



NRCS Updates - O2O Partnership Meeting
April 23, 2020; 10am – 11:30pm

Natural
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Topics

- **Coronavirus and USDA Service Center Status**
- **NRCS Program Updates**
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
 - Financial Assistance Programs
 - Conservation Innovation Grants

Coronavirus and USDA Service Centers

- **USDA Service Centers are open for business by phone appointment only**
- **NRCS staff will be assisting producers by phone, email, and online tools**
- **Field visits will continue with appropriate social distancing**
- **Updates will be posted to:**
<https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus>

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

NRCS and partners leverage funds, resources and expertise to help producers install and maintain conservation activities.



How it Works:

- Partners develop and submit a proposal to NRCS.
- If a proposal is approved, NRCS and partners enter into an agreement and set aside funding to complete conservation activities.
- Producers, landowners, and partners then enter into producer contracts and supplemental agreements with NRCS to carry out agreed-to conservation activities.



RCPP Principles



- **IMPACT**
- **PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS**
- **INNOVATION**
- **PARTNERSHIPS AND MANAGEMENT**



Eligible Activities



- **NRCS will still use “covered programs” as a guide to implement RCPP activities (e.g. EQIP, ACEP)**
- **Applications must request funding for at least one of the following activities:**
 - Land management/land improvement/restoration
 - Land rental
 - Entity-held easements
 - United States-held easements
 - Public works/watersheds



Regional Conservation Partnership Program Updates

- **RCPP Interim Rule**

- Visit [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) search Docket ID NRCS-2019-0012
- Public comments due May 12th

- **RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements**

- Deadline to submit proposal May 29th
- Application information on national RCPP website – How to Apply page
 - Recorded webinar available
 - Request meeting with RCPP coordinator at least 4 weeks to review proposal prior to deadline

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easements

- **Application deadline for FY2020 funding is May 6th.**
- **NRCS POCs:**
 - Roney Gutierrez, roney.Gutierrez@usda.gov
 - Crenel Francis, crenel.francis@usda.gov.
- **Overview of program**
- **Funding**
 - General ALE: NRCS funding is no more than 50% FMV of easement.
 - ALE-Grasslands of Special Significance: NRCS funding is no more than 75% FMV of easement.



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Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easements

Notable changes under 2018 Farm Bill:

- **ALE Plan:**

- Farm bill removed the requirement for an ALE plan. Properties that have highly erodible will still be subject to conservation plan
- However, states can include development of a plan as ranking criteria.

- **Buy-Protect-Sell transactions**

- Pre-closing transfer – partner transfers ownership to farmer or rancher prior to closing on ALE; partner holds the ALE prior to receiving Federal share.
- Post-closing transfer – partner transfers ownership to farmer or rancher no later than 3 years after closing ALE

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easements

Notable changes under 2018 Farm Bill cont.:

- **Non-federal share of easement may include:**
 - Partner cash resources for easement acquisition
 - Landowner donation toward easement value
 - Partner costs for due diligence to include: appraisal, legal boundary survey, full phase I environmental site assessment, title commitment or report, title insurance, and closing costs.
 - 2% of FMV of ALE for easement stewardship and monitoring costs, from sources other than the landowner.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements

- **Overview of Program**
- **Funding**
 - Permanent easements are conservation easements in perpetuity. NRCS pays 100 percent of the easement value for the purchase of the easement. Additionally, NRCS pays between 75 to 100 percent of the restoration costs.



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easements

Notable changes under 2018 Farm Bill:

- **Compatible Use Authorizations:**
 - Water management now included in list of activities
 - Request State Technical Committee feedback on CUAs allowed
- **Reservation of grazing rights**
 - Landowner must comply with grazing management plan
- **Wetland Restoration definition**
 - Restoration may include hydrologically appropriate native community or alternative naturalized vegetative community as part of plan.
 - Request State Technical Committee feedback on community types.

Financial Assistance Programs

- **NRCS POC: Chakesha Harvey,**
Chakesha.Harvey@usda.gov.
- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program Update**
- **Conservation Stewardship Program**
 - Application deadline for FY20 funding: **June 1st**
 - Through CSP, NRCS helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners earn payments for expanding conservation activities while maintaining agricultural production on their land.
 - Notable changes:
 - Enroll applications based on dollars rather than acres.
 - Higher payment rates for activities such as cover crops and resource conserving crop rotations
 - Annual payment limitation of \$40,000 no longer applies.

Conservation Innovation Grants On-Farm Trials

- **Application deadline: **May 29th****
- **Newly authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill, On-Farm Trials supports more widespread adoption of innovative approaches, practices and systems on working lands.**
- **The Soil Health Demo Trial (SHD) component of On-Farm Trials focuses exclusively on implementation of conservation practices and systems that improve soil health.**
- **Eligible Partners:**
 - Private entities whose primary business is related to agriculture, non-governmental organizations with experience working with agricultural producers, and non-Federal government agencies

Email Subscription

- <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>
- News Releases, technical resources, funding opportunities, etc. (national and Florida-specific)

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Noah's Nebraska Flood Story

Cover crops have many benefits, but Noah Seim's rye cover crop helped serve as a kind of "ark," protecting his field during the heavy flooding in Nebraska this year.



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Popular Topics

- > Financial Assistance
- > Technical Assistance
- > Field Office Technical Guide
- > Soils
- > Plants & Animals

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United States Department of Agriculture

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Questions?



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