## HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED (Statewide)

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) includes provisions that address the unique circumstances and concerns of socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers [historically underserved (HU) producers]. The 2018 Farm Bill provides for voluntary participation, offers incentives, and focuses on equity in accessing NRCS Programs. To accomplish these goals in Alabama, all HU participants receive a higher rate of financial assistance, and two fund pools have been established for individual competition: Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and New and Beginning Farmer. Definitions for qualifying individuals can be found in the previous 'General Program Guidance' section. All Resource Groups are eligible for assistance (although only one may be addressed per application) and Veterans of these qualifying individuals will receive priority in the ranking process.

## LONGLEAF PINE INITIATIVE (see map)

**Guidelines:**

The focus of the LLPI in Alabama will be the management of existing Longleaf Pine stands. This priority will be captured through the ranking process and burning/thinning applications will rank higher than tree establishment applications.

## NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INIATIVE (see maps)

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) is a partnership among NRCS, state water quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where farmers can use conservation practices to make a difference. Conservation systems include practices that promote soil health, reduce erosion, and decrease nutrient runoff, such as filter strips, cover crops, reduced tillage, and manure management systems. These practices not only benefit natural resources but enhance agricultural productivity and profitability by improving soil health and optimizing the use of agricultural inputs.

## WORKING LANDS FOR WILDLIFE – BOBWHITE QUAIL INITIATIVE (see map)

**Background:**
The Northern Bobwhite Quail (Colinus virginianus) is iconic and highly valued, yet populations have declined by more than 85% since the 1960's. The southeastern United States was considered premiere quail hunting habitat and quail were common. This drastic decline is due primarily to the loss of quality early successional habitat (i.e. native grasses, legumes, weeds, briars, bugs, and shrubs). Changes in agricultural practices, lack of management, and other land-use change, have led to dramatic fragmentation of high-quality habitats as well.

Research shows that closed canopy and/or unburned pine stands provide poor quality habitat for bobwhites, and other grassland species, and may also serve as ecological sinks (i.e. high predation rates) thereby reducing bobwhite survival, even on adjacent high-quality habitats. When appropriately applied, forest thinning and frequent prescribed fire mimic the ecosystem processes that once occurred naturally across landscapes to create and maintain savanna habitats.

In addition to quail, restoring this habitat type across the Pine Savanna landscape benefits numerous songbirds, rabbits, wild turkey, deer, and many other wildlife species, improves water quality, reduces soil erosion, and can enhance local economies by stimulating quail hunting and wildlife viewing. Practices will be directed at establishing and maintaining habitat for several at-risk species as well. In the Eastern United States these

include pollinators, gopher tortoise, Henslowe's sparrow, Bachmann's sparrow, Prairie Warbler, Pine Snake, Speckled Kingsnake, Pocket Gopher, Indigo Snake, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Western Diamondback Rattlesnake, Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake, and Bog Turtle. Refer to the WLFW 2.0 Bobwhite Quail Map for the counties that are eligible for this initiative.

## WORKING LANDS FOR WILDLIFE – GOPHER TORTOISE INITIATIVE (see map)

**Purpose:** Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) will focus conservation dollars and wildlife expertise on the recovery of certain at-risk, threatened, or endangered wildlife species with Gopher Tortoise being one of seven species selected across the country. WLFW aims to keep at-risk species from needing to be listed as endangered wherever possible, and to hasten the recovery of those that are already endangered by using best available science and wildlife experts to jointly prioritize restoration actions on a regional scale. The Initiative demonstrates that conservation practices are fully compatible to support agriculture and productive wildlife habitat and economic viability.

# HIGH PRIORITY PRACTICES

The 2018 Farm Bill and EQIP rule authorize increased payments for up to 10 high priority practices to address priority resource concerns, mainly Water Quality and Quantity. The higher payment should incentivize conservation practices that have high potential for conservation benefit but are often underutilized and historic adoption may be low.

High Priority Practice Scenarios that will pay 90% are designated as *(Pr)* within the payment schedule. In Alabama, the following scenarios are eligible for the 90% payment rate to ALL participants within the entire state.

NOTE: All payment caps still apply as designated in the Conservation Practice section below

| Eligible High Priority (Pr) Scenarios for 90% rate | | |
|---|---|---|
| 309 | Agrichemical Handling Facility | All Scenarios |
| 316 | Animal Mortality Facility | All Scenarios |
| 351 | Well Decommissioning | All Scenarios |
| 410 | Grade Stabilization Structure | All Scenarios |
| 442 | Sprinkler System | 1) Variable Rate System- convert from traveler to a VRI center pivot (Low Pressure).<br>2) Variable Rate System Retrofit<br>3) Variable Rate System Renovation |
| 449 | Irrigation Water Management | 1) Soil Moisture Sensors with Data Recorder<br>2) Variable Rate IWM |
| 512 | Pasture and Hay Planting | Planting of Native Warm Season Grass |
| 590 | Nutrient Management | All Scenarios |
| 620 | Underground Outlet | All Scenarios |
| 638 | Water and Sediment Control Basin | All Scenarios |

# SOURCE WATER PROTECTION PRACTICES

The 2018 Farm Bill provides for increased incentives for practices that protect water quality and quantity of drinking water sources while also benefitting producers. Increased payment rates for selected source water protection (SWP) practices are to be applied within the identified priority watersheds (refer to Appendix A). These practices will be paid at the 90 percent payment rate for all applicants in all ranking pools within these priority areas. Some practices have specific conditions to qualify for the 90% rate as designated with a footnote. Eligible practices are listed below and correspond to the watershed designation [Ground, Surface, or both (Appendix A)]. For example, both sets of SWP practices are eligible in the orange watersheds designated as "Surface Water and Ground Water." Use of *'Wp'* payment scenarios will ONLY be appropriate if the SWP question is affirmatively answered within the CART ranking.

| Eligible SWP Practices at 90% rate for GROUND WATER watersheds (Blue and Orange on map) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 309 | Agrichemical Handling Facility | 449 | Irrigation Water Management (3) |
| 313 | Waste Storage Facility (1) | 484 | Mulching (4) |
| 317 | Composting Facility | 528 | Prescribed Grazing |
| 329 | Residue and Tillage Management, No Till | 558 | Roof Runoff Structure |
| 342 | Critical Area Planting | 587 | Structure for Water Control |
| 351 | Water Well Decommissioning | 590 | Nutrient Management (5) |
| 359 | Waste Treatment Lagoon | 595 | Pest Management System |
| 360 | Waste Facility Closure | 629 | Waste Treatment |
| 381 | Silvopasture Establishment | 632 | Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility |
| 391 | Riparian Forest Buffer | 634 | Waste Transfer |
| 442 | Irrigation System, Sprinkler (2) | 657 | Wetland Restoration |
| 443 | Irrigation System, Subsurface (2) | | |
| (1) Wet waste only, (2) Variable Rate only, (3) Soil Moisture Sensors/Variable Rate only, (4) No Plastic, (5) Precision Application only | | | |

| Eligible SWP Practices at 90% rate for SURFACE WATER watersheds (Green and Orange on map) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 309 | Agrichemical Handling Facility | 443 | Irrigation System, Subsurface (2) |
| 313 | Waste Storage Facility (1) | 449 | Irrigation Water Management (3) |
| 317 | Composting Facility | 484 | Mulching (4) |
| 318 | Short Term Storage of Animal Waste and Byproducts | 528 | Prescribed Grazing |
| 329 | Residue and Tillage Management, No Till | 558 | Roof Runoff Structure |
| 332 | Contour Buffer Strips | 578 | Stream Crossing |
| 333 | Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum Products | 580 | Streambank and Shoreline Protection |
| 342 | Critical Area Planting | 587 | Structure for Water Control |
| 351 | Water Well Decommissioning | 590 | Nutrient Management (5) |
| 359 | Waste Treatment Lagoon | 595 | Pest Management System |
| 360 | Waste Facility Closure | 600 | Terrace |
| 381 | Silvopasture Establishment | 620 | Underground Outlet |
| 386 | Field Border | 629 | Waste Treatment |
| 391 | Riparian Forest Buffer | 632 | Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility |
| 393 | Filter Strip | 634 | Waste Transfer |
| 395 | Stream Habitat Improvement and Management | 638 | Water and Sediment Control Basin |
| 410 | Grade Stabilization Structure | 644 | Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management |
| 412 | Grassed Waterway | 657 | Wetland Restoration |
| (1) Wet waste only, (2) Variable Rate only, (3) Soil Moisture Sensors/Variable Rate only, (4) No Plastic, (5) Precision Application only | | | |