

# USDA Farm Program Agencies

- NRCS-Natural Resource Conservation Service
  - Administers engineering and conservation plans
  - Administers conservation programs
- FSA- Farm Service Agency
  - Administers Commodity Programs
  - Relies on NRCS to Approve Conservation Systems
  - Relies on NRCS to enforce compliance with approved plans/systems

# Voluntary & Mandatory

- Participation in USDA farm programs is voluntary
- Voluntary participation comes with mandatory requirements
  - Food Security Act provisions
  - Protection of Highly Erodible Land
  - Wetland Protection
  - Sod-busting provisions
- Participation rates are extremely high

# USDA Conservation Programs

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Conservation Security Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Watershed protection and Flood Prevention Act payments or loan assistance
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
- Grassland Reserve Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- Agricultural Management Assistance Program
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative
- Conservation of Private Grazing Lands
- Conservation Innovation Grants
- Healthy Forest Reserve Program
- Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program

# USDA Commodity Programs

- Direct and Counter Cyclical Program
- Average Crop Revenue Election Program
- Deficiency payments
- Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act farm operating loans
- Dairy Marketing Assistance Program
- Non-insured Assisted Program
- Emergency Feed Program
- Wool and Mohair Programs
- Farm Storage Loans
- Crop Disaster Program
- Emergency Conservation Program
- Livestock Indemnity Program
- Livestock Compensation Program

# Applied Conservation Practices

- Conservation Cover
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Contour Buffer Strips
- Contour Farming
- Cover Crop
- Critical Area Planting
- Cross Wind Ridges
- Cross Wind Trap Strips
- Diversion
- Field Border
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers
- Irrigation Water Management
- Mulching
- Pasture and Hay Planting
- Residue Management, Mulch Till
- Residue Management Ridge Till
- Residue Management Seasonal
- Stripcropping
- Surface Roughening
- Terrace
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Vegetative Barrier
- Water and Sediment Control Basin
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation

# Applied Conservation Practices

- 55,579,763 acres enrolled in some form of applied conservation practices

# Requirements Common to All Programs

- Each of these programs has specific requirements of farmers to implement Approved Conservation Systems
- There is a minimum requirement common to all programs.
- The minimum requirements apply to the whole farm, not just acres enrolled in a specific program.
- NRCS determines which acres require specific practices.
- Additional requirements apply to those specific acres.

# What are the participation rates?

- The vast majority of farmers are enrolled in at least one USDA farm program
  - Especially large, commercial farms growing commodity crops



# What are the participation rates?

- Most popular programs are DCP and CRP
- Iowa
  - 154,000 farms enrolled in DCP in 2009
  - 98% of farms participating

# USDA Farm Programs

- **Direct and Counter Cyclical Program (DCP)**
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# DCP Requirements

- Must comply with Food Security Act of 1985
- Including:
  - Sodbuster
  - Swampbuster
  - Highly Erodible Land Conservation
  - Wetland Conservation

# DCP Requirements

- **B CCC-509 Requirements**
- **Producers signing CCC-509 for participation in DCP agree to:**
- Comply with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions on all their land,
- Devote acreage to agricultural or conserving use,
- Control noxious weeds and otherwise,
- Maintain sound agricultural practices, and
- File acreage report with respect to all cropland on the farm
- Notify FSA when there is a transfer of or change of interest of a producer.

# Food Security Act of 1985 authorized: Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Provisions

The objectives of HELC and WC are to:

- Reduce soil loss because of wind and water erosion
- Protect the nation's long-term capability to produce food and fiber
- Reduce sedimentation and improve water quality
- Preserve the nation's wetlands
- Remove incentives for persons to produce agricultural commodities on HEL or converted wetland.

# Highly Erodible Land Conservation Provisions

- HEL is to be set aside, devoted to conservation uses, or otherwise not cultivated
- Persons not abiding by this provision shall be ineligible for benefits under programs administered by USDA.

# Highly Erodible Land Conservation Provisions

- A conservation system must provide for a substantial reduction in soil erosion.
- The conservation system must include all treatments and measures needed to meet the HELC requirements, including treatment required to control sheet and rill, wind, and ephemeral and classic gully erosion.
- A Substantial Reduction in Soil Erosion is generally defined as 75%

# Wetland Conservation Provisions

- persons are ineligible for benefits under programs administered by USDA if they:
  - plant an agricultural commodity on wetland that was converted after December 23, 1985
  - convert a wetland after November 28, 1990

# Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Provisions

- Apply to all land owned by the person or the person's affiliates
- HEL or WC determination must be made for all acres.

# Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Provisions

- NRCS will determine whether a producer is actively applying a conservation system that is based on the local NRCS technical guide as approved.

# Conservation Plan

- Describes the:
  - Conservation system applicable to said cropland
  - Decisions of the person with respect to location, land use, tillage systems, and conservation treatment measures and schedules
- Is approved by the local soil and conservation district in consultation with the local committees established under section b(b)(5) of the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act (16 U.S.C. 590h(b)(5)) and NRCS.

# Electronic Field Office Technical Guide

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>

Technical guides used in each field office are localized so that they apply specifically to the geographic area for which they are prepared.

Source:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/history/story.html>

# Compliance Checks

- NRCS completes status review each calendar year.
- NRCS determines producer is actively applying approved conservation plan or system.
- FSA also ensures compliance through normal business activity and compliance spot checks.

# Part 9 Section 1

- A person may be denied all program benefits if determined that the person participated in a scheme or device to evade HELC or WC provisions. Including:
  - Concealing information
  - Submitting false information
  - Concealing interests in farming operations

# DCP Summary

- 98% of farms participate voluntarily in DCP
- USDA programs require mandatory conservation systems/plans
- Conservation systems/plans are approved by NRCS personnel
- NRCS & FSA enforce compliance with conservation plans

# EQIP

- The EQIP objective to optimize environmental benefits is achieved through a process that begins with National priorities that address:
- Impaired water quality;
- Conservation of ground and surface water resources;
- Improvement of air quality;
- Reduction of soil erosion and sedimentation; and
- Improvement or creation of wildlife habitat for at-risk species.

Source:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmland/2008/pdfs/EQIP\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmland/2008/pdfs/EQIP_fact_sheet.pdf)