

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment.

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical and financial assistance to producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.

Benefits

Through EQIP, NRCS provides agricultural producers with one-on-one help and financial assistance to plan and implement improvements, or what NRCS calls conservation practices. Together, NRCS and producers invest in solutions that conserve natural resources for the future while improving agricultural operations.

Program at a Glance

NRCS will help you develop a conservation plan that meets your goals and vision. This plan becomes your roadmap for selecting the right conservation practices for your land. NRCS offers about 200 unique practices designed for working farms, ranches, and forests.

NRCS financial assistance can cover part of the costs of implementing conservation practices.

Who is Eligible?

Farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who own or rent agricultural land are eligible. EQIP assistance can be used on all types of agricultural operations, including:

- Conventional and organic
- Specialty crops and commodity crops
- Forestry and wildlife
- Historically underserved farmers*
- Livestock operations

*Increased and advance payments available for historically underserved producers (beginning, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and military veterans.)

How to Apply

Apply at your local USDA Service Center, which you can find at farmers.gov/service-locator.

Applications for EQIP financial assistance are accepted throughout the year. Specific state deadlines are set for ranking and funding. If your application is ranked and selected, you will enter into a contract with NRCS to receive financial assistance for the cost of implementing conservation practices. Payment rates for conservation practices are reviewed and set each fiscal year.

More Information

For more information, visit nrcs.usda.gov/farbill or farmers.gov.

Find your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/service-locator.

What's New in the 2018 Farm Bill

Adds potential resource concerns related to beneficial cost-effective operation changes.

Raises cap for organic producers to \$140,000 over four years.

New enrollment option through incentive contracts to address priority resource concerns.

Requires advance payment option be offered to historically underserved producers.

Authorizes direct program assistance to WMEs such as irrigation districts, acequias and other public or semi-public entities for the purposes of improving water use efficiencies.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC)



It all begins with a farm visit!

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) make farm visits, develop plans, and provide technical and financial support for individuals who want to manage their property for specific wildlife types or for general wildlife habitat improvement.

As your conservation decision partner, NRCS provides free assistance to landowners like you to reach land use and natural resource goals. Our local offices, staffed with conservation professionals with local knowledge, can help you make well-informed conservation decisions.

We love what we do!

That's working with farmers, and forest landowners like you to start, expand, enhance, or improve your natural resources and put conservation practices in place that will benefit the soil, water, air, and wildlife.

Getting Started with NRCS

Schedule a Farm Visit. Call or email your local USDA Service Center to set up an appointment.

How to Prepare. What is your vision for your land and farm? What are your challenges? Prepare a list of questions and concerns for your NRCS conservation specialist.

What to Expect. An NRCS team member will visit your property and ask about your goals for your land and can help you develop a plan to obtain them. During our farm visit we can discuss conservation planning and what financial and technical support is available for you.



West Virginia
**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**

WV • February 2022

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that offers farmers, ranchers, and nonindustrial private forest landowners financial and technical assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices and activities on working agricultural and forestry landscapes.

What Are EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts?

Conservation incentive Contracts are available nationwide to help producers address priority resource concerns. In West Virginia, to participate in EQIP CIC eligible participants are required to improve terrestrial wildlife habitat on forestland or associated agricultural land. Producers may use incentive contracts as a “steppingstone” from correcting resource issues on specific land units through EQIP to achieving sustainable stewardship on their entire operation.

“Forestland across West Virginia is a predominant land use. EQIP CIC will provide eligible participants an opportunity to improve terrestrial wildlife habitat for various species using a comprehensive, long-term approach,” said NRCS- WV State Conservationist, Jon Bourdon.”

Contract participants may be eligible for annual management payments as well as payments for installing supporting practices to improve wildlife habitat. Contracts are for a minimum five year period.

Learn more about NRCS-WV Programs

[Visit NRCS-WV programs web page](#) to learn more about USDA's financial and technical conservation assistance.

How to Apply

NRCS accepts applications for EQIP year-round. To apply, producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).

www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov

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Wildlife Conservation Management Practices



Forests

West Virginia's diverse forests are home to songbirds, wild game, and fish. Healthy forests provide clean air and water, flood protection, wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetic enjoyment, jobs, and numerous other services

and products that we enjoy every day. **Some WV Species:** Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Ruffed Grouse, and Wild Turkey.

Partners NRCS frequently work with for wildlife conservation include:

- WV Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
- USDA Forest Service (USFS)

Various Non-Profit Organizations:

- Trout Unlimited (TU)
- National Wild Turkey Foundation (NWTF)
- Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (AMJV)
- American Bird Conservancy (ABC)

Contact Us

WV USDA Service Centers

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White Hall	304-363-8861 ext 205



Upland Wildlife Habitat Management

Upland wildlife habitat management is creating, maintain, or enhancing areas to provide food, cover, and habitat connectivity for upland wildlife.



Early Successional Habitat Management

Early Successional Habitat Management is used to influence the natural succession of plant communities, which usually progresses from grasses to trees, in order to benefit wildlife or plant communities. Various techniques such as light disking, mowing, and clearing forest openings can be used.

Wildlife Conservation Supporting Practices *



Forest Stand Improvement

Forest Stand Improvement is used to manage tree species composition, tree density, and forest structure by cutting or killing selected trees and undergrowth to achieve desired forest conditions.



Brush Management

Brush Management is used to control undesirable, non-native, and invasive woody vegetation such as autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, tree of heaven, and grapevine. Treatments may be mechanical, chemical, or a combination of the two.

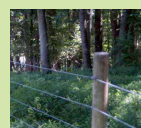


Tree/Shrub Site Preparation and Tree/Shrub Establishment

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation is used to improve growing-site conditions prior to establishing a stand of trees and shrubs. Tree/Shrub Establishment is then used to establish trees and shrubs by planting seedlings or cuttings, by direct seeding, or through natural regeneration.



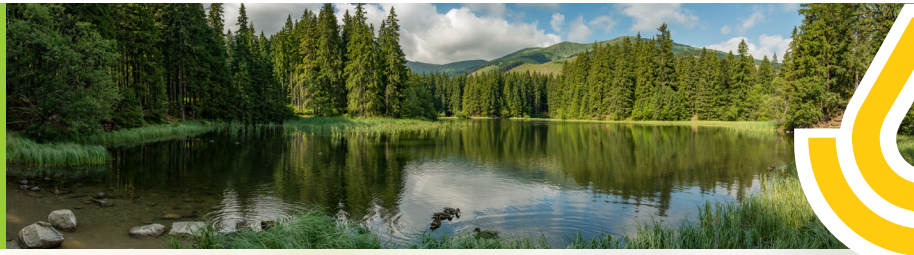
Structures for Wildlife Structures for wildlife are habitat components such as brush piles, used by wildlife for nesting and escape cover. Make the most of debris created as a byproduct of other forest management practices when planning wildlife structures.



Access Control and Fence Access Control and Woodland Exclusion Fence are used to restrict livestock from forestland. Unrestricted access to forestland can be detrimental to forests, wildlife, streams, and even livestock themselves.

* List shows common supporting practices, other conservation practices may apply.

WEST VIRGINIA WILDLIFE HABITAT



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As your conservation decision partner, NRCS provides free assistance to landowners like you to reach land use and natural resource goals. Our local offices, staffed with conservation professionals with local knowledge, can help you make well-informed conservation decisions.

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What to Expect. An NRCS team member will visit your property and ask about your dreams and goals for your land and can help you develop a plan to obtain them. During our farm visit we can discuss conservation planning and what financial and technical support is available for you.

The Benefits of Helping Wildlife

Sustainable agriculture practices on farms and forests benefit wildlife by improving soil health, water quality and plant diversity. They also create profitable, productive agricultural land that is more resilient to drought, fire, and other natural disturbances.

Managing for a diverse set of conditions for all types of wildlife provides the best chance to attract a bigger pool of wildlife species.

West Virginia Wildlife Habitat



Forests West Virginia's diverse forests are home to songbirds, wild game, and fish. Healthy forests provide clean air and water, flood protection, wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetic enjoyment, jobs, and numerous other services and products that we enjoy every day. **Some WV Species:** White Oak, Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, and Ruffed Grouse



Grasslands Whether they span 1 or 100 acres, privately owned farms (including pastures and cropland) across West Virginia provide food and habitat for wildlife and all sorts of animals. **Some WV Species:** Milkweed, Monarch, Eastern Meadowlark, and Eastern Cottontail



Aquatic Clean, fresh water is as important to birds, bats, butterflies, and other wildlife as it is for people. It supplies food and cover for a large diversity of animals, and serve as migration routes and connectors between

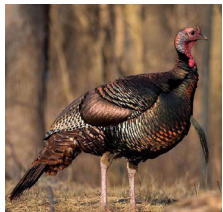
habitats for a variety of wildlife. **Some WV Species:** Brook Trout, Eastern Hellbender, and Louisiana Waterthrush



West Virginia
Natural Resources Conservation Service

WV • October 2021

Our Conservation Partners



Sometimes it takes a village to create quality wildlife habitat!

NRCS experts from many disciplines work together with state and local partners to ensure effective conservation practices.

Individually the federal, state,

and nonprofit groups that comprise our conservation partnerships have a diversity of expertise in discipline, location/area, and focus. As partners in conservation, we share our unique areas of expertise to better put sustainable conservation on your land.

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- USDA Forest Service (USFS)

Various Non-Profit Organizations:

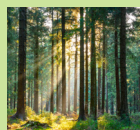
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Common West Virginia Wildlife Conservation Practices



Forest Stand Improvement Forest Stand Improvement is used to manage tree species composition, tree density, and forest structure by cutting or killing selected trees and undergrowth to achieve desired forest conditions.



Brush Management Brush Management is used to control undesirable, non-native, and invasive woody vegetation such as autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, tree of heaven, and grapevine. Treatments may be mechanical, chemical, or a combination of the two and are intended to promote the establishment and growth of desirable plants.



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Early Successional Habitat Management Early Successional Habitat Management is used to influence the natural succession of plant communities, which usually progresses from grasses to trees, in order to benefit wildlife or plant communities. Various techniques such as light disking, mowing, and clearing forest openings can be used to maximize plant and animal diversity.

Visit our website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wv

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Maple Syrup Production

NRCS Opportunities



Partnering with NRCS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assists private land users in addressing natural resource concerns. West Virginia has a long history of maple syrup production and in recent years, interest in maple and other types of tree syrups has increased.

NRCS assists syrup producers by providing conservation technical assistance. This assistance may lead to funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). NRCS conservationists work with landowners and managers to implement energy and forestry conservation practices on the farm. For many of these operations, conservation work is mostly for the sugar houses or facilities where the syrup is processed.

EQIP Ag Energy Assistance

Why does syrup production depend on energy? The sap collected from trees is mostly water. To get to the thick consistency and rich taste we all love, water needs to be evaporated, and that takes energy. Through EQIP, energy auditors conduct an Agricultural Energy Assessment, recommending possible conservation practices to use energy wisely.

Through EQIP, energy assistance is available to producers in two ways.

1. EQIP enables the producer to identify ways to conserve energy through an Agricultural Energy Assessment, also known as a Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA 228). An Agricultural Energy Assessment is also known as an on-farm energy audit. Agricultural Energy Assessments are typically completed by a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP).

Payment for the completion of an Agricultural Energy Assessment is provided through EQIP based on the type and size of the agricultural operation.

2. After an Agricultural Energy Assessment (228) is completed, a producer may be eligible for additional financial assistance to implement various recommended measures using Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation (374) conservation practice.



NRCS provides financial assistance through the Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation (374) conservation practice to upgrade inefficient equipment with more efficient technology such as reverse osmosis (RO), evaporators, and high-efficiency pre-heaters. These upgrades can reduce fuel burning leading to better air quality and a streamlined syrup operation.



EQIP Forestry Assistance

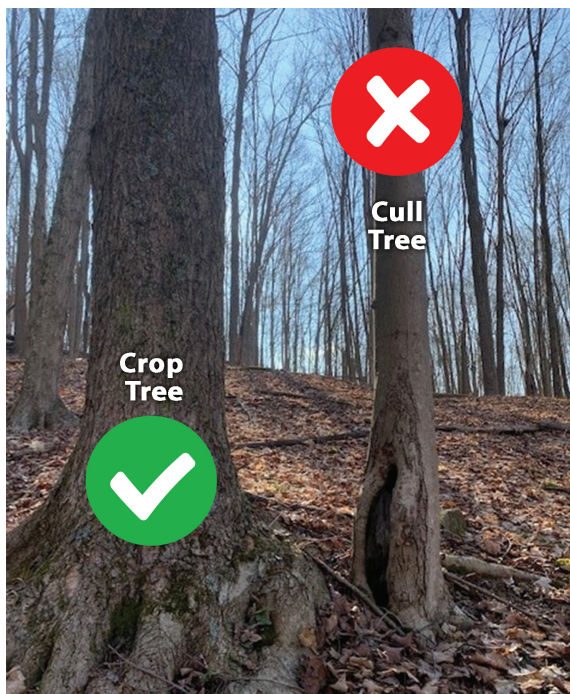
NRCS also provides assistance for forest management practices that would benefit sap producing trees. To qualify for financial assistance, producers must complete forest management practices consistent with an NRCS-approved forest management plan. Two beneficial forestry practices are as follows.

1. Forest Stand Improvement (CPS 666) includes activities that will favor maple species and other tree species used for sap collection and syrup production by forest stand improvement to reduce competition.
2. Brush Management (CPS 314) includes removal of invasive species such as autumn olive, Japanese barberry, bittersweet, or grapevines that can invade sugar bush stands.

For additional information on how NRCS can assist you please contact your local NRCS Field Office.

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Typical forest stand improvement activity.



Maple syrup evaporator in a WV sugar house.



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nrcs.usda.gov/