

# USDA-NRCS

And

## NCDA-Division of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

### **Technical Assistance, Programs, and Funding Resources:**

The USDA-NRCS and NCDA-Division of Soil and Water Conservation District and local staff work together as a partnership; providing assistance to the landowner with on site investigations, and determines the resource concern on their property. If a resource concern is identified, the landowner can request technical and /or financial assistance through the numerous programs available.

Local staff can provide technical assistance to develop conservation plans and design conservation practices with or without financial assistance; the partnership also administers or utilizes several financial assistance programs that provide direct payments to customers who install conservation practices.

### **The main resource concerns throughout the state are:**

- Erosion (water, wind, and stream bank)
- Water Quality Impairment from Sediment, Nutrients, Animal Waste and Stormwater Runoff
- Water Quantity
- Soil Health
- Loss of Farmland / Urbanization
- Wildlife Habitat Loss and Fragmentation
- Unproductive Forestland
- Energy
- Invasive Species
- Pasture Health and Condition
- Water Management

### **Current Financial Resources:**

For contract and funding approval, a conservation plan must be developed, the conservation practices must be determined to be within the scope of our program, improve the resource concern that has been identified by staff and meet the standards and specifications set forth in the program rules.

Available funding and program participation varies from county to county, so check with the local USDA-NRCS and Soil and Water Conservation District office for more details on the programs that are offered in your area.

**NRCS administers** several financial assistance programs authorized by Congress through the Farm Bill. The 2008 Farm Bill will expire in 2012. The programs listed below may not be authorized, or may be substantially changed, in the new Farm Bill.

Program Name	Program Purpose	Eligibility	
		Applicant	Land
Conservation Reserve Program - CRP Continuous	To protect soil, water, wildlife and to improve water quality	Individuals and/or groups who own eligible land for at least one year	Cropland with recent cropping history or marginal pastureland
Conservation Reserve Program - CRP General	To apply high priority conservation practices that benefit large areas	Individuals and/or groups who have owned land for at least 1 year	Cropland with recent cropping history; re-enrollments & extensions
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program - CREP	To improve water quality and wildlife habitat in selected watersheds in North Carolina	Individuals and/or groups who own eligible land in watersheds covering 76 counties; owned land for at least 1 year	Cropland with recent cropping history; or marginal pasture grazed.
Conservation Stewardship Program – CSP & CStP	Encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance.	Individual producers, legal entities, corporations and Indian Tribes.	Crop, grass, range and prairie lands, improved pastureland, nonindustrial private forest land

**USDA-NRCS programs continued:**

Program Name	Program Purpose	Eligibility	
		Applicant	Land
Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP	To address significant natural resource concerns on agricultural land	Livestock or agricultural producers and landowners	All agricultural land uses
Grasslands Reserve Program - GRP	To restore and conserve grassland for agriculture and wildlife	Private landowners with at least 10 acres of grassland	Permanent grassland used for grazing, hay or wildlife land
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Programs - WHIP	Improving habitat for at-risk species at landscape scale.	Individuals, clubs, companies, partnerships, NGO's, tribes	All land where important wildlife habitat can be provided.
Wetlands Reserve Program - WRP	Restore and protect wetlands and riparian areas for wildlife and improve water quality	Individuals and/or groups who have owned land for at least 7 years	Prior converted wetland (PC), farmed wetland (FW), and certain other adjacent land
Agricultural Water Enhancement Program – AWEPP	Provides assistance to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural lands to conserve surface and ground water and improve water quality	Livestock or agricultural producers and landowners	All agricultural land uses
Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program – FRPP	Provides matching funds to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranch land in agricultural purposes	State, Tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations	Land must contain at least 50% prime, unique or important farmland soils; have a historic or archeological resource; or have land that supports the policy of a state or local farm and ranch land protection program

**The Soil and Water Conservation Commission and the Division of Soil and Water Conservation** administers other conservation programs that offer additional opportunities to address natural resource concerns. The major state programs are listed below.

Program Name	Program Purpose	Eligibility	
		Applicant	Land
NC Agriculture Cost Share Program – NCACSP**	Reduce agriculture nonpoint pollution and improve the water quality	Landowner or tenant of an agricultural operation existing for more than 3 years	All agricultural land uses
Agriculture Water Assistance Program – AgWRAP**	Increase agriculture water use efficiency, availability and storage	Landowner or tenant of an agricultural operation existing for more than 3 years	All agricultural land uses
Community Conservation Assistance Program - CCAP	Reduce non-agriculture nonpoint pollution and improve the water quality	Individuals, clubs, companies, partnerships, NGO's, tribes	Non Agricultural Land uses
Drought Response Program**	Assist agricultural producers to recover from historic drought of 2007-08 by re-establishing damaged pasture vegetation and establishing more resilient water supplies.	Landowner or tenant of an agricultural operation	All agricultural land uses
Watershed Improvement Grants (state grant sources)	Reduce agriculture and non-agriculture nonpoint pollution and improve the water quality	Various agricultural and non-agricultural landowners	All agricultural land uses

\*\*To be eligible for cost share funds under ACSP and AgWRAP program, each applicant must establish that he or she is engaged in farming by providing any of the following to the Soil and Water Conservation Commission with his or her application:

- A copy of the farm owner's or operator's federal tax Schedule F (Form 1040) or an equivalent form for the most recent tax year showing the owner's or operator's profit or loss from farming.
- A copy of the farm's agricultural exemption certificate issued to the farm owner or operator by the Department of Revenue.
- For forestland actively engaged in the commercial growing of trees under a sound management program as defined in G.S. 105-277.2(6), a copy of the sound forest management plan described in G.S. 105-277.3(g). *This applies only for BMPs contracted on land covered in the forestry management plan.*
- In extraordinary circumstances, the Commission may permit an applicant to establish that he or she is engaged in farming with an alternate form of documentation if the farm has a conservation plan that meets the statutory purposes of the program.

**Soil and Water Conservation Districts may administer local government programs.** Other programs may be implemented subject to local government decisions. Some of those locally lead programs are listed below.

Program Name	Program Purpose	Eligibility	
		Applicant	Land
Voluntary Agricultural District Program	To encourage the preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development	Landowners with farms or forestlands meeting the listed land requirements.	Farms in accordance with the following General Statutes of NC. (G.S. 105-277.2 – 105-277.7), (G.S. 105- 277.3), (G.S. 121-35), as well as other eligibility requirements required by the individual county.
Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program	To encourage the preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development	Landowners with farms or forestlands meeting the listed land requirements.	<b>(As defined in G.S. 106-737 &amp; G.S. 106-743):</b> Includes all terms of a VAD agreement plus: Conservation agreement as defined in G.S. 121-35, Automatic renewal of conservation agreement for 3 years absent a written notice to the county revoking the conservation agreement as required by the ordinance.
Beaver Management Assistance Program	To manage Beaver population reducing negative impacts to roads, homes, farm fields and forestlands.	Landowners with Beaver problems.	All lands where Beaver activity is causing problems to roads, homes, farm fields and forest.
Storm Water Management	Storm water management planning combines quality engineering, wise planning, acceptable maintenance practices, and public education to achieve cleaner water in our streams, lakes, oceans and drinking water reservoirs.	All landowners in the district	Lands prone to flooding or in need of best management practices to achieve cleaner water in our streams, lakes, oceans and drinking water reservoirs.
Farmland Preservation	To encourage the preservation of farmland from non-farm development through farmland planning	Landowners with farms or forestlands.	Farm and Forest lands.
Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Program	To control erosion on non-agricultural lands.	Landowners with erosion or sediment problems,	Non agricultural land over 1.0 acre.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are also active in seeking additional funding through grants from various organizations and agencies. Grants have been secured for conservation practice implementation as well as environmental monitoring, education programs, outreach activities, stream restoration, water quality improvements and many other related conservation initiatives. In many districts, especially the more urban ones, grants provide major support for the local district’s conservation program.