



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NRCS Puerto Rico State Technical Committee Meeting



September 11, 2024
Colegio de Agrónomos de Puerto Rico

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

Agenda

1. **Director's Welcome – Frank Velazquez**
2. **Roll Call – Némesis Ortiz Declet**
3. **Introduction to STCM – Frank Velazquez**
4. **Open Business – Frank Velazquez**
 - a) NRCS Financial Assistance Recap – Frank Velazquez
 - b) NRCS & Puerto Rico Conservation Districts Association Cooperative Agreement – Sheila Hernández
 - c) NRCS Engineering Projects updates – Yilia Baucage Bou
 - d) Equity Subcommittee updates – Némesis Ortiz Declet
 - e) Technical Service Providers Subcommittee updates – Miguel Oliveras
 - f) Wildlife, Wetlands & Forests Subcommittee updates – Iván Llerandi
 - g) Caribbean Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) – Javier Cruz / Open Discussion
5. **New Business – Némesis Ortiz Declet**
 - a) P.R. Department of Natural and Environmental Resources & Environmental Quality Board – Priority watersheds according to environmental quality – Ángel Meléndez
 - b) P.R. Department of Agriculture – Identifying high priority production areas & collaboration opportunities – Agro. Irvine Rodriguez
 - c) Agricultural Cooperative Extension – Identifying high priority production areas & collaboration opportunities – José Torres Castillo
 - d) U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 - National Wildlife Refuges System updates – Silmarie Padrón
 - Caribbean Ecological Sciences Field Office updates – Lourdes Mena
 - e) State Agencies Identified Priorities for 2025 – Open Discussion
6. **Adjournment**



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NRCS Financial Assistance Recap

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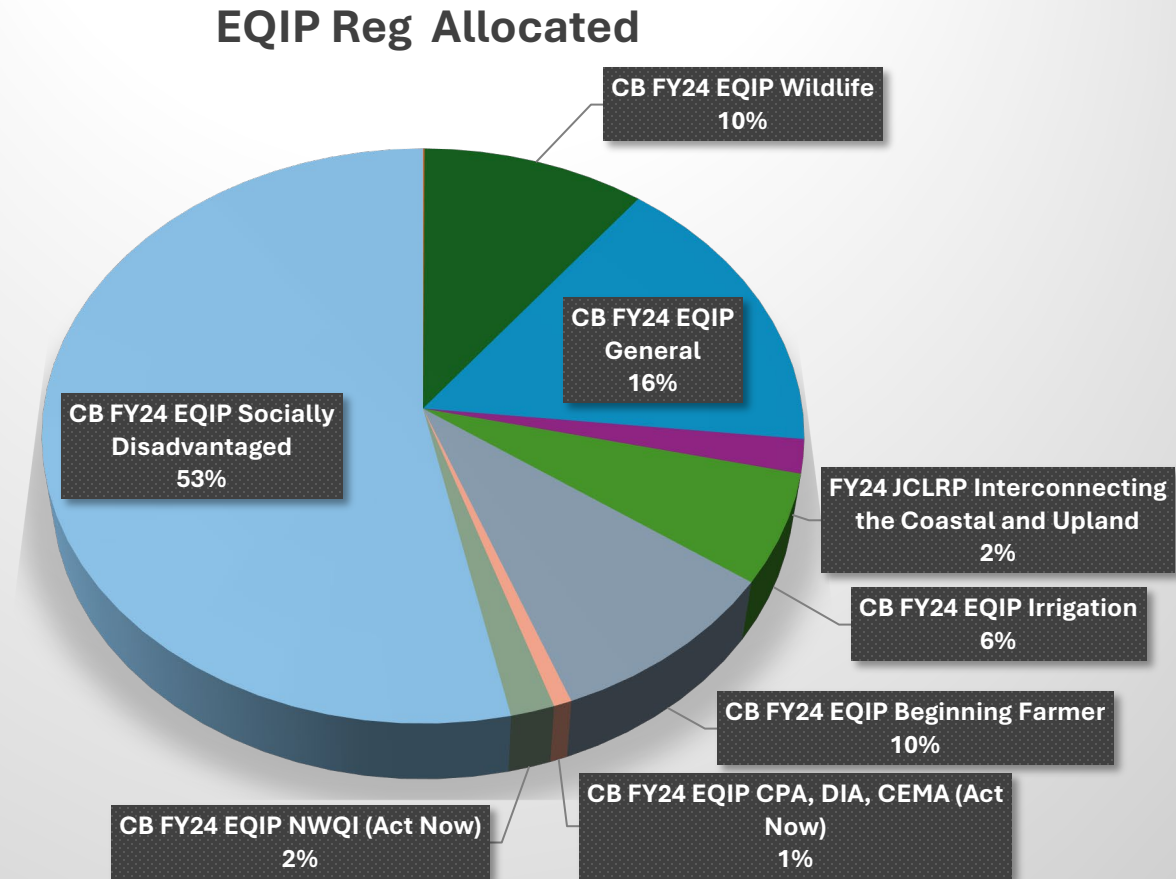
CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM RC

CSP State Priority Resource Concerns – Caribbean Area

State Priority Resource Concerns CSP Agland
Degraded Plant Condition
Pest Pressure
Livestock Production Limitation
Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
Storage and Handling of Pollutants
Soil Quality Limitation
Concentrated Erosion
Wind and Water Erosion

State Priority Resource Concerns CSP NIPF
Degraded Plant Condition
Pest Pressure
Fire Management
Aquatic Habitat
Terrestrial Habitat
Soil Quality Limitation
Concentrated Erosion
Wind and Water Erosion

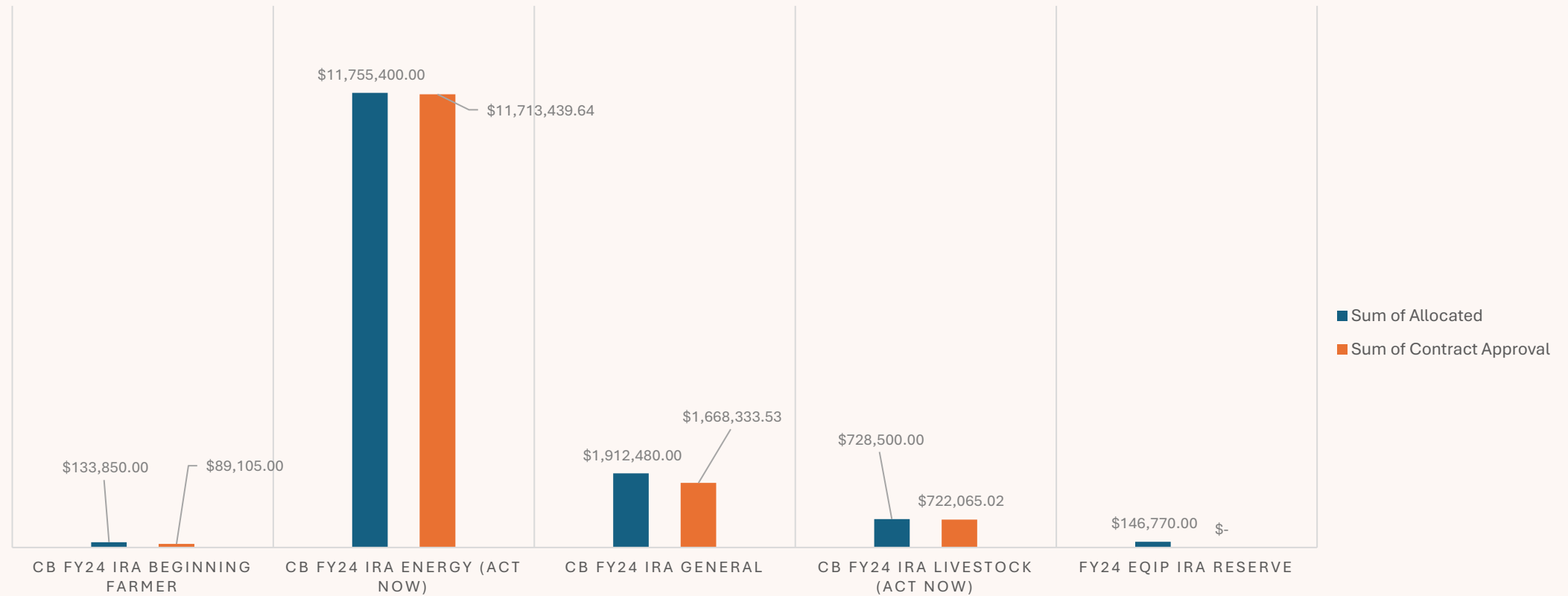
EQIP Allocation per Account in (%)



EQIP FUND DISTRIBUTION AND OBLIGATION

Account Name	Allocated	Contract Approval
Caribbean	\$ 9,559,656.00	\$ 8,329,231.99
CB FY24 EQIP Disaster/Emergency (Act Now)	\$ 6,196.00	\$ 6,196.00
CB FY24 EQIP Wildlife	\$ 910,470.00	\$ 644,443.58
CB FY24 EQIP General	\$ 1,423,235.00	\$ 1,423,235.00
FY24 JCLRP Interconnecting the Coastal and Upland	\$ 167,000.00	\$ 117,457.00
CB FY24 EQIP Irrigation	\$ 541,143.00	\$ 541,143.00
CB FY24 EQIP Beginning Farmer	\$ 827,470.00	\$ 825,177.00
CB FY24 EQIP CPA, DIA, CEMA (Act Now)	\$ 62,068.00	\$ 62,068.00
CB FY24 EQIP NWQI (Act Now)	\$ 149,956.00	\$ 149,950.20
CB FY24 EQIP Socially Disadvantaged	\$ 4,678,792.00	\$ 4,559,562.21

IRA FUNDING ALLOCATION +92% Obligation





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Watershed Program Update

09/11/2024

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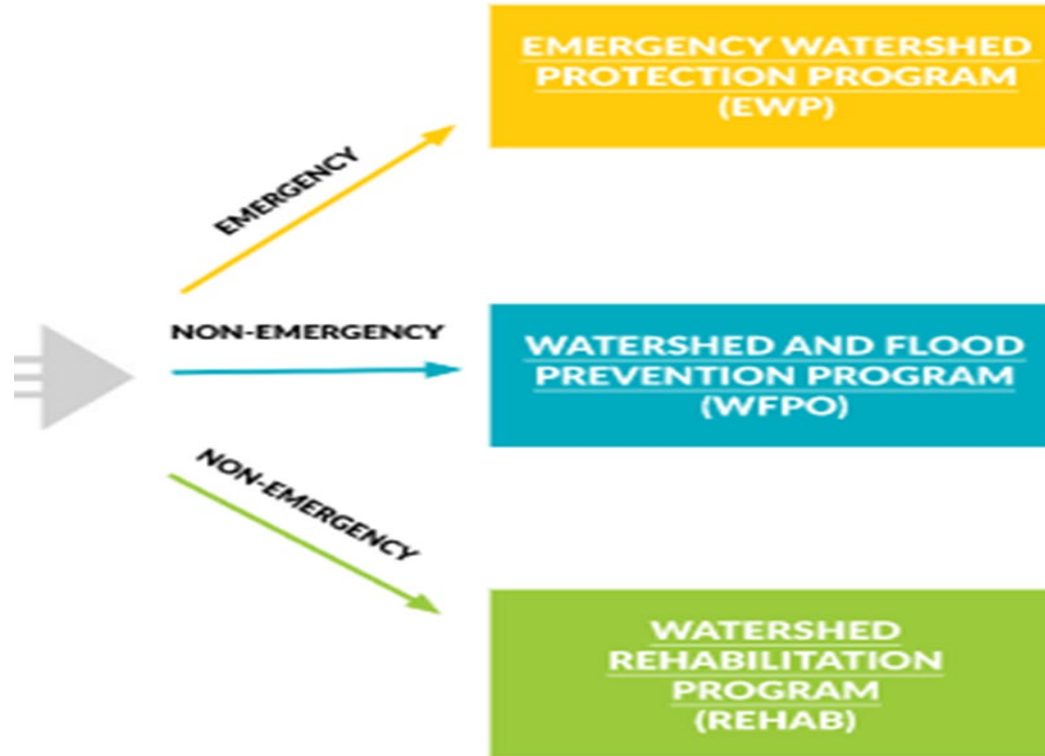
An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are green fields and a small farm with several buildings. A winding river or stream flows through the middle of the landscape. The background is filled with mist or low clouds, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The overall scene is a mix of green fields, brown earth, and blue water, with the mist adding a layer of texture and depth.

USDA NRCS Watershed Programs

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USDA-NRCS Watershed Programs





Watershed Flood Protection and Operations

**Isabela
Irrigation
Channels** repairs

Bordeaux Water
Quality and
Quantity
improvements

Watershed Flood Protection and Operations



1 Project sponsor requests planning assistance from State NRCS. State NRCS approves the request.



2 Complete a Preliminary Investigation Findings Report (PIFR). This can be developed by the State NRCS (if staff is available) or an IDIQ contractor.



3 Once the PIFR is approved, WFPO funding is requested for planning. Planning is 100% funded through WFPO.



4 Planning includes a development of a Watershed Plan & Environmental Document at zero cost to the sponsor.



5 The draft Watershed Plan is reviewed by State, NHQ, and the NWMC including the public through the NEPA process.



6 Once a Final Watershed Plan is approved and authorized by the Chief, the final design is 100% funded through WFPO.

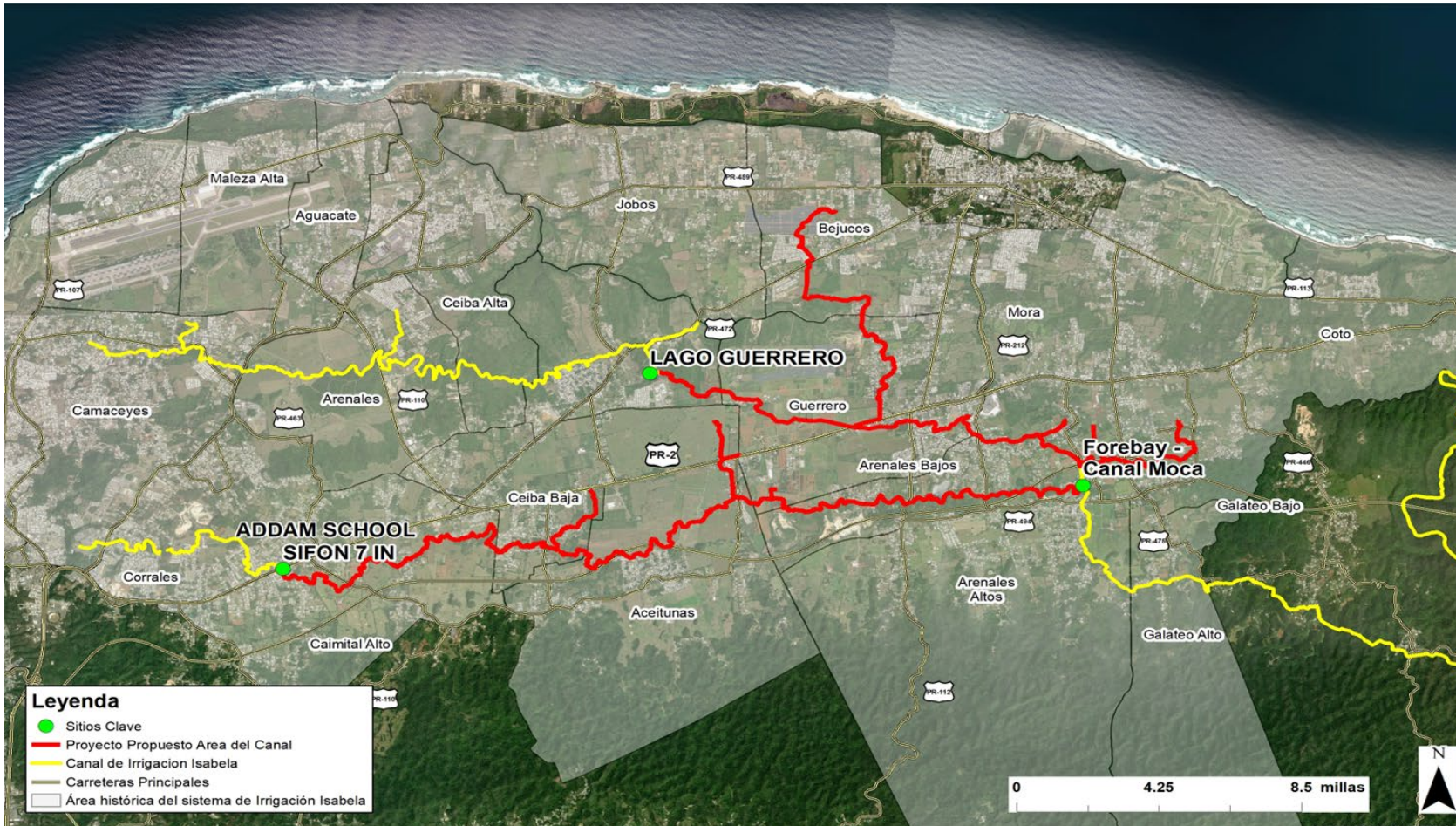


7 Construction phase begins and funding through WFPO can be up to 100%

75% on Ag water projects



Isabela Irrigation Channel Repairs



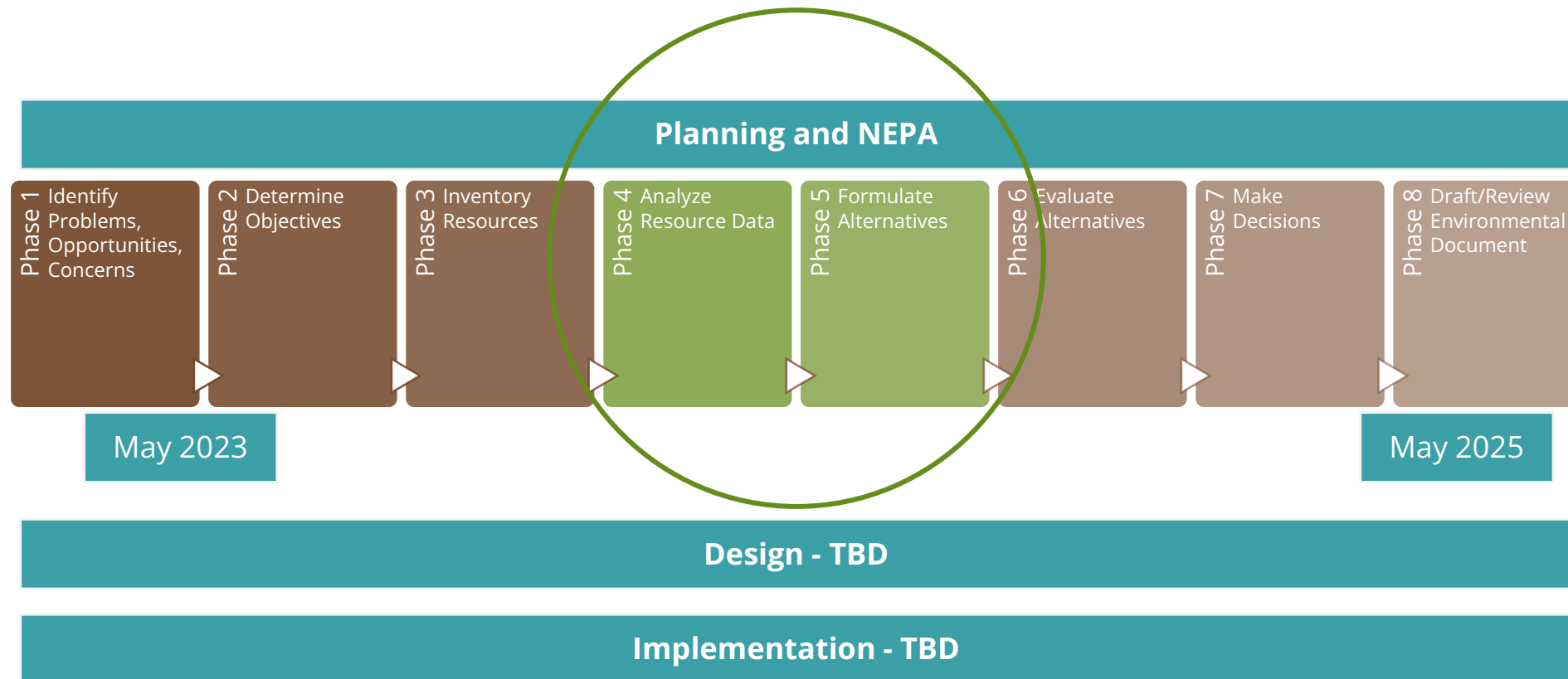
Canal Principal
and Moca Canal

15.3 miles
irrigation
channels

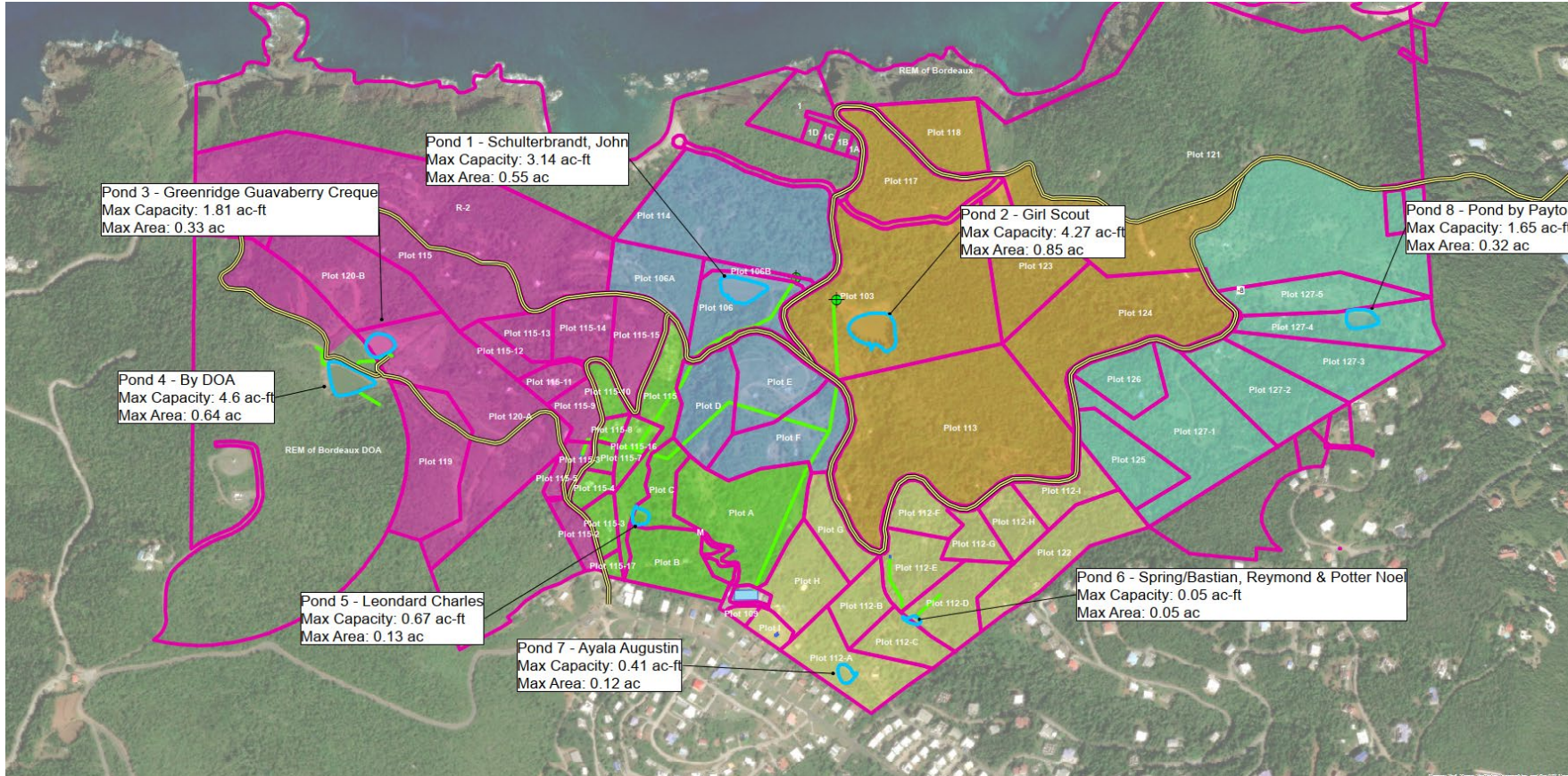
+ 12 miles laterals



Isabela Irrigation Channel Repairs



Bordeaux Farming Community Water Quality and Quantity



The proposed project is protecting future agricultural water resources in the farming community of Bordeaux



Bordeaux Farming Community Water Quality and Quantity timeline

Investigation:
PIFR
(Completed
2023)

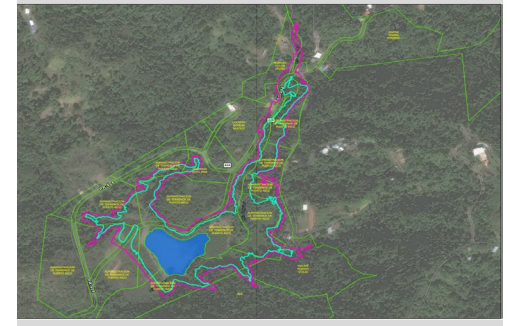
Design (2027)

Planning +
NEPA
2024-2026

Construction
(2028-2030)

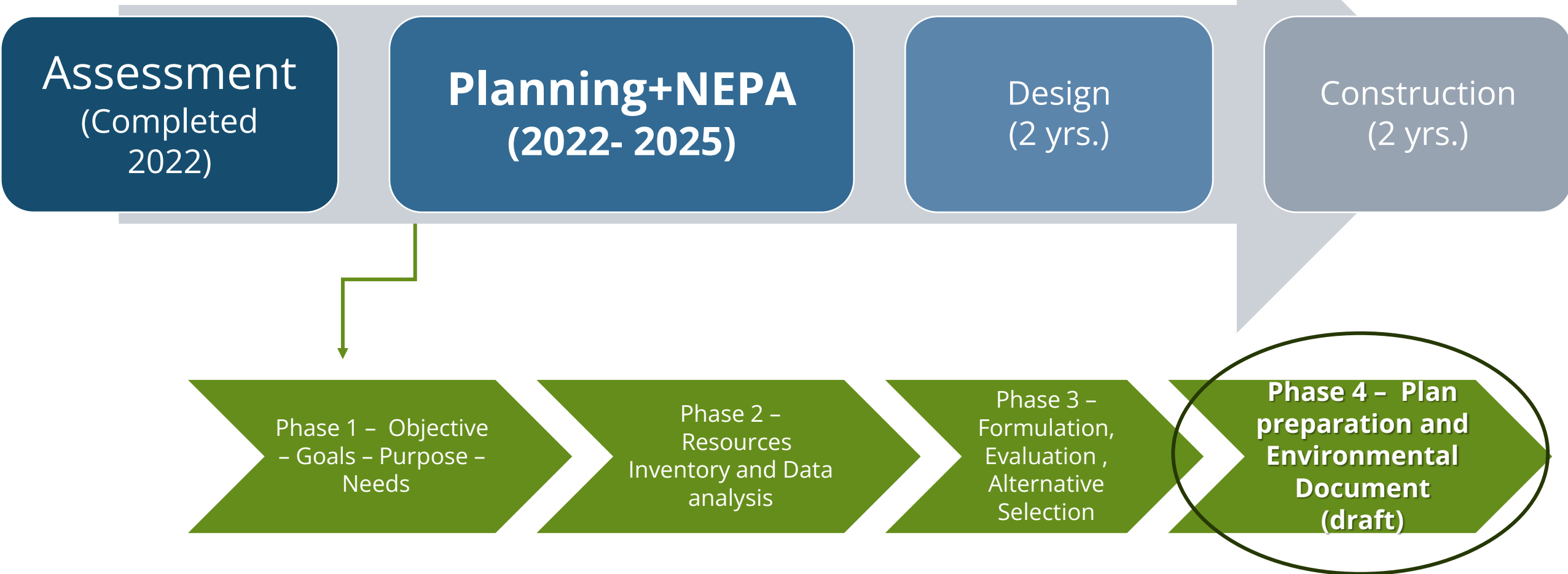


Dam Rehabilitation Ajíes & Dagüey





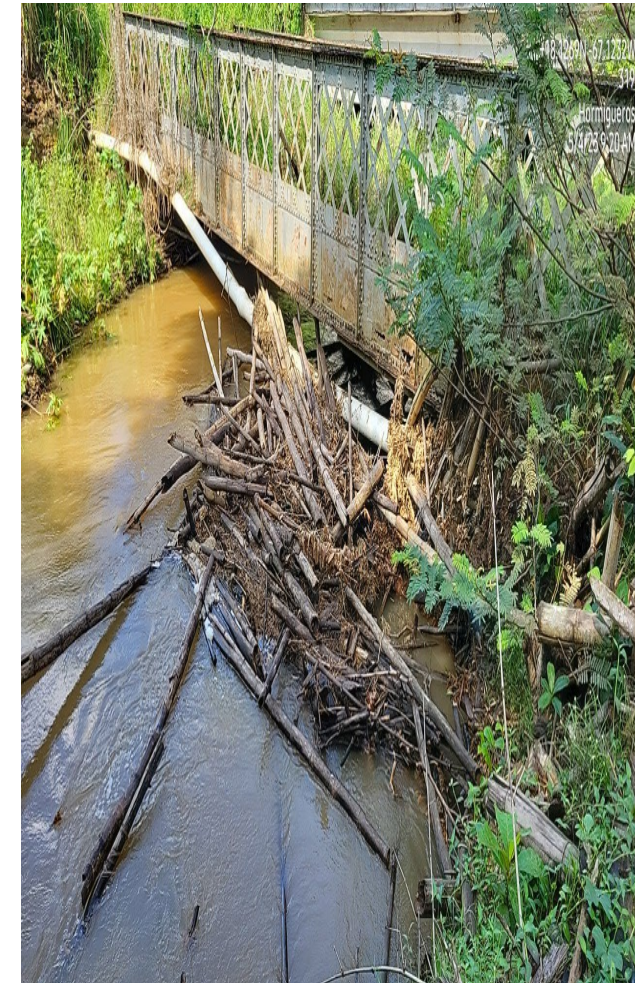
Dam Rehabilitation Ajíes & Dagüey





Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- Remove debris from stream channels, road culverts and bridges;
- Reshape and protect eroded streambanks;
- Correct damaged or destroyed drainage facilities;
- Establish vegetative cover on critically eroding lands; and
- Repair structural, enduring, and long-life conservation practices



Current Events

- **Maria** – 2 construction projects running
- **Rain even February 2022** -All work completed – closing out
- **Fiona** – Clean ups completed – structural work pending
- **Torrential Rains May 2024** – to move cases to Ernesto
- **Ernesto Tropical Storm** – ongoing sponsor request and site identification





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Caribbean Area Watershed Program Manager
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Watershed Program Update
09/11/2024

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Equity Subcommittee Updates

PR State Technical Committee Meeting
September 11, 2024

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NRCS Equity Division

Looking Through the Lens of Others

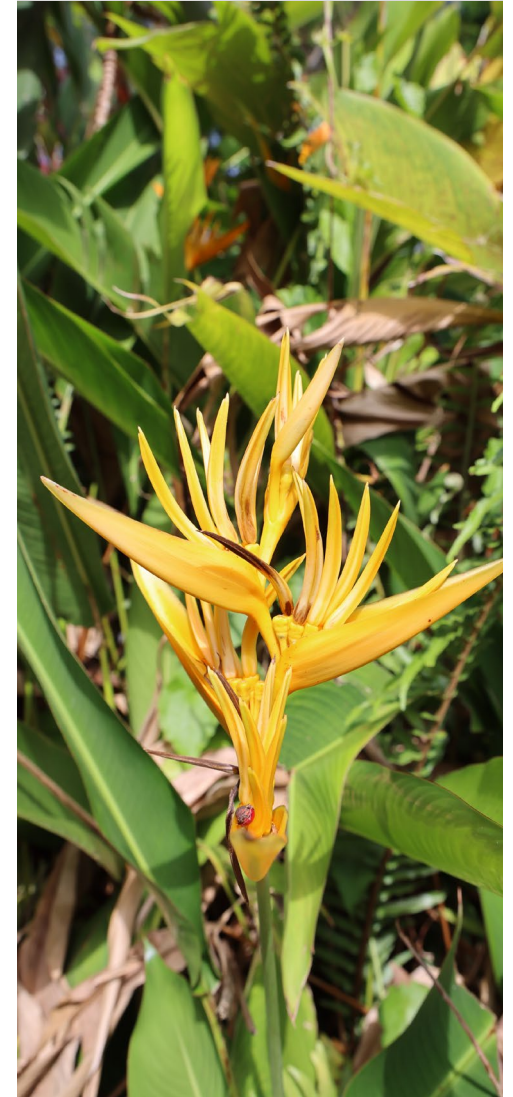
Equity is the consistent and systematic treatment of all individuals in a **fair, just**, and **impartial manner**, including people who belong to communities that have been denied such treatment.



Race
Ethnicity
Religion
Income
Geography
Gender
Identity
Sexual
Orientation
Disability

Equity Subcommittee

- **FY 2024 Meetings:**
 - January 10, 2024
 - April 3, 2024
- **Discussion Topics:**
 - Equity & USDA
 - NRCS Caribbean Area Equity Plan
 - Caribbean Area Equity Barriers
 - NRCS Outreach & Reporting
 - Equity Data Analysis
 - NRCS Program Ranking Pools



Equity Subcommittee

■ Current Members:

- Alliance for Agriculture
- RAFI
- Victus PR
- Hispanic-American Institute
- Rural Coalition
- VI Good Food Coalition

Join the Conversation!

Contact:

Némesis Ortiz Declet

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787-379-2571





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Technical Service Providers Program Update

September 11, 2024

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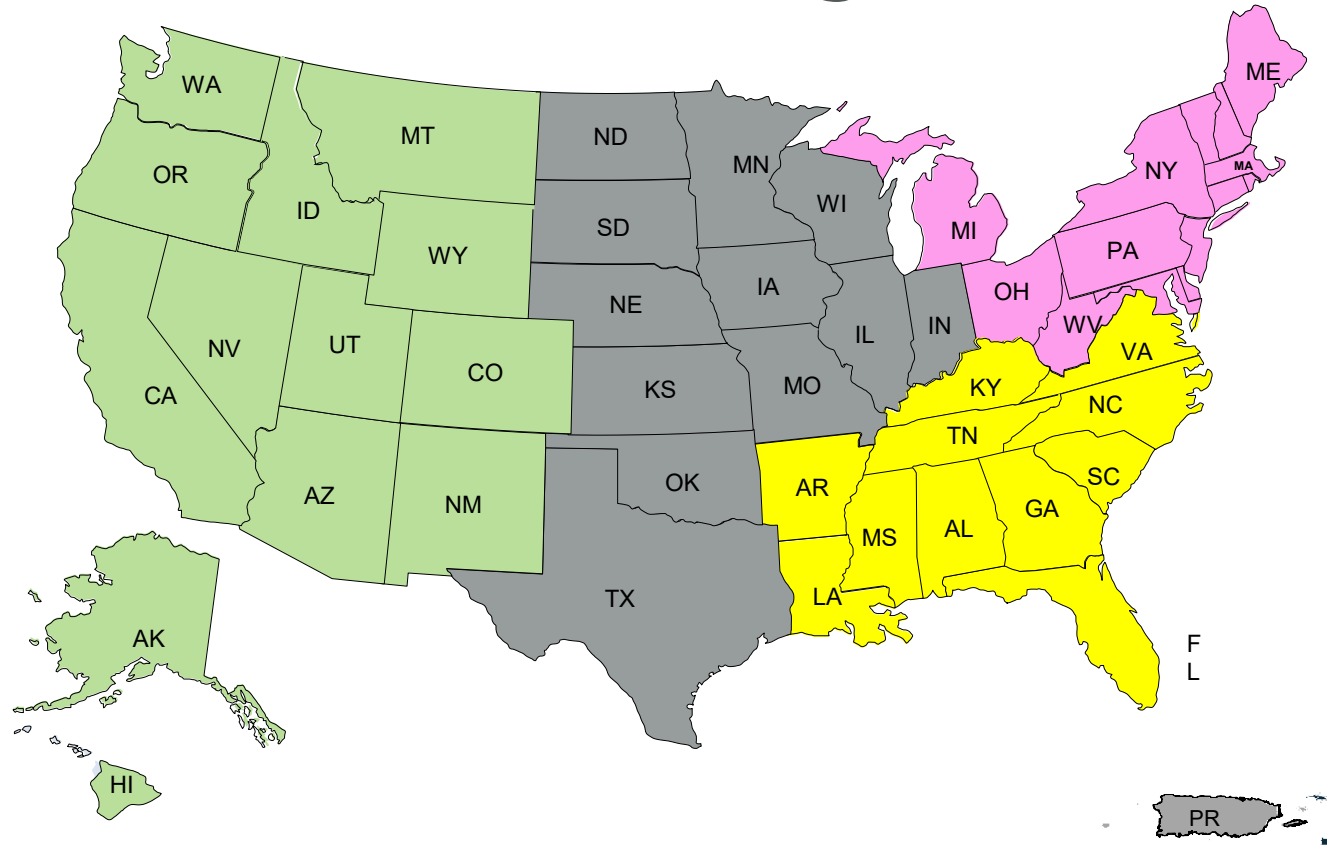
Technical Service Provider Program

National TSP Program

Manager

Charlotte Brewster
202-440-3220

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Northeast Region (Pink)

Peter Hoagland

717-216-3715

Peter.Hoagland@usda.gov

Southeast (Yellow) & West (Green) Region

Stacey Bradshaw

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stacey.bradshaw@usda.gov

Central Region & Caribbean (Gray)

Miguel Oliveras

870-209-0089

Miguel.Oliveras@usda.gov

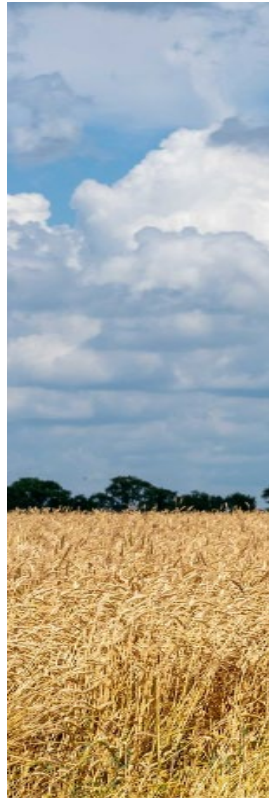


What is a Certified Technical Service Provider (TSP)?

A Certified TSP is an individual, entity (business, nonprofit, or similar organization), Indian tribe, or public agency who is certified by NRCS and on the approved list to provide technical services to eligible participants.

TSPs may provide technical services to eligible participants

1. in conservation planning,
2. education and outreach, and
3. assistance with design and implementation of conservation practices





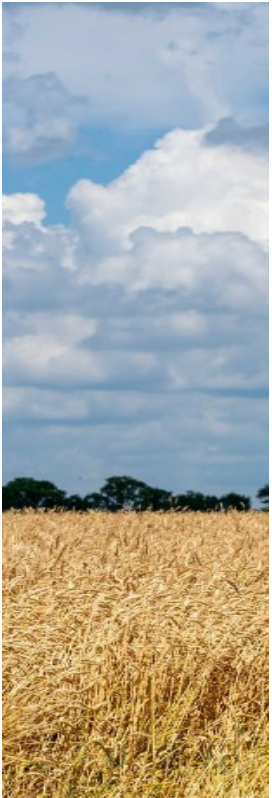
Who are TSP Customers?

- Participants in USDA Farm Bill Programs
 - Producers
 - Landowners
 - Tribes
- Agreements and Contracts
 - Non-profit organizations
 - Public agencies
 - NRCS



Food Security Act of 1985

- Requires the Secretary to deliver technical assistance to eligible participants for implementation of its Title XII Programs and the conservation activities:
 - Directly,
 - Through an agreement with a third-party provider,
 - Or at the option of the producer through payment to the producer for an approved third-party provider.





TSP Opportunities

- TSPs can provide the following technical services:
 1. Developing a Conservation Planning Activity (CPA)
 2. Developing a Design and Implementation Activity (DIA)
 3. Developing a Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA)
 4. Implementing a conservation practice (design, implementation, checkout)



TSP in the Caribbean Area

- Currently no certified TSPs in the Caribbean Area.
- Efforts underway to promote TSP program in the Caribbean and get qualified individuals interested.
- Caribbean TSP Workshop hosted on April 27th, 2024 – Colegio de Agrónomos de P.R.
- Over 60 professionals (Agronomists & Engineers) in attendance.
- 36 professionals started the process to become a TSP in the Caribbean.
- PR NRCS Staff hosting a “TSP Office Hours”.
- TSP branch providing assistance to PR applicants.



Looking ahead...

- New Registry to be deployed on October the 1st.
- Conservation Planning Part 2 Training planed for FY25.
- Sample Plans workshops
- Certify TSPs



Questions?

Miguel Oliveras

Regional TSP Coordinator

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Work: 870-209-0089

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