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United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.me.nrcs.usda.gov

Helping People Help the Land
Since 1935



Maine

Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Report



History

On April 27, 1935 Congress passed Public Law 74-46, in which it recognized that “the wastage of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands...is a menace to the national welfare” and established the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as a permanent agency in the USDA. In 1994, SCS’s name was changed to the Natural Resources Conservation Service to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency’s concerns. In doing so, Congress reaffirmed the federal commitment to the conservation of the nation’s soil and water resources, first made 78 years ago.

Who We Are

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers and others care for the land. NRCS has six mission goals that include high quality, productive soils; clean and abundant water; healthy plant and animal communities; clean area; an adequate energy supply; and working farms and ranchlands.

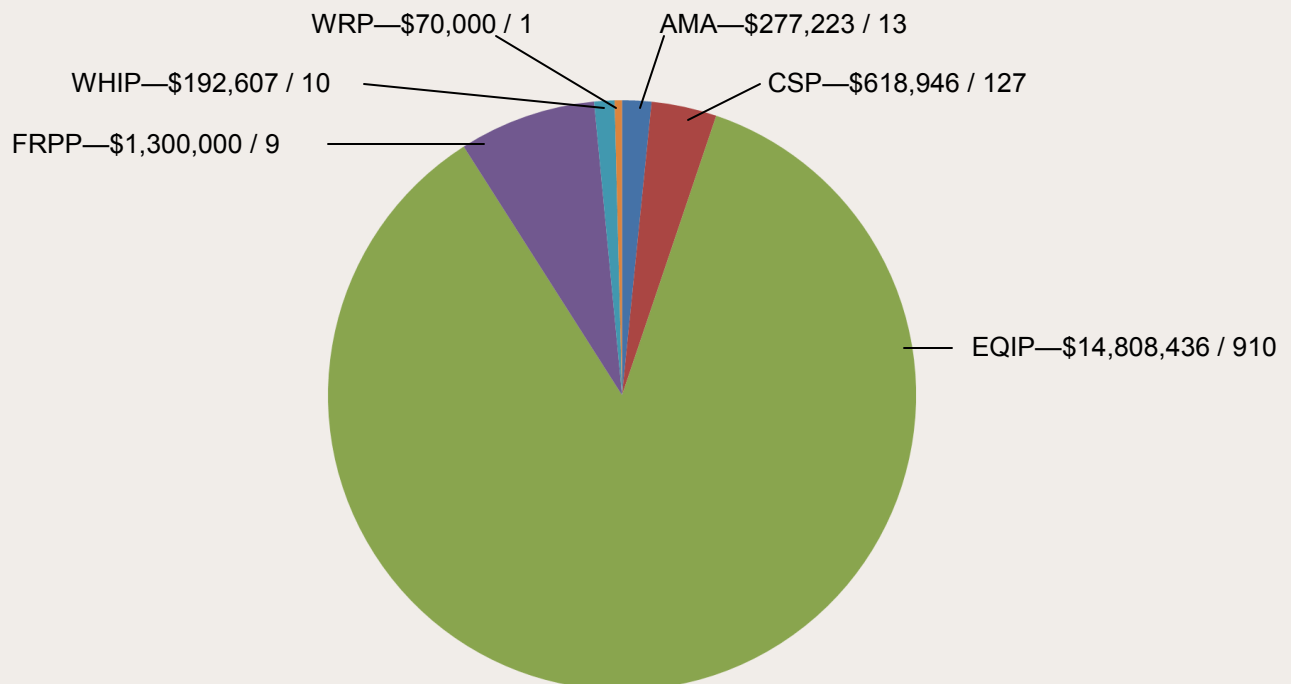
Vision

Productive Lands—
Healthy Environment

Mission

Helping People Help the Land

Program Financial Assistance Dollars / Number of Contracts—Fiscal Year 2012



Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides cost share assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures 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, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming.

In Fiscal Year 2012, \$277,223 was obligated through 13 contracts to both large- and small-scale irrigators to construct or improve their water management structures and to mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, the NRCS provides assistance to agricultural producers in a manner that will promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimize environmental benefits, and help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental requirements.

In Fiscal Year 2012, \$14,663,903 was obligated through 910 contracts to Maine producers. Of that amount, \$6,977,494 was obligated for the general category EQIP projects, while the remainder of \$7,686,436 was obligated through special initiatives.

EQIP Initiatives

Conservation Activity Plans

Maine NRCS provides financial assistance to help develop Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs). A CAP is a specialized conservation plan prepared specifically for a conservation management unit. CAPs are developed by a Technical Service Provider, who is certified by NRCS and placed on an approved list to provide technical assistance to farmers and others for specific conservation programs administered by NRCS.

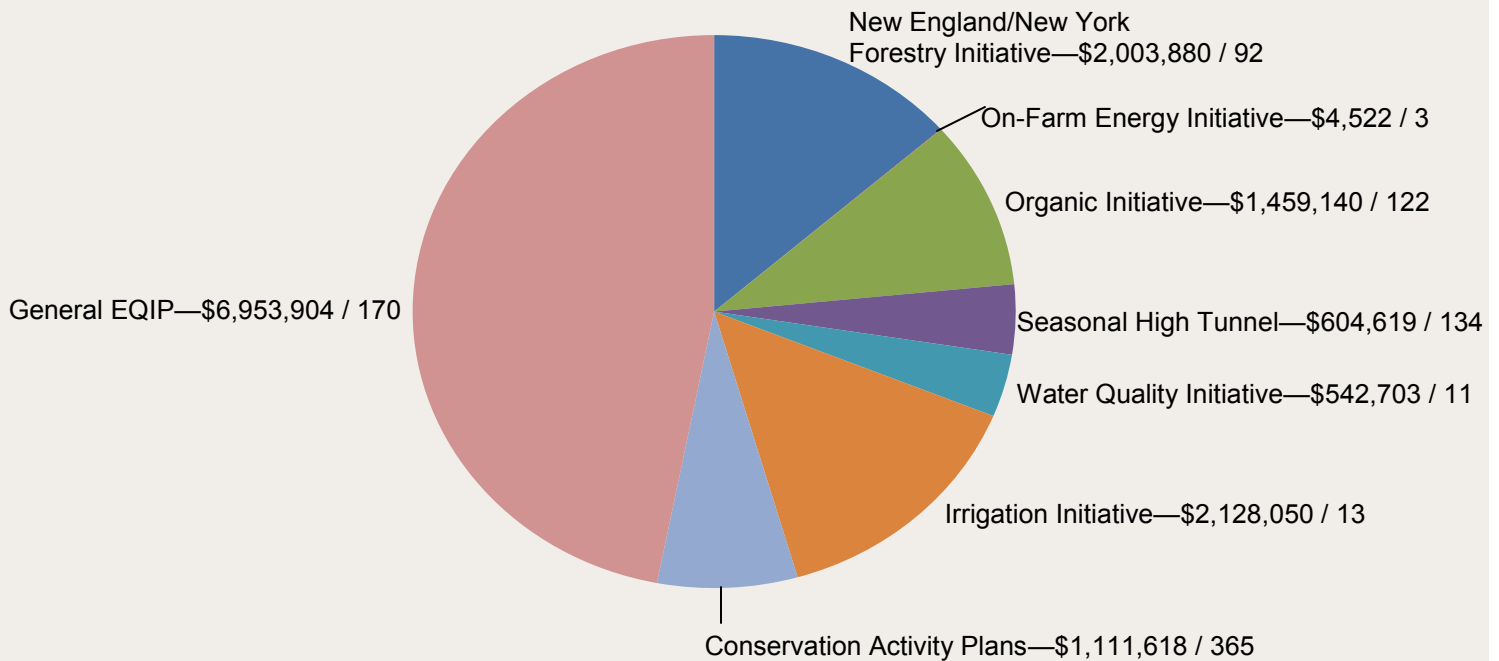
In Fiscal Year 2012 Maine NRCS obligated \$944,438 for the development of 365 CAPs.



Conservation Activity Plans Written in FY 2012

Practice	Number of Plans Developed	Dollars Obligated for the Practice
Forest Management Plan	271	\$546,429
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans	51	\$457,394
Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition	56	\$79,560
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Plan	10	\$22,653
Agricultural Energy Management Plan—Headquarters	3	\$6,952
Pollinator Habitat Plan	3	\$6,839
Nutrient Management Plan	1	\$2,268
Grazing Management Plan	1	\$1,764
Agricultural Energy Management Plan—Landscape	1	\$2,291

Summary for EQIP National and State Initiatives Fiscal Year 2012 Financial Assistance Dollars / Number of Contracts

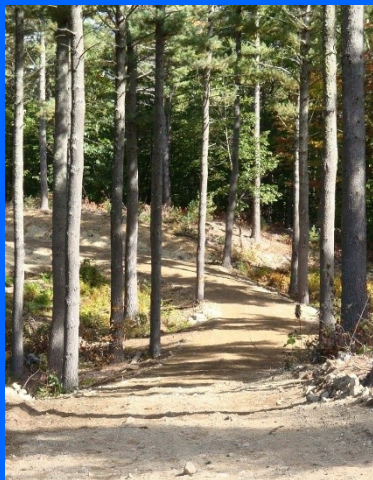


EQIP Initiatives

New England/New York Forestry Initiative

NRCS assists Maine's forest landowners with forest land planning and management under the New England/New York Forestry Initiative. This initiative assists private landowners in conservation planning and management of their private forests to improve wildlife habitat, forest health and productivity, and water quality.

In Fiscal Year 2012, Maine NRCS obligated \$2,002,965 through 92 contracts for practices such as forest stand improvement, stream crossings, fish passage, forest trails and landings, and access roads.



On-Farm Energy Initiative

Through the On-Farm Energy Initiative, NRCS and producers develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP), or farm energy audits, that assess energy consumption on an operation. There are two separate AgEMP options: (1) for a landscape component, that assesses equipment and farming processes, and (2) a farm headquarters component, that assesses power usage and efficiencies in livestock buildings, maple syrup operations, and similar facilities to support the farm operation.



NRCS then uses audit data to develop energy conservation practice recommendations. Clients may apply for financial assistance through the On-Farm Energy Initiative to implement the recommended practices.

In Fiscal Year 2012, the first year this initiative was offered, Maine NRCS obligated \$4,522 through 3 contracts for this initiative.

EQIP Initiatives

Organic Initiative

NRCS helps certified organic growers and producers working to achieve organic certification install conservation practices for organic production through the Organic Initiative. Funding is available to help producers plan and implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns in ways that are consistent with organic production.

In Fiscal Year 2012, \$1,459,140 was obligated through 122 contracts to assist organic producers.



Seasonal High Tunnels

Through the Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative, NRCS helps producers plan and implement high tunnels -- steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend growing seasons in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality, fewer nutrients and pesticides in the environment, and better air quality due to fewer vehicles being needed to transport crops.

In Fiscal Year 2012, Maine NRCS obligated \$604,619 through 134 contracts for this initiative.



Irrigation Assistance

Priority has been given to water conservation or irrigation efficiency applications that will reduce water use or where the producer agrees not to use any associated water savings to bring new land under irrigation production. Maine NRCS has set aside at least \$1,000,000 each year in financial assistance funding for eligible applicants across the state.

In Fiscal Year 2012 Maine NRCS obligated \$2,128,050 through 13 contracts to address irrigation efficiency and assist producers to comply with Maine Department of Environmental Protection Chapter 587 In-Stream Flows and Lake and Pond Water Levels regulations.



EQIP Initiatives

Salmon Falls Watershed Initiative

Maine NRCS is providing financial assistance to assist eligible agricultural and forest landowners in the Salmon Falls Watershed with planning and management of their land under the Salmon Falls Watershed Initiative.

The Salmon Falls Watershed is fed by an ecologically diverse land area shared by the states of Maine and New Hampshire, and drains into the Great Bay Estuary, a coastal ecosystem of national importance. More than 28,000 people currently rely on the Salmon Falls Watershed to provide clean drinking water.

The Watershed is threatened by increases in polluted runoff from rapid population growth and conversion of forested land to developed areas.

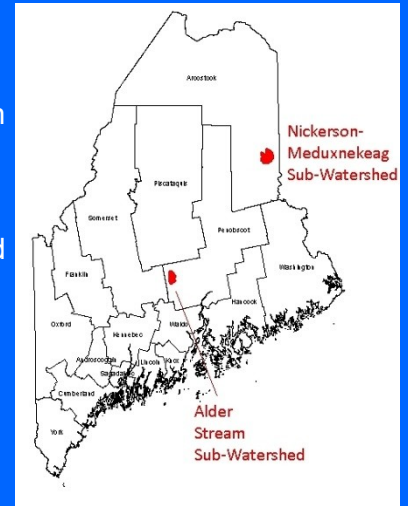
In Fiscal Year 2012, four workshops were held for the landowners, and as a result of what the landowners learned, NRCS obligated funding for 20 contracts for Forest Management Plan CAPs on 3,716 acres.



National Water Quality Initiative

The National Water Quality Initiative works in priority watersheds to help farmers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams. NRCS helps producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff.

In Maine, two watersheds were selected to participate in this initiative in Fiscal Year 2013: The Nickerson Lake Sub-watershed



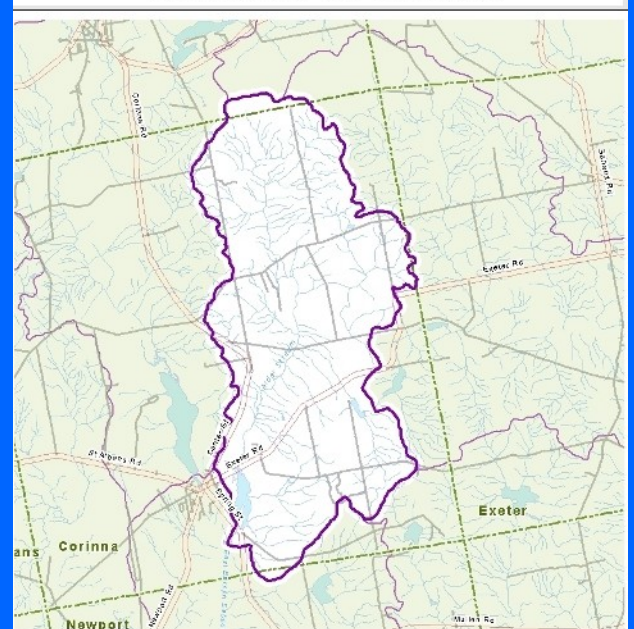
Nickerson Lake-Meduxnekeag River Sub-Watershed



located in the Meduxnekeag River Watershed in southern Aroostook County and Alder Stream Sub-watershed located in the Sebasticook Lake Watershed in Penobscot County.

In Fiscal Year 2012, the first year of this initiative, Maine NRCS obligated \$542,703 through 11 contracts for this initiative in these two watersheds.

Alder Stream Sub-Watershed





Perennial Stream Crossing (Before)



Bridge Stream Crossing Installed (After)



Access Road (Before)



Access Road (After)

NRCS and Landowner Address Natural Resource Concerns on Forestland

A Franklin County landowner has and will continue to implement conservation practices on his 240-acre woodlot. Located in the Barker Stream watershed, the landowner has a forest management plan that will help him address some of the occurring natural resource issues. Before the installation of conservation practices, vehicles/ machinery drove through a series of intermittent and perennial streams causing gully erosion, water quality and sedimentation problems. Access was needed to get logging trucks to a central landing so forest management practices can be performed on the woodlot.

Through the New England/New York Forestry Initiative, funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the following practices were installed in Fiscal Year 2012 to address these natural resource issues:

- A 24 ft. x 16 ft. bridge stream crossing to allow access to the woodlot without causing sedimentation and turbidity problems
- 2,400 ft. of access road including several culverts for cross drainage
- Two 3 ft. x 6 ft. concrete box culvert stream crossings and one 36 in. culvert stream crossing to allow the crossing of intermittent streams without causing sedimentation and turbidity problems
- 600 ft. of rock-lined waterway to re-direct water from logging road to reduce erosion problems

The woodland is located within the Atlantic Salmon Critical Habitat and Atlantic Salmon Gulf of Maine Distinct Populations Segment boundaries, so maintaining/improving water quality is a priority for the landowner. It is also the desire of the landowner to practice sound forestry so keeping the forest healthy, harvesting timber and producing high-value forest products is also a primary objective.

Pleasant River Projects Restore Fish Runs

The Pleasant River Initiative began in 2011 with the specific goals to restore runs of diadromous fish that include, but are not limited to, the federally endangered Atlantic salmon, and to restore geomorphic characteristics and connectivity to benefit resident and diadromous fish, eastern brook trout, and other native aquatic species at a landscape scale. In just a year and a half NRCS and partners are starting to achieve the goals by completing eight projects that have reconnected close to 20 miles of stream habitat and over 1,000 acres of lake habitat. Three of these projects were completed in 2011, and five were completed in 2012.

Projects completed in 2012 include:



Three undersized culverts were removed on the tributaries to Mountain Brook in Piscataquis County, the same tributary system on which three undersized culverts were removed in 2011. Two of the crossings were perched by over two feet and one crossing was severely plugged with debris. The crossings were replaced with



concrete bridge abutments and bridge decks. All of the six projects together total over 10 miles of reconnected stream habitat.



Mattamiscontis Lake, which means a fishing place for alewives by the Penobscot Nation, had a limited spawning alewife population due to a remnant log drive dam that had been in place prior to the 1880's. The remnant dam structure was removed and a series of rock weir step pools were installed to serve as resting places during migrations and to maintain the current lake level. This project was not only important for the



Penobscot Nation traditional culture but for the overall ecological health of the Penobscot River.



A remnant log drive dam on Roaring Brook held back over a half mile of deadwater habitat creating a thermal barrier for cold water fish species like brook trout and Atlantic salmon. The dam was removed, which has reconnected an additional 7 miles of stream habitat.



Conservation Innovation Grants Benefit Four Maine Recipients

More than \$158,000 was awarded to four Maine recipients through Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG), a component of EQIP. CIG is a statewide competitive grants process to address some of the state's most pressing natural resource conservation needs.

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches into NRCS technical manuals or guides, or to the private sector.

In Fiscal Year 2012 CIG grants were awarded to:

- ✓ [Windependence dba Community Energy Partners, LLC](#), in Freeport received \$70,000 for "Advancing Farmer-Owned Wind Power in Maine". They will educate eligible producers on Net Energy Billing, conduct a feasibility study on a Small Wind Turbine Bulk Buy Program and conduct educational webinars on Community Wind. The demonstration project will be primarily focused on rural Maine.
- ✓ [The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association \(MOFGA\)](#) in Unity received \$44,000 to demonstrate "New Soil Health Building Techniques for Organic Farmers in the Northeast". MOFGA will demonstrate and quantify the impacts of cover crops, crop rotations, tillage and/or soil amendments on soil chemical, physical, and/or biological properties and their relationships with nutrient cycling, soil and water availability, and plant growth.
- ✓ [Maine Rural Partners \(MRP\)](#) in Orono received \$40,000 for the "Micmac Heat Pump Demonstration Project". MRP will establish a demonstration project in Aroostook County for ductless air-to-air heat pump technology in the retail farm store and processing facility of Micmac Farms and Trading Company, owned by the Aroostook Band of Micmacs.
- ✓ [Holly Miller, Project Manager of Hope's Edge Farm in Hope](#), received \$4,011 for "Hope's Edge Conservation Initiative". Miller will demonstrate and quantify the impacts of reducing on-farm electrical use by replacing old, highly-inefficient cooling and freezing equipment with new, energy-efficient equipment. This project proposes to reduce the carbon footprint of Hope's Edge Farm in Hope by reducing on-farm electrical usage by 15% to 25%.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program is a voluntary conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners for developing, improving or managing wildlife habitat or for restoring natural ecosystems on eligible land.

In Fiscal Year 2012, WHIP financial assistance dollars were dedicated to a new national initiative, "Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative". Through a partnership between NRCS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, seven at-risk species were identified nationwide that would benefit from conservation investments made by landowners on private lands. The New England cottontail habitat was targeted in Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Rhode Island. The initiative is a voluntary, incentive-based effort that has three primary objectives: (1) Restore populations of the New England cottontail; (2) provide farmers, landowners and forest managers with regulatory certainty; and (3) strengthen rural economies through productive working lands.



In Fiscal Year 2012, Maine NRCS obligated \$192,607 through 10 contracts, to allow farmers and forest landowners to use innovative approaches to restore and protect the New England cottontail rabbit.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to maintain existing conservation activities and adopt additional ones on their operations. A producer must treat at least one resource concern and one priority resource concern during the length of the CSP's 5-year contract.

CSP offers participants two possible types of payments:

- Annual payment for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing activities.
- Supplemental payment for the adoption of resource-conserving crop rotation.

In Fiscal Year 2012 Maine NRCS obligated \$618,946 through 127 CSP contracts to help producers conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. The 2012 obligations included payment for prior year (2010 and 2011) contracts as well as 11 new Fiscal Year 2012 contracts.



Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP)

The Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranch land in agricultural uses.

Working through existing programs, USDA partners with State, tribal, or local governments and 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.

In Fiscal Year 2012, Maine NRCS obligated \$1,333,300 of FRPP funding to keep 8 parcels of productive farmland in agricultural use. Estimated Conservation Easement Value totaled \$2,666,600 on 631 acres of land.

Soil Survey Program

Soil survey information is gathered to assist in the management of our natural resources. The NRCS soil survey specialists investigate, inventory, classify and interpret the soils of Maine and help people understand, value and wisely use soil resources. The information is used to determine if land is suitable for farming, grazing, development, and engineering and conservation practices.

In Fiscal Year 2011 all field work for the initial soil survey was completed. In Fiscal Year 2012, extensive revisions were completed on 91,000 acres in Penobscot County, initially surveyed in 1963. Soil scientists on detail to Wyoming during Maine's winter months also surveyed approximately 100,000 acres for initial soil surveys.



The Soil Survey Staff in Maine has also assumed the responsibility of wetland and highly-erodible land (HEL) determinations in Maine. In Fiscal Year 2012 they conducted reviews of approximately 30 tracts for wetland and HEL compliance and conducted 50 wetland and/or HEL determinations. They also provided assistance to NRCS in Massachusetts and Vermont by conducting certified wetland determinations as needed..

Additional Before and After Visuals from Fiscal Year 2012



Rock Removal on Blueberry Land.



Large classic gully outletting tons of sedimentation and nutrients directly into the Meduxnekeag River.



Methane digester project on organic dairy farm. Installation of the cover over the manure pit will be used to collect methane for digestion.

Additional Before and After Visuals from Fiscal Year 2012



Pullen Mill – A pool and weir fish passage were installed.

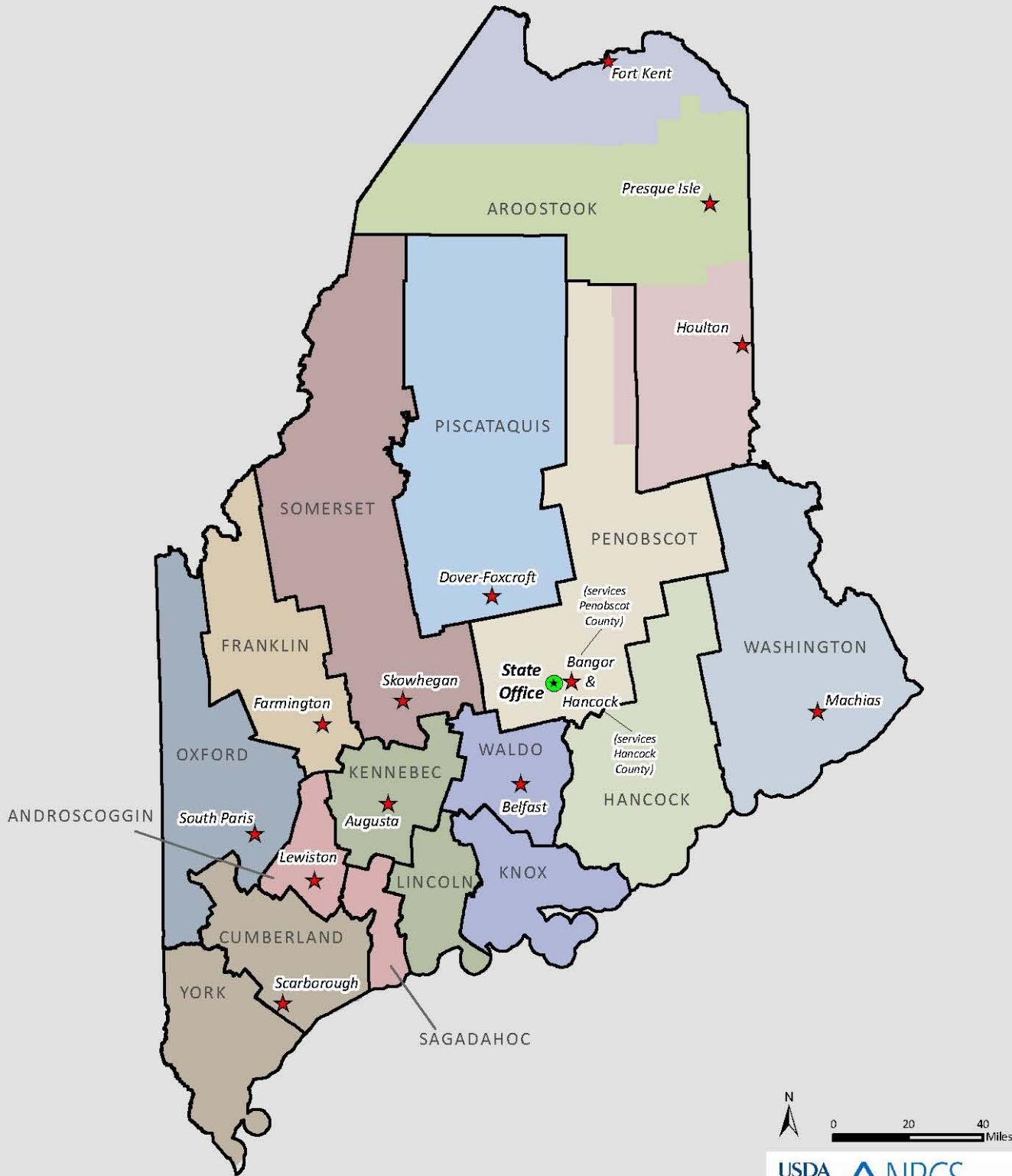


Muddy heavy use area replaced with a roofed concrete manure storage and heavy use area.



Culvert replacement at Jam Black Brook.

USDA - NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE MAINE FIELD OFFICE LOCATIONS



* Service Areas are represented by unique shading. Field Offices that service multiple counties, or partial counties as in Aroostook County, are shaded accordingly.



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