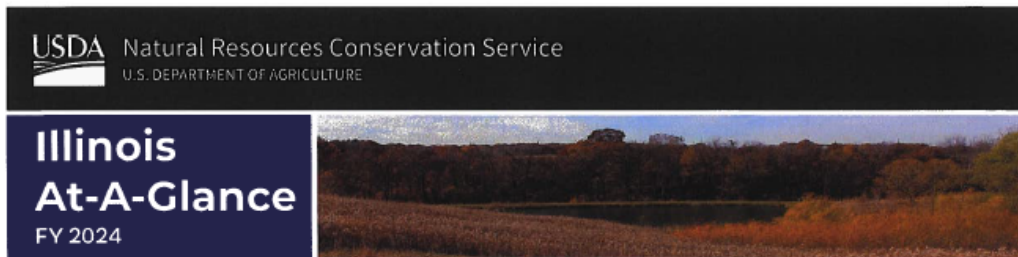


Illinois State Technical Committee Meeting
USDA NRCS State Office
2118 West Park Court
Champaign, IL 61821
November 6, 2024 - 9:30 a.m.
MINUTES

Welcome and Introductions (Tammy Willis)

- Tammy Willis gave the IL Report Card.
- Tammy referred to At A Glance- **HO#1(shown below)** as she discussed what budget we received for FY24 and FY25.



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Program Accomplishments in Illinois

The information below captures the program activities in Illinois during fiscal year (FY) 2024 which runs from October 1, 2023-September 30, 2024. Federal funds are allocated and organized in separate ranking pools in order to direct funds to specific resource issues or watershed locations.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Dollars Obligated
Cropland	77	9,476	\$5,370,857
NRCS Area 1	8	3,882	\$1,392,131
NRCS Area 2	27	2,405	\$1,825,536
NRCS Area 3	9	1,530	\$606,752
NRCS Area 4	14	1,602	\$1,267,971
Small-Scale Ag	19	57	\$278,467
Livestock	30	3,039	\$5,946,503
Confinement Operation	5	1,399	\$1,783,947
Pasture Operation	25	1,640	\$4,162,556
Forestland	115	7,062	\$2,328,908
Wildlife	30	654	\$463,452
On-Farm Energy	3	18	\$593,801
Urban Ag	9	26	\$129,782
Organic	1	300	\$57,694
Organic Transition Initiative	19	4,045	\$3,383,542
Beginning Farmer (BF)	27	1,783	\$2,283,016
Cropland	6	737	\$534,902
Forestland	5	109	\$85,377
Livestock	16	937	\$1,662,737
Socially Disadvantaged (SD)	13	69	\$200,255
Cropland	10	33	\$112,701
Forestland	0	0	\$0
Livestock	3	36	\$87,554
Conservation Activities	102	6,440	\$671,708
Ag. Energy Assessment	6	34	\$41,216
Compr. Nutrient Mgt.	19	1,779	\$395,204
Forest Management	36	1,786	\$86,141
Grazing Management	40	2,839	\$141,273
Organic Transition	1	2	\$7,874
Total	426	32,912	\$21,429,518

EQIP - Landscape Conservation Initiatives (LCI)

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Dollars Obligated
Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)	7	1,476	\$454,714
Clinton Lake Watershed	1	15	\$32,568
Upper Macoupin Creek Watershed	4	392	\$171,222
Vermillion Headwaters Watershed	2	1,069	\$250,924
National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	0	0	\$0
Friends Creek Watershed	0	0	\$0
Money Creek Watershed	0	0	\$0
Panther Creek Watershed	0	0	\$0
Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership	6	894	\$99,071
Northern Bobwhite Quail	35	1,473	\$549,128
Monarch Butterfly	11	120	\$106,753
Total	59	3,963	\$1,209,666

EQIP-Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Dollars Obligated
EQIP-IRA	57	20,753	\$6,144,676
EQIP-IRA Mgmt ACT NOW	108	52,277	\$19,697,037
Total	165	73,030	\$25,841,713

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)-IRA

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Dollars Obligated
Agricultural Land - IRA	99	86,865	\$9,093,251
Agricultural Land - Renewal - IRA	46	43,373	\$2,485,531
NIPF - IRA	20	1,673	\$1,132,301
NIPF - Renewal - IRA	9	353	\$184,116
Total	174	132,264	\$12,895,199

HO#1

CSP

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Dollars Obligated
Agricultural Land	129	153,600	\$12,018,811
Agricultural Land – BF	45	17,135	\$3,266,107
Nonindustrial Private Forest Land (NIPF)	52	3,616	\$1,730,060
NIPF – BF	10	524	\$398,933
Agricultural Land - Organic	1	161	\$29,807
Grassland Conservation Initiative	2	49	\$4,430
Total	239	175,086	\$17,448,148

CSP Renewals

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Acres Enrolled	Dollars Obligated
Agricultural Land	20	13,102	\$1,173,345
Agricultural Land – BF	1	277	\$31,096
NIPF	6	320	\$123,270
NIPF – BF	1	5	\$20,000
Total	28	13,704	\$1,347,711

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Ranking Pools	Contracts	Dollars Obligated
Working Lands, Water, and Wildlife Partnership	6	\$225,615
Lake Springfield Source Water Project	11	\$283,678
Precision Conservation Management	22	\$1,687,860
Southern Illinois Oak Ecosystem Restoration	11	\$201,300
Kinkaid Watershed Restoration Project	6	\$74,104
Lake Decatur Water Quality Initiative	28	\$5,853,540
Improving Oak Ecosystems Health in the Great Lakes Region	38	\$85,429
Rend Lake Watershed Conservation Initiative	56	\$1,163,705
Total	178	\$9,575,231

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Program Funding Source	New Agreements	Acres to be Protected	Funds Obligated
Welland Reserve Easements (ACEP - WRE)	2	239	\$1,733,203
ACEP-WRE RA	5	265.25	\$1,631,909
Welland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (ACEP - WREWREP)	6	1,172	\$4,163,008
Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP - ALE)	2	150	\$224,970

Emergency Watershed Protection Program - Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE)

Program Funding Source	Easements Closed	Acres	Funds Disbursed
EWPP - FPE	6	1,351	\$5,708,704
Program Funding Source	New Agreements	Acres to be Protected	Prior Year Funds Obligated
EWPP - FPE	5	152	\$564,501

RCPP-Entity Held Easements (RCPP-EHE)

Program Funding Source	Obligations	Acres to be Protected	Funds Obligated
RCPP-EHE	1	193.5	\$212,500
Program Funding Source	Easements Closed	Acres Protected	Funds Dispersed
RCPP-EHE	5	341.85	\$298,100



Data from National is still being compiled. All contract information was obtained October 1, 2024 and certified by the Illinois NRCS State Office.

Formore information, contact:

Tammy Wills, Illinois State Conservationist	217-353-6600
Area 1- Katundra Shears, Assistant State Conservationist	815-318-2177
Area 2- Annette Holmes, Assistant State Conservationist	217-331-7109
Area 3- Stewart Smith, Assistant State Conservationist	217-208-4023
Area 4- Ron Ziehm, Assistant State Conservationist	618-998-6134

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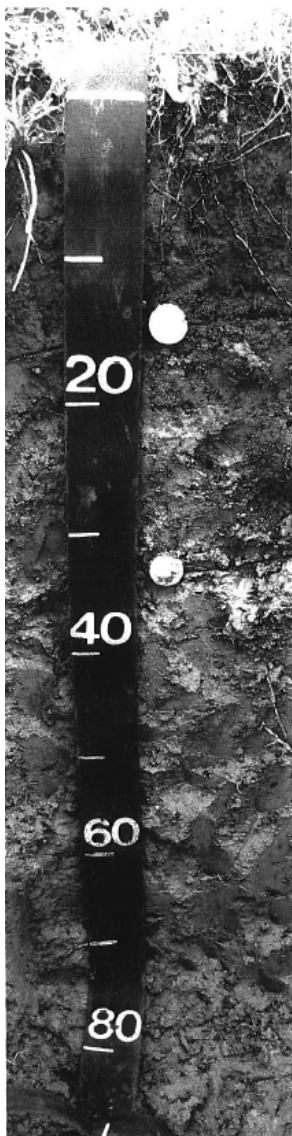
ILLINOIS • OCT 2024
HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND

ILLINOIS
Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/il

- There was an increase in funding.
- This is a full advisory budget; the Presidents' budget has not yet been signed.
- NRCS is hiring staff, Soil Conservationists, Natural Resource Specialists, Soil Conservation Technicians, and Pathways Students. Please put the word out that NRCS has positions available.

- Tammy passed out **HO#2 (shown below)**, which is a strategic plan from the Chief.



CONTENTS

Message from the Chief	3
Mission/Vision	4
Core Values	5
Introduction	6
Strategic Goal 1	7
Apply science-based solutions and technology to improve natural resources through conservation planning and implementation.	
Strategic Goal 2	9
Cultivate the agency's diverse, well trained, and engaged workforce.	
Strategic Goal 3	10
Advance the agency's high-quality customer experience.	
Strategic Goal 4	11
Foster partnerships that strengthen locally led and tribal land conservation.	
Strategic Goal 5	12
Optimize mission delivery by strengthening organizational health and performance.	
Reference Documents	12
Team Participants	13

HO#2

- This year is going to be a big year for NRCS, due to funding and programs.

Conservation Drainage Management (Richard Duesterhaus, NACD)



Conservation
Drainage-Deusterha

- Keegan Kult shared the “**Conservation Drainage Presentation**” (*attached above*) and led the discussion with special focus on game changers.
- Tom Christenson, former NRCS IL State Conservationist, also spoke on the attached Drainage PowerPoint.
- The conversation was opened up to take questions. Emails are welcome as well.

Financial Assistance Programs- HO#4 (shown below) (Jamie Alderks)

Financial Assistance Programs Fiscal Year 2025 Application Deadlines and Allocations

Financial Assistance (FA) Application Deadlines:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Renewal (using ACT NOW)

Application Deadline	May 3, 2024
Ranking Deadlines	November 1, 8, and 15, 2024
Obligation Deadline	December 20, 2024

CSP-Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

Application Deadline	January 10, 2025
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CSP Classic

Application Deadline	May 2, 2025
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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Organic Transition Initiative (OTI), and EQIP-IRA

Application Deadline	February 28, 2025
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EQIP Landscape Initiatives ACT NOW

Application Deadline	Ranking Deadlines
May 30, 2025	On the 13 th of every month January through June

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP18)

Application Deadline	April 18, 2025
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Fiscal Year (FY) Allocations:

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Allocations

Program	FY 2024 Initial Allocation	FY 2025 Advisory Allocation
CSP-IRA	\$14,851,000	\$29,786,000
EQIP-IRA	\$24,448,000*	\$35,875,226
IRA Total	\$39,299,000	\$65,661,226

*\$1,000,000 additional EQIP-IRA funds were received in addition to the initial allocation.

CSP Advisory Allocations

Program	FY 2024 Initial Allocation	FY 2025 Advisory Allocation
CSP Renewal	\$8,950,000 Budgeted	\$7,212,000 Budgeted
CSP Classic	\$13,395,000 Budgeted	\$10,618,000 Budgeted
CSP Organic	\$200,000 Budgeted	\$200,000 Budgeted
CSP Total	\$22,545,000	\$18,030,000

H.O. #4

EQIP Advisory Allocations

Program	FY 2024 Initial Allocation	FY 2025 Advisory Allocation
EQIP	\$15,449,955*	\$13,077,223
Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)	\$462,210	\$126,723
National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)	\$201,283	\$220,359
Monarch Butterfly Initiative	\$73,806	\$100,000
Northern Bobwhite	\$219,771	\$444,826
Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership (JCLRP)	\$380,291	\$350,000
Organic Transition Initiative	\$3,318,000	Determined by Headquarters after applications submitted
EQIP Total	\$20,105,316	\$14,319,131

*\$4,000,000 additional EQIP funds were received in addition to the initial allocation.

RCPP18 Information:

- An additional RCPP Specialist on my staff was a recently hired, Adam Wyant. Adam was most recently the District Conservationist in McLean-Livingston counties. Shannon Allen is still on my staff as the RCPP Coordinator. The program is growing, and we have a need for two employees to assist with program delivery to our field offices and discussions with partners. Continue to work with Shannon at shannon.allen@usda.gov and also include Adam at adam.wyant@usda.gov, as we train him in the position.
- Proposals were due July 2, 2024. Awards were made on October 23, 2024. The following is the proposal that was selected in Illinois:

Proposal Title	Lead Partner	Project Type	Funding Pool	CCA	Award	Description
Reducing Sedimentation to Improve Southern Illinois Aquatic Habitats	Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA)	Critical Conservation Area (CCA)	Mississippi River Basin	\$18,960,000	This project will work to help producers in targeted southern Illinois watersheds reduce the amount of sediment moving through the watersheds and deposited in critical downstream aquatic habitats. The goal is to restore an anticipated 130 acres of wetlands and 977 acres of native vegetation buffers and implement 48,865 acres of no-till cover crops to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus runoff and sequester carbon.

- Jamie handed out the “**Financial Assistance Programs Fiscal Year 2025 Application Deadlines & Allocations**” **HO#1**, (*attached above*), and discussed the application deadlines. The main focus was CSP renewals. Field Offices are diligently working on renewals and utilizing the Act Now process.
- FY25 Field Offices would like a compartmentalized timeframe for applications. Field Offices will adhere to that with the ranking deadlines as well.
- Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) money will be spent first, as it is the push from headquarters.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the next application deadline coming up.
- Adam Wyant is new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Co-Coordinator. Shannon Allen is also an RCPP Co-Coordinator. If you need to contact RCPP, please email both of them.
- Shannon Allen has contacted all Partners that have not been awarded RCPP. Please continue to work with Shannon & Adam in the future for more opportunities.

Easement Programs (Paula Hingson)

- Paula Hingson referenced the back side of the At A Glance, **HO#1**, discussing what we spent for FY 24.
- Regarding cutoffs for Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) programs, decisions will begin to be made mid-December, with the last decisions coming in early February.

NRCS Partnerships (Eric Gerth)

- More funding will be forthcoming for Agreements. There is a need for additional staff and Partnership Agreements to promote priorities in Illinois.
- Last year several agreements were entered, NRCS will be utilizing those to hire a Farmland Protection Specialist.
- NRCS is looking at Ducks Unlimited to assist with easement workload & realty assistance.
- There is a new agreement with Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation District (AISWCD).
- The Jackie Joyner Kersey Agreement in St louis focuses on agriculture. We are looking to train our field staff using those facilities.
- Eric stated in FY 25 NRCS will be looking for opportunities for new agreements. The agreement must be doing something to get conservation on the land or help ease the workload on field staff it's not a viable agreement. There will be opportunities than dollars, it's just a matter of where opportunities land.

Compliance (Winnie Chen)

- Winnie Chen demonstrated the use of the new Mitigation tool. Attached are the Instructions for use of the tool.



IL Wetland
Mitigation Procedure

- HO#6 (shown below)** is an example with the numbers populated in the Tool (used for mitigation).

ILLINOIS WETLAND FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION DECISION TOOL
United States Department of Agriculture
IL Natural Resources Conservation Service

INSTRUCTIONS: 1. Type responses in Yellow boxes. 2. Use drop downs to select Ratings for each variable. 3. Results will be shown in cell G21 for WAA to mitigate.

STEP 1 - TYPE IN RESPONSES IN YELLOW BOXES BELOW

1. Landowner Name: EXAMPLE	6. Date: 5-Nov-24
2. Landowner Address: 1234 FLOODED ST.	7. ADMIN Co. & State: SATURNATED CO., IL
3. Landowner City: WATER CITY	8. NRCS Name & Field Office: W. CHEN, CHAMPAIGN FIO
4. Landowner ZIP Code: 71752	
5. Landowner Phone: (123) 45 6789	

Location Information: Converted Site (Before)

9. Farm/Tract No.: 150477 TRACT	16. NW/4 Map: PMSB
10. County: SATURNATED CO.	17. HMA No.: 14258
11. FIP County Code: 41	18. CRD Label: PW
12. Township Name: WATER TOWN	
13. Township Range: 3RD MERIDIAN T12N R9W	
14. Section: 12	
15. River: LONG RIVER	

Location Information: Mitigated Site (After): Select Yes or No

19. Purchase of Bank Credits? NO	22. Farm/Tract No.: F 21452 TRACT
20. Same size Restoration? NO	23. County: NEIGHBORING CO.
21. Easement requirement on site? YES	24. FIP County Code: 51
	25. Township Name: DRY TOWN
	26. Township Range: 3RD MERIDIAN T2N R9W
	27. Section: 12
	28. River: LONG RIVER

STEP 2. Instructions: Select ratings using drop down boxes to the right of the cell for each variable (Purple & Green boxes only), the Converted site (Before) and the Mitigated site (After). Rating will populate in yellow boxes.

Variable	Converted (Before)	Converted (Before) Rating	Mitigated (After)	Mitigated (After) Rating
Select Ponding Volume (Vpd)	1 to 3	0.3	0	0.1
Select Land Use (Vlu)	Not cropped, hayed, managed, or grazed	1	Not cropped, hayed, managed, or grazed	1
Select Percent Openings (Vpo)	< 5%	0.1	< 5%	0.1
Select Vegetative Type (Vt)	Communities dominated by woody species > 10 years old and < 40 years old, with 10% of the canopy or stems being hard-mast species	0.7	Communities dominated by woody species > 10 years old and < 40 years old, with 20% of the canopy or stems being hard-mast species	0.7
Select Proximity (Vp)	Only used for Mitigation site		Within the 8-digit HUC or a bank bottom area	0.8
Select HCU Classification (Vhcu)	Only used with Mitigation site		Mitigation provides the same HCU class, subclass, regional subclass, and modifier as the converted wetland	1

STEP 3 - RESULTS ARE SHOWN BELOW

Variables	Converted Site (Before)	Mitigation Site (After)
Ponding Depth (Vpd)	0.25	0.11
Micro-topography (Vmt)	0.10	0.19
Land Use (Vlu)	0.20	0.20
Vegetative Type (Vt)	0.70	0.70
Proximity (Vp)	0.20	0.37
HCU Classification (Vhcu)	0.20	0.37

Functions and Value Loss or Gain:

Function	FCI Before / FCI After
Function 1	0.96
Function 2	0.85
Function 3	0.64

Results (Input AC)

Function	Original Acres of WAA being converted or is converted	Total Acres of WAA needed to replace Functions
Function 1	0.79	0.79
Function 2	0.85	
Function 3	0.64	

IL WAA 10.2024

Farm Service Agency (FSA) updates (Emily Conover)

- Emily Conover shared update and Jamie Diebal supplemented at the end.
- Emily passed out statistics sheet *shown below*.

Farm Service Agency Illinois Year End Statistics for FY2024

Total CRP Acres	794,871
Total CRP Contracts	72,472
Contracts Set to Expire in FY2025 (9-30-2025)	7,392 (73,958 acres)
Annual CRP Payments Issued October 2024	\$169 million

CRP Signup	Total Number of Contracts	Total Acres
CLEAR30	381	3,563
SAFE	2201	45,583
CREP	43	773

- Jamie Diebel stated that management activities are required on contracts.
- In February 2020, FSA met with NRCS and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and developed needed management activities and processes and were approved.
- Jamie D. stated it is important to note that the management activities that were discuss are only used by FSA (CRP program).
- The 2018 Farm Bill brought about change; it is no longer paying farmers cost share to complete management activities. This is their rent built into that payment.
- Any changes brought about will need to go through the State Technical Committee.
- FSA requested a meeting with the Wildlife Subcommittee in August.
- Jamie D. discussed the highlights of the discussion held at the last meeting.

Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) updates (Trevor Sample)

- Trevor Sample reported that loads and yields will be out at the end of the year.
- There will be a Policy Workgroup Meeting online tomorrow from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (11/7/24), where a presentation will be given.

Other items

- Adrienne Marino state the Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Partnership (ISAP) is working in partnership with Knox County SWCD to implement a batch-n-build pilot to install edge of field practices at scale in 2025.
- There will be funding in the next year to revisit the Conservation Drainage Training.
- Kris Reynolds gave an update.
- Working with ADM on the Regeneration Program, as well as working on a project with tintera (soil health ing)
- Caleb Worley, Pheasants Forever and Quails Forever (PFQF) stated they are up to 15 Farm Bill Biologists, and all positions are filled.

- CPS 590 is with the Quality Assurance (QA) Team. The QA team is comprised of at national level discipline lead. It goes through draft and then an internal review. Then goes back to QA to adjust. It then goes out again through another review process and then on to federal registry and then on to state tech committee. (for the public review process) then back through same process after 90 days. Comments are reviewed by QA, then sent back to state to release as final. The state can then adopt it as is.
- David Dupre-US Geological Survey state the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy will continue. They will have federal priority stream gauges and cooperative matching funds.
- Justin Shew stated all positions are filled (Land Conservation Specialists). The team is gearing up for easement monitoring. NGRREC- just received a large CRP monitoring grant. They will be focusing on Wetlands CRP Practices.
- Amelia Gooding Cheek with IL Farm Bureau would like updates on soil classifications on the national level.
- The Farm Bureau is handing out grants for next year's Stewardship Program.

Closing items

Dates for next year's meetings will be chosen in the near future and added to the website as soon as they are finalized.



IL State Tech
11-6-24_Sign In She