



# Natural Resources Conservation Service Accomplishments Report FY 2001

---



*The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.*

## What We Do

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary Federal agency that works with private landowners to help them protect their natural resources. The agency emphasizes voluntary, science-based conservation technical assistance; partnerships; incentive-based programs; and cooperative problem solving at the community level. The strength of NRCS is its workforce—some 12,000 individuals working side by side with many partners to help set conservation goals, work with people on the land, and provide services. These partners include conservation districts, state conservation agencies, resource conservation and development councils, and tribes. Local conservation districts—about 3,000 in all—are an important part of the conservation delivery system that is critical to natural resource accomplishments that benefit all Americans.

## Strategic Goals

In fiscal year 2001, the agency continued its commitment to help individuals, communities, units of government, and tribes make decisions

about managing their lands and resources for productivity and long-term use. NRCS helped rural and urban communities curb erosion, conserve and protect water, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and address other natural resource issues. Conservation accomplishments were achieved under four strategic goals:

- **Enhance natural resource productivity** to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector.
- **Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use** to ensure a high-quality environment.
- **Reduce risks from drought and flooding** to protect individual and community health and safety.
- **Deliver high-quality services to the public** to enable natural resource stewardship.

NRCS identified objectives and performance measurements for each goal. The work of the agency is accomplished through conservation planning, technical and financial assistance, resource assessment, and technology development and transfer.



Conservation systems are designed to meet the needs of the land and landowners.

## What We Achieved

Highlights of the accomplishments for fiscal year 2001 illustrate that conservation is the work of many—no one person or group can do it alone. The Nation's conservation efforts on private land ensure a healthy and productive land—sustaining food and fiber production, protecting watersheds and natural systems, enhancing the environment, and improving urban and rural landscapes.

**Goal 1:** Enhance natural resource productivity.

NRCS identified four objectives to address resource concerns that challenge continued productivity of privately owned agricultural lands:

—Maintain, restore, and enhance cropland productivity.

—Maintain, restore, and enhance irrigated land.

—Maintain, restore, and enhance grazing land productivity.

—Maintain, restore, and enhance forest land productivity.

Accomplishments:

NRCS helped landowners—

- Plan and apply resource management systems on 9.5 million acres of cropland.
- Apply 4 million acres of crop residue management.
- Apply resource management systems on 11.3 million acres of grazing land and prescribed grazing on 18.6 million acres.
- Protect 3.5 million acres of cropland from excessive wind and water erosion and apply erosion control measures on 9.3 million acres of land resulting in reducing soil loss by 257 million tons.

- Apply irrigation water management systems that resulted in 1.2 million acres of improved water management and conserved 7.5 million acre-inches of water.
- Apply forest stand improvement (weeding and thinning) on 400,000 acres.
- Establish trees and shrubs on 525,000 acres.

**Goal 2:** Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use.

NRCS identified five objectives to address the most pressing concerns affecting environmental quality of rural and urban landscapes:

—Protect farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses.

—Promote sound urban and rural community development.

—Protect water and air resources from agricultural nonpoint sources of impairment.

—Enhance animal feeding operations to protect the environment.

—Maintain, restore, or enhance wetland ecosystems and fish and wildlife habitat.

Accomplishments:

- Helped landowners put conservation buffers on 524,000 acres to protect water quality and provide wildlife habitat.
- Created, restored, or enhanced wetlands on 362,000 acres.
- Helped landowners apply wildlife habitat management—for wetlands or upland areas—on 11.7 million acres.

- Planned or applied 10,500 waste management systems, including waste storage structures, treatment lagoons, composting facilities, and roof runoff management.
- Helped agricultural producers apply nutrient management on 5.4 million acres.
- Helped producers apply pest management on 5.4 million acres.
- Entered into 57 cooperative agreements with state and local governments and nongovernmental organizations to protect an estimated 34,900 acres of farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses through the Farmland Protection Program.
- Applied erosion control measures on 70,700 acres of urban and built-up land.
- Completed 3,043 resource conservation and development (RC&D) projects that improve the quality of life—including social, economic, and environmental concerns—in local communities across the Nation.



Above: Sound resource information and technology enable producers to manage animal waste properly.

Right: Conservation buffers reduce soil erosion, improve air and water quality, reduce flooding, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.

**Goal 3:** Reduce risks from drought and flooding.

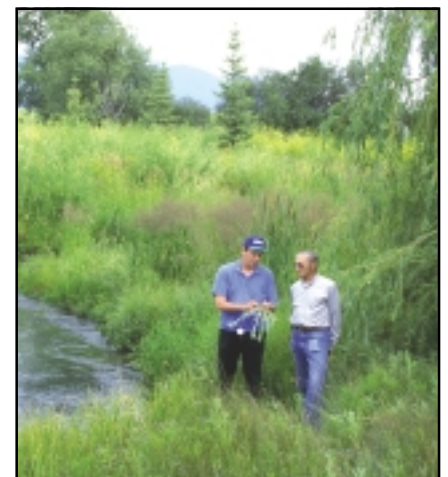
NRCS identified two objectives to help landowners and land managers apply conservation systems to address the impacts of water shortages and flooding.

—Protect upstream watersheds from flood risk.

—Protect watersheds from the effects of chronic water shortages and risks from drought.

Accomplishments:

- Realized a total of \$1.62 billion worth of benefits from small watershed projects.
- Issued 9,000 water supply forecasts for Federal, state, and local water resource planning purposes to 69,000 water users and managers.
- Completed construction on 51 flood protection structures.
- Prepared 10 watershed infrastructure rehabilitation plans.
- Applied conservation systems to address flooding concerns on 3.1 million acres.
- Applied conservation systems to address water supply concerns on 8.6 million acres.





**Goal 4:** Deliver high quality services to the public.

NRCS identified three objectives to address the delivery of conservation services that lead to good natural resource stewardship.

—Deliver services fairly and equitably.

—Strengthen the conservation delivery system.

—Ensure timely, science-based information and technologies.

Accomplishments:

- Provided assistance to 2.4 million farmers, ranchers, and other customers.
- Provided assistance to a total of 306,000 minority customers.
- Assisted 5,300 minority customers apply conservation systems.
- Assisted 2,000 minority customers with an NRCS conservation cost-share program.

- Mapped or updated 24.4 million acres of soils.
- Provided 139 soil surveys in digital format.
- Released 24 new conservation plants for commercial or private use and evaluated 424 plant materials studies.
- Provided data to 1.2 million customers through the PLANTS database website.
- Earned an American Customer Satisfaction Index rating of 81 from a sample of landowners who received conservation technical assistance (CTA) last year. The average score for all government agencies in the survey was 71. Customers gave NRCS an extremely high rating of 90 on *trust*, which is measured by whether the customer will (1) become an advocate for CTA and (2) request services or information from the agency in the future.

## More Information

Additional information on the agency's programs and services can be found in the NRCS Strategic Plan for 2000-2005—a comprehensive roadmap that describes goals, objectives, guiding principles, baselines, and performance targets. The Strategic Plan is available on the web at:  
[www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/SPA](http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/SPA)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Left: NRCS provides conservation assistance nationwide in rural and urban communities.

Right: Wetlands improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion, reduce flooding, and improve water supply.

