

## NRCS Acronyms & Definitions

- **ACEP – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program:** The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) protects the agricultural viability and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting nonagricultural uses which negatively affect agricultural uses and conservation values, protect grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring or conserving eligible grazing land, and protecting and restoring and enhancing wetlands on eligible land.
  - ACEP has two components:
    - Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)
    - Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)
- **ALE - Agricultural Land Easements:** an easement under ACEP which helps private and tribal landowners, land trusts, and other entities such as state and local governments protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements.
- **BFR – Beginning Farmer/Rancher:** a Historically Underserved (HU) participant who:
  - Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of a legal entity, and
  - Who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
- **CEMA – Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities:** contracted under EQIP program; CEMAs produce results of an evaluation, monitoring, test, or assessment.
  - CEMA are provided by Qualified Individuals (QIs). QIs self-certify they meet qualification criteria stated in a CEMA document. Professional licenses, accreditations, certifications, and experience typify qualification criteria for CEMA QIs. A QI may, or may not also hold TSP certification.
  - CEMAs inform the participant and conservation planner about natural resource conditions on the area evaluated.
  - CEMA results can support adaptive management strategies, lead to new and revised conservation plans; and support development of new or revised site-specific conservation practice installation instructions.
  - CEMAs are consistent with Step 9 of the NRCS conservation planning process, but may be used at any point in the iterative steps of conservation planning.
- **CPA – Conservation Planning Activities:** contracted under EQIP program; a formally developed conservation plan that document participant objectives, existing resource concerns, and participant decisions regarding conservation practices and activities that will be used to address identified resource concerns. CPAs are:
  - Provided by a Technical Service Provider (TSP) with appropriate certification in NRCS Registry.
  - Consistent with steps 1-7 of the NRCS conservation planning process.

- **CREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program:** part of FSA’s CRP program- CREP leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific State, regional, or nationally significant conservation concerns.
  - In exchange for removing environmentally sensitive land from production and establishing permanent resource conserving plant species, farmers and ranchers are paid an annual rental rate along with other federal and non-federal incentives as specified in each CREP agreement. Participation is voluntary, and the contract period is typically 10-15 years.
- **CRP – Conservation Reserve Program:** a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are from 10 to 15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat.
- **CSAF – Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities:** a sub-set of conservation activities denoted as critical to climate change mitigation. When applied appropriately, these activities may deliver quantifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and/or increases in carbon sequestration. Many offer co-benefits and ancillary benefits that help operations build climate change resilience while addressing other natural resource concerns such as soil health, water quality, pollinator and wildlife habitat and air quality. Offered under Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding.
- **CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program:** an NRCS’ financial assistance program which helps agricultural producers take their conservation efforts to the next level.
- **CTA – Conservation Technical Assistance:** provides our nation’s farmers, ranchers and forestland owners with the knowledge and tools they need to conserve, maintain and restore the natural resources on their lands and improve the health of their operations for the future.
  - NRCS offers this assistance at no cost to the producers we serve. Our goal is to give our customers personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to help them make informed decisions.
  - If a producer chooses to take the next step towards improving their operations, we can work with them to develop a conservation plan, with suggested conservation practices that can help them reach their production and conservation goals.
- **DIA – Design and Implementation Activities:** contracted under EQIP program; DIAs produce designs, prescriptions, or other instructions for implementing a single conservation practice, or a system of conservation practices derived from the participant’s conservation plan.
  - DIAs are provided by Technical Service Providers (TSP) with appropriate certification in NRCS Registry.
  - DIAs are consistent with Step 8 of the NRCS conservation planning process.

- DIA scope does not include assistance for conservation practice installation, review, and checkout.
- **EQIP – Environmental Quality Incentives Program:** NRCS’ most commonly used financial assistance program; provides assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns.
- **FA – Financial Assistance:** NRCS programmatic funding which helps producers to install the conservation practices outlined in their conservation plan.
- **FPAC – Farm Production and Conservation:** USDA’s focal point for the Nation’s farmers and ranchers and other stewards of private agricultural lands and non-industrial private forest lands. FPAC agencies implement programs designed to mitigate the significant risks of farming through crop insurance, conservation programs, farm safety net programs, lending, and disaster programs.
  - Farm Service Agency (FSA)
  - FPAC Business Center
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
  - Risk Management Agency (RMA)
- **FSA – Farm Service Agency:** NRCS’ adjacent federal agency; FSA is in charge of farm records, emergency and disaster relief programs, farm loan programs, certain conservation programs and more.
- **FY – Fiscal Year:** The Federal fiscal year runs from October 1<sup>st</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup>
- **GCI – Grassland Conservation Initiative:** a five-year NRCS financial assistance program under Conservation Stewardship program (CSP) which pays an annual acreage payment for eligible base acres of established grassland
- **HEL – Highly Erodible Land:** HEL is land that can erode at an excessive rate because of soil properties, leading to long-term decreased productivity. HEL is designated on a field basis and based on the proportion of the total field acreage that contains HEL soils.
  - A HEL determination identifies fields subject to HEL conservation provisions. The determination consists of Form NRCS-CPA-026 "Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation Determination" which documents the fields and acreage of HEL, along with a map labeling fields HEL or NHEL (non-highly erodible land).
- **HELC – Highly Erodible Land Conservation:** Highly erodible land conservation (HELC) and wetland conservation (WC) provisions (known as “conservation compliance”) aim to reduce soil loss on erosion-prone lands and to protect wetlands for the multiple benefits they provide. HELC and WC provisions apply to all land that is considered highly erodible or a wetland, and that is owned or farmed by persons voluntarily participating in USDA programs, unless USDA determines an exemption applies.
  - To comply with HELC provisions, producers and affiliated persons must fill out and sign form AD-1026 certifying they will not:
    - Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible land without following an NRCS-approved conservation plan or system

In addition, producers planning to conduct activities that may affect their HELC or WC compliance; for example bringing new land into production, removing fence rows, conducting drainage activities or combining fields; must notify FSA by filing form AD-1026. FSA will notify NRCS, and NRCS will then provide highly erodible land or wetland technical evaluations and issue determinations if needed.

- **HU – Historically Underserved:** Some groups of people are identified in Farm Bill legislation and in USDA policy as being Historically Underserved (HU). Members of these groups have been historically underserved by, or subject to discrimination in, Federal policies and programs. Four groups are defined by USDA as “Historically Underserved,” including farmers or ranchers who are: Beginning; Socially Disadvantaged; Veterans; and Limited Resource.
- **IRA – Inflation Reduction Act:** Part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda – represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. IRA assistance is available through NRCS’ standard conservation programs (EQIP and CSP.)
  - Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities. Those applications that were not previously funded, and those that are received after the ranking date, will automatically be considered during future funding cycles.
  - The Inflation Reduction Act provides an additional \$19.5 billion over five years to support USDA’s conservation programs that yield climate change mitigation benefits.
- **NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service:** USDA’s primary private lands conservation agency; NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to partners and landowners; and administers conservation programs
- **RCPP – Regional Conservation Partnership Program:** an NRCS financial and technical assistance program which brings together partners to expand the reach of NRCS conservation programs.
- **SD – Socially Disadvantaged:** a Historically Underserved (HU) participant who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.
  - These groups consist of the following:
    - American Indians or Alaskan Natives
    - Asians
    - Blacks or African Americans
    - Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
    - Hispanics.

- Note: Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation programs. The term entities reflect a broad interpretation to include partnerships, couples, legal entities, etc.
- **TA – Technical Assistance:** NRCS no-cost assistance, not affiliated with financial assistance programs
- **TSP – Technical Service Provider:** work on behalf of the customer to offer planning, design, and implementation services that meets NRCS criteria. This assistance helps improve the producer's operation and addresses resource concerns on their land.
  - TSPs include individuals, private businesses, American Indian tribes, nonprofit organizations, and public agencies.
  - TSPs expand the number and availability of conservation technical experts capable of offering customized, one-on-one conservation advice to agricultural producers.
- **USDA – United States Department of Agriculture:** Federal Agency under which NRCS and FSA fall; part of FPAC
- **WC – Wetland Conservation:** Highly erodible land conservation (HELC) and wetland conservation (WC) provisions (known as “conservation compliance”) aim to reduce soil loss on erosion-prone lands and to protect wetlands for the multiple benefits they provide. HELC and WC provisions apply to all land that is considered highly erodible or a wetland, and that is owned or farmed by persons voluntarily participating in USDA programs, unless USDA determines an exemption applies.
  - To comply with WC provisions, producers and affiliated persons must fill out and sign form AD-1026 certifying they will not:
    - Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on a converted wetland; or
    - Convert a wetland that makes the production of an agricultural commodity possible.

In addition, producers planning to conduct activities that may affect their HELC or WC compliance; for example bringing new land into production, removing fence rows, conducting drainage activities or combining fields; must notify FSA by filing form AD-1026. FSA will notify NRCS, and NRCS will then provide highly erodible land or wetland technical evaluations and issue determinations if needed.
- **WRE – Wetland Reserve Easement:** an easement under ACEP which helps private and tribal landowners protect, restore and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.