

**LOCAL WORKING GROUP**  
**FY24**

Please answer the following questions:

1. As an LWG, what do you see as the biggest problems related to agriculture and natural resources?

a. Why are these problems a concern, why are they important, can they be fixed, and what happens if we don't do anything about them? Where are these issues happening?

b. Do you see NRCS programs as a way to fix them? If yes, which ones seem like a good fit? What practices should we consider solving some of these problems?

c. Who is working on these issues? (e.g., which groups, agencies, partners, etc. are working on this already?)

- d. Are there existing plans in place that take action on these particular issues? (e.g., Watershed Management Plan, Nutrient Reduction Plan, Wildlife Recovery Plan, Climate Adaption Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Conservation Action Plan, etc.).

2. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems by adopting enhancements to address priority resources concerns.

- a. Does the LWG agree that there are producers who adopted most of what EQIP has to offer to address a resource concern? For example: sediment loads in the James River.

- b. What additional enhancements are needed to improve and enhance the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) that are currently not offered?

3. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) plays a key role in the overarching concern for loss of farmland and rapid development.

- a. Has the LWG considered exploring easements and other long term management tools/programs such as CRP/CREP/ACEP/RCPP/CSP?

- b. What could NRCS do to increase enrollment in ACEP-WRE wetland easements, in order to accelerate wetland restoration and protection in Virginia?

- c. Can you recommend a potential partner organization(s) that may assist with these goals?

- d. What could NRCS do to increase enrollment in ACEP-ALE farmland easements, in order to accelerate farmland and prime soils protection in Virginia?

4. The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Program enables us to work with public and private partners to evaluate and accelerate adoption of new approaches to natural resource protection.

a. What priority topics should be offered in a state CIG announcement in FY24?

5. Please provide other information and recommendations on local natural resource priorities and criteria for USDA conservation activities and programs.