

State Technical Committee (STC) Meeting
May 26, 2022, at 10 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

10:00 – 10:35	Welcome and Opening Remarks Introduce Dr. Ronald Howell, FSA State Executive Director and Perry Hickman, RD State Director Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Tribal Summit Update	Dr. Edwin Martinez, State Conservationist
10:35 – 10:50	FY22 Programs Update Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG)	Patrick Vincent, ASTC-Programs
10:50 – 11:00	Urban Agriculture Activities and People's Garden Initiative, State Technical Subcommittee	Patrick Vincent, ASTC-Programs & Chad Wentz, SRC
11:00 – 11:05	Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) Buchanan County Watershed Programs/Watershed Rehabilitation Cherrystone Creek 1 and 2	Mat Lyons, State Conservation Engineer
11:05 – 11:15	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Emily Horsley, FSA CRP Program Manager
11:15 – 11:30	Chesapeake Bay Update	Leon Tillman, Chesapeake Bay Coordinator
11:30 – 11:45	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)	Jake Riley, Director, Chesapeake Bay Programs
11:45- 11:55	Questions and Answer Session	ALL
11:55 – 12:00	Closing Remarks	Dr. Edwin Martinez, State Conservationist

Next Meeting – TBD

State Technical Committee (STC) Meeting
May 26, 2022, at 10 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

10:00 – 10:35

Welcome and Opening Remarks

**Dr. Edwin Martinez,
State Conservationist**

Dr. Martinez welcomed everyone and thanked them for their time to join today.

Introductions:

Dr. Ronald Howell, Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director

Dr. Howell gave updates, welcomed partnership with NRCS and looks forward to moving forward opportunities for Technical Assistance, Climate Smart Ag, and Urban Agriculture.

Perry Hickman, Rural Development (RD) State Director

Mr. Hickman gave a brief background of Rural Development, essential services, rural business opportunities with over 40 programs to assist in 4 area offices around the state.

Chief Walt Brown – 155 acres of tribal land in conservation easement. Working with Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), walking trails, looking for a grant for compost bathrooms along the trail. What entity within USDA can we reach out to? Mr. Hickman – will speak to staff in Courtland Office and will do some additional research. He provided an email to Chief Brown.

Agency Priorities

Dr. Edwin Martinez, State Conservationist

- Highlighted several past projects including Federal Tribal summit (March 2022); Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements, Partnership for Climate-Smart Commodities, Partnerships for Progress in Bay Conservation, Chesapeake Bay State Partnership Initiative, Peoples Garden, and the Local Work Groups. More details will be shared on several of these initiatives later in the morning.

Comment: (Chief Brown) Discussed Federal Recognized Tribes vs. State Recognized Tribes – seems the State Tribes are being left behind with funding.

Comment (Chief Brown): Southampton tribal land consists of 263 acres with 3-4 acres suitable for growing food; are tribes eligible for this initiative?

Response: Leadership we will check with staff and see what the requirements are for this initiative.

Comment (Follow-up): Chief Brown added his tribe had been doing this for the last 15 years, featuring a school day demonstrating the Iroquois three sisters garden, next farm day expecting 800 to 1000 students.

New Initiatives/Projects:

- Virginia (Recognized) Tribal Summit is being planned. We have authorities to work with Federally Recognized Tribes, in the Farm Bill, and we are planning to work with State Recognized Tribes in the future.

10:35 – 10:50

FY22 Program Update

Patrick Vincent, ASTC-Programs

- Refer to PowerPoint slide deck for overview of Virginia Programs and Financial Assistance report
- Response to Sylvia's question in the chat - we don't have all the details yet but will respond when we do.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG)

Question: (Matt Kowalski/Chesapeake Bay Foundation) asked about EQIP funding running out and how many applications went unfunded last year – who to ask, Ron or Patrick.

Response: Patrick shared always have a back-log of applications

Question: (Sylvia Malm) Inquired about Joint Chiefs project asking if there will be opportunity for source water partners to participate?

Response: Patrick is seeing communications, should be coming out soon. There may be opportunities.

Question (follow-up) - is there thought to focus a new NOCWA?

Response: Patrick shared it is possible, hopes are to have discussion with source water protection committee.

Question: (Chief Brown) Asked again about walking trail compost bathrooms.

Response: Patrick heard comments earlier, can't think of anything right off hand, that can assist with those bathrooms, but we will investigate it and maybe be able to refer you to a partner.

Question: (Lois Carter/Mattaponi Tribe) Tribe has 100 acres looking to put together a plan for land use? We are State Recognized, looking for Federal Recognition. Is Ron Wood the contact; if it's someone else, we need to know whom to contact, so we don't miss out.

Response: Patrick shared contact information asking her to contact him after the call.

10:50 – 11:00

Urban Agriculture Activities and People's Garden

Patrick Vincent, ASTC-Programs

Refer to PowerPoint Slides for more specific information

- New Urban Office being established – NRCS/FSA signed MOA for 2 staff from each agency to staff the urban office in existing space in the Quinton Service Center. Long term plan to co-locate with Extension or SWCD with ag programs to maximize visibility, increase exposure, offer one-stop shop.
- Peoples Garden –
 - Fairfield Middle School
 - Richmond Alternative School
 - Swansboro Community Garden

Initiative, State Technical Subcommittee

Chad Wentz, SRC

- Urban Ag initiative, establishing a subcommittee to help advise the State Technical Committee and guide VA. 1-2 meetings per year. Looking for members who have interest. Send interest to Patrick and Chad.

11:00 – 11:05

Emergency Watershed Program (EWP)

Mat Lyons, State Engineer

- Buchanan County - Still providing technical and financial assistance to Hurley in Buchanan County, approx. \$750,000 to assist. County is moving through with design, permits, etc.
- Cherrystone 1 & 2A - Received funding for these two dam rehab projects. See slide for additional details.

11:05 – 11:15

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Emily Horsley, FSA CRP Program Manager

- CRP reviewed with update on FY22 signup. Enrollment and acceptance details can be found in slides. CREP rule change opens the program to new partnership opportunities. Climate Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity through pilot projects.

Question: (Chief Brown) Can expired CREP land be re-enrolled?

Response: may need to re-assess it as a new contract, submit offers to local office, can come out and look at options.

11:15 – 11:30

Chesapeake Bay Update

Leon Tillman, Chesapeake Bay Coordinator

- Provided update and reviewed the most current (2018-2020) action plan, stating the plan had been reviewed in 2021, exceeding the quantitative goals with over 120% accomplishment in resource concerns. Looking to update the action plan to go through 2025.
- USDA – EPA will work together to create a new task force to give more credit to farmers for conservation efforts in the bay watershed. Looking to coordinate for areas where financial collaboration will work.

Question: (Sylvia Malm) GIS mapping to address priority mapping, can you include state source water areas, Virginia has about 20% of the state with HUCs focusing on SWPAs?

Response: Mr. Tillman will follow up with each state.

11:30 – 11:45

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

Jake Riley, Director, Ches. Bay Program

- Announced NFWF will be part of the NRCS/EPA partnership. Reviewed competitive grants programs stating partnerships are critical to leverage technical assistance.
- Leveraging Farm Bill Conservation Programs – they encourage existing Farm Bill programs first for cost-share first before using NFWF funding to fill gaps, technical assistance.

Question: (Chief Brown) Are there any partnerships established with Nottoway River – it's a scenic river for Virginia?

Response: No, not at this point. Eager to talk about ideas and projects; email provided to follow-up.

11:45 – 11:55

Questions and Answer Session

ALL

No additional questions currently.

11:55 – 12:00

Closing Remarks

Dr. Edwin Martinez, State Conservationist

- Dr. Martinez thanked the group for the discussion and presentation and questions. Thanked Chad and Patrick as leads for the STC. Thanked to Leon and Jake for providing updates.
- Veterans Farmers Boots to Roots at VSU Pavilion. Good event to see the work they are doing.
- Lot of interest with seasonal high tunnels in VA. Higher demand than what we can fund at this time. Look for opportunities to bring in additional funds.

**Please see slide deck for more information about each of the topics covered.*

Next Meeting – TBD



United States Department of Agriculture



Virginia State Technical Committee Meeting

May 26, 2022

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Welcome and Opening Remarks

Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez, State Conservationist



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New Leadership for the Virginia USDA Team



Dr. Ronald Howell
FSA State Executive Director



Perry Hickman
RD State Director



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Starting Off Strong in FY 2022



EQUITY



**CLIMATE-SMART
AGRICULTURE
AND FORESTRY**



**URBAN
FARMERS**



**DIVERSE
WORKFORCE**



**LEVERAGE
INNOVATIVE
PARTNERSHIPS**



Strengthening Ties with Tribes

- Session recordings and presentations from the March **Virginia Tribal Summit** are now posted on our website for review and sharing
- NRCS is now following up with tribal leadership to explore ways to help them address priorities outlined during the event
- We've also established three fund pools for federally recognized tribes and funded all applications received.
- Land acquisitions will offer opportunities to provide conservation planning assistance as well as funding for recommended practices

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Equity Conservation Cooperative Agreements

Entity Name	States	Project Title
Africulture	VA	Building Capacity for Virginia Historically Underserved farmers to enable them to access NRCS programs
American Forest Foundation	AL, AR, GA, NC, TX, VA	Growing the SFLR Network to Reach More Historically Underserved Landowners and Provide Climate Smart Solutions
Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Inc.	MD, PA, VA	Outreach to Historically Underserved Farmers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
Children Learning through Outdoor Experiences (ChLOE)	CA, MO, VA	Conservation and agriculture STEM education through outdoor experiences for k 12 students, emphasizing access for underserved populations.
Winston County Self Help Cooperative	AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA	Stronger Together: Assisting Historically Underserved Farmers & Ranchers Implement Natural Resources Conservation Practices Across the Rural Southern Black Belt



Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities

- **First Funding Pool (May 6 deadline)**

\$5 to \$100 million offered for large-scale pilot projects that emphasize:

- Greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production
- Meaningful benefits to a representative cross-section of production agriculture, including small/historically underserved producers



- **Second Funding Pool (June 10 deadline)**

\$250,000 to \$4,999,999 offered for particularly innovative pilot projects that emphasize:

- Enrollment of small and/or underserved producers, and/or
- Monitoring, reporting and verification activities developed at minority-serving institutions.



Partnerships for Progress in Bay Conservation

- New Chesapeake Bay States' Partnership Initiative unveiled earlier this month
- \$22.5 million investment in Bay conservation assistance
- Funding provided through EQIP, ACEP and CSP
- Effort will also involve collaboration with FSA to identify needs and opportunities for buffer management on CREP acres
- Targeted process to focus funding on priority watersheds





Bridging the Food Access Divide

- People's Garden Initiative empowers communities to grow their own fresh, healthy produce in a more sustainable manner
- This Henrico County site is one of 17 in the nation that will serve as models of what can be accomplished when neighbors come together to meet a shared need for a more resilient local food system

Local Working Groups (LWGs)

- Mechanism for obtaining field-level feedback from conservation partners
- Include decision-makers from local SWCDs, FSA county committees, FSA county executive directors, NRCS district conservationists, members of tribal governments (if applicable) and representatives of other state and local governments and agencies
- Assess the efficiency and priorities of existing NRCS and USDA programs
- Wrapped up 2022 meetings last month and will be forwarding minutes for review by **May 27**



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Financial Assistance Programs Updates

Patrick Vincent, ASTC-Programs



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FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

10-year Commitment to Conservation

More than **7,842** conservation contracts obligated since 2012 to provide **\$283 million** in financial assistance for implementing conservation practices on **1.4 million acres**

\$130 million in total active funding for natural resource protection on more than a **467,347 acres** of Virginia land

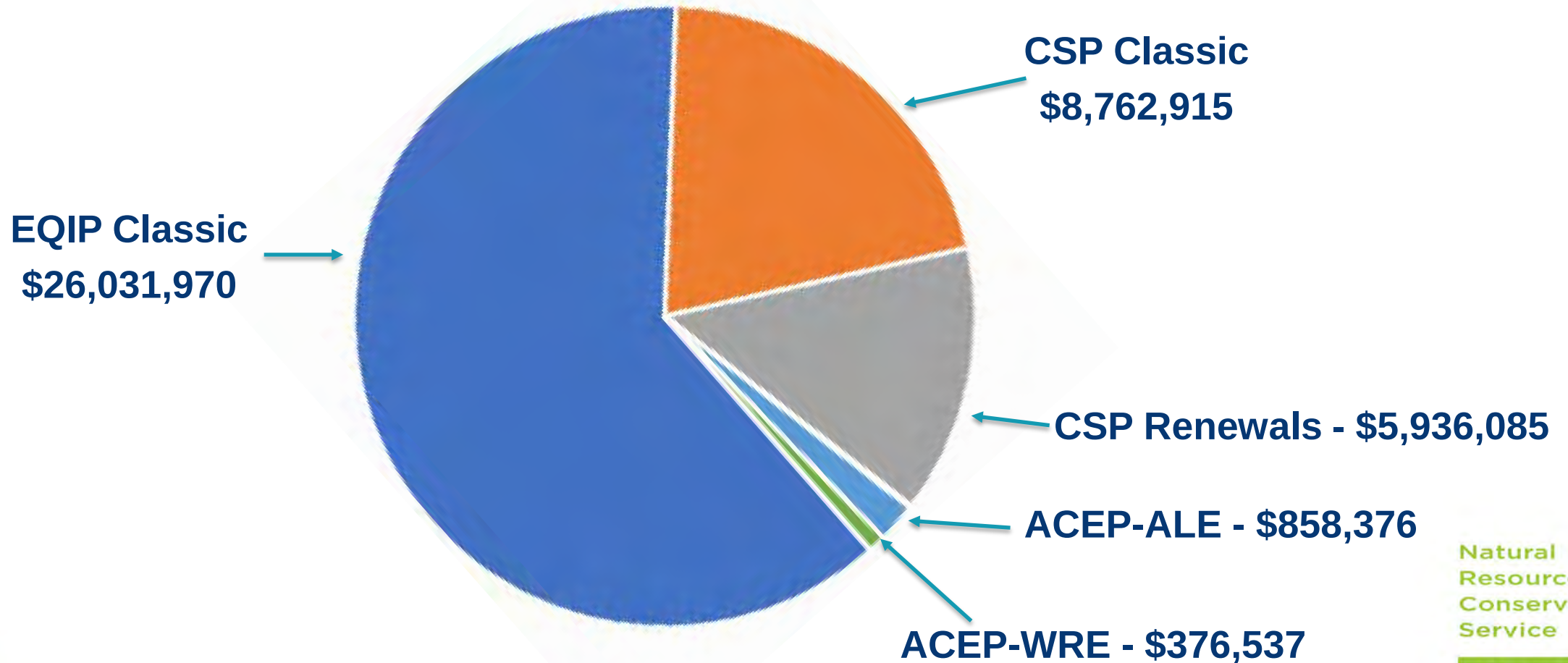


The chart above reflects payments made (light green) and remaining obligations (dark green) not yet paid. Funding for the current fiscal year was as of May 2022, however obligations are expected to reach \$40 million. The chart does not reflect funding for easement programs.



FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

EQIP, CSP, ACEP Program Budget

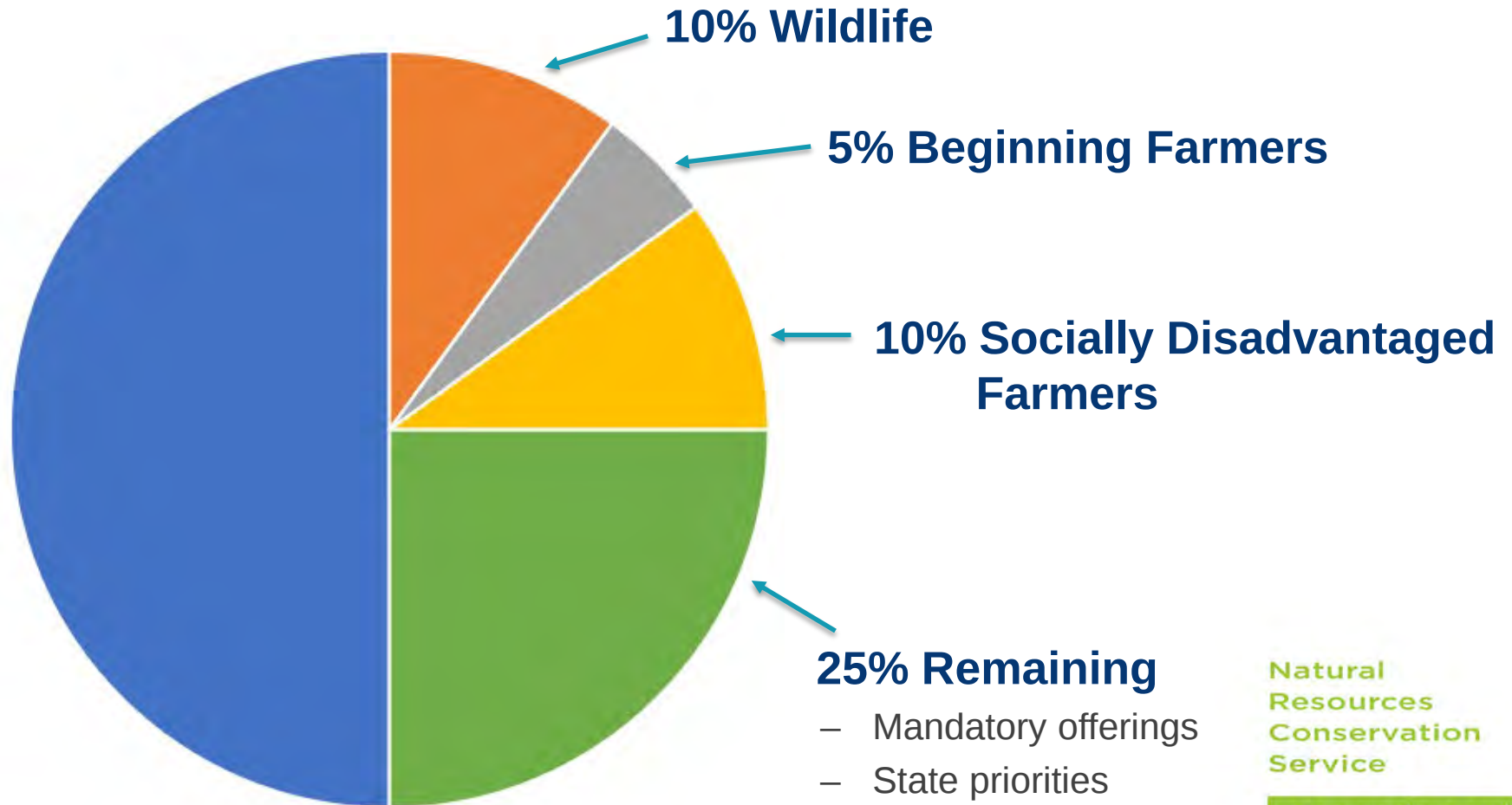


FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

EQIP Statutory Requirements / FY22 Funding Allocation

Total Allocation
\$26,031,970

50% Livestock



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FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

❖ EQIP Classic

- 170 contracts obligated for \$9.3 million (36% obligated)
- 117 applications at approved status for \$5.6 million
- 149 applications at preapproved status for \$7.5 million

❖ EQIP Classic – New Fund Pools

- Tribal Fund Pools
- Urban High Tunnel Fund Pool
- Beginning Farmer High Tunnel Fund Pool
- Joint Chiefs Eastern Divide Restoration Project
 - Awarded \$2,983,965 of funding for 3 years. Funding targeted for Bland, Botetourt and Wythe counties

❖ EQIP – Conservation Incentives Contract (CIC)

- Ranking deadline for applications received is June 3, 2022. Preapprovals will be made the following week.



Contact:

Ron Wood, EQIP Program Manager (Program Contact), ron.wood@usda.gov

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FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

Coronavirus Agricultural Relief Payment (CARP) Extended to 12/31/22

- ❖ NRCS Conducted an economic analysis on practice payment rates due concerns about increasing cost of materials related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- ❖ Identified seven conservation practice scenarios that have highest price increases (10% or more)
 - 367 – Roofs and Covers
 - 443 – Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface
 - 584 – Channel Bed Stabilization
 - 575 – Trails and Walkways
 - 430 – Irrigation Pipeline
 - 468 – Lined Waterway or Outlet
 - 516 – Livestock Pipeline
- ❖ Additional financial assistance will be made available to participants with active or completed EQIP and EQIP-RCPP contracts (2012 – 2021) affected by these higher commodity prices for practices completed by December 31, 2022.
- ❖ Minimum CARP payment of \$300.00 per contract

Virginia has already made \$493k in CARP payments to 58 eligible participants.



FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

❖ CSP Renewals

- Obligated 82 contracts for \$5.9 million covering 45,686 acres
- Received 136 FY23 Renewal applications

❖ CSP Grassland Conservation Initiative (GCI)

- Obligated 13 contracts for \$26k

❖ CSP Classic

- Received 359 applications
- Ranking deadline is May 27, 2022
- Preapprovals will be completed in June



Contact:

Nizhoni LaFrance-Pettigrew, CSP Program Manager (Program Contact), Nizhoni.LaFrance-Pettigrew@usda.gov

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FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

- Closed 1 ALE easement on 215 acres in Clarke County
- Currently processing and evaluating 4 ALE applications with funding requests for \$5.6 million on 1,692 acres.
- 7 ACEP-ALE acquisitions underway
- 2 ACEP-WRE restorations in progress
- 146 existing recorded easements totaling 17,112 acres of land protected and monitored.

Contact:



Diane Dunaway, Easement Program Manager - Diane.Dunaway@usda.gov
Leticia Jackson-Holder, Realty Specialist - Leticia.Jackson@usda.gov



FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

Regional Conservationist Partnership Program (RCPP)

❖ RCPP Classic Project Proposals

- Application deadline was on April 13, 2022
- Virginia received 4 project proposals.
- Two proposals were targeted just for Virginia and two covered multiple states.

❖ RCPP TNC Renewal

- Financial assistance is provided to implement agricultural best management practices (BMPs) in the Clinch-Powell Watersheds.
- Multi-state project with TN and Virginia. VA project counties are Lee, Scott and Russell.
- 12 applications have been preapproved for \$700K

❖ RCPP Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

- HFRP offers financial assistance to help landowners restore, enhance and protect privately-owned forests through conservation easements.
- An easement application is currently being processed for Grayson County to conserve 997 acres of forested land with an estimated cost of over \$1 million.



Contact:

Stacey Bradshaw, RCPP Program Manager (Program Contact), Stacey.bradshaw@usda.gov

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FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG)

- ❖ **2022 Virginia CIG Notice of Funding Opportunity posted April 1, 2022 on grants.gov and closed on May 16, 2022.**
 - The recommended proposals topics were soil health on grazing land and pollinator habitat restoration.
 - Grants will be awarded for projects between one- and three-years duration with maximum awards of \$200,000 for each priority topic.
 - We received 5 proposals for review and hope to make selections for each topic in June.
- ❖ **Currently managing 12 CIG's totaling \$1.1 million with various partners like Virginia Tech, Sustainable Chesapeake, Virginia State University, Virginia Department of Forestry and Water Science Institute .**



Contact:

Debbie Bullock, CIG Program Manager (Program Contact), debbie.bullock@usda.gov

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FY22 Financial Assistance & Program Updates

FY23 Program Planning

❖ Local Working Groups (LWG)

- Conservation partners at the field level such as FSA County Committee, SWCD Board, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Department of Forestry, agricultural producers, etc.

❖ Program Development Committee

- NRCS staff representatives from the Field, Area and State Office Staff who provide their input on program decisions.

❖ State Technical Committee

- Diverse groups served by USDA including representatives from federal, state and local conservation agencies, tribal governments, agricultural producers, nonprofit organizations, agribusiness partners, and other professionals who represent disciplines in agriculture and conservation.
- Subcommittees
 - Source Water Protection
 - Urban Ag



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Urban Agriculture Activities:



- State Technical Subcommittee
- People's Garden
- Urban Office

Patrick Vincent, Asst. State Conservationist- Programs
Chad Wentz, State Resource Conservationist



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Urban Agriculture Subcommittee

Agency Priority:

Expand conservation tools and support the unique needs of urban farmers and communities nationwide.

Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP):

Created by the 2018 Farm Bill to better focus on the needs of urban farmers.

Urban Ag Subcommittee Objective:

Serves as the primary advisor to the Virginia State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) chaired by the State Conservationist regarding urban agricultural conservation.



Virginia NRCS Urban Agriculture Subcommittee CHARTER

1. **Committee's Official Designation**
The official designation of this committee is the Virginia Natural Resources Conservation Service Urban Agriculture Subcommittee, hereafter referred to as the UAS.
2. **Authority**
The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are under section 1261 and section 1240H of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334). This subcommittee is being established in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.
3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities**
The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 supports the development of a State Technical Committee subcommittee with the mission to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices. The objective of the subcommittee is to be the primary advisor to the Virginia NRCS State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) chaired by the Virginia NRCS State Conservationist (STC) regarding urban agricultural conservation.
4. **Description of Duties**
The UAS will assist the STAC and STC by:

Urban Agriculture Subcommittee

Description of duties:

This subcommittee will assist the STAC and STC by:

1. Identifying local urban agriculture needs, emerging practices, resource concerns, and potential partnering entities to support urban, small-scale, and innovative production.
2. Identifying local barriers to successful implementation of conservation strategies by urban, small-scale, and innovative agriculture, especially for new and beginning farmers.
3. Evaluating and reviewing ongoing innovations in agriculture production and conservation and extension activities relating to urban and community agriculture, including compost, food waste reduction, and innovative production,
4. Developing recommendations on outreach strategies that meet the unique and complex conservation issues facing producers in urban environments,
5. Providing additional relevant assistance and advice to the STC.



Urban Agriculture Office – Short-Term Plan

Quinton Service Center

- NRCS and FSA are already colocated here and serving the city of Richmond and surrounding urban areas.
- This team was involved in establishing one of the first FSA County Committees for Urban Agriculture and continues to shepherd this pilot project.



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Urban Agriculture Office – Long-Term Plan

Collocated with or near a **Soil & Water Conservation District** and **Virginia Cooperative Extension Office** with urban ag programs to:

- Maximize visibility
- Increase exposure
- Offer one-stop shopping for various urban ag programs



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People's Garden Sites – Cornerstone Community Garden

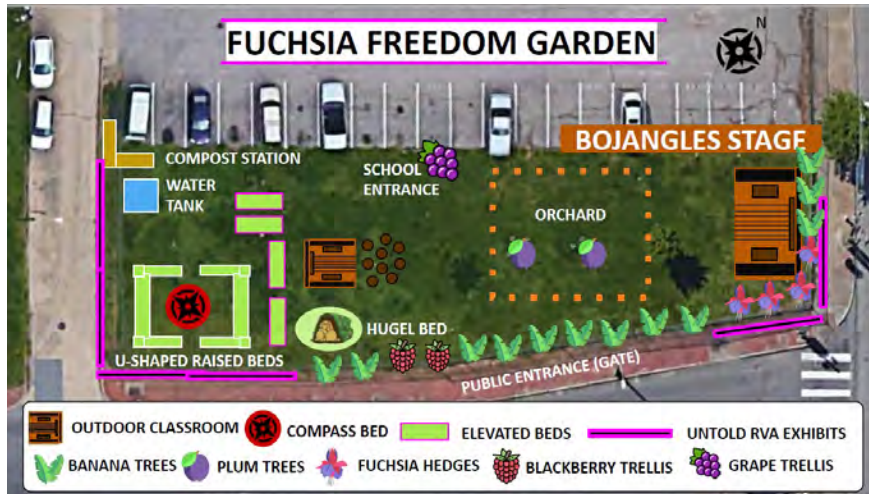
Fairfield Middle School

- Established in 2012 and now encompasses three acres
- Partnering with the Community Food Collaborative via MOU
- Supports a CSA Program
- Integrated into the school curriculum through the Backyard Urban Gardens (BUG) program
- Approved for a full-time Community Agriculturist position



People's Garden Garden Sites

Richmond Alternative School



This proposed garden in historic Jackson Ward would also feature a visual exhibition with a historical narrative to commemorate the rich legacy of this community.

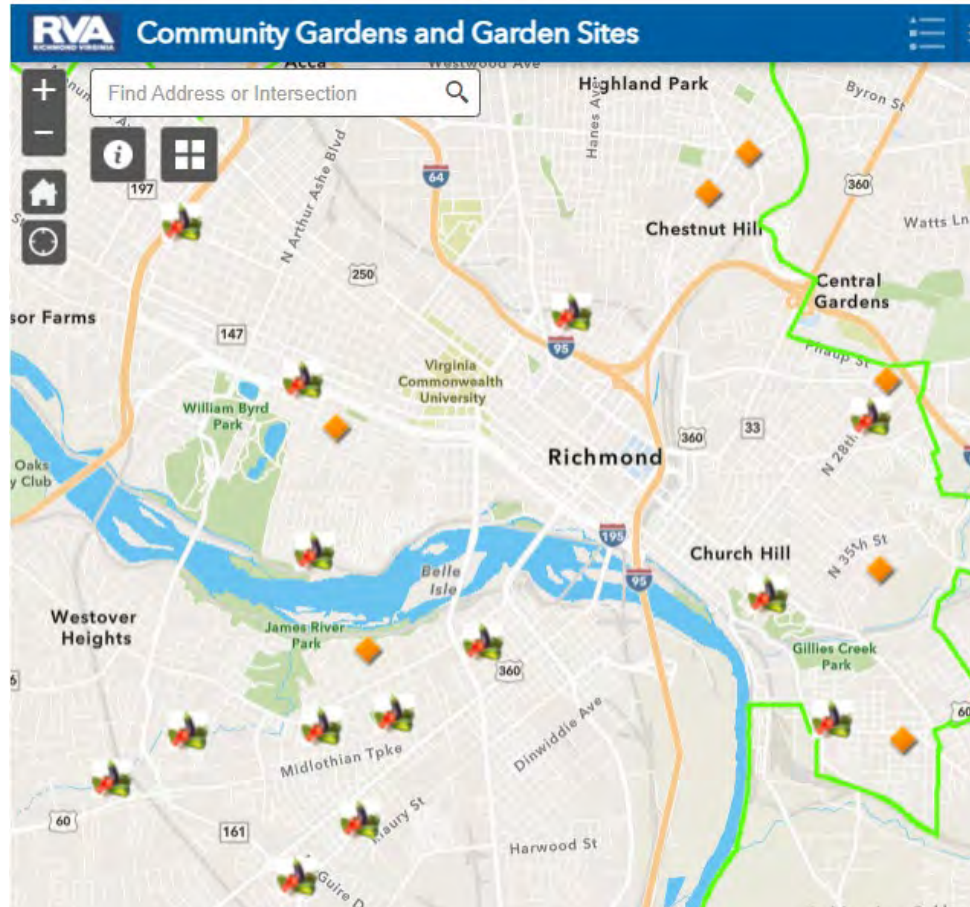
Swansboro Community Garden



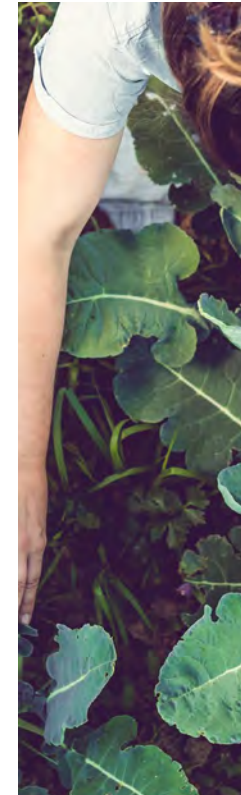
A local church and community members support this garden established in a vacant lot in a food desert.



People's Garden Sites



Other Community Garden Sites in Richmond, Va.



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Watershed Programs and Rehabilitation:



- Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) Buchanan County
- Cherrystone Creek 1 & 2

Mat Lyons, State Conservation Engineer



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Town of Hurley (Buchanan County) EWP



- Received notification of EWP funding approval for the approved sites on January 12, 2022 and initiated weekly coordination with FEMA.
- The EWP agreement was finalized on March 15, 2022.
- Buchanan County is currently working through the design, permitting and scheduling for the approved sites.



Cherrystone Creek 1 and Cherrystone Creek 2A

Watershed Plan Supplement/Environmental Assessments completed

Cherrystone Creek 1 - September 2019

Cherrystone Creek 2A - August 2019

Design funding

Cherrystone Creek 1 - FY22 Watershed Rehabilitation Program funding

- \$790,000 for the cost of the design and local project administration costs
- Cooperative agreement signed 3/30/22
- Final design due 4/30/24

Cherrystone Creek 2A - IIJA funding

- \$790,000 for the cost of the design and local project administration costs
- Cooperative agreement in process





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Conservation Reserve Program Update

Emily Horsley, FSA Program Manager



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CRP Signup Results – VIRGINIA FY21



General Signup 58 – 92% Acceptance Rate

	Received	Accepted	Rejected
Offers	52	48	4
Acres	1,778 ac	1,619 ac	159 ac

Grasslands SU204 – closed May 13th

	Received FY21	Received FY22
Offers	104	142
Acres	3,518 ac	4,576 ac



State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)

- **Press Release – 4/18/22**

- [USDA Accepting New or Modified Proposals for Its State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program](#)

- We encourage government entities, nonprofits, and other groups to take advantage of this unique opportunity to help us manage wildlife habitat, and we are committed to supporting and working with our partners to meet high-priority state conservation goals.
 - Through SAFE, producers and landowners restore vital habitat in alignment with high-priority state wildlife conservation goals. Specifically, landowners establish wetlands, grasses, and trees. These practices are designed to enhance important wildlife populations by creating critical habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water health by working as a barrier to sediment and nutrient run-off before they reach waterways.
 - Eligible entities for SAFE include government entities, non-profits, and private organizations.

- **Notice CRP-966 –**

- [Announcing Request for New or Modified SAFE Proposals](#)

- **Stakeholder Webinar –**

- [SAFE Partner Webinar – April 26, 2022](#)

- **SAFE –**

- [Fact Sheet](#)



Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR30)

- **Press Release – 4/1/22**

- [USDA Offers CLEAR30 Option for Producers to Enroll Land with Expiring Conservation Contracts](#)

- Producers may apply for CLEAR30 **from April 1, 2022, through Aug. 5, 2022.**
 - CLEAR30 is a 30 year contract option for certain continuous CRP reenrollment.
 - Cropland and certain pastureland currently enrolled in Continuous CRP or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and dedicated to an eligible water quality practice such as riparian buffers, contour strips, grass waterways or wetland restoration may be eligible if their contracts are expiring by September 30, 2022.

- **Stakeholder Webinar –**

- [CLEAR30 Partner Webinar – April 12, 2022](#)

- **CLEAR30 –**

- [Fact Sheet](#)

- [Primary Practices](#)



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Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

- The 2018 Farm Bill broadened the types of partners USDA can work with under CREP.
 - In addition to working with State and Tribal Governments, USDA can now partner with a wide-range of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) such as non-profits, private companies, and foundations. FSA encourages conservation partners to consider supporting a CREP project. Interested partners should contact their [CREP Regional Specialist](#) or visit the [CREP for Partners webpage](#).
- **Press Release – 4/18/22**
[USDA Accepting New or Modified Proposals for Its State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program](#)
- **CREP for Partners Website –**
https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement/crep_for_partners/index
- **CREP –**
[Fact Sheet](#)



Climate-Smart Commodities Funding Opportunity

- The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities funding opportunity will finance pilot projects that create market opportunities for U.S. agricultural and forestry products that use climate-smart production practices and include innovative, cost-effective ways to measure and verify greenhouse gas benefits.
- **Press Release – 3/11/22**
[USDA to Extend Application Deadline for Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Funding](#)
- **Extended Deadlines –**
 - The new deadlines to apply via [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. ET:
 - First Funding Pool – May 6, 2022
Proposals from \$5 million to \$100 million
 - Second Funding Pool – June 10, 2022
Proposals from \$250,000 to \$4,999,999
- [Frequently asked questions](#) are also available on the website to help answer questions.



Contact



Emily Horsley

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Farm Programs Specialist

USDA, Farm Service Agency

Virginia FSA State Office

1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 138

Richmond, VA 23229

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www.fsa.usda.gov/crp



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Chesapeake Bay Update

Leon Tillman, NRCS Chesapeake Bay Coordinator



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Chesapeake Bay 2018 – 2020 Action Plan

Bay Wide Accomplishments

NRCS established an action plan for the Chesapeake Bay for work between 2018 and 2020.

Based on recommendations and doesn't describe all NRCS programs and services.

Quantitative and qualitative goals and priorities included:

- Water Quality
- Soil Health
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat
- Training of Conservation Professionals
- Partner and Public Engagement
- Client Outreach
- Science
- Technology
- Partnerships



Exceeded all natural resource, outreach and engagement goals.

- Water Quality (137%): >1.26 million ac
- Soil Health (131%): >917,300 ac
- Fish & Wildlife Habitat (121%): >145,500 ac
- Training (134%): >6,300 trained
- Public Engagement (146%): >40,500 engaged
- Client Outreach (437%): >69,400 new & underserved customers



Chesapeake Bay 2018 – 2020 Action Plan

Bay Wide Accomplishments

NRCS's 2018–2020 Chesapeake Bay Action Plan established a goal of implementing practices to improve water quality on 920,000 acres.

Through technical and financial assistance, implemented improvements to improve water quality on over 1.2 million acres.

NRCS has a goal to implement targeted conservation within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. As of the end of 2020, there had been implementation of conservation practices through financial assistance programs on over 3.34 million acres.

According to the Chesapeake Bay Program-Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST), the watershed's modeled sediment load goal of 18.5 million pounds has been met and exceeded.

FY 2018-2020 Action Plan Milestone Accomplishments

Natural Resource Priorities



Outreach and Engagement Priorities



Information Key



Contact Information

Contact your local USDA Service Center for more information or: www.nrcs.usda.gov

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Chesapeake Bay VA Accomplishments

Progressing conservation, partnerships, outreach and engagement

Invested over \$81 million in conservation delivery (technical and financial assistance)

Natural Resource Priority Accomplishments (2018 – 2020)

Water Quality: +343,000 acres

Soil Health: +250,000 acres

Fish & Wildlife Habitat: +26,000 acres

Nearly 566 acres of farmlands and wetlands protected through conservation easements

\$1.3 million invested through National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) program contracts to install priority practices in the Smith Creek Watershed



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NRCS Chesapeake Bay 2021 – 2025 Action Plan

Drafting update to the action plan for 2021 – 2025 to continue and advance NRCS priorities and goals for the agency across the watershed.

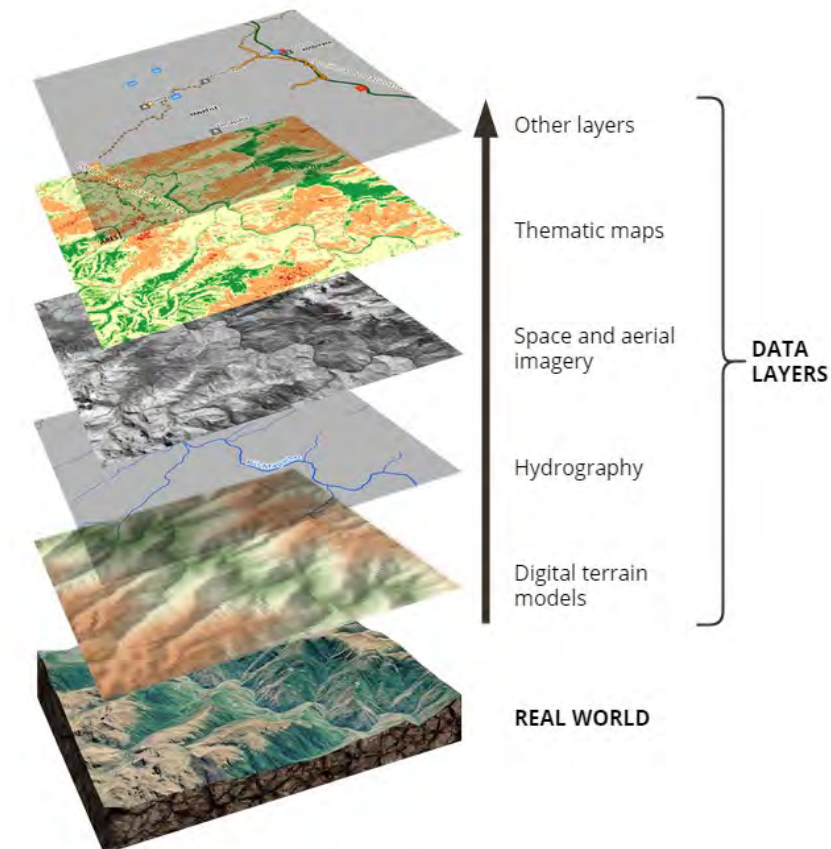
Retaining prior goals and priorities. Evaluating goals and priorities to include USDA and NRCS priorities for climate resiliency, social justice, and urban agriculture.

Increasing goals and measures for acres addressing resource concerns, engagement, and outreach.



Chesapeake Bay Initiative- May 2022

- **USDA will invest more than \$20 million in additional funding, in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to help farmers implement conservation practices to improve water quality.**
- **From 2011 to 2021, USDA/NRCS has invested more than \$1.1 billion towards helping producers and partners meet or exceed goals in the Chesapeake Bay.**
- **The funding will support practices that will prioritize nutrient reductions, sediment reductions, livestock and waste management, and wetland creation.**
- **Using geospatial information systems (GIS) such as USGS Sparrow maps, soil maps, 303d impaired streams maps, partner feedback, local recommendations, etc. to target conservation funding and identify priority areas.**



Chesapeake Bay Initiative- May Announcement

- Announced coordination of USDA and EPA to create a new federal task force for agriculture crediting in the Bay.
 - Over the next year, identify opportunities to more fully credit agriculture conservation efforts and outcomes and establish an action plan.
- Deliver conservation technical and financial assistance through collaboration
 - NRCS and EPA Funding Coordination
 - NRCS/ USGS/ EPA Monitoring Coordination
 - Evaluating agreements and opportunities to expand technical and financial assistance delivery





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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Partner Update

Jake Reilly, Director, NFWF Chesapeake Bay Program



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NFWF Programs and Partnerships Refresh



Competitive Grants Programs

- **Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants** accelerate the rate and scale of water quality improvements specifically through the coordinated and collaborative efforts of sustainable, regional-scale partnerships in implementing proven water quality improvement practices more cost-effectively
 - Fall solicitation annually with awards of up to \$1M
- **Small Watershed Grants** promote voluntary, community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse and vital habitats of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams
 - Spring solicitation annually with awards of up to \$500,000
- **NEW Chesapeake WILD Grants** support coordinated habitat conservation and restoration actions across Federal, state, local, and regional entities and conservation partners
 - Spring solicitation annually with awards of up to \$750,000 annually



NFWF Programs and Partnerships Refresh



Leveraging Farm Bill Conservation Programs

- **NFWF encourages all applicants and grantees to look first to leverage existing cost-share programs first** before utilizing NFWF funding to fill financial assistance gaps and evaluates proposals accordingly
- **Grant funding often supports additional technical assistance capacity** to help address known shortfalls in available funding and capacity
- **Projects increasingly utilize comprehensive on-farm conservation approaches** to maximize outcomes for water, carbon, and beyond
- **Grants provide seed funding to build and enhance partnerships** that can later compete for and manage competitive USDA programs (e.g., RCPP, CIG, Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities)



NFWF Programs and Partnerships Refresh



(Selected) NFWF-Supported Virginia-Based Private Lands Conservation Partnerships

- **Virginia Soil Health Coalition** coordinated by Virginia Tech
- **James River Riparian Buffer Consortium** led by the James River Association
- **Mountains-to-Bay Grazing Alliance** led by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- **Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative** led by the Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
- **Eastern Brook Trout Restoration and Conservation Partnerships** led by Trout Unlimited
- **Rappahannock River Roundtable** coordinated by Friends of the Rappahannock
- **Virginia Conservation Assistance Program** delivery by VASWCD and districts



NFWF Programs and Partnerships Refresh



Ongoing NFWF Priorities and Needs

- **Scaled implementation of wetland and forest buffer restoration** on private lands, for water quality, habitat, and resilience benefits
- **Scaled implementation of improved agricultural nutrient management** to meet local water quality and Bay restoration goals
- **Engagement of supply chain and industry partnerships** to drive increased adoption of conservation practices beyond early adopters
- **Efforts that leverage agricultural conservation practices to improve farm resilience**
- **Efforts to engage socially disadvantaged producers** in adopting agricultural conservation practices



NFWF Programs and Partnerships Refresh

Questions or Project Ideas?

- Contact NFWF Directly

jake.reilly@nfwf.org

- Contact NFWF's Contracted Field Liaisons in Virginia

Kristen Saacke Blunk (Headwaters, LLC) | kristen@headwaters-llc.org

Kristen Hughes Evans (Sustainable Chesapeake) | kristen@sustainablechesapeake.org





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Question and Answer

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Closing Remarks

Dr. Edwin Martinez Martinez, State Conservationist



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*(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or*

(2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

*(3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov
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