

## Summary of Conservation Programs

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 is landmark legislation for conservation funding and for focusing on environmental issues. The conservation provisions will assist farmers and ranchers in meeting environmental challenges on their land. This legislation simplifies existing programs and creates new programs to address high priority environmental and production goals. The 2002 Farm Bill enhances the long-term quality of our environmental and conservation of our natural resources.

**New Eligibility Requirement:** The landowner's three-year average of the adjusted gross income cannot exceed \$2.5 million. This applies to ALL Farm Bill programs.

**Continuous Conservation Reserve Program:** This program is for landowners with cropland planted to commodity crops. Eligibility requires the land to have been cropped four of the past six years. Cost share pays approximately 50% of establishment costs for such practices as: *grassed waterways; vegetative filter strips; water control structures; shallow water wetlands; and riparian forest buffers*. Rental payments (based on soil types) for land taken out of production are provided for 10 to 15 years. Additional cost share of 40% could be obtained through Practice Incentive Payments (PIP) and Signing Incentive Payments (SIP).

**EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program):** Provides total resource management system planning on the whole farm. A wide variety of conservation practices are available for cost share, including: *pasture management, manure management, erosion control, nutrient and pest management*. Cost share rates are 50% for installation of practices. Contract periods are from one to 10 years. There is a continuous sign-up period for EQIP; applications are ranked and funded once per year.

**CRP (Conservation Reserve Program):** Provides rental payments to producers who plant sensitive lands (such as Highly Erodible Land) to long-term cover. Cover options include *trees; cool season grasses; and warm season grasses*. Cost share for establishing conservation cover is 50%. The Farm Service Agency will announce the general CRP sign-up as they are offered. More information will be available at that time.

**WRP (Wetland Reserve Program):** This program provides for wetland/wildlife habitat enhancement. Financial assistance is available for restoring previously drained wetlands. WRP works through 10-year, 30-year and permanent easements with landowners. Contact NRCS for land eligibility requirements. There is a continuous sign-up period for WRP; applications are ranked and funded once per year, statewide.

**WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program):** Uses five to 15 year cost share agreements to protect and restore wetland and wildlife habitats. Emphasis is placed on *warm-season grassland habitat, tree planting, and wetland habitat creation*. There is a continuous sign-up period for WHIP; applications are ranked and funded once per year, statewide.

**CSP (Conservation Security Program):** This new program provides payments to producers who have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands and additionally provides incentives for those who want to do more. CSP has three levels of funding, based on current levels of conservation treatment. Tier I contracts are limited to five years, with the lowest funding levels. While Tiers II and III contracts range from five to 10 years, as determined by the producer. The Tier III funding level is the highest, with the expectation of an implemented total Resource Management System. Watersheds where the program will be offered are announced once per year.

**Farm & Ranch Land Protection Program (FRLPP):** The Farm & Ranch Land Protection Program (FRLPP) was reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. The purpose of FRLPP is to protect prime, unique, or statewide and locally important soils and historical and archaeological resources on farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses. FRLPP does this by providing funds to state and local farmland protection programs to reimburse their costs in acquiring conservation easements. Additional considerations are given to lands that sustain rural economic stability; maintain and enhance ecosystems; and protect scenic beauty. U.S Department of Agriculture's USDA-NRCS manages the program.

#### **Farm Bill Details on the Web**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) have moved quickly to provide up-to-date information on the Farm Bill on their websites:

FSA: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

NACD: [www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org)

*For more information, contact Steve Hall, District Conservationist, at 937-372-4478.*