



A partial list of statutory funding requirements for Farm Bill programs is provided below along with questions to help facilitate your discussions.

EQIP (funding and mandatory offerings)

- Funding Targets:
 - a. 50 percent for livestock-related practices
 - b. 5 percent for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
 - c. 5 percent for beginning farmers and ranchers
 - d. 10 percent for wildlife habitat related practices
 - e. 5 percent for EQIP-CIC
 - f. Remaining funds for:
 - i. High Tunnel Systems, Energy, StrikeForce, Organic, Transitioning to Organic and CPAs/DIAs/CEMAs, which are mandated national priorities that do not receive earmarks.
 - ii. Cropland, Forestry, and CIG are state priorities.
- Earmarks (dedicated funding that cannot be used elsewhere)
 - a. Golden-winged Warbler
 - b. National Water Quality Initiative
 - c. Longleaf Pine Initiative
 - d. Joint Chiefs Initiative

CSP (funding targets)

- 5 percent for beginning farmers and ranchers
- 5 percent for socially disadvantaged farmers
- 5 percent for organic and organic transition

ACEP

- ALE applications must be from eligible entities that can hold easements
- WRE applications must be from private landowners and Indian tribes

RCPP

- The 2018 Farm Bill expanded RCPP to a standalone program. Partners develop project applications to address specific natural resource objectives in a proposed area or region and submit them during the annual announcement of program funding. Through RCPP, NRCS works with partners to provide a combination of financial and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation practices. RCPP federal assistance is delivered in through land management/restoration, rental, easements, public works/watershed structures activities.

The programs listed above are our “standard” programs, and funding has remained consistent over the last several Fiscal Years (FY). We will continue with those target allocations for FY24.

Inflation Reduction Act: On August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the [Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#) into law. With the passage of the IRA, approximately \$20 billion of IRA funds will support USDA’s conservation programs during Fiscal Years (FY) 2023-2026. For the current FY, FY23, Virginia NRCS has been allocated the following amounts for our Conservation Programs.

Mandatory targets of IRA funds:

- 5 percent Beginning Farmer
- 5 percent Socially Disadvantaged Farmer
- 10 percent Wildlife
- 10 percent Source Water
- No mandatory target for Livestock

IRA conservation funds may only be used to fund one or more agricultural conservation practices, enhancements, or bundles that the Secretary determines directly improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses, or reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide emissions, associated with agricultural production. At this writing, we do not have the specific primary practices that will be eligible to support; however, we anticipate that they will closely match the attachment to this bulletin, *Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List for FY23*.

CSP-IRA and EQIP-IRA: IRA funds are authorized only for contracts with one or more conservation practices or activities, identified by NRCS, that directly improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses, or that reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide emissions, associated with agricultural production.

Questions/topics to discuss with your Local Work Group:

Note: For Statewide consistency purposes, please address all questions listed below.

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 Adaptation 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/RCP/CSPP/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.