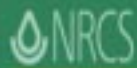


offers three enrollment options: permanent easement, 30-year easement, and restoration cost-share agreement.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of national, state, Tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to landowners to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property.

NRCS works with the participant to develop a wildlife habitat development plan. This plan becomes the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that are usually 5 to 10 years in duration, depending upon the practices to be installed.



Farm Bill 2002

A Guide To Conservation Programs for Oklahoma Landowners



Your quick reference to financial and technical assistance for conservation on private and Tribal lands.

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Conservation Provisions Overview

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) represents the single most significant commitment of resources toward conservation on private and Tribal lands in the nation's history. The legislation responds to a broad range of emerging natural resource challenges faced by farmers, ranchers and Tribes including soil erosion, wetlands, wildlife habitat and farmland protection. Private landowners and Tribes will benefit from a portfolio of voluntary assistance, including cost-share, land rental, incentive payments and technical assistance. The 2002 Farm Bill places a strong emphasis on the conservation of working lands, ensuring that land remain both healthy and productive.

The conservation provisions build upon past conservation gains and respond to the call of farmers, ranchers and Tribes across the country for additional cost-share resources. The Farm Bill also ensures greater access to the programs by making more farmers, ranchers and Tribes eligible for participation. To receive technical assistance, a landowner or manager may contact the local NRCS or conservation district office.

Conservation of Private Grazing Land (CPGL)

The Conservation of Private Grazing Land Program (CPGL) is a voluntary program that helps owners and managers of private grazing land address natural resource concerns while enhancing the economic and social stability of grazing land enterprises and the rural communities that depend on them.

CPGL provides for technical assistance from NRCS to conserve or enhance resources to meet ecological, economic, and social demands.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The act extends the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and increases the program's acreage cap from 36.4 million to 39.2 million acres at a cost of \$1.517 billion over current spending. It also provides equal priority for erosion control, water quality and wildlife habitat, and allows for



30-year contracts for hardwood trees. The six-state Farmable Wetlands Pilot Program, which allows producers to enroll small acreages of wetlands in fields in the CRP, is extended to all states with a cap of one million acres. The act also incorporates both the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the CRP Buffer Initiative into the statute. Haying and grazing may now be carried out on CRP lands under a conservation plan, with reduction in annual rental payments.

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance for the conservation, protection and improvement of soil, water and related resources on private and Tribal lands. The program provides payments for producers who

historically have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands and incentives for those who want to do more. The program will be



available in fiscal year 2003. Producers may choose from one of three tiers of conservation practices and systems, with the more complex and comprehensive tiers receiving higher incentive payments. CSP contracts are from 5 to 10 years. Contract payments will be based on 5, 10 and 15 percent of a national rental rate per acre.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. Through EQIP, farmers, ranchers and Tribes may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices important to improving and maintaining the health of natural resources in the area. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a producer to adopt land management practices such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, irrigation water management and wildlife habitat management, or to develop a CNMP and components of a CNMP. Limited

resource farmers and beginning farmers may be eligible for up to 90 percent of the cost of conservation practices.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term of one year after implementation of the last scheduled practice and a maximum term of ten years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost share payments for implementing conservation practices.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)

The Farmland Protection Program (FPP) is a voluntary program that helps farmers, ranchers and Tribes keep their land in agriculture and prevents conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. The program provides matching funds to State, Tribal, and local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs to purchase conservation easements. These entities purchase easements from landowners in exchange for a lump sum payment, not to exceed the appraised fair market value of the land's development rights. The easements are for a minimum of 30 years. To date, all easements accepted into the program have been for perpetuity.

Proposals are received from federally recognized Indian Tribes, states, units of local government, and non-governmental organizations to cooperate in the acquisition of conservation easements or other interests on



farms and ranches. The federal share of any easement acquisition is limited to a maximum of 50 percent of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement.

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

The Farm Bill establishes a new, CCC-funded, two million-acre Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), which will use permanent and 30-year easements and 30-year rental agreements to restore and protect grasslands. Total funding for the program is \$254 million. Of the two million acres to be enrolled in the program, 500,000 acres are to be reserved for tracts of native grassland 40 acres or less. GRP lands must have an NRCS-approved conservation plan, which may allow grazing and haying or mowing after the nesting and chick-rearing season. Restoration costs are cost-shared up to 75 percent. Payments for permanent easements and rental agreements will be based on the fair market value of the land, less its grazing value.

Surface and Groundwater Conservation

A special section of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program allows for additional funding for water conservation measures in the High Plains Aquifer region of Oklahoma.

The purpose of this special section is specifically to promote ground and surface water conservation activities to improve irrigation systems, convert to the production of less water intensive agricultural commodities, or institute other measures that improve groundwater conservation.

Financial and technical assistance to a producer may be provided only to facilitate a conservation measure that results in a net savings in groundwater or surface water resources in the agricultural operation of the producer.

Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D)

The Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC&D) is reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. The purpose of the RC&D program is to encourage and improve the capability of volunteer local elected and civic leaders in designated RC&D

areas to plan and carry out projects for resource conservation and community development. Program objectives focus on "quality of life" improvements achieved through natural resources conservation and community development. Such activities lead to sustainable communities, prudent land use, and the sound management and conservation of natural resources. Oklahoma has nine approved RC&D areas.

Technical assistance is available for the planning and installation of approved projects



specified in RC&D area plans, for land conservation, water management, community development, and environmental enhancement elements.

Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

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