



WHY PARTICIPATE?

- Only you as a farmer or rancher can supply the information needed.
- A small number of farmers and ranchers are being asked to participate in this survey. Your operation was selected at random as part of a scientific, statistical sample. Therefore, the responses you provide will represent hundreds of other operations. It is important that farmers and ranchers selected to complete this survey lend their assistance to provide an accurate measure of the environmental benefits of conservation programs.
- By demonstrating the valuable contribution made by America's farmers and ranchers to the environment, your response ensures that conservation programs will continue to provide America's working lands with the assistance needed to remain both healthy and productive in the future.

THE FARM BILL CONNECTION

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (the Farm Bill) represents the single most significant commitment of resources to conservation efforts on private lands in the Nation's history. The 2002 Farm Bill places strong emphasis on conservation of working lands, ensuring that across the country land is healthy and productive, and remains so for tomorrow's generations. This legislation provides assistance to producers investing in conservation efforts to prevent soil erosion and protect wetlands, wildlife habitat, and farmland. Program participants can benefit from an array of voluntary assistance programs including cost-sharing, land rental, incentive payments, and technical assistance.

While the advantages of conservation programs are widely recognized, from reducing soil erosion and enhancing water and air quality, to promoting wetland and wildlife

habitat preservation and restoration, the environmental benefits of such programs have not been previously measured at the national level. The 2002 Farm Bill increased Federal expenditures for conservation practices approximately 80 percent from levels in the 1996 Farm Bill. Tracking the successes of these programs will allow policy makers and program managers to design and implement new opportunities to more effectively and efficiently meet conservation goals. The National Resources Inventory—Conservation Effects Assessment Project (NRI-CEAP) will provide the farming community, the general public, legislators, and other environmental policy issue stakeholders with a record of the benefits achieved through conservation programs.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION ONCE YOU COMPLETE THE SURVEY?

Once you complete the survey and describe your past and present farming practices on the designated land, climate and soil information from other sources will be added to this information to create a more complete picture of environmental and management conditions associated with that field. Conservation benefits will then be estimated using sophisticated environmental effects models. These benefits are added to benefits estimated for all the other sample sites in the survey and then reported to Congress and the public. Annual progress reports will be published beginning in 2005.



The 2002 Farm Bill provides over \$38 billion for conservation—the highest level of funding in history for conservation programs that reduce soil erosion, preserve and restore wetlands, clean the air and water, and enhance wildlife. This survey will be used to provide farming communities, the general public, legislators and other stakeholders with an interest in environmental policy issues an accounting of the environmental benefits obtained from these conservation programs.

Even if you are not presently participating in any conservation programs, information about your operation is still important to us. Your answers will be used to estimate the potential benefits that could be achieved by expanding these programs.

Voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs authorized under the 2002 Farm Bill are the most successful and popular environmental programs in the United States. Conservation programs that will use information gathered in this survey include:

EQIP—Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

WRP—Wetlands Reserve Program. Provides an opportunity for landowners to receive financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture.

WHIP—Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Encourages creation of high-quality wildlife habitats that support certain wildlife populations. Through WHIP, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property.

CSP—Conservation Security Program. Provides payment for producers who historically have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands and incentives for those who want to do more.

CRP—Conservation Reserve Program. Provides annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving covers on eligible farmland.

CREP—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Combines an existing program, CRP, with State programs to provide incentive payments for installing conservation practices to meet specific State and national environmental objectives.

NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance (CTS). Provides conservation technical assistance to land users, communities, units of State and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems.

Farmers ask:

I spent my valuable time answering questions about my farming operation on another survey. How does this one benefit me?

Today's agricultural producers are inundated with requests for information. USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) realizes how valuable your time is and greatly appreciates your participation in our surveys. We assure you that your time is well spent and that information you provide will benefit your livelihood, that of your neighbors and the farming community in which you live.

As you read through this brochure, you will see that the National Resources Inventory—Conservation Effects Assessment Survey (NRI-CEAP) has a unique purpose—to provide information that will aid in determining environmental benefits associated with conservation programs. This information will provide the basis for showing that conservation practices can improve water, soil, and air quality, and enhance wildlife habitat across the country.



United States Department of Agriculture



National Agricultural Statistics Service

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National Resources Inventory Conservation Effects Assessment Project

