



**United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service**

***“A Partner in Conservation Since 1935”***

**USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
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## **Mission**

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

## **Vision**

Harmony between people and the land.

## **Overview**

Since 1935, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private land owners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources. NRCS employees provide technical assistance based on sound science and suited to a customer's specific needs. NRCS provide financial assistance for many conservation activities. Participation in NRCS programs is voluntary.

NRCS manages natural resources conservation programs and services that provide environmental, technical, financial, and social benefits.

- Our science and technology activities provide technical expertise in such areas as clean water, ecological sciences, engineering, and resource economics. We provide expertise in soil science and leadership for soil surveys.
- Technical assistance is provided from our 31 field and six RC&D offices. Technical help is also available through certified technical service providers.
- NRCS offers a variety of financial incentives to producers and landowners interested in conservation programs. Some programs offer annual payments for conservation use. Others offer one-time up-front payments for long-term easements and many include government funds to share in the costs of installing conservation measures.

- NRCS reaches out to all segments of the agricultural community, including under served and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to ensure that our programs and services are accessible to everyone.

NRCS employees serve all 55 West Virginia counties from 31 field offices across the state. Staff includes engineers, conservationists, technicians, soil scientists, RC&D coordinators, and volunteers. These employees work hand-in-hand with land users to conserve natural resources on private lands.

We work closely with West Virginia's 14 conservation districts and six Resource Conservation and Development Councils. These locally elected or appointed community leaders ensure that local conservation concerns are addressed. The West Virginia Conservation Agency and NRCS balance their specific local needs with a coordinated state and national conservation effort.

## **Programs**

NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. Public benefits include enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty. For more information on any of these programs, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

## **Cost Share Program Summary Conservation Security Program (CSP)**

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. CSP identifies and rewards those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental

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management on their operations. CSP provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life on private working lands.

In 2005, conservation stewards in three selected West Virginia watersheds had the opportunity to participate in CSP. Yearly rotation of eligible watersheds gives every farmer the opportunity to participate.

### **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

West Virginia has 14 different Local Working Group areas for EQIP allocations and rankings. Each Conservation District convened Local Working Group meetings to identify and prioritize their natural resource concerns which EQIP can address.

### **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of National, State, and local significance. Through WHIP, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property.

### **Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)**

Agricultural Management Assistance provides cost share assistance to agricultural producers to address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations.

Producers may participate in the poultry litter program; construct or improve water management or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production, diversification, or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control or transition to organic farming.

### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

The Conservation Reserve Program provides agricultural landowners annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland. Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10 to 15 years. Annual rental payments are based on the agriculture rental value of the land and it provides cost-share assistance for up to 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved conservation practices.

### **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)**

Farm and Ranch Land Protection provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, local governments, and/or non-governmental organizations to acquire conservation easements or other interests in land from landowners. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value of the conservation easement.

### **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**

The Wetlands Reserve Program provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private land in an environmentally beneficial and cost effective manner. WRP provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.

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## Other NRCS Programs and Services

### Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Conservation Technical Assistance helps land-users, communities, units of state and local government, and other federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems. The purposes of conservation systems are to reduce erosion and flooding, improve air, soil and water quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve pasture, and woodlands. Technical assistance is provided to landowners whether or not they are enrolled in a USDA conservation program. NRCS promotes planning a total resource management system. This sustainable approach, takes into account all of the natural resources in the planning area. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cta.html>.

### Soil Survey Program

Soil surveys provide a field-based scientific inventory of soil resources, including soil maps, data about the physical and chemical properties of soils, and information on the potentials and limitations of each soil. Soil surveys help people make decisions on how to best use the land based on properties and characteristics of the soils. Modern soil survey information is available for the entire state of West Virginia—currently 35 counties have data available on the web soil survey. Sources for WV surveys may be found at <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/soils.html>.

### Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D)

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) is a unique program that helps people care for and protect their natural resources in a way that will improve their economy, environment, and living standards. RC&D provides a way for people to work together to plan and carry out activities that will make their communities better places to live. The strength of RC&D lies in the local peoples' commitment and dedication to solving local problems.

The purpose of RC&D's is to guide the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources, improve the general level of economic activity, and to enhance the environment and standard of living.

West Virginia has six councils that cover all 55 counties. These councils are made up of local citizens, which generally represent counties, cities, and conservation districts. To locate the RC&D office in your area, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/rcd.html>

### Alderson Plant Materials Center

The Alderson Plant Materials Center serves 11 states in the Appalachian Region. The Center is operated by the NRCS in cooperation with other agencies and universities.

The Plant Materials Center evaluates plants for their ability to solve specific conservation problems related to climate, the rugged topography, soil limitations, various land uses, fish and wildlife needs and desires of the landowners. The center conducts systematic observations and evaluations of plants needed to protect our natural resources. New techniques are developed for the propagation, establishment, management, and use for new or improved species of grasses, legumes, shrubs, and trees. For more information, go to <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/wvpmc.html>.

### Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program undertakes emergency measures—including the purchase of flood plain easements—for runoff retardation and soil erosion prevention to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion on any watershed whenever fire, flood, or any other natural occurrence is causing or has caused a sudden impairment of the watershed. The EWP program relies on federal funding which has been limited in recent years. For more information, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/>.

### Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs).

Technical guides are the primary scientific references for NRCS. Technical guides used in each field office are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared. These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs).

FOTGs are available on-line at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>.

## Earth Team

The Earth Team is NRCS's volunteer program. NRCS needs people who are willing to commit their time and talent to conserving and protecting soil, water, and wildlife for their community and everyone in it. Earth Team volunteers may work with private farmers and landowners implementing conservation practices; improving wildlife around their community; or assisting in data collection for soil, water, or archaeology surveys. Earth Team volunteers also assist with office and clerical work, community outreach, and giving tours. For more information, go to <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>.

## Backyard Conservation

Backyard Conservation shows how conservation practices used on agricultural land across the country to conserve and improve natural resources can be adapted for use on the land around your home. These practices help the environment and can make your yard more attractive and enjoyable.

Ten conservation practices have been scaled down for homeowners and city residents to use in their yards. Tip sheets offer "how to" steps and helpful hints may be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/>.

## Key Contacts

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NRCS has offices in many of West Virginia counties. Local offices may be found at <http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/> or contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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