line when conservation program funds become available."

"Our CTA program is the motor that makes other conservation programs work," says Hardisty. We combine a producer's farming experience with the science-based knowledge of a conservation planner to develop a plan to meet a farmer's land and natural resource management goals.

"Farmers today are top notch managers and know production agriculture. At NRCS, it's our job to know natural resources and what it takes to apply conservation measures to farm land to solve natural resources issues," says Hardisty. "We have broad experience in knowing which conservation practices can work to help farmers reduce erosion, improve soil and water quality, provide a place for wildlife, and continue raising good crops."

NRCS offers planning assistance to farmers large and small. Not only is a conservation plan valuable, it is also required for financial assistance from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).

Contact your local USDA Service Center to begin the conservation planning process. For contact or program information, go to the Indiana NRCS website at [www.in.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov).

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