

Protecting Natural Resources



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency that works with private

landowners to protect natural resources. The agency was established in 1935 following the Dust Bowl days, when the Nation's land was destroyed by erosion, drought and poor farming practices.

Since then, millions of acres have been restored and protected through a unique relationship between NRCS, our conservation partners and private landowners.

In Virginia, NRCS works closely with 47 soil and water conservation districts and several state agencies to provide farmers and other landowners with technical expertise on a wide range of resource concerns. This service is free and voluntary.

NRCS employees are highly skilled in many technical fields, including soil science, soil conservation, agronomy, biology, forestry, geology, engineering, hydrology, wetland science, cultural resources, and economics, to name a few.

NRCS agronomist explains how using no-till and other conservation practices affect soil quality.



NRCS works with farmers and other landowners to help reduce soil erosion and protect water quality.

Technical Help and Funding

NRCS works with producers to develop site-specific conservation plans that will meet their economic and environmental objectives. And, we can help with the design and installation of conservation practices.

NRCS offers a range of technical information including basic soils information that is up to date, easily accessible and designed to meet user needs. There is also "how to" information for farmers, and technical standards for contractors and conservation specialists.

NRCS also provides financial assistance through several Farm Bill programs. These programs offer incentive payments to reduce erosion, improve air and water quality, preserve wetlands, enhance wildlife habitat, and protect farmland and grazing land from urban development.



Conservation planning helps address resource concerns.



Assistance Available Through Farm Bill Programs



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EQIP helps farmers address environmental concerns related to animal waste management, cropland, grazing land and forestland, and ground and surface water. EQIP offers incentive payments of up to 75 percent to install conservation practices (up to 90 percent for limited resource, beginning and historically underserved farmers). Bonus points are given to applicants who install wildlife habitat practices.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative

Farmers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed may receive assistance to install a variety of conservation practices that improve water quality. Funding is targeted to priority practices such as livestock exclusion, nutrient management, crop rotations, residue management and no-till, and cover crops.

Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP provides technical and financial assistance to producers who have already applied basic conservation practices but want to achieve a higher level of conservation on their operations. Participating landowners receive payments to maintain existing practices and implement additional conservation treatment. Contracts are for five years with an annual payment based on the level of current land stewardship and planned conservation practices.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

WHIP provides technical and financial assistance to establish and improve wildlife habitat on private agricultural lands and non-industrial forestland. The financial assistance can include cost share payments for the installation of certain conservation practices.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

FRPP offers matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farmland in agricultural uses. USDA partners with state or local governments and non-governmental entities to acquire conservation easements through existing programs. USDA provides up to 50 percent of the fair market value of the conservation easement.

Wetlands Reserve Program

WRP helps landowners restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from agriculture. Landowners receive a one-time payment for permanent easements and 30-year easements and 100 percent of restoration costs for practice installation under a 10+ year restoration agreement. Easement payments and restoration costs are based on the type and length of the easement.

For more information visit
www.va.nrcs.usda.gov