

Vermont NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting

July 17, 2024

In-person: USDA State Office, Colchester

Virtual: Microsoft Teams

NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 16, 2024

Attendees (Colchester): Travis Thomason (NRCS), Luis Aponte (NRCS), Angela Hyldburg (NRCS), Chadd Cupit (NRCS), Ally Hook (NRCS), Chris E. Smith (USFWS), and Michael Fernandez (BCNRCD)

Attending (MS Teams): Michelle Jezeski (NRCS), Keith Feliciano-Cortes (NRCS), Jazmond Carter (NRCS), Dave Blodgett (NRCS), Phyllicxia Moore (NRCS), Marybeth Whitten (NRCS), John Van Hoesen (NRCS), Stephanie Vasilopoulos (NRCS), Liam Fagan (Senator Sanders' Office), Owen Doherty (Congresswoman Balint's Office), Angelica Quintana (FS), Marli Rupe (VT DEC), Laura Ranker (VT DEC), Dave Adams (VT FW), Jill Arace (VACD), Jeff Farber (VACD), Emily Nummer (VACD), Nina Gage (VAAF), Ryan Patch (VAAF), William Eldridge (VFW), Kate MacFarland (USDA National Agroforestry Center), Stacy Cibula (VHCB), Alissa White (American Farmland Trust), Vern Grubinger (UVM Extension/VVBGA), Margaret Fowle (Audubon VT), Nancy LaRowe (NOFA-VT), Susannah Howard (UFLT), Theresa Vander Woude (EPA), Jennifer Byrne (WRNRCD), Heather Blunk (WCNRCD), Abe Collins (Land Care Cooperative).

Vermont NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting

July 17, 2024 | 9:30 am-12:00 pm

USDA State Office, Colchester and MS Teams

Agenda

Time	Topic	Speaker
9:30 – 9:45 am	State Conservationist Welcome and NRCS Update	Travis Thomason
9:45 – 9:55 am	Farm Service Agency Update	John Roberts
9:55 – 10:05 am	Rural Development Update	Sarah Waring
10:05 – 10:25 am	Legislative Update	Congressional Delegations
10:25 – 10:45 am	Programs Update	Michelle Jezeski
10:45 – 10:50 am	Break	
10:50 – 11:05 am	Climate Subcommittee Update	John Van Hoesen
11:05 – 11:20 am	Engineering Update	Ally Hook
11:20 – 11:35 am	Ecological Sciences Update	Jaz Carter
11:35 – 11:55 am	Partnerships and Initiatives Update	Luis Aponte
11:55 – 12:00 pm	Wrap-up	Travis Thomason

Welcome and NRCS Updates:

Travis Thomason, State Conservationist, NRCS Vermont

Welcome. Review of ground rules for hybrid meetings. Review of the agenda.

NRCS Updates

Gantt Chart

- Review of Program Deadlines (application, assessing and ranking, approval, obligation) mapped over the fiscal year and how that aligns with the State Technical Committee and subcommittees.
- Today we will review the recommendations from the subcommittees, as shared by the NRCS staff leads for each subcommittee.
- NRCS leadership team will provide guidance to employees on the decisions made from those recommendations for fiscal year 2025.

Mission, Vision and FY24 Agency Priorities *(See slides for details)*

- Not expecting Agency Priorities to change for FY25, but with the upcoming election, changes could happen.

Flooding

- Thank you to all those who have stepped in to help with flooding. One year to the day from last year's floods.
- FSA is the lead USDA agency for emergencies
- John Roberts, FSA Executive Director oversees and chairs the USDA State Emergency Board. NRCS plays a support role.
- Our teams have been asked to listen to producers regarding their needs and the impact from the floods and to encourage producers to report their losses to FSA.
- VAAFM has a survey for producers to collect information on the impact of the floods.
- Not currently rolling out EQIP Disaster Assistance, but still gathering data
- Submitted a request to activate our EWP Program (Emergency Watershed Protection Program), which does not require a Presidential or Secretarial Disaster Declaration

Other Updates

- FY25 application deadline is August 23, 2024
- Encourage producers to sign-up even if they have exceeded their payment limitation. That way if a new Farm Bill is passed, they will have an application on file.
- Finalizing obligations for FY24; Summary of data will be shared at the October 16th meeting.
- Reminder: Fall 2024 Conservation Partnership Bus Tour will be on September 18th. A day long tour of farms with lunch provided (thanks to a partner).
- John Roberts (FSA) and Sarah Waring (RD) are not able to attend today's meeting due to other work priorities.

Locally Led Conservation Delivery Framework *(See slide for details)*

- High level overview of framework and plans to incorporate this process for FY25 and beyond.
 - Creating a subcommittee to meet quarterly with NRCS District Managers.
 - Create higher Local Fund Pools for both FA and TA.
 - Progressive increase for the next several years.
 - Will be offering "Road Shows" to present to Conservation District board supervisors.
 - Goal: 80% of EQIP funds to Locally Led fund pool (mini RCPPs)
 - More information to come at the October 16th meeting.
-

Farm Service Update:

No update

Rural Development Update:

No update

Legislative Updates

Senator Sander's Office

Liam Fagan, Legislative Assistant (DC), liam_fagan@sanders.senate.gov

Ryan Joseph, Outreach Coordinator (VT), ryan_joseph@sanders.senate.gov

- From Rutland, Vermont and covers Agriculture, Small Business, Postal Service and Veterans
- Farm Bill 2018 extension ends September 30, 2024.
 - Not hearing much movement on the areas of difference within the new Farm Bill. We understand that our counterparts across the aisle and the House continue to want to reduce nutrition funding across the board, and that is a hard no for Democrats within the Senate as well as the chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee.
- Senate is working in a bipartisan fashion on the 12 yearly appropriations bills. They completed agriculture as well as a couple others last week and have a few others ready to review before the August recess. Unsure if the House will have any type of agreement on FY25 spending package before the end of the session.
- Echoing Travis's comments, it is unbelievable that we're in the same situation again with the flooding. Thank you to everybody here who's been working on the ground with producers to get this data and help folks clean up with their immediate needs.
- We were working to increased funding requests for supplemental disaster relief from last year's floods but have paused to determine the needs for this year's floods. Please let us know what the needs are for agriculture and if there are gaps not served by the current programs.

Congresswoman Balint's Office

Owen Doherty, Staff Assistant (VT), owen.doherty@mail.house.gov

Kate Gorud (DC), kate.gorud@mail.house.gov

- Covering agriculture, environment, climate issues
 - Waiting for a lot of things to move forward
 - Congresswoman Balint is excited to be introducing a reauthorization of the Lake Champlain Basin program with our Senate colleagues in the next few weeks.
 - Encourage folks to reach out with any issues or concerns related to the flooding.
-

NRCS Programs Update *(See slides for details)*

Michelle Jezeski, Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

2024 Program Review

- FY2024 Application Allocation
- FY2024 IRA Allocation (Inflation Reduction Act)
- EQIP Ranking Pools – Farm Bill Funds
- 2024 Practice Summary – Top 20 Most Frequently Planned Practices
- 2024 ACEP Summary

2025 Programs and Recommendations

- Application deadline: August 23, 2024 (All Programs except Easements)
- EQIP Allocation Recommendation
 - Increase community scale and local fund pools
 - Conservation Incentive Contract (CIC) to be funded with IRA
 - Reduce General Statewide allocation
 - No funds have been allocated for Disaster, at this time
- Local Fund Pool Proposals (Information will be sent out earlier in further years, mini-RCPPs)
- EQIP State Priority Resource Concerns: In addition to the FY 2024 priority resource concerns, recommendation to add resource concerns that assist with increasing flood resiliency.
- CSP State Priority Resource Concerns: Recommend they remain the same as FY 2024
- High Priority Practices - 10 practices that address water quality impairment due to excess nutrients, address water conservation and wildlife habitat, or they are geographically targeted to a specific watershed. No recommended changes for FY 2025.
- State Priority Geographic Areas – Recommendation to ensure that VT303d impaired waterbodies are included for FY 2025.
- Source Water Protection Areas – No recommendation for change of areas or practices.

2025 Easements Programs and Recommendations

- Recommendations to move up deadline
 - ACEP-ALE IRA and ACEP-WRE IRA – November 22, 2024
 - ACEP-ALE and ACEP-WRE – January 24, 2025
- ALE – Expansion of Priority areas for ALE-IRA to include sugarbush areas and areas impacted by high development pressure and risk of land conversions
- WRE – Keep ranking priorities the same as FY 2024. Highly organic soils that optimize soil carbon sequestration and potential to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, prior converted and degraded wetlands, and the existing forest habitat that will be maintained through forest management plans.

Comments/Questions:

Comment: Was the feedback provided by the White River NRCD taken into consideration?

Response: It seemed there was some confusion on process and those were addressed during Office Hours, which partners are invited to attend.

Action item: Travis and Programs team to connect with Jennifer Byrne on the feedback provided by the WRNRCD.

Request: To push back the application deadline of August 23, 2024, for FY 2025.

Response: Right now, we are going to keep it as August 23, 2024, and handle issues case by case. We recognize that will be a challenge for some, but we are staying with this date.

Question: Regarding the State Priority Geographic Areas, are we going to add the Hoosic River? Is it too late for this year or should it be included next year?

Response/Action item: Let's review this for next year. Joe Bondi, Water Quality Specialist will be the lead on this work.

Climate Subcommittee Update *(See slides for details)*

John Van Hoesen, State GIS Specialist

How It Started

- Review and comment on priority list of [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry \(CSAF\)](#)

Mitigation Activities List.

- Identify potential areas of additional investment in NRCS and Partners to support CSAF activities.
- Offer recommendations and rationale for pursuing additional or different CSAF activities in (FY25 – 26).
- Provide summary of recommendations by July 2024
 - Vermont did not have additional recommendations for FY25 (not many states did)
- Historical NRCS Investment/Interest in Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
 - Three documents were the foundation of IRA and the NRCS Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Organizational Recommendations

- Eight recommendations made with connection to Strategic Goals and Objectives

Technical Recommendations

- Eight recommendations made with connection to Strategic Goals and Objectives
- Reminder: Must be able to quantify the benefit of the practices.

Where It's Going

- Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Agriculture and Forestry: Methods for Entity-Scale Inventory (“The Blue Book”) – released in April 2024
 - This informs what stays on the CSAF list.
 - Nothing was taken off the CSAF list for FY25, but the narratives changed and there are some more constrained applications of some of the CSAF practices. That is a function of our ability to quantify the climate mitigation benefit.
- USDA Climate Adaptation Plan 2024-2027 – released in June 2024
 - Charges a vision for where USDA might go
 - There are four action items that align with NRCS work

Comments/Questions:

Question: How does someone join this subcommittee.

Answer: An email was sent in August to all subcommittee members from FY23 asking if they wanted to remain on the committee for FY24. A GovDelivery email was sent in October to all registered to receive State Technical Committee emails. It includes the meeting info and POC for each subcommittee. All subcommittees are on the NRCS event website with MS Teams links.

Comment: Concerns about USDA overall vision with this work.

Response: If you have recommendations on how to change that or make it more holistic, feel free to send them my way (john.vanhoesen@usda.gov) and I'll forward them on to the Climate Office.

Engineering Update (See slides for details)

Ally Hook, Supervisory Engineer

Irrigation

- Funding is provided under AMA and EQIP programs
- Not a lot of irrigation was funded in FY24 due to ranking questions. Hope to work through backlog of requests next year.

Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water

- FDA – Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) Final Ruling
- Holistic approach more than just water testing
- NRCS is not the enforcement agency, but it is something that we need to be aware of
- The compliance date that most affects Vermont producers is **April 5, 2027** - Covered farms for which, on a rolling basis, the average annual monetary value of produce the farm sold during the previous 3-year period is more than \$25,000 but no more than \$250,000 (very small businesses).

Subsurface Drainage (Tile)

- Increase in requests to cost share on pattern tile drainage systems
- No plans to cost share recommended for FY25

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) Update

- Watershed event – July 2023 (*See slides for details*)
- Towns are struggling to find engineers as the private sector engineers cannot handle the workload
- New/recent floods (July 2024) are requiring reassessment of some sites before work can begin from 2023 floods
- A new Equitable Relief issued for July 2024 floods

Dam Rehab Update

- Jewell Brook Watershed – Ludlow

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operation (WFPO) Update

- Requesting funds for a potential project at Amherst Lake in Plymouth
- Les Wright, Engineer, is the point person

Comments/Questions:

Comment: Nina Gage (VAAFMM) - If there are any USDA staff seeking guidance on FSMA changes for VT Farms, our Food Safety Produce Program can assist with training or guidance regarding FSMA water quality testing requirements. They are a little busy this week due to the floods but encourage any coordination with Tucker as needed. Tucker Diego: 802-622-4412; tucker.diego@vermont.gov

Action item: NRCS Office Hours - FSMA (Jim/Jaz)

Question: Irrigation - What level of documentation/proof is required to demonstrate two years of irrigation, does that include just hand watering?

Response: Written documentation of what has been done (with as much specificity as possible) is acceptable.

Question: Regarding the EWP workload and private sector engineering firms. Is it due to capacity, skill set, or NRCS standards?

Answer: It's about capacity. There is so much private sector work if they bid on a project the cost is extremely high.

Ecological Sciences Update (*See slides for details*)

Jaz Carter, Acting State Resources Conservationist

FY 2025 Payment Schedules:

- National Instruction 300-313 updated in Feb 2024, offers all available scenarios for adopted conservation practices

Vermont FOTG Notice 74

- Deep Tillage (324) is a newly adopted practice for Technical Assistance (TA), but will not be available for cost share/Financial Assistance (FA) in FY 2025
- Select practice standards and support documents have been revised

Forest and Wildlife Subcommittee

- Subcommittee members: NRCS, VT FPR, VT FW, NWTF, UVM Extension
- Forest Update
 - New component practice to Forest Stand Improvement (666): 'Managing for Old Forest Characteristics'
 - Review of purpose and benefits
 - NRCS Foresters will lead planning and implementation
 - Criteria was developed for all forests in Vermont
 - Larger diameter trees and forest stands are eligible
 - Maintaining and managing for numerous large trees per acre (Includes active management such as crown thinning)
 - Maintaining and/or increasing large standing dead (snags) and down trees
 - Uneven-aged regeneration treatments for structure/species diversity
- Wildlife Update - Endangered Species Act (ESA)
 - IPaC has been updated with a more decisive and useful Determination Key for Northern Long-Eared Bats and Tri-Colored Bat
 - Tri-Colored Bat and Wood Turtle might be added to the Vermont threatened species list
 - Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) –Federal Species info and range maps - <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/>
- Planning Guidance - ESA
 - New Interim Practice – Wildlife Habitat Site Preparation (828)
 - Intended to make pollinator plantings better
 - Gives proper attention and funding to site prep
 - Three (3) payment scenarios available currently for herbicide treatment as it pertains to wildlife habitat site preparation
 - Added guidance for existing practices
 - Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment (654)
 - Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490)

Wetlands Subcommittee Update

- Lawsuit results changed the definition of what is a certified wetland determination
- NHQ issued guidance:
 - National Bulletin 180-24-7: CPA-Announcing National Instruction on Treatment of Certified Wetland Determinations
 - National Instruction: 190-319: Wetland Determination and Delineation Subpart A - Certification of Wetland Determinations
 - Review slides for details.

Water Quality Subcommittee Update

- Subcommittee members: NRCS, VT DEC, VAAFM
- Agreed to keep things the same for FY25 (any other changes must be submitted by 8/23/2024 to Joe Bondi or Jaz Carter)
- IRA funding can now be used to fund projects in those watersheds

Agronomy Updates

- CPS Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805) and CPS Pasture & Hayland Planting (512) can

- be planned together
- CPS Organic Management (823) can be planned on currently Certified Organic farms, but cannot be funded through the “Organic Transition Initiative”
- Anticipated Conservation Practices updates coming in FY2025:
 - Cover Crop (340)
 - Nutrient Management (590)

Grazing Updates

- New “Grazing Plan” excel template coming to eFOTG
- New Interim Conservation Practices Standards coming soon:
 - Strategic Harvested Forage Management—Code 827 (Bale Grazing)
 - Currently available as a CSP enhancement (E528P—Implementing Bale or Swath Grazing to Increase Soil Organic Matter and Reduce Nutrients in Surface Water).

Cultural Resources Updates

- New Prototype Programmatic Agreements (PPAs) with State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Stockbridge-Munsee Community Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) coming in FY25.
- Additional Practices will be added to Appendices A-C. Look for an updated list of Conservation Practices Requiring No Further CR Review in FY25 once the PPAs have been finalized.
- Any change in project design or practice location requires an additional CR Review as stated in the Comments/Required Action Section of the Vt-ECS-1 form.
- Also remember to take into consideration the cumulative and foreseeable effects of your project when requesting a CR Review as required under 36 CFR 800. Some examples of cumulative and foreseeable effects include access roads built to NRCS construction sites, borrow and disposal areas, and buried utility lines dug to NRCS funded conservation practices.

Comments/Questions:

Question: What are the anticipated changes to the Cover Crop (340) practice standards?

Response: The information has not been shared with us yet.

Question: At what point will the FY25 Payment Schedule be released?

Response: Great question. As soon as we receive the information in Vermont, we will get it out to you. Historically the agency tries to get it out in the summer. At this time use FY24 to predict what it will look. (FY24 came out in December 2023).

Question: What is the status of the agroforestry specific practice standards, forest management plan (FMP) addendums to do alley cropping and silvopasture and forest farming practice planning? I've heard that there are some more specific practice standards that are going to be released. Is that anticipated for FY25 or FY26? Are we still going to be able to use those FMP amendments to plan those or should I use a different planning practice?

Response: This is still a work in progress. Vermont is leading the nation in this space, so we are ahead of the game. Whether or not we can make the changes for FY25 is yet to be determined, but we're pushing hard to see if we can make those changes happen. The national office recognizes that we are trying to push it, but sometimes they are a bit behind.

Action item: Jaz to follow-up with Michael Fernandez, DM, BC NRCD, regarding use of FMP amendments (as stated in their local fund pool).

Comment: Chris Smith (USFWS) – Update to the update regarding Endangered Species Act (ESA). Tricolored bat, wood turtle, spotted turtle and Blanding turtle (no Blanding turtle in Vermont), the listing determinations whether they will be listed are expected out in September. Tricolored bats will be very

similar to what we are doing now for northern long eared bat. If wood turtle is listed that will have an impact on Vermont, given how widespread those are.

Action item: Further discussion at the October meeting if determinations listing has been made available.

Partnerships and Initiatives Update *(See slides for details)*

Luis Aponte, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives

Partnerships Umbrella

- Regional Conservation Partnerships Program (RCPP)
- Strategic Investments and Agreements
- Outreach and Communications

Partnerships Team

- RCPP Coordinator
 - Adam Dellinger, current RCPP Coordinator from PA, starting in mid-September
- Management Analyst – point of contact for partners regarding Investments and Agreements
 - Position to be filled
- Outreach Coordinator – working with partners to provide outreach on our programs
 - Cheyanne Rico, current Soil Conservationist from ME, starting in late August

RCPP Updates

- Agreements signed for 2 new projects
 - RCPP 3155 National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
 - RCPP 3273 VT Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC)
- RCPP Notice of Funding (NOFO): Closed July 2, 2025; New projects are being evaluated at the national level.
- RCPP NOFO for FY25 (released next summer): If you are interested or know someone who is interested, please be in touch with us as soon as possible so we have time to assist with the proposals.
- Active RCPP Projects (see slides for details)
 - RCPP 1865 – Maine is the lead state; CPS (395) Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
 - RCPP 3273 – NEW. This is a sequential to RCPP 2132 but added additional layers of conservation issues
 - RCPP 2132 – Improvements for water quality and land protection/easements; sunsetting
 - RCPP 2280 – Reducing the effects of erosion on the watershed of Lake Memphremagog
 - RCPP 2311 – CT River Watershed, improvements to plant productivity and health, reducing soil erosion, improving soil health
 - RCPP 3155 – NEW.
 - RCPP 2145 (AFA) – Being fully delivered by the VAAF, incentive to producers to reduce phosphorus in their land
- New RCPP Projects 3273 and 3155 (see slides)

Investments

- Our investments strategy is based on moving forward outcomes on the agency's priorities and strategic goals.
 - Agency Priority 5 and NRCS Strategic Goal 4: Expanding Locally Led conservation efforts statewide.
 - Agency Priority 3 and NRCS Strategic Goal/Objective 4.2: Increasing outreach to community scale, small scale and urban farmers.

Urban Ag Subcommittee

- Subcommittee chairs: Luis Aponte and Cheyanne Rico
- Number of applications and funding requested far exceeded our spending plan, but it was the first year and there was no past data to guide us (see slide for details)
- Plans for FY25 – increase dedicated funds, continue to gather data on demand and most used practices, focus on outreach to community/small scale and historically underserved (HU) producers
- Outreach Highlights – 2024 Soil Screening Events (Chadd Cupit led)
 - Offered a few events in FY23 in partnership with UVM (Master Gardeners) and Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (Boston) with a borrowed pXRF (lead detection). About half the samples scanned were contaminated.
 - Invested in our own pXRF device and offered events across the state at County Farmers Markets (26 events, 16 completed). Results are the same as last year, about 50% are testing contaminated by lead.
 - Partnering with Chittenden County Community Economic Development Office in the Old North End of Burlington for further screening. Finding contamination in backyard chicken eggs, paint chips in soils.
 - Looking to expand outreach with other partners for HU gardeners
 - Hoping to bring in producers who are interested in raised beds, mulching, use of biochar.

Comments/Questions:

Comment: Michael Fernandez is willing to assist with outreach efforts in Bennington County.

Wrap-up

Travis Thomason, State Conservationist, NRCS Vermont

Comment: Michael Fernandez, Bennington County NRCD, “THANK YOU to Phylicia Moore for her collaboration and support as the South Zone District Conservationist.” (Phylicia was recently promoted to Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations.)

Comment: Suggestion to have a more detailed agenda shared in advance.

Future meetings:

- October 16, 2024, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- January 22, 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- April 23, 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- July 23, 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- October 22, 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Thank you so much.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm



State Technical Committee Update – July 2024

Travis L. Thomason, State Conservationist

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Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mission

*We deliver
conservation solutions
so
agricultural producers can
conserve natural resources
and
feed a growing world.*

Vision

*Clean and abundant
water,
healthy soils,
resilient landscapes
and
thriving
agricultural communities
through
voluntary conservation.*

“Helping People Help the Land”

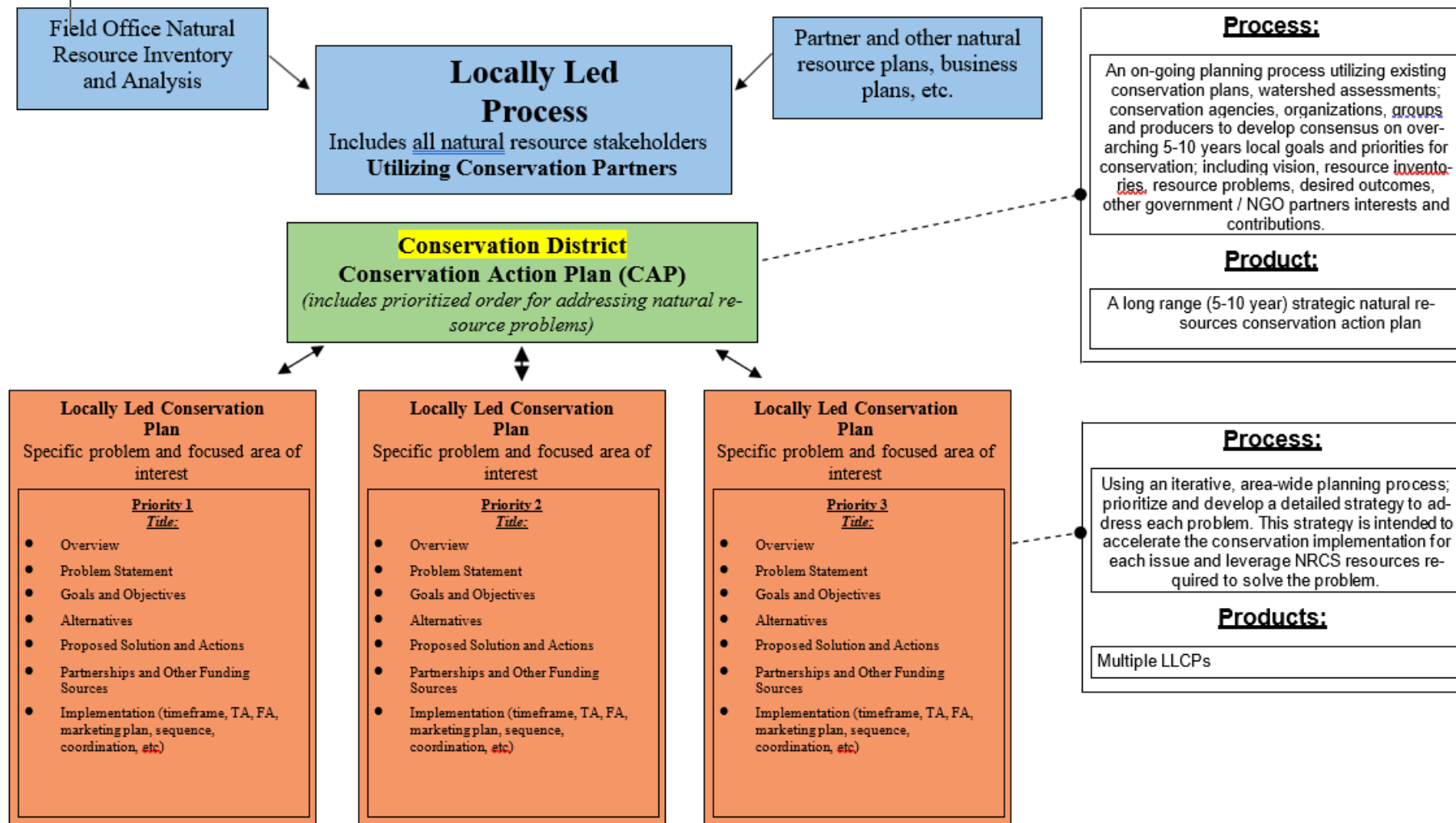


FY24 Agency Priorities

1. Ensure equity in the delivery and implementation of all NRCS programs and services.
2. Increase assistance for climate-smart agriculture and forestry to support producers in building resiliency across their operations.
3. Expand conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of urban farmers and communities nationwide.
4. Cultivate a complete and diverse workforce that has the right tools, technologies, and training to uphold the scientific integrity of NRCS.
5. Leverage innovative partnerships to expand NRCS's ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently.



Locally Led Conservation Delivery Framework



Non-Discrimination Statement

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Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture

July 17, 2024

VT State Technical Committee



NRCS Programs Update



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2024 Program Review

FY2024 Application Allocation

- **EQIP: \$7,771,840**
- **EQIP Gold Wing Warbler: \$263,725**
- **EQIP National Water Quality Initiative: \$681,291**
- **CSP: \$1,600,000 (40% Renewals, 60% Classic)**
- **ALE: \$2,608,585**
- **WRE: \$514,860**

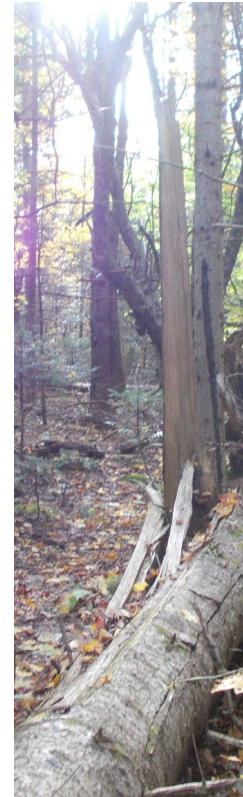
FY2024 IRA Allocation

- **EQIP: \$12,299,000**
- **CSP: \$1,034,000**



EQIP Ranking Pools – Farm Bill Funds

Account Name	2024
CPAs/DIAs/CEMAs	1%
CIC	5%
Local Pools	18%
Emergency Disaster	32%
General Statewide	18%
Beginning Farmer	1%
Socially Disadvantaged	1%
Community Scale Urban Ag	3%
Organic Initiative	1%
Energy	1%
Forest & Wildlife	5%
Source Water	3%



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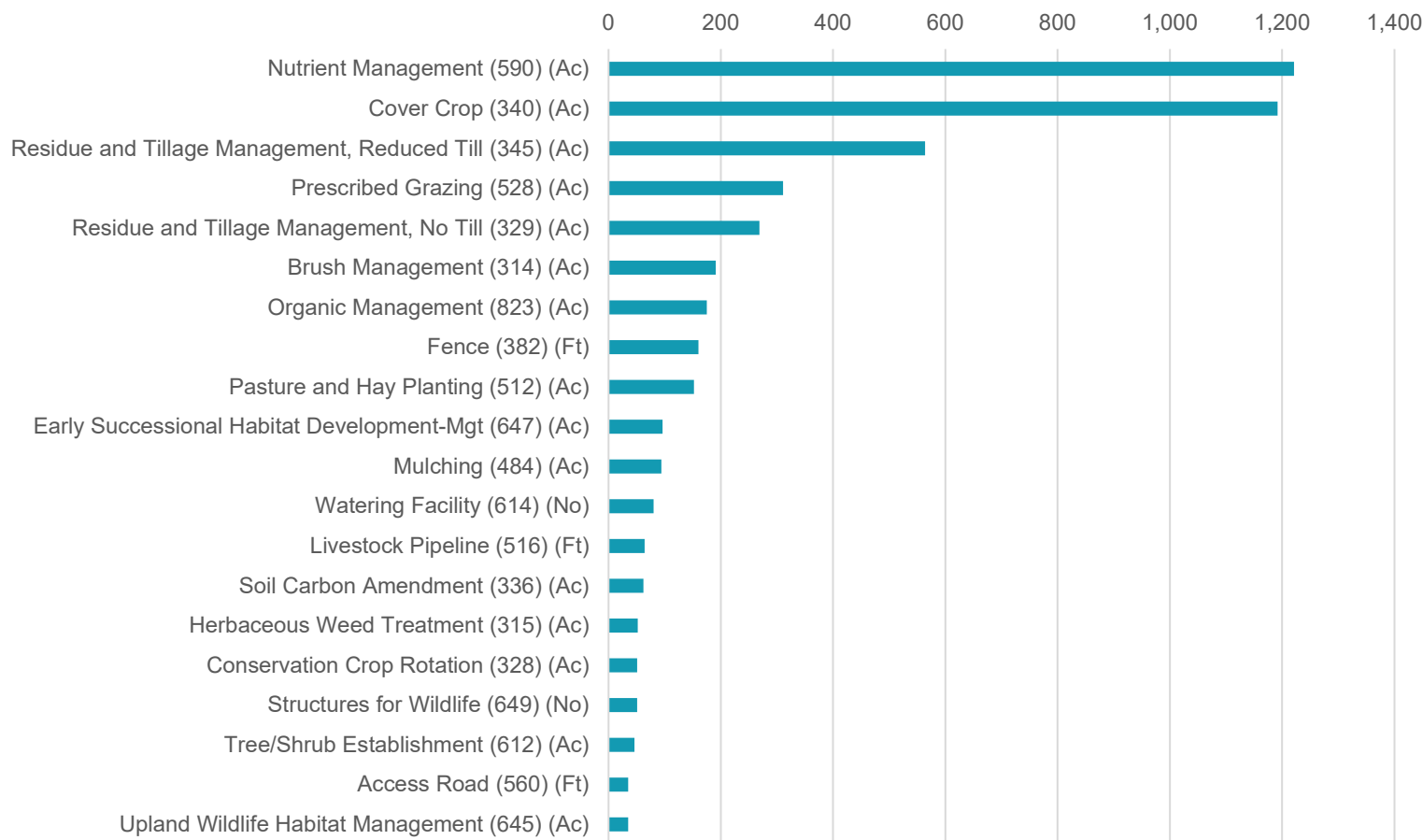
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2024 Practice Summary



Top 20 Most Frequently Planned Practices



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2024 ACEP Summary



FY24 ALE Enrollments (As of 7.17.2024)

	Count	Acres	Funds
New Enrollment	9	2043.4	\$ 2,114,500
Substitute	2	397.6	\$ 60,000
Grand Total	11	2,441	\$ 2,174,500

FY24 WRE Enrollments (As of 7.17.2024)

	Count	Offered acres	Total Estimated Cost
Grand Total	2	315.5	\$ 995,225



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Program Application Timelines

Application
Deadline
8/23/2024

All Programs
(Except
Easements)



United States Department of Agriculture

FY25 Recommendations



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EQIP Allocation Recommendation

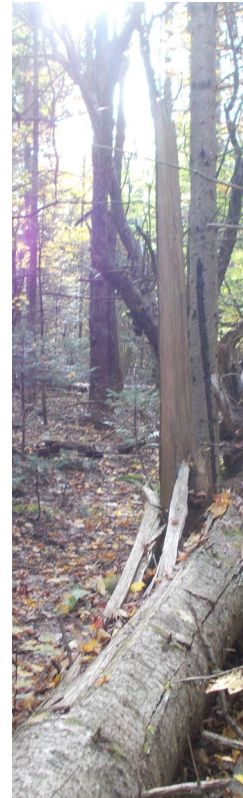
Account Name	2023	2024	2025 (Proposed)
CPAs/DIAs/CEMAs	1%	1%	1%
CIC	0%	5%	0%, Fund with IRA Funds
Local Pools	2%	18%	50%
Emergency Disaster	29%	32%	0%
General Statewide	37%	18%	16%
Beginning Farmer	2%	1%	2%
Socially Disadvantaged	1%	1%	2%
Community Scale Urban Ag	6%	3%	10%
Organic Initiative	1%	1%	2%
Energy	0%	1%	0
Forest & Wildlife	8%	5%	2%
Source Water	0%	3%	5%

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service



2025 Local Fund Pool Proposals

- **Orleans**
 - Invasive Species Control-\$300,000
- **Winooski River**
 - Streambank Stabilization-\$750,000
- **Windham Forest**
 - Forestry and wildlife-\$400,000
- **Windham Small Scale**
 - Grazing, crop, and irrigation practices-\$250,000
- **Northwest Zone**
 - Terrestrial wildlife habitat-\$1,500,000
- **Tri-District**
 - Soil Health and Agroforestry-\$750,000
- **White River Ottauquechee**
 - Agroforestry and small scale agriculture-\$800,000
- **Ompompanoosuc**
 - Beaver habitat-\$200,000



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State Priority Resource Concerns

2025 EQIP State Priority Resource Concerns as follows:

Water Quality:

- Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss
- Storage and handling of pollutants

Soil:

- Wind and water erosion
- Concentrated erosion
- Soil quality limitations (soil health) – focus on organic matter

Habitat and Forestry:

- Terrestrial habitat
- Degraded plant condition
- Concentrated erosion – trails and landings

Recommendation:

- Resource concerns that assist with increasing flood resiliency



State Priority Resource Concerns

2025 CSP State Priority Resource Concerns as follows:

State Priority Resource Concerns:

Agricultural Land Ranking Pools	Non-Industrial Private Forestland Ranking Pools
Degraded Plant Condition	Degraded Plant Condition
Pest Pressure	Fire Management
Livestock Production Limitation	Pest Pressure
Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pesticide Loss	Aquatic Habitat
Soil Quality Limitations	Soil Quality Limitations
Terrestrial Habitat	Terrestrial Habitat
Concentrated Erosion	Concentrated Erosion
Wind and Water Erosion	Wind and Water Erosion

High Priority Practices



Elevated Payment Rates (Top-10) – Pr prefix

313 – Waste Storage Facility

340 - Cover Crop

329 - Residue and Tillage Management – No till

345 - Residue and Tillage Management – Reduced till

391 – HUA (replacing Riparian Forest Buffer)

393 – Fence (replacing Filter Strip)

512 - Pasture and Hay Planting

590 - Nutrient Management

612 - Tree/Shrub Establishment

634 – Waste Transfer



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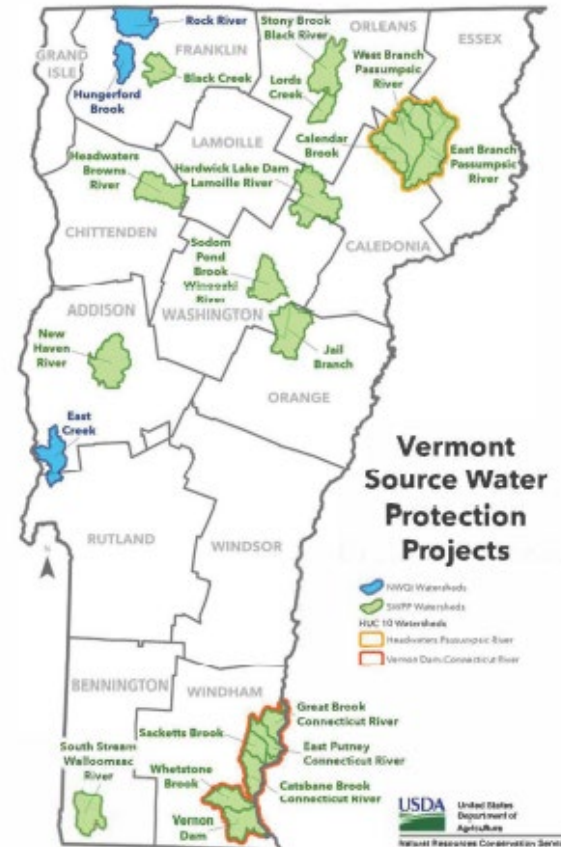
State Priority Geographic Areas

- Water quality restoration score watersheds
- Surface water source protection area
- Ground water source protection area
- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) –Rock River, East Creek, Hungerford Brook
- Source Water – Black Creek, Hardwick Lake Dam-Lamoille River, Headwaters Browns River, Headwaters Passumpsic River, Jail Branch, New Haven River, Sodom Pond Brook-Winooski River, South Stream Walloomsac River, Stony Brook-Black River, Vernon Dam-Connecticut River-Dead Creek
- **Recommendation: Ensure that VT303d impaired waterbodies are included in the priority geographic areas.**



Source Water Protection Areas

**East Branch Passumpsic River,
West Branch Passumpsic River,
Calendar Brook, Stony Brook
Black River, Hardwich Lake
Dam Lamoille River, Lords
Creek, Black Creek, New
Haven River, Sodom Pond
Brook Winooski River,
Headwaters Brown River,
South Stream Walloomsac
River, Jail Branch, Great Brook
Connecticut River, East Putney
Connecticut River, Catsbane
Brook Connecticut River,
Whetstone Brook, Vernon Dam,
and Dead Creek**



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Easement Programs

Easement Application Deadlines

ACEP-ALE IRA and ACEP-WRE IRA

November 22, 2024

ACEP-ALE and ACEP-WRE

January 24, 2025

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2025 ACEP Recommendations

ALE

- **Expansion of Priority areas for ALE-IRA**
 - Sugarbush areas
 - Areas impacted by high development pressure and risk of land conversions

WRE

- **Keep existing ranking priorities the same as FY24**



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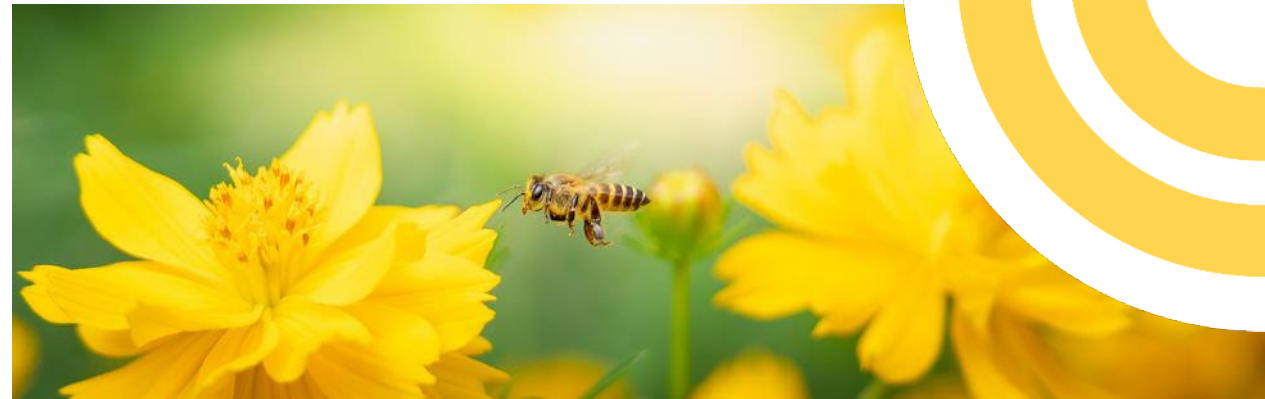


QUESTIONS





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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



NRCS State Technical Committee

Climate Subcommittee

John Van Hoesen, Ph.D.
FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

How It Started

- Review and comment on priority list of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List.
- Identify potential areas of additional investment in NRCS and Partners to support CSAF activities.
- Offer recommendations and rationale for pursuing additional or different CSAF activities in (FY25 – 26).
- Provide summary of recommendations by July 2024

NRCS Climate-Smart Mitigation Activities

[Home](#) > [Conservation Basics](#) > [Natural Resource Concerns](#) > [Climate](#) > [NRCS Climate-Smart Mitigation Activities](#)

Producers and land managers are experiencing firsthand the impacts of climate change, which is caused by the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. With support from NRCS, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners across the nation’s working lands can contribute to climate solutions.

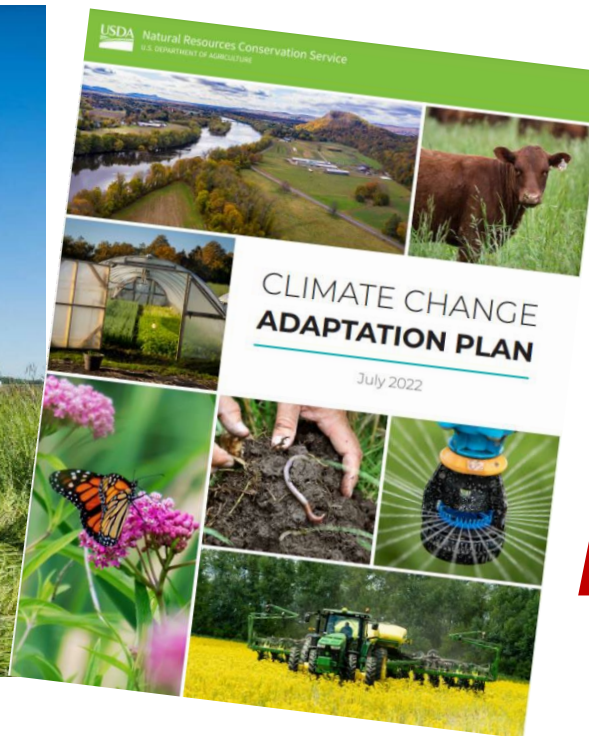
[NRCS Climate-Smart Mitigation Activities | Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List for FY2024



Highlighted activities have been added to the list in FY2024.
Noted activities are added to the list as "provisional" ()

Mitigation Categories	Code	Conservation Practice Standard Name ⁽¹⁾ (practice unit)	Code	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities
Soil Health	327	Conservation Cover (acres)	E327A	Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects ⁽²⁾
			E327B	Establish Monarch butterfly habitat
	328	Conservation Crop Rotation (acres)	E328A	Resource conserving crop rotation
			E328B	Improved resource conserving crop rotation
			E328C	Soil health crop rotation
			E328E	Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E328F	Modifications to improve soil health
			E328N	Intercropping to improve soil health
	329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres)	E328Q	Perennial grain crop conservation rotation
			E329A	No till to reduce soil erosion
			E329B	No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E329C	No till to increase plant-available moisture
			E329D	No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E329E	No till to reduce energy
	332	Contour Buffer Strips (acres)		None Available
	336	Soil Carbon Amendment (acres) ^(*)		None Available
	340	Cover Crop (acres)	E340A	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion
			E340B	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E340C	Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
			E340D	Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health
			E340E	Cover crop to minimize soil compaction
			E340G	Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients
			E340H	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles
			E340I	Using cover crops for biological strip till
			E340J	Cover crop to improve moisture use efficiency and reduce salts
	345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres)	E345A	Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion
			E345B	Reduced tillage to reduce tillage induced particulate matter
			E345C	Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture
			E345D	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
			E345E	Reduced tillage to reduce energy use



>>>
IRA



Historical NRCS Investment/Interest in Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/NRCS_Strategic%20Plan_2023.pdf

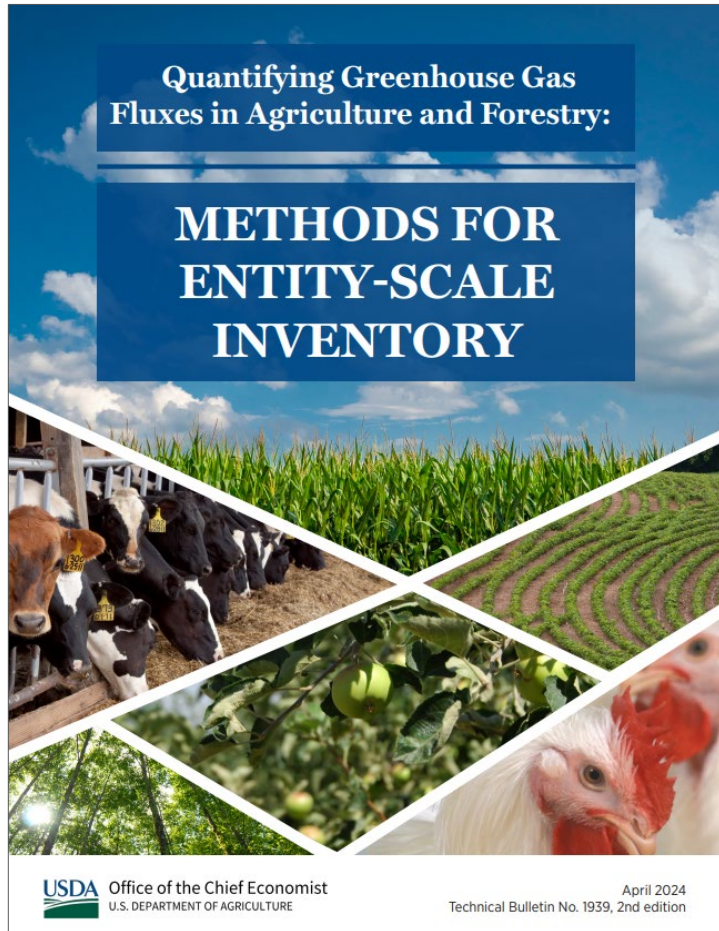
Organizational Recommendations

- Develop a unified communication strategy, including a specific emphasis on how best to share CSAF/climate resources with small-scale, urban, and HU communities. [Strategic Goal 3, Objectives 3.1 & 3.2]
- Better advertise and explain how to access existing NRCS/FSA disaster recovery programs. Provide new or updated factsheets related to post-flood activities (e.g., managing debris in floodplains) to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. [Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3.1]
- Work with the Franklin NRCD to translate the Franklin County Guide into a shorter, potentially more accessible format. [Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3.2]
- Explore ways to reduce barriers to entry and access to NRCS funding. [Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3.2]
- Coordinate with the Agriculture Flood Recovery Task Force (AFR). [Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3.1]
- Develop training for navigating the programs (e.g., how to fill out forms, who to talk to about specific topics, etc.). [Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3.2]
- Review existing & future surveys to inform NRCS conservation planning efforts. [Strategic Goal 3, Objective 3.1]
- Develop a multi-stakeholder process for discussing and prioritizing research needs and priorities related to greenhouse gas emission quantification methodologies. [Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.1]

Technical Recommendations

- Create short-term manure management subcommittee or task force, which includes NRCS and State engineers. [Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.2 and Strategic Goal 4, Objective 4.1]
- Develop better understanding of how NRCS practices relate to resource concerns with emphasis on climate mitigation and climate risk. [Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.2]
- Develop **proactive** plans to address climate risks: drought, flooding, frost, etc.
[Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.2]
- Expand TSP program to ensure necessary expertise and resources for highly technical practices are available. [Strategic Goal 4, Objective 4.1]
- Explore opportunities and barriers for pathways to State/Federal tax credits.
- Provide access to Nutrient Management (590) Scenario #387, Precision Nutrient Application.
[Strategic Goal 1, Objectives 1.1 & 1.2]
- Maintain awareness of relevant Vermont legislation to ensure Vermont NRCS is aware of and developing relevant programming and outreach.
- Can NRCS calculate the carbon sequestration benefit of NRCS-funded practices to share with VAAFM?
[Strategic Goal 1, Objective 1.4]

Where It's Going



<https://www.usda.gov/oce/entity-scale-ghg-methods/download>

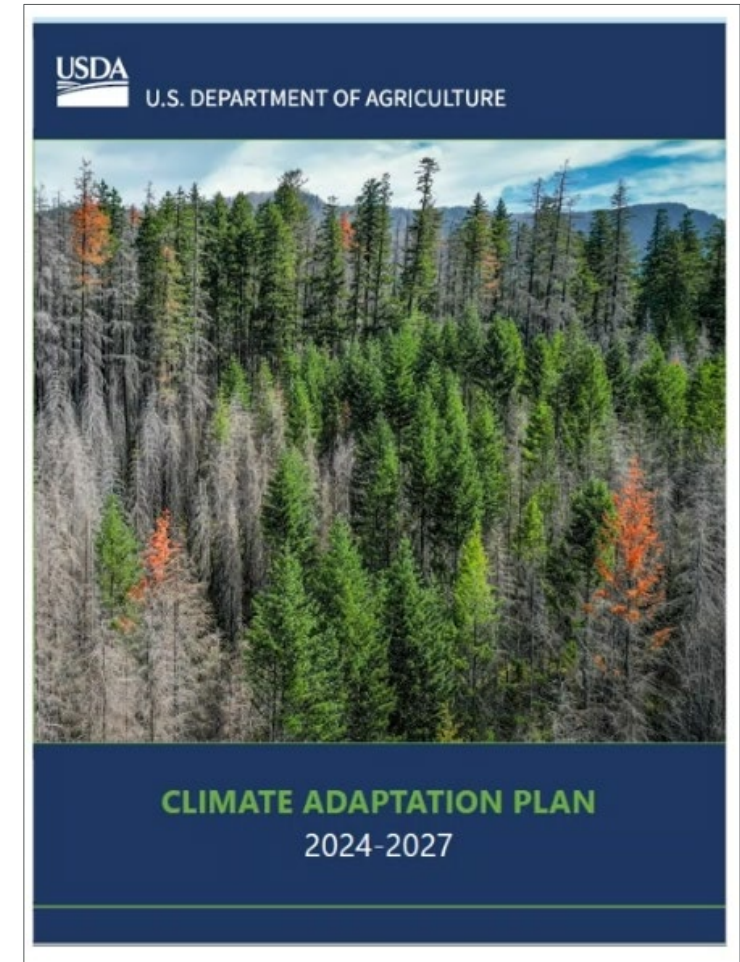
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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FACTSHEET • SEPTEMBER 2023 FARMERS.GOV/CLIMATE-SMART



<https://www.sustainability.gov/pdfs/usda-2024-cap.pdf>

Where It's Going

CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLAN

2024-2027

- **Action 1:** Build resilience across landscapes with investments in soil and forest health.
- **Action 2:** Increase outreach and education to promote adoption of climate-smart adaptation strategies.
- **Action 3:** Broaden access to and availability of climate data at regional and local scales for USDA Mission Areas, producers, land managers, and other stakeholders.
- **Action 5:** Leverage the USDA Climate Hubs to support USDA Mission Areas in delivering adaptation science, technology, and tools.



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QUESTIONS?



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July STC – NRCS Engineering Update

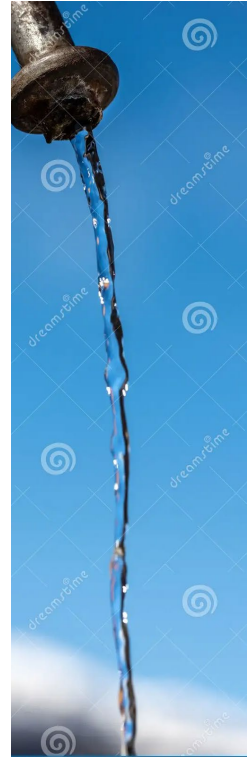
July 17, 2024

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Irrigation

- Irrigation Now Funded Under Both AMA & EQIP
- AMA – Risk Reduction
- EQIP – Improved Irrigation Efficiency (Existing Systems)
 - FIRI Tool – Measures Potential Water Savings
- Not a lot of Irrigation Funded in 2024
 - Re-assess Ranking Questions for FY25
 - Work on Previous Year Backlog

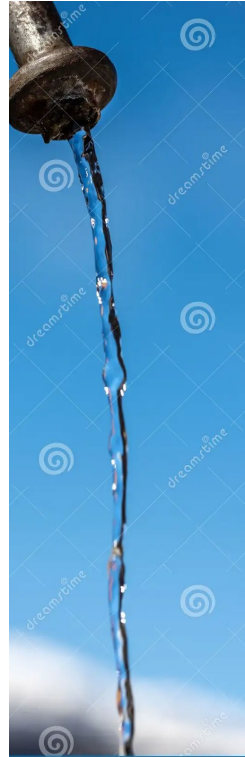


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Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water

- Part of Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA)
- Prevent Illness & Recalls due to Contaminated Irrigated Water on Crops
- Water Quality Assessment, which include:
 - Water testing
 - Contributing Watershed
 - Type of Crop
 - Inspecting water source
 - Surface vs. Sub-surface Water
 - Potential Runoff Contamination
 - Etc.
 - Other
- NRCS is not the enforcement agency!



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Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water

- Water System Evaluation or Assessment
- Is Water Safe?
- Nearby Land Use?
- Other Conditions?
- Continue Regular Inspection & Maintenance



Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water

For pre-harvest agricultural water requirements for non-sprout covered produce, the compliance dates are as follows:

- **April 7, 2025:** Covered farms for which, on a rolling basis, the average annual monetary value of produce the farm sold during the previous 3-year period is more than \$500,000.
- **April 6, 2026:** Covered farms for which, on a rolling basis, the average annual monetary value of produce the farm sold during the previous 3-year period is more than \$250,000 but not more than \$500,000 (small businesses).
- **April 5, 2027:** Covered farms for which, on a rolling basis, the average annual monetary value of produce the farm sold during the previous 3-year period is more than \$25,000 but no more than \$250,000 (very small businesses).



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Subsurface Drainage (Tile)

- Increase Requests to Cost Share on Pattern Tile Drainage Systems (Subsurface Drain)



United States Department of Agriculture

606-CPS-1

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CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

SUBSURFACE DRAIN

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all land uses where a shallow water table exists or where a subsurface drainage system can mitigate one or more of the following adverse conditions caused by excessive soil moisture:

- Poor health, vigor, and productivity of plants
- Poor field trafficability
- Health risk and livestock stress due to pests
- Adverse soil conditions around farmsteads, structures, and roadways
- *When used in support of other conservation practices such as CPS 412 - Grassed Waterway.*

This practice also applies to water distribution through subsurface drain pipe for utilization or treatment

This practice should not be used to provide drainage solely to improve crop production.



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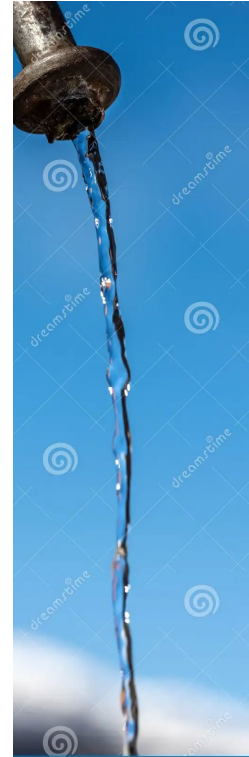
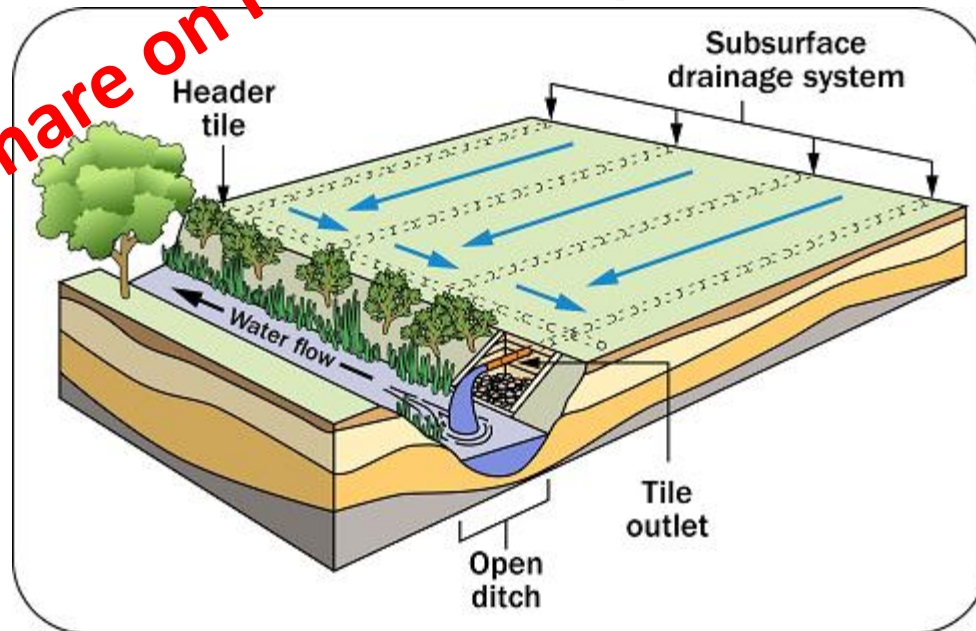
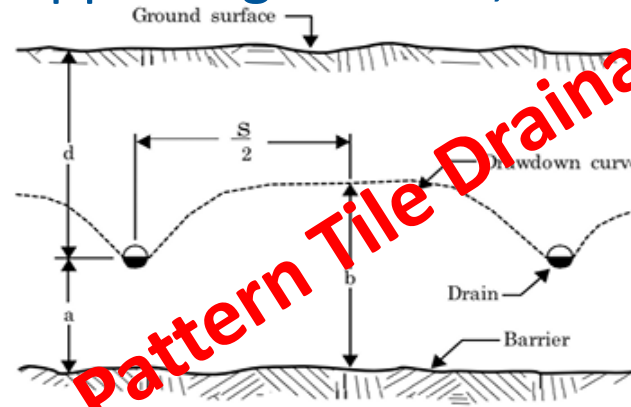
Subsurface Drainage (Tile)

- Traditionally Funded as a Supporting Practice, ie.

- Waste Storage
- Grassed Waterways
- Etc

- Concerns:

- Water Quality
- Swamp Buster
- Regulations
- Workload
 - Engineering
 - Wetlands
 - Archeology
 - T&E Species
- Other Concerns



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EWP Update

- Watershed Event – July 2023
 - Request for Assistance – 46 (Towns)
 - Number of Sites Assessed – 237
 - Total Eligible Sites – 111
 - Number of Sponsors (Towns) – 32
 - Number of Agreements Executed – 32
 - Total Funding - \$13.3 Million (Financial & Technical)
 - Cost Share Rate – Increased to 100%
 - Sponsor's Asked to Hire their own Engineering (NRCS providing some funding to assist)
 - NRCS Staff working on a few smaller sites.
 - To Date – Nothing has been implemented
 - Looking to start on a few project soon
 - Potential Delays – Bat Habitat and other T&E Species
- 14 Sponsors**
- **Dropped Out**
 - **Or**
 - **No Eligible Sites**



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Dam Rehab Update

- Jewell Brook Watershed – Ludlow
 - Four PL-566 High Hazard Flood Control Dams
 - Dams > 50 years old, Exceeded Design Life!
 - Environment Assessment Completed Last Year
 - Acquired Funding to Complete Design
 - Developed agreement between NRCS and Ludlow
 - Sponsor (Ludlow) will hire engineer to develop design
 - Currently negotiating price with Engineering Firm
 - Hope to start Design Work in July
 - Rehab Design for four dams will take approximately two years to complete



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WFPO Update

- Currently working to request funds for a potential project at Amherst Lake, Plymouth.
- Several towns, watershed coalitions and CDs have potential projects which may qualify.
- Currently reaching out to provide assistance.
- Diligently working on Outreach!!!!



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United States
Department of
Agriculture



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Ecological Sciences Updates

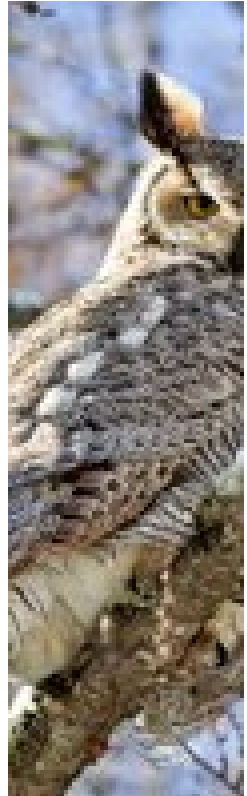
State Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
July 17, 2024

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FY 2025 Payment Schedules

- **NI 300-313 updated in February 2024**
- **Offer ALL available scenarios for adopted conservation practices**
- **Many more scenarios will be available in the payment schedules this year**
- **Review the practice payment scenario reports**
- **Choose the closest available scenario**
- **If unsure, ask a discipline lead**



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Vermont FOTG Notice 74 (8/2/2024)

Deep Tillage (324) - Newly adopted practice, will not be available for FA in FY 2025

The following practice standards and support documents have been revised:

- **Anaerobic Digester (366)**
- **Animal Mortality Facility (316)**
- **Drainage Water Management (554)**
- **Forest Trails and Landings (655)**
- **Lined Waterway or Outlet (468)**
- **Obstruction Removal (500)**
- **Pond Sealing or Lining (521)**
- **Roof and Covers (367)**
- **Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)**
- **Underground Outlet (620)**
- **Waste Storage Facility (313)**
- **Water and Sediment Control Basin (638)**
- **Watering Facility (614)**

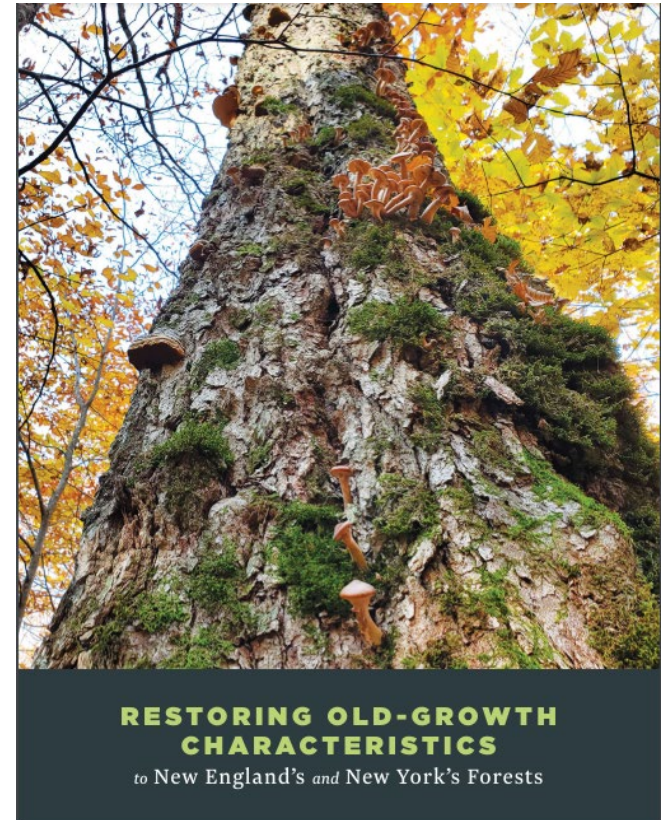


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Forestry Update - Old Forest 666

- New component practice to 666 Forest Stand Improvement being introduced
- ‘Managing for Old Forest Characteristics’
- Purpose/Benefits
 - Improved structure, composition & species diversity
 - Improve habitat (forest songbirds and others)
 - Improve forest for climate/pest resiliency
 - Improve carbon storage and sequestration
- NRCS Foresters will lead planning/implementation

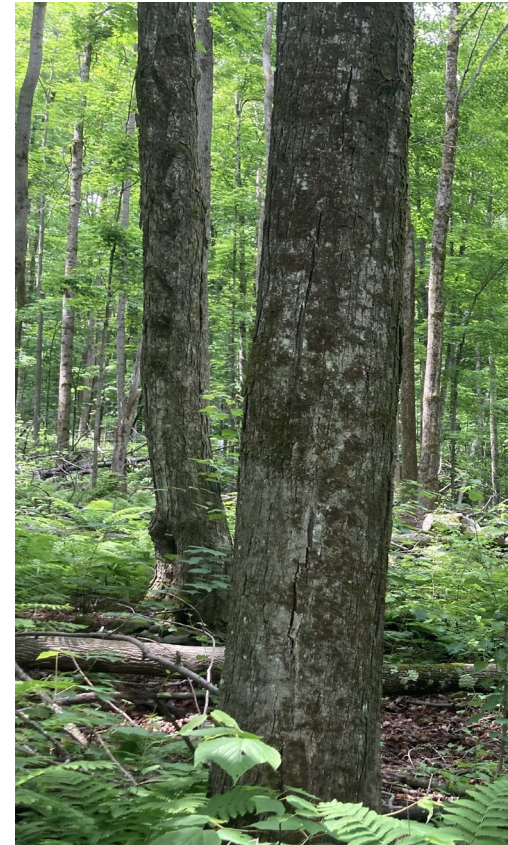


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Forestry Update - Old Forest 666

- Larger diameter trees and forest stands are eligible
- Maintaining and managing for numerous large trees per acre
 - Includes active mgt. such as crown thinning
- Maintaining and/or increasing large standing dead (snags) and down trees
- Uneven-aged regeneration treatments for structure/species diversity

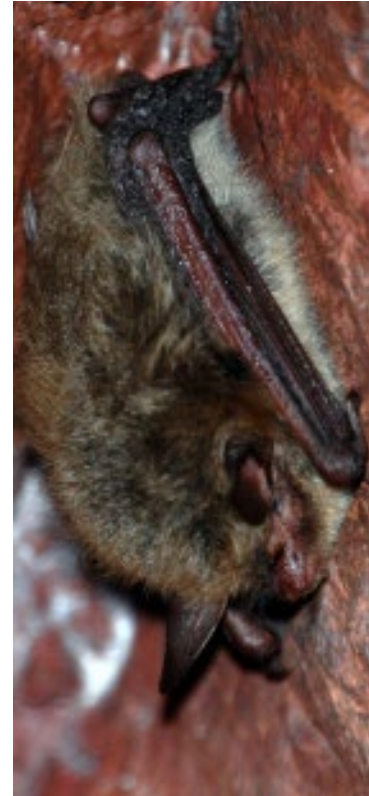


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Wildlife Update - ESA

- IPaC has been updated and should have a more decisive and useful Determination Key for NLEB (and TCB)
 - Based more on actual extent/degree of cutting
 - More informative presence/absence may reduce some IPaC entries
- Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) – Federal Species info and range maps - <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/>
- Likely listings coming soon Tricolored bat and wood turtle



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Planning Guidance - ESA

- New Interim Practice 828 – Wildlife Habitat Site Preparation
 - Intended to make pollinator plantings better
 - Gives proper attention (and \$) to site prep!
 - 3 payment scenarios available at this time for herbicide treatment
- Added guidance for Existing Practices
 - Not in prior version of Planning Guidance
 - Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment (654)
 - Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490)

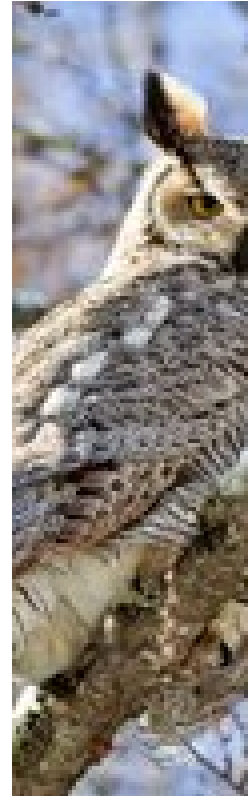


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Wetlands Update

- **NB-180-24-7 and 190-NI-319**
 - NB = National Bulletin
 - NI – National Instruction
- **Lawsuit results changed the definition of what is a certified wetland determination**
- Certification of a wetland determination means that the wetland determination is of sufficient quality to make a determination of ineligibility for USDA program benefits. All wetland determinations made on or after July 3, 1996, are considered certified determinations

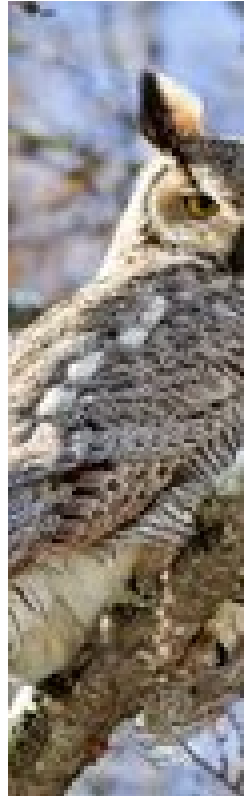


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Wetlands Update

- NRCS will evaluate all wetland determination requests to determine if they are fulfilled by a previously certified determination.
- Regardless of its certification status when issued, a determination will be treated as certified only when it meets at least one of the following conditions:

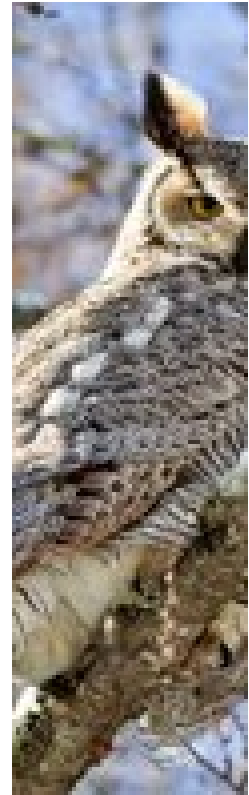


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Wetlands Update

- 1. The determination was appealed with a field visit, or
- 2. The determination was issued on or after July 3, 1996.
- If there is no determination that can be treated as certified, NRCS will conduct a new determination, certified by signature on Form NRCS-CPA-026-WC and issued with appeal rights.

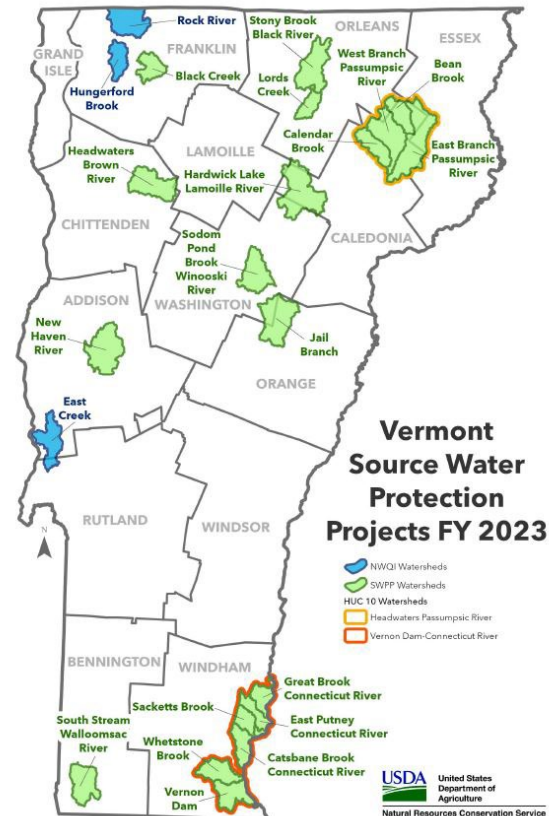


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Water Quality Update

- Source Water Priority Protection Watersheds - August 23rd deadline to revise or update high priority areas.
- WQ subcommittee met in June and agreed to keep things as is for next FY.
- IRA funding can now be used to fund projects in those watersheds.
- Any recommendations to add or remove watersheds?



Agronomy Updates

- CPS 805 (Amending Soil Properties with Lime) and CPS 512 (Pasture & Hayland Planting) can be planned together!
- CPS 823 (Organic Management) can be planned on currently Certified Organic farms, but cannot be funded through the “Organic Transition Initiative”.
- Anticipated Conservation Practices updates coming in FY2025:
 - Cover Crop—Code 340
 - Nutrient Management—Code 590

Grazing Updates

- New “Grazing Plan” Excel Template coming to eFOTG soon.
 - Thanks to Amber Reed, UVM and Sonia Howlett, VT Agency of Ag for their valuable input!
- New Interim Conservation Practice Standard coming soon.
 - Strategic Harvested Forage Management—Code 827 (Bale Grazing)
 - Currently available as a CSP enhancement (E528P—Implementing Bale or Swath Grazing to Increase Soil Organic Matter and Reduce Nutrients in Surface Water).

Cultural Resources

- New Prototype Programmatic Agreements (PPAs) with State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and Stockbridge-Munsee Community Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) coming in FY25.
- Additional Practices will be added to Appendices A-C. Look for an updated list of Conservation Practices Requiring No Further CR Review in FY25 once the PPAs have been finalized.
- Any change in project design or practice location requires an additional CR Review as stated in the Comments/Required Action Section of the Vt-ECS-1 form.
- Also remember to take into consideration the cumulative and foreseeable effects of your project when requesting a CR Review as required under 36 CFR 800. Some examples of cumulative and foreseeable effects include access roads built to NRCS construction sites, borrow and disposal areas, and buried utility lines dug to NRCS funded conservation practices.



United States
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Q&A and Open Discussion

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Partnerships and Initiatives – STTC Update

Luis Aponte, Assistant State Conservationist- Partnerships and Initiatives

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Partnerships Umbrella



- Regional Conservation Partnerships Program
- Strategic Investments
- Outreach/Communications

Partnerships Team

- RCPPP Coordinator
- Management Analyst for Partnerships
- Outreach Coordinator



RCPP Updates

- Agreements signed for 2 new RCPP projects, RCPP 3155(NFWF) and RCPP 3273(DEC).
- RCPP NOFO: Closed on July 2nd, 2024. New projects are being evaluated as we speak.
- Engaging with many partners interested in FY25 NOFO. If you have ideas, we want to hear them ASAP!



RCPP Updates

■ Active RCPP Projects for VT:

RCPP18 Project Number	RCPP18 Project Name	Project Partner
1865	Northern Tier Stream Restoration Initiative	Trout Unlimited
3273	Vermont Water Quality Collaborative Partnership	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
2132	Accelerated Implementation of Agricultural and Forestry Related Practices	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
2280	Lake Memphremagog Water Quality Partnership	Orleans County NRCD
2311	Regenerative Agriculture in New England	American Farmland Trust
3155	Vermont Dairy Farms Working for Water, Wildlife, Climate, Food and Farmers	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
2145 (AFA)	Vermont Pay for Phosphorus	Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets



RCPP Updates

- RCPP 3273: Vermont Water Quality Collaborative Partnership
- Lead Partner: VT DEC
- Investment: \$10.7M, which \$8.1M will be FA for producers.
- Target RC: Water Quality, Soil Health, Forestry, Wildlife Habitat, Flood Resiliency
- Cost-share rate: 100%
- Project Area: Statewide



RCPP Updates

- RCPP 3155: Vermont Dairy Farms Working for Water, Wildlife, Climate, Food and Farmers
- Lead Partner: NFWF
- Investment: \$10M, which \$7.5M will be FA for producers.
- Target RC: Aquatic Habitat
- Cost-share rate: 100%
- Project Area: Statewide



Investments

- Our investments strategy is based on moving the needle forward on the agency's priorities and strategic goals.
- FY24 Agency priorities:
 1. **Ensure equity in the delivery** and implementation of all NRCS programs and services.
 2. Increase assistance for **climate-smart agriculture and forestry** to support producers in building resiliency across their operations.
 3. Expand conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of **urban farmers and communities** nationwide.
 4. **Cultivate a complete and diverse workforce** that has the right tools, technologies, and training to uphold the **scientific integrity** of NRCS.
 5. Leverage **innovative partnerships** to expand NRCS's ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently.

Investments

- Agency Priority 5:

Leverage innovative partnerships to expand NRCS's ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently.

- NRCS Strategic Goal 4:

Foster partnerships that strengthen locally led and tribal land conservation.



Investments

- Expanding Locally Led conservation efforts statewide



Investments

- Agency Priority 3:

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

- NRCS Strategic Goal 4, Objective 4.2:

Increase the number of strategic partnerships to improve engagement with underserved customers.



Investments

- Increasing outreach to community scale, small scale and urban farmers.



Urban Ag Subcommittee

- Total applications for financial assistance: 75 applicants
- Total funding request: \$2,070,000
 - Dedicated \$233,155 (3%) to urban/community-scale fund pool in Oct. '23
 - Funded 9 applications for \$375,000
- Average size of operation: 8 acres
- Top conservation practices:
 1. Cover crop
 2. Seasonal High Tunnel
 3. Mulching
 4. Low Tunnel
 5. Hedgerow Planting
 6. Critical Area Planting



Urban Ag Subcommittee

- Plans for FY25:
 - Dedicated funds will be increased from 3% to 10%
 - Continue to gather data on demand and most used practices
 - Focus on outreach to community/small scale producers and HU producers
 - Continue work with the subcommittee to “Vermontize” what will work for NRCS VT.





Outreach Highlight!

- 2024 Soil Screening Events:





Questions?

*ANY
QUESTIONS*

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Vermont State Technical Committee FY 2025 Dates

September 18, 2024 - Fall Bus Tour

October 16, 2024

January 15, 2025 OR January 22, 2025

April 16, 2025

July 16, 2025

