

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2008 Farm Bill

Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008

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Helping People Help the Land

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2008 Farm Bill Highlights

- Increases funding for Conservation programs
- Focuses on Agricultural and Forestry Working Lands
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program expanded
- Continues Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
- Agricultural Management Assistance expanded to include Hawaii

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2008 Farm Bill Highlights (2)

- Conservation Stewardship Program begins FY2009 with an acreage allocation and a ranking system. Offers flexibility to be a nationwide program
- Wetlands Reserve Program appraisal issues resolved
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program funding expanded
- Chesapeake Bay program created to direct further NRCS program resources to the Bay watershed

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Conservation Technical Assistance

Delivery of Conservation Technical Assistance

Section 2706

This section authorizes the Secretary to provide technical assistance:

- To an eligible participant directly
- Through an agreement with a third-party provider
- or at the option of the eligible participant, through a payment to the eligible participant for an approved third party provider

Where financial assistance is not required, the Secretary may enter into technical services contracts with program participants

The Secretary is directed to ensure that adequate technical assistance is made available to producers involved with organic, specialty crop, or precision agriculture production

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Key Points

- Reauthorized until 2012
- Validates NRCS forestry activities by specifically referencing forest management
- Expanded to include energy conservation benefits associated with conservation practices
- Places a priority on reduction of water use or no new lands irrigated

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EQIP Key Points (2)

- For organic producers:
 - Specific section on assistance with conservation practices utilized for organic production and transition
 - Payments for practices with organic production benefits limited to not more than \$20,000 per year; \$80,000 in 6 years

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EQIP Key Points (3)

For limited resource, socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers:

- Up to 90 percent cost share or at least 25 percent above the otherwise applicable rate
- Advance payments to cover up to 30% of the cost of materials to install conservation improvements

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EQIP Payment Limitations

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Payment Limitations

- \$300,000 per person over a six-year period
- Up to \$450,000 per person over a six-year period may be authorized for projects of environmental significance

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Conservation Innovation Grants

- Program reauthorized
- Emphasis on efficient and effective transfer of innovative technologies and approaches and increased participation of specialty crop producers

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Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Key Points

- Reauthorizes WHIP through 2012
- Limits contracts to private agricultural land, non-industrial private forestland, and tribal lands
- Allows a priority for projects that further national, state, or regional habitat goals
- Establishes annual payment limits to a person or legal entity of not more than \$50,000

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Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Provides cost-share and incentive payments to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues, such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations

Available in 16 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low

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Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

- Adds Hawaii
- \$15 million in mandatory funding for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012
- Requires a percentage breakout of funding rather than a dollar amount:
 - NRCS 50 percent
 - AMS (Agricultural Marketing Service) 10 percent
 - RMA (Risk Management Agency) 40 percent

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AMA Payment Limitations

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Payment Limitations

\$50,000 annually per person



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Conservation Programs

PRIVATE LANDS PROTECTION PROGRAMS

- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)



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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

Provides matching funds to help State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses



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FRPP Key Points


- Creates new conservation opportunities through increased funding
- Reauthorizes FRPP through 2012
- Changes program purposes from topsoil protection to protecting agricultural use and related conservation values by limiting nonagricultural uses
- Changes the Secretary's role in the purchase of easements from acquisition of an interest to providing cost-share to eligible entities



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FRPP Key Points (2)

- Removes any present or future interest in easements from the Secretary
- Changes the minimum entity contribution to 25 percent of the easement acquisition price rather than 25 percent of the appraised fair market value
- Allows the entity to designate the terms and conditions of its deed and to choose the appraisal methodology, subject to approval by the Secretary



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GRP Key Points

- Reauthorizes GRP through 2012
- Additional 1,220,000 acres in the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012
- Limits rental agreement options to 10-, 15-, and 20-years
- Allows entities to write, own, and enforce easements with a 50 percent match through a cooperative agreement



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GRP Key Points (2)

Uses an easement valuation requirement similar to Wetlands Reserve Program

Requires a grazing management plan

Includes contingent right language that would limit Federal rights in entity-secured easements

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GRP Payment Limitations

Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) Payment Limitations

Establishes an annual \$50,000 payment limitation per person for rental agreements and an annual \$50,000 payment limitation per person for restoration agreement payments

No statutory limit for easements

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Conservation Programs

LAND RETIREMENT PROGRAMS

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

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Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

A voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that helps private landowners, farmers and ranchers protect and restore wetlands on their property

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WRP Key Points

Reauthorized through 2012

Overall Program Acreage Cap 3,041,200 acres (adds 766,200 acres)

Removed annual acreage cap

Limits enrollment to private or Tribal lands

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WRP Key Points (2)

Enrollment Options:

- Permanent easements
- 30-year easements
- 30-year contract option for Tribes
- Restoration cost-share agreements

Prohibits enrollment of land in easements where ownership has changed during the previous 7 years for the purposes of enrolling in the WRP

Specifies cost-assistance for maintenance activities

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WRP Key Points (3)

Changes easement compensation to the lowest of the following:

- Fair market value of the land enrolled based on a
 - Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices appraisal, or a Market survey
- Geographic cap established by the Secretary, or
- Landowner offer

These changes will be implemented on the date of enactment

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WRP Key Points (4)

- Sets an annual payment limit on restoration cost-share agreement payments of \$50,000 per person
- Easements of less than \$500,000 may be made in up to 30 payments
- Easements greater than \$500,000 may be made in at least 5 and no more than 30 payments
- A waiver may be allowed for special circumstances

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STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS

- Conservation Security Program (CSP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSTP)

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Conservation Security Program

Conservation Security Program—

- Continues funding for current contract holders for signups conducted during fiscal years 2004 through 2008
- No new enrollments
- No new modifications

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Conservation Stewardship Program (CSTP)

CSTP pays farmers who are improving conservation treatment on their working lands to encourage the continuation of farming and ranching practices that benefit soil, water, and air resources

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Conservation Opportunities

PROMOTES NEW CONSERVATION AND REWARDS STEWARDSHIP

The renamed **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSTP)** will focus on:

- Incentivizing new conservation
- Rewarding producers for high levels of additional stewardship
- Addressing local priority resource concerns

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CSTP Key Points

Authorized 2009 through 2017

12,769,000 acres may be enrolled each year

Average \$18/acre nationally (FA and TA)

Acres will be allocated based on eligible acres in a state

Applicants must account for stewardship activities covering their entire agricultural operation

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CSTP Payment Limitations

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSTP)
Payment Limitations

\$200,000 per person
5-year period

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Conservation Programs

NEW INITIATIVES

- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

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Chesapeake Bay Watershed Key Points

- Provides additional program resources in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Provides assistance to producers to minimize nutrient and sediment loading
- Special consideration and evaluation of applications in the Susquehanna, Shenandoah, Potomac and Patuxent River Basins
- The funds are utilized through existing Farm Bill conservation programs and are available until expended.
- FY 09: \$23 million - FY10: \$43 million - FY11: \$72 million - FY12: \$50 million.

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Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

- Directs 6 percent of funds and acres from Farm Bill Conservation Title programs, except CRP, WRP, FRPP, and GRP, be used for targeted conservation activities and areas
- Projects will be selected through a competitive process of applications submitted by partners
- Projects will be implemented through existing program authorities and procedures
- Funds and acres are directed at the State level (90 percent) and nationally (10 percent)

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Programs Reauthorized

- Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program
 - Reauthorized through 2012
 - Provides \$100 million in mandatory funding in 2009 to be available until expended
- Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control
- Conservation of Private Grazing Land
- Resource Conservation & Development

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Conservation Access

Assistance to Certain Farmers and Ranchers to Improve Their Access to Conservation Programs:

- Ten percent funding set aside for Beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
- 5% funding set-aside for each group in EQIP
- A 5% acreage set-aside for each group in CSP

Funds or acreage not obligated during a fiscal year would be returned to the general EQIP and CSP programs

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Streamlining Provisions

Section 2702--Authority to Accept Contributions to Support Conservation Programs

- Provides authority to accept non-federal funds to administer conservation programs under this Title.

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2008 Farm Bill Annual Funding (\$ million)

Program	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
EQIP	1200	1337	1450	1588	1750
AWEP (in addition to EQIP)		73	73	74	60 and thereafter
CIG -- Air (Funding included in EQIP)		37.5	37.5	37.5	37.5
GSWC Ground & Surface Water Conservation	60	NA	NA	NA	NA

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2008 Farm Bill Annual Funding (\$ million)

Program	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
WHIP	85	85	85	85	85
AMA (%50 for NRCS)	15	15	15	15	15
HFRP		9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75
FRPP	97	121	150	175	200

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2008 Farm Bill Annual Funding (\$ million)

Program	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Small Watershed Rehabilitation		100 (until expended)			
Voluntary Public Access		50 (until expended)			
CSP "Security"	Such Sums				
Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program		23	43	72	50

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Rule Making for FY2009

Most rules to be completed in 90 days

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- Your local conservation district
- <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

