

Natural Resources Conservation  
Service

# 2018 Farm Bill Program Overview

Presented by:  
**DANIEL WESTCOT**  
District Conservationist



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## USDA – NRCS Georgia

We provide technical and financial assistance on natural resources issues and assist individuals, groups, communities, and counties in implementing soil and water conservation practices to protect the 34 million acres of privately owned land in Georgia.

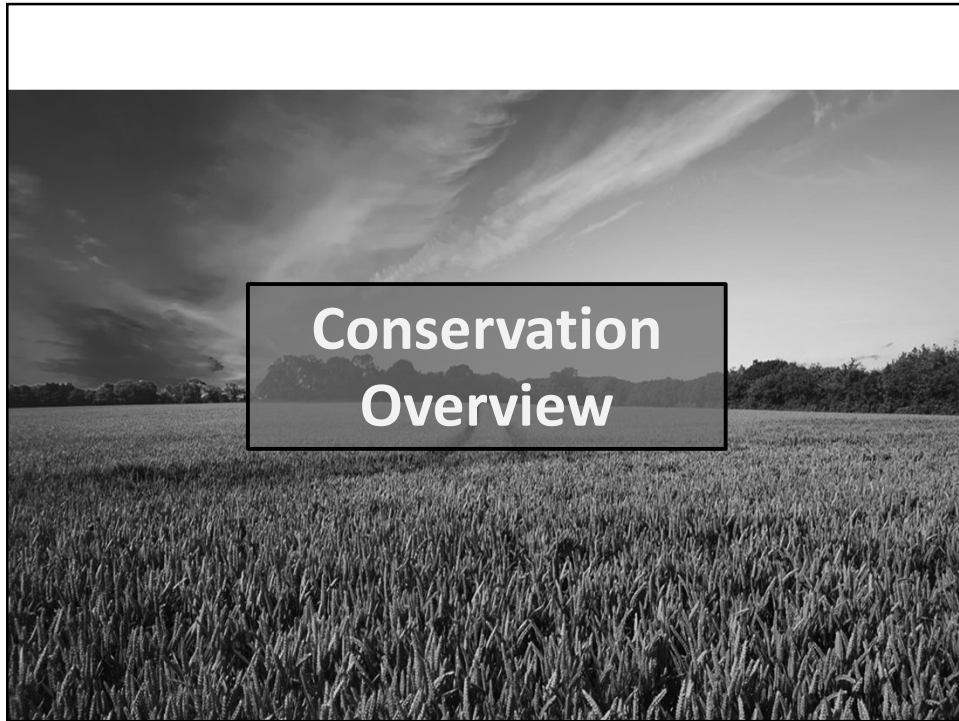
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## USDA Programs

### Natural Resources Conservation Service - NRCS

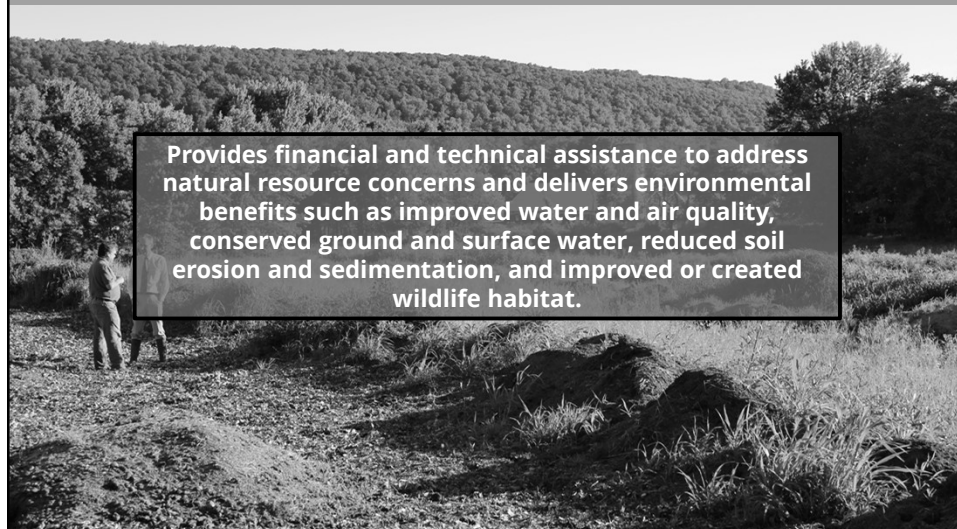
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP
- Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - ACEP
  - Wetland Reserve Easements - WRE
- Healthy Forest Reserve Program - HFRP

### Farm Service Agency - FSA

- Conservation Reserve Program - CRP
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program - EFRP

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## Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP



**Provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and delivers environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.**

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## EQIP – Forestry and Wildlife Related Funding Categories

### • **General Forestry Category**

- Tree and Shrub Site Preparation – 490
  - Chemical and mechanical methods for site prep
- Tree and Shrub Establishment – 612
  - Establishment of loblolly, slash, or longleaf and hardwoods
  - Trees must be cut prior to site visit to be eligible for this practice
- Forest Stand Improvement – 666
  - Thinning for wildlife or forest health associated with specific basal area requirements

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## EQIP – Forestry and Wildlife Related Funding Categories

### **General Forestry Category, Cont'd**

- Prescribed Burning – 338
  - Management and site preparation burns
- Brush Management – 314
  - Chemical and mechanical methods for understory control
- Herbaceous Weed Control – 315
  - Chemical or light mechanical control of herbaceous weeds
- Wildlife Habitat Planting – 420
  - Establishment of permanent vegetative cover for pollinator habitat and native warm season grasses
- Additional forestry practices are available

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## **EQIP – Forestry and Wildlife Related Funding Categories**

- **Forestry Initiatives**
  - Longleaf Pine Initiative
    - Establishment and management of longleaf pine
    - General forestry practices are eligible for this initiative, but must be implemented on existing longleaf stands or establishment of longleaf on cutover stands
  - Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative
    - Restores habitat for populations of declining wildlife species. Eligible practices depend on targeted species habitat. Some practices have specific requirements for targeted species.
    - Current Georgia targeted species: Bobwhite Quail, Conasauga River Aquatic Species, Gopher Tortoise, and Golden-Winged Warbler

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## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP**

### **Financial Assistance Rates**

- General Assistance – 75%
- Historically Underserved – 90%
- Payments are based on a regional cost list that is updated each year.

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## Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP



Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority natural resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

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## Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP

- **Types of Contracts**
  - Agriculture (Ag)
  - Non-Industrial Private Forest (NIPF)
- **Five Year Contracts**
- **Maximum obligation per contract \$200,000 for life of the contract**
- **Producer must enroll all acres they have control of for five years**
- **Assessment of existing and planned activities must meet a conservation threshold to be eligible for program**

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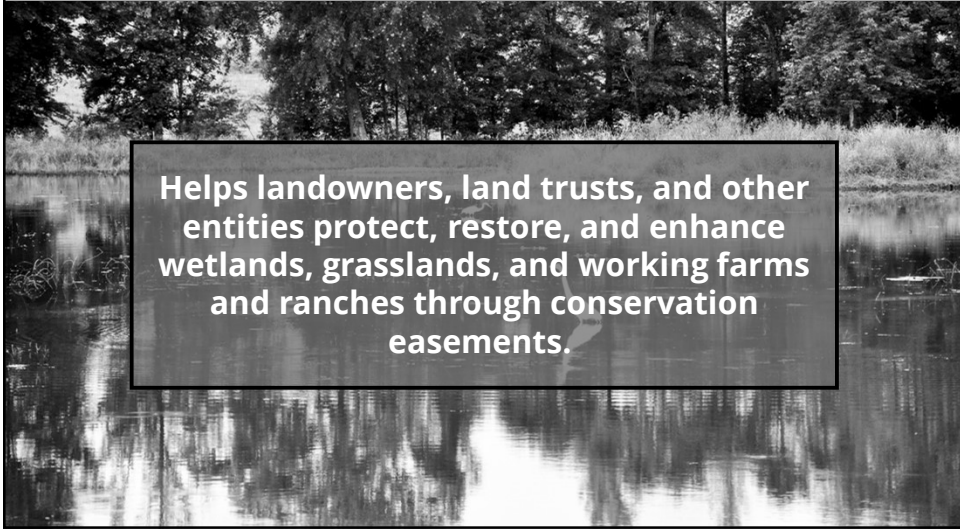
## Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP

### Annual Payment

- Existing Activity Payment – Same every year of the contract
  - Resource concerns being addressed at the time of application
  - Acres enrolled
- Planned Activity Payment – Changes each year of the contract
  - Amount of each enhancement scheduled for implementation for each specific year of the contract
    - Examples: Thinning, Burning, and Tree Planting

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## Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - ACEP



Helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.

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## **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - ACEP**

- **Wetland Reserve Easements – WRE**
  - NRCS helps to restore, protect, and enhance enrolled wetlands.
    - Permanent Easements
    - 30-year Easements
  - Land must have hydrologic restoration and hydric soils to be eligible for consideration
  - Easement is held by NRCS and the landowner retains ownership of the land
  - One-time lump sum payment for enrolled acres based on a third-party real estate value

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## **Healthy Forests Reserve Program – HFRP**

**Helps landowners restore, enhance and protect forestland resources on private lands through easements and financial assistance. HFRP aids the recovery of endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act, improves plant and animal biodiversity and enhances carbon sequestration.**


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## Healthy Forests Reserve Program – HFRP

- **HFRP provides landowners with 10-year restoration agreements**
  - Permanent Easements
  - 30-year Easements
- **Easements must be privately owned or owned by Indian tribes and restore, enhance or measurably increase the recovery of threatened or endangered species, improve biological diversity or increase carbon storage.**
- **Some landowners may receive safe harbor assurances under the Endangered Species Act by restoring or improving habitat on their land for a specified time.**

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## Conservation Reserve Program - CRP



Is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranched, but instead devoted to conservation benefits.

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## Conservation Reserve Program - CRP

- **Eligible Acres**
  - Cropped 4 out of 6 years between 2012 – 2017
    - Includes acres that had a reported commodity crop, or if the producer has adequate documentation of production on acres. Seed bills, fertilizer records, and harvesting records are forms of required documentation.
- **Enrollment**
  - General
  - Continuous
- **Reenrollment**
  - Loblolly and Slash – Unlimited
  - Longleaf – One-time

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## Conservation Reserve Program - CRP

- **General Signup**
  - Loblolly and Slash – 10 year contracts
  - Longleaf – 10 or 15 year contracts
  - National competitive ranking with national office completing the ranking on the submitted offers from states
  - Offers with tree and native grass establishment receive additional points in ranking

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## Conservation Reserve Program - CRP

- **General Signup – Continued**
  - 50% cost share based on GFC assigned practice establishment rates
  - FSA County Annual Rental Rate Payments
  - Climate-Smart Practice Incentive – Additional rental rate payment for qualifying practices
  - No cost share for the one required mid-management practice

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## Conservation Reserve Program - CRP

- **Continuous Signup**
  - Longleaf – 10 or 15 year contracts
  - No ranking
  - 50% cost share based on GFC assigned practice establishment rates
  - FSA County Annual Rental Rate Payments
  - Signup Incentive Payment (SIP) – 32.5% of annual rental rate payment at signup

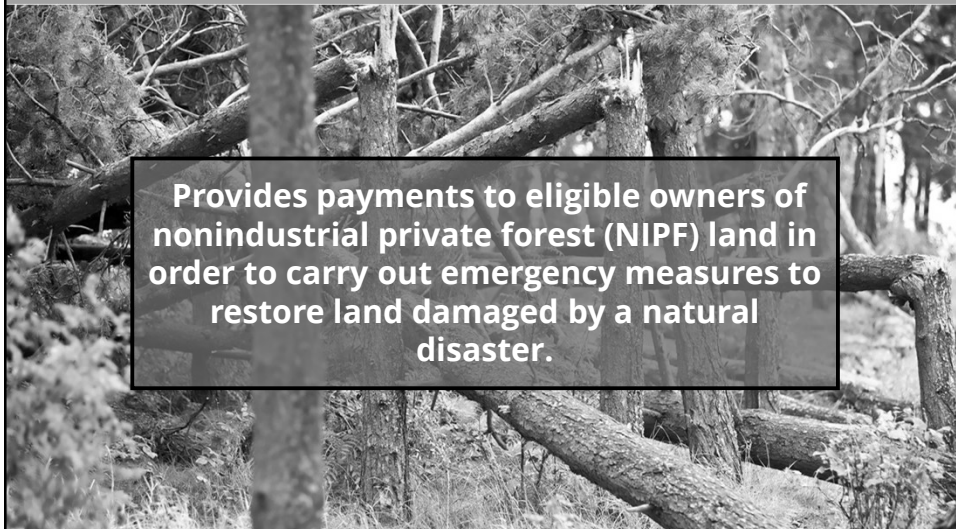
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## Conservation Reserve Program - CRP

- **Continuous Signup – Continued**
  - Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) – Additional 50% practice payment on top of cost share, will not exceed actual cost of implementation
  - Climate-Smart Practice Incentive – Additional rental rate payment for qualifying practices
  - Requires native grass establishment
  - No cost share for the one required mid-management practice

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## Emergency Forest Restoration Program – EFRP



Provides payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land in order to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster.

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## **Emergency Forest Restoration Program – EFRP**

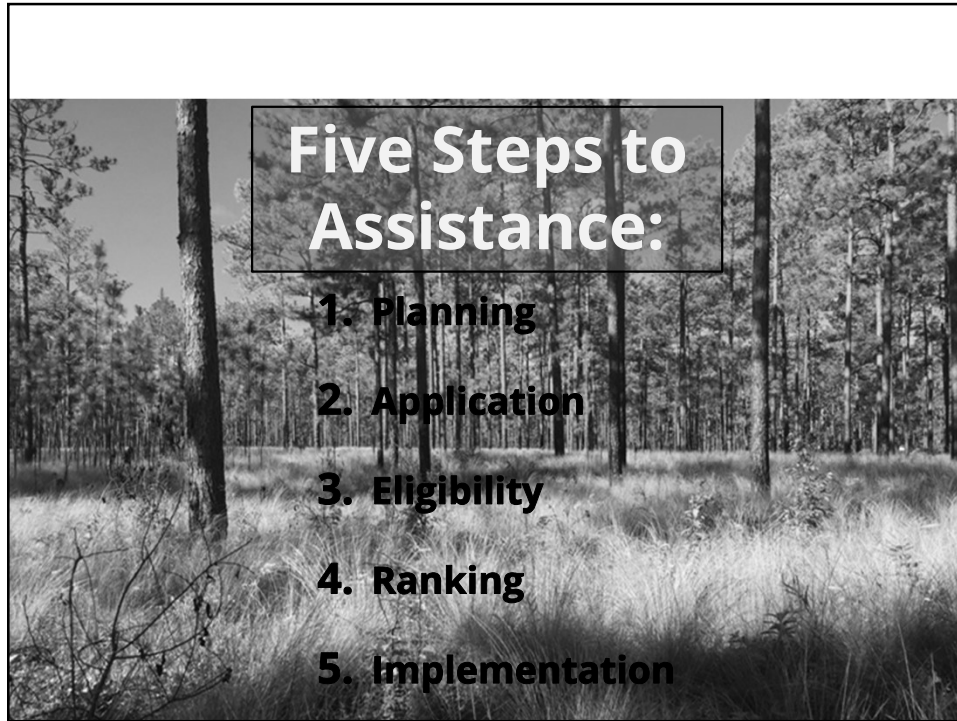
- **State or area must have a natural disaster declaration**
- **Must apply with FSA prior to starting any work**
- **Acres had to have had existing tree cover prior to the disaster and be within the disaster declaration area**
- **No AGI or 1026 requirements**
- **Must have a minimum of \$2,000 of damage to be eligible**
- **\$500,000 payment limitation per person or entity, per disaster**
- **Two years to complete work**

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## **Get Started With NRCS**



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## **Planning**

- **NRCS Conservationist will develop a conservation plan that addresses:**
  - ✓ needs of the client
  - ✓ identified resource concerns
  - ✓ federal, state and local agency requirements
- **Support documents – job sheets, engineering designs, standards and specifications, operation and maintenance for each structural practice planned**

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## **Application**

- **Applications for most programs are accepted on a continuous basis with publicly announced cut off periods to determine ranking.**
- **Must be completed in your legal name or how you filed with IRS.**
- **An appointment will be made to complete an assessment of your property.**

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## **Eligibility**

**NOTE: ALL ELIGIBILITY MUST BE MET BEFORE YOUR STATE EQIP RANKING DEADLINE TO BE CONSIDERED FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE DURING THE CURRENT FUNDING YEAR ALLOCATIONS!**

**You must have farm records established with USDA's Farm Service Agency to be eligible for NRCS programs.**

- Property Deeds or lease agreement to show control of the land;
- Farm and Tract Number;
- Social Security or Tax ID Number.

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## Eligibility, Continued

- **Crops Reported (important for CRP)**
- **Filed/Update AD-1026 (Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Certification)**
- **Filed/Update CCC-941 (Payment Eligibility Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification)**
- **Filed/Updated CCC-902 (Farm Operating Plan for Payment Eligibility Review)**

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## Ranking

- **NRCS will evaluate your applications according to local resource concerns, the amount of conservation benefits the work will provide, and the needs of the applicants.**
- **Local Workgroups help prioritize resource concerns.**
- **All applications are not funded**
- **Generally, applications can be deferred to the next funding cycle**

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## **Implementation**


- **If you're selected, you can choose whether to proceed with the contract for the work to be done.**
- **A contract will be developed.**
- **Once you sign the contract, you'll be provided standards and specifications for completing the practice or practices, and then you will have a specified amount of time to implement the contract items.**

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## **Implementation, Continued**

- **Once the practice is completed, NRCS will conduct a field visit.**
- **If practice's standards and specifications are met, they can be certified.**
- **Typically, you'll receive the rate of compensation for the work completed within 10 business days.**

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**Online Resources:**

- **Usda.gov**
- **Farmers.gov**
- **Newfarmers.usda.gov**
- **Nrcs.usda.gov**
- **Web Soil Survey**
- **Gov Delivery**

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## **Connect with us...**

- **You can find your nearest office by using the USDA Service Center locator at [www.farmers.gov/connect](http://www.farmers.gov/connect).**

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## Contact Information

**Daniel Westcot**

**USDA – NRCS**

**District Conservationist**

**Screven and Effingham Counties**

**Office: 912-564-7101 Ext. 3**

**Mobile: 912-425-9589**

**Email: [daniel.westcot@usda.gov](mailto:daniel.westcot@usda.gov)**

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