

CONSERVATION



OUR PURPOSE. OUR PASSION.

2008

Oklahoma

Annual

Report

Message From State Conservationist Ronald Hilliard

The past year, 2008, was a productive and beneficial year for the NRCS in Oklahoma. The year was also a year of transitions: from the 2002 Farm Bill to the newly signed 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act. NRCS and the conservation partnership in Oklahoma have achieved tremendous accomplishments from the 2002 Farm Bill. This work has resulted in unprecedented amounts of conservation applied on the Oklahoma landscape, in addition to the tremendous positive impact on rural communities in Oklahoma. This conservation was applied because of the

dedication and efforts made by NRCS staff, along with the staffs of the conservation partnership.

There are great expectations of additional opportunities from the newly signed farm bill. This legislature provides for new initiatives and increases of potential funding. Implementation of the new farm bill will become our highest priority, ensuring that attention be given to items identified in the legislative language such as climate change, energy, and outreach to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

The Oklahoma conservation partnership is rich in tradition and pride. As the state conservationist, I will always view this partnership as one of our greatest strengths and one that we must continue to build upon. I know that with the continued support of the conservation partnership, we can all work together in 2009 to provide the best possible service to our customers and have the most impact on the Oklahoma landscape.

2008 | conservation programs at a glance

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

contracts: 1,600
acres: 552,546 acres
financial assistance: \$25.6 million

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

contracts: 81
acres: 28,497 acres
financial assistance: \$994,587

Wetlands Reserve Program

easements: 7
acres: 228
financial assistance: \$436,450

Ground and Surface Water Conservation Program

contracts: 7
acres: 1,181
financial assistance: \$233,411

Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program

contracts: 3
acres: 240
financial assistance: \$394,255

Conservation Security Program

contracts: 108
acres: 115,273
financial assistance: \$2.5 million

Grassland Reserve Program

easement: 1
acres: 969
financial assistance: \$468,259

Emergency Watershed Protection

total funds spent: \$4.2 million

Watershed Program

total funds spent: \$6.8 million

Resource Conservation & Development

active projects: 242
businesses created/expanded/retained: 123
total project contributions: \$78 million

Summary of 2002 Farm Bill

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (2002 Farm Bill) was landmark legislation for conservation funding and for focusing on environmental issues. The conservation provisions helped farmers and ranchers meet environmental challenges on their land. It simplified existing programs and created new programs to address high priority environmental and production goals. The 2002 Farm Bill enhanced the long-term quality of our environment and conservation of our natural resources.

Since the enactment of the 2002 Farm Bill, NRCS in Oklahoma joined with landowners and our conservation partners to create, restore, and enhance over 19,667 acres of wetlands through 119 Wetlands Reserve Program contracts; enhanced or improved wildlife habitat on 144,102 acres with 359 Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contracts; and promoted agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality on 3,872,844 acres through 10,711 Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts.

The most common practices implemented in Oklahoma during the 2002 Farm Bill included:

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

- brush management
- pond
- fencing
- firebreaks, and
- prescribed burning

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- brush management
- irrigation system, sprinkler
- pasture and hay planting
- grade stabilization structures, and
- fencing

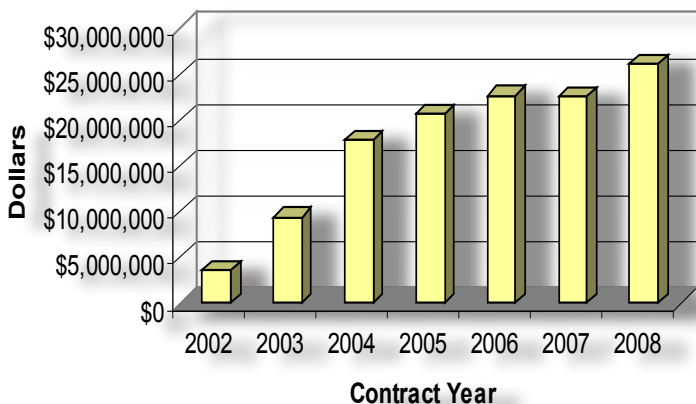
Wetlands Reserve Program

- structure for water control
- tree planting
- critical area planting
- range seeding, and
- fencing

To ensure that farmers, ranchers and all Oklahomans have access to high quality data on natural resources, we have generated soil surveys covering all 77 counties.

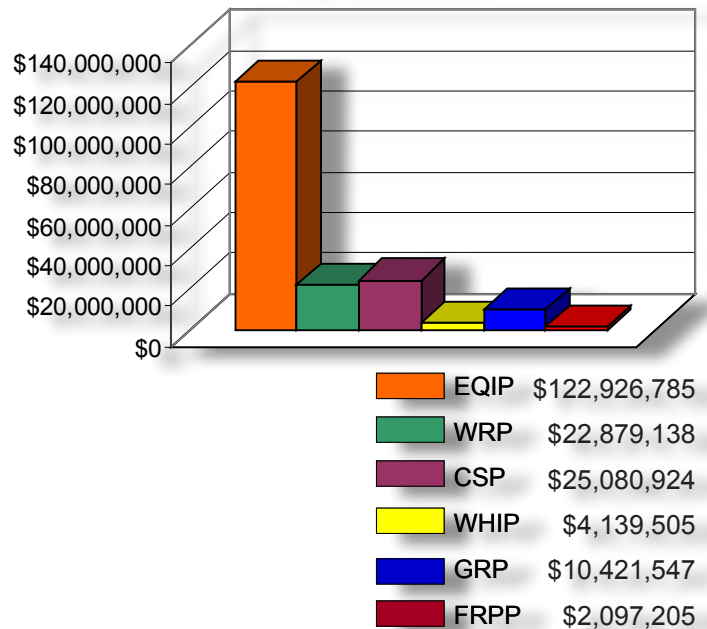
Good conservation must equal good economics. Farmers and ranchers are some of America’s best resource stewards, and they are also some of America’s best business people. They understand that practices like precision farming reduce energy use and other input costs, and also save time—all of which are important to a producer’s bottom line.

**EQIP Obligations and Contracts By Year
2002 - 2008**



**2002 Farm Bill Programs
All Obligations and Payments 2002 - 2008**

Total \$187,545,104



The New 2008 Farm Bill

The conservation provisions in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) will provide conservation opportunities for farmers and ranchers for years to come. The new provisions build on the conservation gains made by farmers and ranchers through the 1985, 1996 and 2002 Farm Bills. They simplify existing programs and create new programs to address high priority environmental goals.

What’s in the 2008 Farm Bill?

- The bill increases authorized funding for conservation programs
- It reinforces the importance of conservation on working agricultural and forestry lands
- It retains and reaffirms the key tools in our conservation portfolio, including financial assistance, easement programs, community development and watershed rehabilitation, grant programs and conservation technical assistance
- The bill also expands some programs, such as adding the Agricultural Water Enhancement

What's in the 2008 Farm Bill (continued)

- Program, under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- The Conservation Security Program will be phased out and replaced with the Conservation Stewardship Program
- The new bill also resolves the appraisal issues in the Wetlands Reserve Program
- It also authorizes some new activities. These are the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program
- The bill also further enhances opportunities for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers
- Opportunities for partnership are also being expanded through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

The 2008 Farm Bill increases the nation's investment in voluntary conservation on private working lands and retains the breadth of tools NRCS needs to execute our vital mission of helping people help the land.

America's farmers and ranchers are the best stewards of our natural resources, yet they don't get the credit they deserve. The conservation actions they take on private lands yield public benefits we all enjoy, in the form of cleaner and more abundant water, cleaner air, improved soils and increased wildlife habitat and diversity.

For more information on NRCS programs and services in Oklahoma, visit our web site at www.ok.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
100 USDA, Suite 206
Stillwater, OK 74074
405.742.1204



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