



NRCS

United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

An overview of the

**2008 Farm Bill**

**Conservation Programs**

in Massachusetts

# A Legacy of Conservation



**Born in the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, the Soil Conservation Service, now NRCS, has helped millions of private landowners protect soil, water, and related resources.**

# NRCS programs and services

- Conservation planning and technical assistance  
**reduced significantly in 2011 budget**
- Farm Bill programs **EQIP WRP WHIP**
- ~~Resource Conservation & Development~~  
**eliminated 2011**
- Emergency Watershed Protection
- ~~Small Watershed Program~~ **eliminated 2011**
- Soil Surveys **Plymouth County completed 2010**
- Natural resource information

# 2008 Farm Bill programs

- Financial assistance programs
  - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  - Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)
  - Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Easement programs
  - Farm & Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)
  - Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
  - Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- Stewardship program
  - Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

# Program priorities in Massachusetts

- Water quality and conservation
- Sustainable forest management
- Soil quality and Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Air quality and energy conservation
- Invasive species control
- Wildlife habitat enhancement

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage farmland, pastureland or non-industrial forest land.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** 2 - 10 year contract.
  - **Financial incentives:** Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.
  - **Participant obligations:** Install and maintain conservation practices to NRCS standards.

# Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

- WRP promotes the protection and restoration of wetlands through the purchase of easements and enhancement activities.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who privately own farmed wetlands, land that has become wetland or that contributes to adjacent wetlands. Land must be restorable and suitable for wildlife benefits. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** 30 year easement, permanent easement or 10 year restoration agreement .
  - **Financial incentives:** One time easement payment based on fair market value or a Geographic Area Rate Cap. Compensation for the cost of wetland restoration.
  - **Participant obligations:** Maintain or restore wetlands as agreed. If restoration is needed, assist with the cost. Install and maintain restoration practices to NRCS standards

# Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

- AMA helps mitigate the risk of drought to farms through new irrigation systems.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage non-irrigated farmland with droughty soils are eligible.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** 2 - 10 year contract
  - **Financial incentives:** Compensation for implementing certain irrigation practices.
  - **Participant obligations:** Install and maintain conservation practices to NRCS standards.

# Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CSP rewards farmers who are good conservation stewards of their land and offers compensation for enhancements.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage farmland with existing conservation practices and that is not already enrolled in WRP or GRP.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** 5 year contract with possible renewal .
  - **Financial incentives:** Annual payments for maintaining, and compensation for enhancing, existing conservation practices.
  - **Participant obligations:** Maintain or increase level of land stewardship.

# Farm & Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)

- FRPP works in partnership with eligible entities such as the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program to protect agricultural lands through the purchase of development rights.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who privately own farmland with productive soil resources and has a pending offer from an eligible entity, such as the state APR program.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** Permanent easement
  - **Financial incentives:** NRCS contributes 50 percent of the easement purchase based on appraised fair market value.
  - **Participant obligations:** Maintain or increase level of agricultural land use.

# Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

- GRP offers compensation for landowners to protect, restore and enhance grasslands.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who own or control land that historically has been dominated by grassland, forbs or shrubland. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** Permanent easement or 10, 15, or 20 year rental contract.
  - **Financial incentives:** Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Rental contract: annual payments for the length of the contract Permanent easement: property's fair market value, less the grazing value.
  - **Participant obligations:** Maintain grasslands as agreed. Install and maintain restoration practices to NRCS standards.

# Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

- WHIP helps improve fish and wildlife habitat and restore natural ecosystems.
  - **Eligibility:** Individuals, groups or entities who own or manage farmland or non-industrial forest land. Publicly owned lands are not eligible.
  - **Type/length of agreement:** 2-10 year contract or 15 year critical habitat agreement.
  - **Financial incentives:** Compensation for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Payments for the costs of critical habitat agreements. Beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers may be eligible for higher payment rates.
  - **Participant obligations:** Improve or restore wildlife habitat as agreed. Install and maintain wildlife practices to NRCS standards.

# Help for new, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers

- The 2008 Farm Bill provides offers incentives and focuses on equity in accessing USDA programs and services for beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers.
  - Five percent of EQIP funds and CSP acres will be targeted to assist beginning farmers and another five percent to assist socially disadvantaged farmers.
  - Increased payments may be available for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers.
  - Up to 30 percent of payments may be provided in advance for purchasing materials or contracting.