



United States Department of Agriculture

2014

Farm Bill

**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**





Agricultural Act of 2014

- Reauthorizes Programs from the 2008 Farm Bill until 2018
 - Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
 - Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)
 - Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)



Agricultural Act of 2014

- Repealed programs from the 2008 Farm Bill
 - Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
 - Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
 - Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
 - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
 - Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
 - Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)



Agricultural Act of 2014

- New Programs Authorized
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
 - Includes a Wetland Reserve Easement Component (WRE)
 - Includes an Agricultural Land Easement Component (ALE)



Agricultural Act of 2014

- New Programs Authorized, cont.
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Combines similar programs from former Farm Bills
 - Allows for a competitive process for partnership agreements to address large landscape resource concerns
 - Includes a Partnership component
 - Secretary will select up to 8 critical conservation areas
 - Allows Secretary to waive AGI if needed to fulfill purposes of the program
 - No funding may be used to cover partner administrative costs



Agricultural Act of 2014

- New Programs Authorized, cont.
 - Voluntary Public Access and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program
 - New program to NRCS from FSA
 - Will be funded via Request for Proposals
 - Additional information to follow



Agricultural Act of 2014 Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

– Acreage Allocations by Year

- FY 2014 – 27.5 million acres
- FY 2015 – 26 million acres
- FY 2016 – 25 million acres
- FY 2017 – 24 million acres
- FY 2018 – 24 million acres

– Current CRP Enrollment – 26.9 million acres



Agricultural Act of 2014 Conservation Reserve Program

- 750,000 acre wetland cap
- Establishes grasslands for grazing purposes as an eligible land use – folds in GRP rental component
- Provides flexibility for increased managed haying and grazing
- Limits early termination of contracts (early outs)



- # Agricultural Act of 2014 Conservation Stewardship Program
- Reduces enrollment cap to 10 million acres annually from 12.7 million acres
 - Allows for expiring contracts to be renewed
 - Eliminates the 10% cap for forest land
 - Increases locally identified priority resource concerns to at least 5 (soil erosion, water quality, etc.)
 - CMT or other means will be used to rank applications



Agricultural Act of 2014 Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- At least 5% of funds go to practices benefitting wildlife
- Retains requirement that 60% of funding address livestock resource concerns
- Raises payment limit from \$300,000 to \$450,000; does not provide any waiver authority
- Reduces AGI eligibility to \$900,000 for all income



Agricultural Act of 2014 Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Maintained 10 year contract maximum
- Veterans eligible for increased payment rate as historically underserved producers
- Authorized funding for EQIP
 - FY 2014 – \$1.35 B
 - FY 2015 – \$1.6 B
 - FY 2016 – \$1.65 B
 - FY 2017 – \$1.65 B
 - FY 2018 - \$1.75 B



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)





Agricultural Act of 2014

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

RCPP is a new regional program that:

- Furthers the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife on a regional scale
- Encourages partners to cooperate with producers
- Provides assistance through:
 - Partnership agreements
 - Program contracts or easement agreements
- Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:
 - Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program (CBWP)
 - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
 - Great Lakes Basin Program for Erosion and Sediment Control



Agricultural Act of 2014

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- Project selections will be competitive via RFP
- Agreements can be up to 5 years in length
- Combines AWEF, CCPI, CBWI, and GRBP
- May include a state component



Agricultural Act of 2014

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- Partnership agreements require funding and summary assessment upon completion of project
- Funding cannot be used for administrative support
- Allows for a total of 8 critical conservation areas selected by the Secretary



Agricultural Act of 2014

Other Programs and Provisions

- Watershed Rehabilitation Program to be funded at \$250M
- Special provisions for conservation compliance (as required by the 1985 Food Security Act) for crop insurance participants
 - 5 years to develop and comply with conservation plan
 - 2 years for existing operations with violations
- Authorizes conservation program funds as “no-year funds”
- AGI requirements do not commence until FY 2015 for most NRCS conservations programs



Agricultural Act of 2014

Other Programs and Provisions

- Retained the Technical Service Provider provision
- Veterans recognized as underserved group



Agricultural Act of 2014

- For More Information:
 - www.nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill
 - www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/programs
 - The local field office that provides technical assistance in your county.



Questions ?

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Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

1. Many have been in place for years
2. Some keep expanding to cover more area than originally identified
3. The projects are losing momentum and the resource concern demand has diminished
4. Have we addressed the identified concern?



Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

1. Dairy
2. Eagle Mountain Special Project
3. Edwards Aquifer Threatened & Endangered Cropland Irrigation
4. Edwards Aquifer Threatened & Endangered Rangeland
5. Fever Tick
6. Gulf Coast Cropland Irrigation



Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

7. Lower Rio Grande Valley Cropland Irrigation
8. Migratory and Shorebird Habitat Initiative
9. North and South Llano Rangeland
10. North Concho River Rangeland
11. Pedernales River Rangeland
12. Poultry



Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

13. Pronghorn Antelope Rangeland
14. South Central Texas Rangeland
15. Spring\Dove Creek\Twin Buttes Rangeland
16. Texas Quail Initiative
17. West Texas Cropland Irrigation



Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

1. Proposal Summary
2. Project Objectives, Actions and Outcomes
3. Partnership Capacity
4. Lands to be Treated
5. Producer Information



Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

- 6. Letters of Support
- 7. Proposed NRCS Technical Points of Contact
- 8. Appendix
- 9. End of Project Report
- 10. Memorandum of Understanding Required

Texas State Wide Resource Concerns

- Due Date for Proposals July 1 for FY 15
- Format not mandatory
- Projects will have an end date
- Funding from each party is suggested
- Evaluation criteria included in hand out



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