



CT NRCS State Technical Committee

April 15, 2026

CT NRCS PROGRAMS

Cadie Pruss, Acting ASTC-Programs

- FY2025 Look Back
- FY2026 changes
- Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)
- CSP Changes
- NRCS Program Allocations
- FY2026 Program Roll out
- Easements – ACEP
- ACEP-WRE Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC)



FY 2025 Look Back

FY25 Year End Programs Summary

Program	Funding Source	Allocation	# Contracts	Obligation	% Obligated
EQIP	Total	\$16,839,912	212	\$15,995,912	96%
	IRA EQIP	\$2,556,189	39	\$1,992,293	78%
	FB EQIP	\$14,283,723	173	\$14,003,619	98%
CSP	Total	\$1,896,388	50	\$1,849,809	98%
	IRA	\$134,588	3	\$134,588	100%
	Farm Bill	\$1,761,800	47	\$1,715,221	97%
AMA	Total	\$115,000	3	\$124,929	108%
Total		\$18,851,300	265	\$17,970,650	95%

FY25 EQIP HU Contracts

Contract Historically Underserved Funding

Contracts and Dollars Obligated to Historically Underserved Contracts



105
historically underserved contracts

173
Total Contracts



\$4M
on historically underserved contracts

\$14M
Total Obligations

FY25 EQIP IRA HU Contracts

Contract Historically Underserved Funding

Contracts and Dollars Obligated to Historically Underserved Contracts



24
historically underserved contracts

39
Total Contracts



\$1M
on historically underserved contracts

\$2M
Total Obligations



FY25 CSP HU Contracts

Contract Historically Underserved Funding

Contracts and Dollars Obligated to Historically Underserved Contracts



22

historically underserved contracts

47

Total Contracts



\$1M

on historically underserved contracts

\$2M

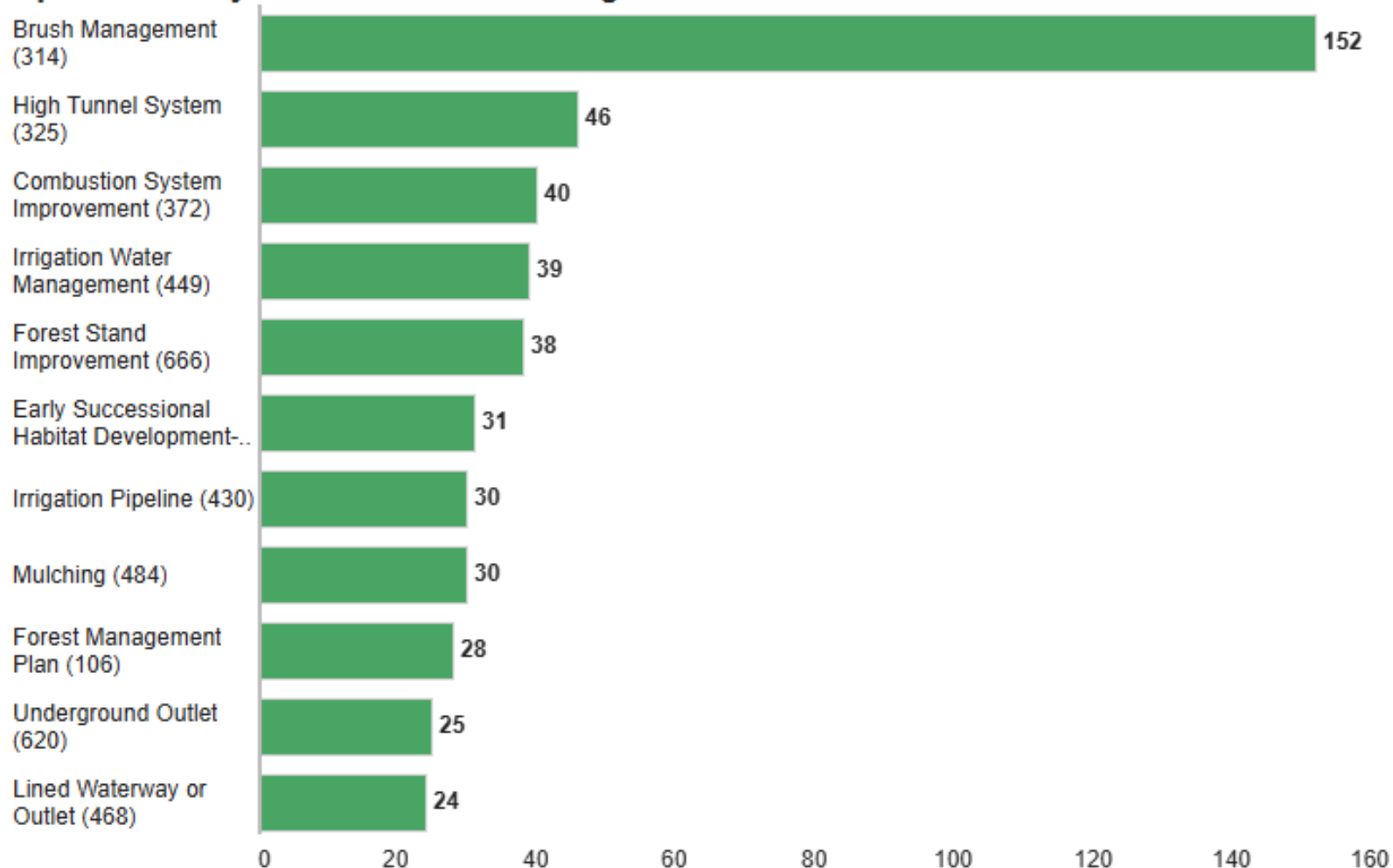
Total Obligations

FY25 Year End Programs Summary - EQIP

FY 25 Subaccounts	# Contracts	Obligation	Acres
EQIP General Statewide	27	\$1,872,695	641
EQIP-IRA Statewide	7	\$261,835	281
Urban Agriculture	6	\$528,115	137
Wildlife 10%	13	\$1,352,785	1646
EQIP Historically Underserved BF/SD	31	\$1,233,559	413
EQIP-IRA Historically Underserved BF/SD	17	\$1,215,863	547
ACT NOW General EQIP	79	\$3,889,362	2,413
ACT NOW Livestock Waste & Farmstead	8	\$3,298,716	121
ACT NOW EQIP IRA	14	\$522,455	392
NWQI	3	\$991,797	58
FY25 Organic Transition	2	\$67,694	2
FY25 WLFW Bog Turtle	1	\$259,162	58
FY25 Oyster Restoration	1	\$140,799	3
FY25 Flood Recovery	3	\$361,621	54
Grand Total	212	\$15,995,912	6,766

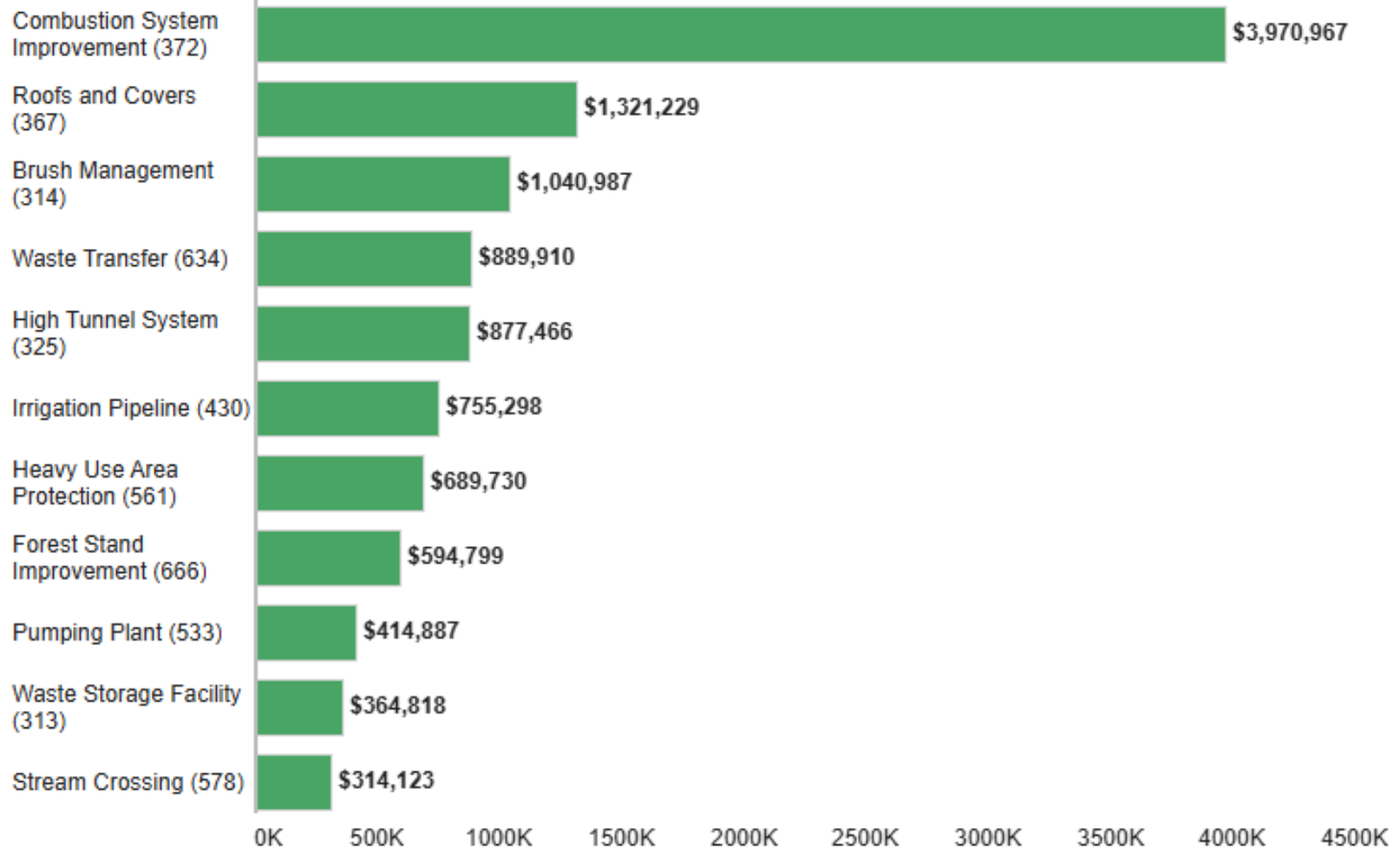
FY 2025 Top Planned Practices - EQIP

Top Practices by Practice Instances Obligated



FY 2025 Top Planned Practices- EQIP

Top Practices by Dollars Obligated

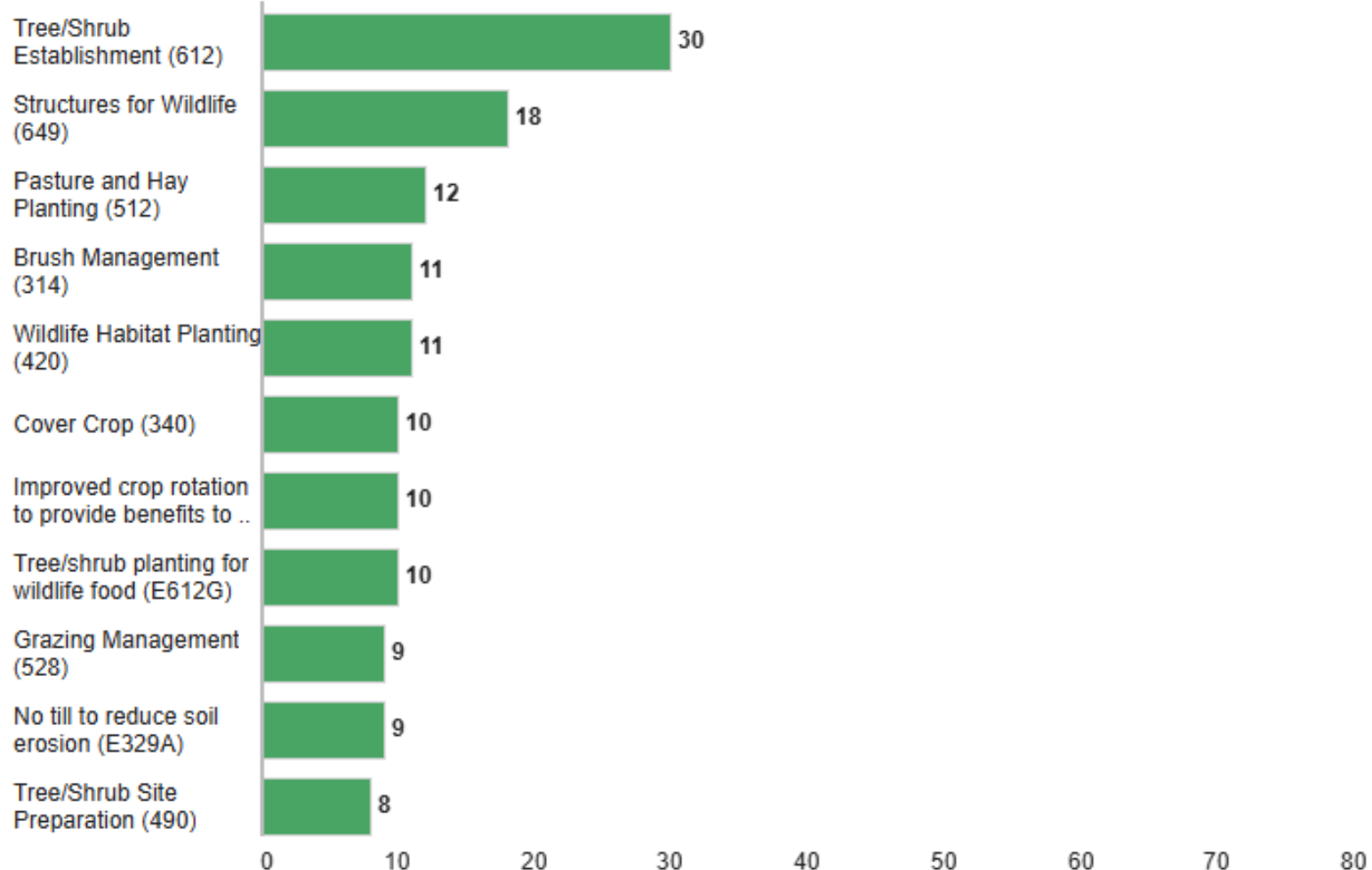


FY 2025 Year End Programs Summary - CSP

CSP – Subaccount and Funding Source	# Contracts	Obligation	Acres
	50	\$1,849,809	11,227
CSP Farm Bill	47	\$1,715,221	3,690
NIPF	15	\$570,719	7246
NIPF-Beginning Farmer	2	\$40,515	140
Agland	22	\$800,358	3,619
Agland - Renewals	2	\$46,052	6
Agland - Beginning Farmer	6	\$204,442	43
CSP IRA	3	\$134,588	6,341
CSP IRA Agriculture	3	\$134,588	172

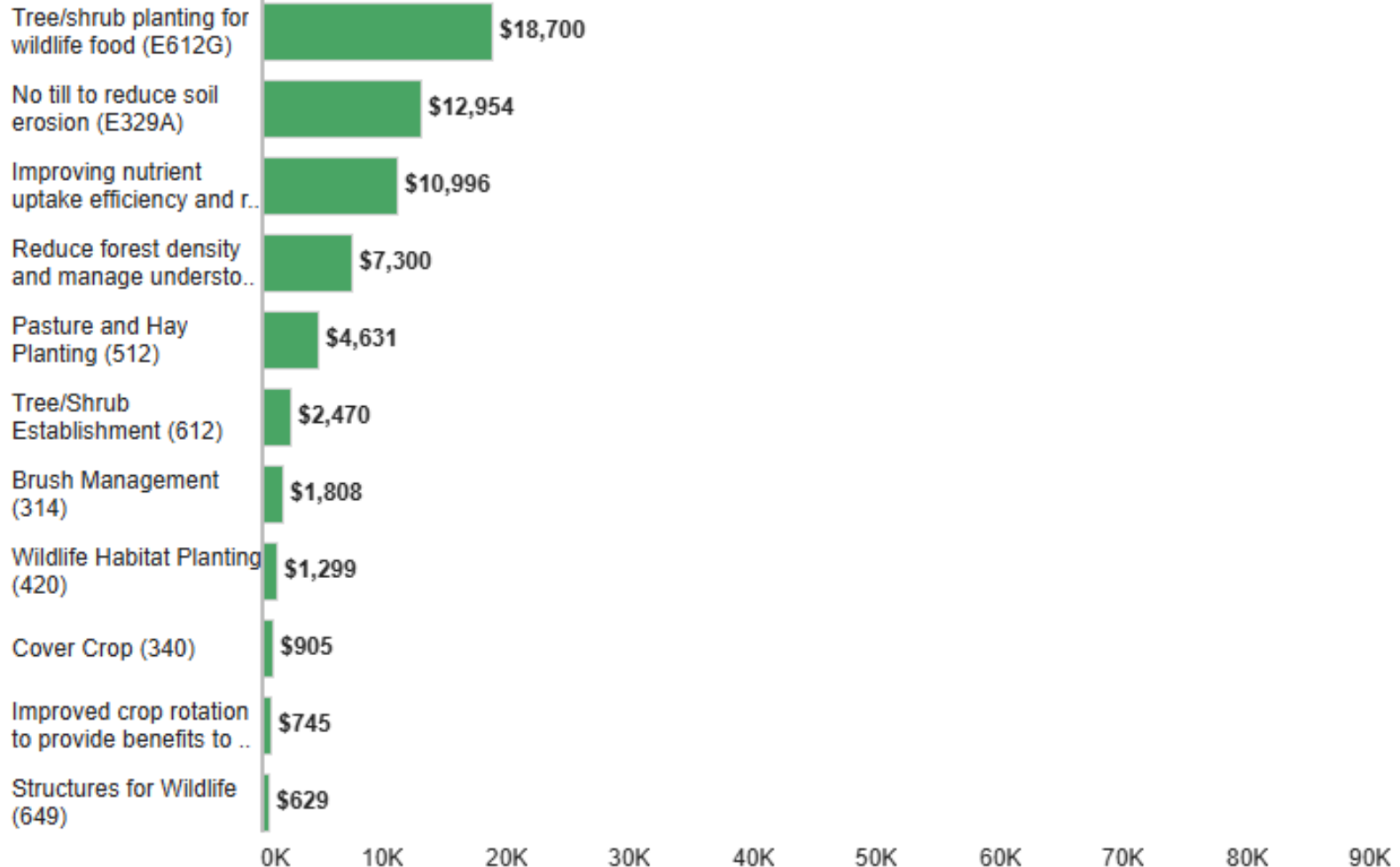
FY 2025 Top Planned Practices - CSP

Top Practices by Practice Instances Obligated



FY 2025 Top Planned Practices- CSP

Top Practices by Dollars Obligated



FY 2025 Easements

ACEP ALE

Program	Funding Source	Allocation	# Contracts	Obligation	% Obligated
ACEP*	Farm Bill	\$2,754,525	8	\$2,614,954	95.00%

**All ACEP funding for this year was through ALE. No WRE signups for FY 2025*

- ACEP ALE obligated 8 contracts in FY 2025
- Round 1 = 5, round 2 = 3
- CT Dept of Agriculture closed on 9 easements enrolled in ALE in previous years, totaling **562 acres** protected with ACEP ALE assistance

FY 2025 Easements- RCPP

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

RCPP- HFRP

Healthy Forest Reserve Program

■ **Closed**

- NRCS closed on a 2023 RCPP HFRP agreement in fiscal year 2025
- Total of 194.37 acres protected
- Restoration expected to begin in 2026
 - Following Forest Management Plan to improve forest conditions, habitat

RCPP- 2018

Signed Agreements
for 3 proposed easements



FY 2026 Programmatic Changes

FY 2026 Allocations

Program	EQIP	CSP	AMA	ACEP-ALE	ACEP-WRE	Total
Original FA	\$6,475,000	\$4,063,000	\$183,617	\$4791,000	\$1,000,000	\$16,512,617
25 % RPP	\$1,618,750	\$1,015,750				
10% BF & SD	\$647,500	\$406,300				
10% wildlife	\$647,500					
NWQI	\$450,000					
50% Livestock	\$3,237,500					
10% source water	\$647,500					
	7,248,750	\$1,422,050				

Programmatic Changes in 2026

- **Payment Limitations affecting EQIP and CSP**
- FY2026 EQIP and CSP contracts will not be subject to payment limitations identified in the 2018 Farm Bill.
 - **The regulatory contract limits still apply in FY2026.**
 - **EQIP: \$450,000**
 - **CSP: \$300,000**



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Regenerative Pilot Program



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Regenerative agriculture is a conservation management approach that emphasizes natural resources through improved soil health, water management, and natural vitality for the productivity and prosperity of American agriculture and communities. The Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) is a farmer-first, outcomes-based approach to conservation designed to return the agency to its core mission, helping people help the land, by addressing whole-farm resource concerns through support for voluntary regenerative agriculture Conservation Plans.

NRCS website

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/regenerative-pilot-program>



Regenerative Pilot Program Requirements

- Whole Farm Assessment
- Primary Practices
- Soil Health Testing
- Minimum 5-year contract



Land Uses

RPP focuses on Crop, Forest, Pasture, and Range

Other land uses can be encompassed within the same conservation plan

HOW CONSERVATION PLANNING WORKS A NINE-STEP PROCESS



Conservation Practices

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Y	N	N	N
330	Contour Farming	Y	N	N	N
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop	Y	N	N	N
340	Cover Crop	Y	Y	Y	N
554	Drainage Water Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
511	Forage Harvest Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
666	Forest Stand Improvement	N	Y	Y	N
449	Irrigation Water Management	Y	Y	Y	N
484	Mulching	Y	Y	Y	Y
590	Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	N
595	Pest Management Conservation System	Y	Y	Y	Y
598	Prescribed Grazing	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Y	N	N	N
	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced	Y	N	N	N
	Stripcropping	Y	N	N	N

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities

Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
Soil Health Testing	Y	Y	Y	Y
Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	Y

Conservation Planning Activity

Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
Conservation Plan	Y	Y	Y	Y

Whole Farm Assessment

Defined for Regenerative Pilot Program

- EQIP Regen - All land that encompasses the “whole farm” will be evaluated
- CSP Regen - All land under control for the life of the contract will be evaluated

Environmental Quality
Incentives Program (EQIP)

Conservation Stewardship
Program (CSP)

Note: When working with tribes to complete a whole farm assessment, NRCS and the Tribe will follow this instruction, in combination with program policies found in CPM 440 Part 530 to address the unique relationship between the Tribe and its members so as not to create an undue hardship.



Assessment - Resource Concerns

A complete assessment of all applicable resource concerns is required

- All applicable Resource Concerns and corresponding Components will be evaluated
- At a minimum, the plan must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories.

Establish whole farm plan before the end of the contract period.

- By the end of the contract period all Soil and Water resource concerns will be met, Planned Condition
 - CSP – On at least one land use (of range, pasture, crop, forest)
 - EQIP – can be subset of all land units based on client objectives

Conservation Plan

Required

- Conservation Plan must span a minimum of 5 years
- A minimum of one primary Regen Practice
 - Existing
 - Planned
- Soil Health Testing 216 planned in year one and year five
- Soil and Water Resource Concerns planned condition must meet or exceeded threshold

Optional

- Supporting and other practices are eligible
- CEMA 217 Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management

Eligible Practices and Activities

The following table identifies primary regenerative management practices by land use. Conservation plans and contracts under the RPP must incorporate at least one primary regenerative management practice which is either already being implemented by an eligible producer or planned for future implementation. The practice must meet all general and additional criteria of the applicable conservation practice standard to address targeted resource concerns within the pilot program. Conservation plans and contracts developed under RPP may also include supporting practices as well as other practices and activities.

Conservation Practices

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Y	N	N	N
330	Contour Farming	Y	N	N	N
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop	Y	N	N	N
340	Cover Crop	Y	Y	Y	N
554	Drainage Water Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
511	Forage Harvest Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
666	Forest Stand Improvement	N	Y	Y	N
449	Irrigation Water Management	Y	Y	Y	N
484	Mulching	Y	Y	Y	Y
590	Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	N
595	Pest Management Conservation System	Y	Y	Y	Y
528	Prescribed Grazing	Y	Y	Y	Y
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Y	N	N	N
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced	Y	N	N	N
585	Stripcropping	Y	N	N	N

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
CEMA 216	Soil Health Testing	Y	Y	Y	Y
CEMA 217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	Y

Conservation Planning Activity

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
CPA 199	Conservation Plan	Y	Y	Y	Y

Excerpts from NI 440 307.14 Regenerative Dec. 2025

Conservation Plan Done!

RPP EQIP

EQIP

To qualify for Regen Pilot Program:

- Land that encompasses the “whole farm” will be evaluated
- All applicable Resource Concerns evaluated
- Minimum 5-year contract

and

At least one land unit in the assessment must meet the following:

- One Primary Regen Practice planned or currently being implemented
- Soil and Water RC thresholds are at met condition by end of contract
 - planned practices necessary to achieve outcome must be contracted
- Soil Health Testing year one and year five

Conservation Plan Done!

RPP CSP

CSP

- To qualify for Regen Pilot Program:
 - All land under control for the life of the contract will be evaluated
 - All applicable Resource Concerns evaluated
 - Meet CSP Stewardship Threshold Eligibility
 - *RPP Addition* - Soil and Water RC thresholds are at met condition by end of contract On at least one land use (of range, pasture, crop, forest)
 - planned practices necessary to achieve outcome must be contracted

and

At least one land unit in the assessment must meet the following:

- One Primary Regen Practice planned or currently being implemented
- Soil Health Testing year one and year five



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CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing

(CEMA = Conservation Evaluation & Monitoring Activity)



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What's the difference?

216 Soil Health Testing

Quantitative testing for **biological, chemical, and physical characteristics** of soil and constraints using approved laboratory methods.

Measures:

Soil Aggregation Soil Carbon Cycling
 Microbial Activity Carbon Food Source
 Nitrogen Food Source Soil pH
 Soil Texture
 (Advanced: Microbial Diversity/functional diversity)

Scenarios:

Soil Health Testing
 Advanced Soil Health Testing

217 Soil & Source Testing For Nutrient Management

A sampling strategy for nutrient management measuring **nutrient levels** in soil and or nutrient source.

Measures:

Macronutrients
 Micronutrients

= Standard soil test from UCONN lab

Scenarios:

1. Soil Testing
2. Soil Testing, Small Production Beds
3. Soil Test with Organic Nutrients, Less Than or Equal to One Acre
4. Manure or Compost
5. Acidic or Alkaline Soil Testing
6. Water Sampling
7. Zone or Grid Soil Testing

Planning CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing

Through the planning process customers are encouraged to plan Soil Health Testing to provide a sampling protocol that provides comprehensive results of their whole farm. At a minimum Soil Health Testing must be planned on one planning land unit.

Extent will depend on the client's operation in combination with the client's objective.

- Crop Rotation
- Soil variability
- Livestock vs no livestock
- Nutrient sources
- Client's desired extent of testing
- Etc....

Soil Health Testing is planned at least twice for evaluation & monitoring

- Year 1 and Year 5 of a contract
- Minimally at beginning and end of the conservation plan / contract



Soil Health Testing

Participants must agree to **Soil Health Testing** in the first and last year of the contract to establish a starting *baseline* and to record the *resulting changes*.

Financial assistance for **Soil Health Testing** will be available to both producers who have not previously completed soil testing and producers who are already testing their soil.



United States Department of Agriculture

CEMA 216 - Page 1

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity

Soil Health Testing

CEMA 216

DEFINITION

Quantitative testing for biological, chemical, and physical characteristics of soil and constraints using approved laboratory methods.

APPLICABLE LAND USES

All Land Uses.

REQUIREMENTS

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
CEMA 216	Soil Health Testing	Y	Y	Y	Y
CEMA 217	Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	Y

[CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing 10-2026R](#)

[CEMA 217 Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management 10-2022](#)

Talking Points: 216 Benefits to Farmers

1. **Quantified Soil Health Report:** CEMA 216 provides a detailed “report card” of overall soil health (SH), helping farmers understand the current condition of their soils across multiple metrics — soil organic matter content and dynamics, biological activity, and physical structure.
2. **Informed Decision-Making:** With the data from CEMA 216 tests, farmers can identify and hone specific SH deficiencies/achievements. This enables targeted soil amendments and management strategies.
3. **Conservation Monitoring:** By measuring soil health over time, farmers can track the effectiveness of conservation practices that address SH deficiencies. This feedback supports long-term soil stewardship.



Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMAs)

CEMA are provided by Qualified Individuals (QIs). QIs self-certify they meet qualification criteria stated in a CEMA document. Professional licenses, accreditations, certifications, and experience typify qualification criteria for CEMA QIs. A QI may, or may not, also hold TSP certification.

A QI for Soil Health Testing CEMA 216 meets one of the following:

- 1) Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or Certified Professional Agronomist (CPAg) through the American Society of Agronomy or a Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) or Associate Professional Soil Scientist (APSS) through the Soil Science Society of America.
- 2) Technical Service Providers (TSP) certified for Soil Health Management Plan Conservation Practice Activity (116) or Soil Health Management Design and Implementation Activity (162).
- 3) An associate degree or higher in an agricultural or soil science field with at least 2 years of experience collecting soil for laboratory analysis.
- 4) Individuals working under the guidance or management of a QI are allowed to collect soil samples for this CEMA.

Excerpt from CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing document

Qualified Individuals

Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

Q: Will there be a QI list?

A: NRCS will not maintain a comprehensive list of QI's. It's not feasible to make a comprehensive list.

Next best thing: Local sources of QI's based on 216 standard QI criteria:

1. CCA, CPSS: **SSSSNE Registry** (search by "CPSS" and/or "CEMA 216"),
2. **TSP Registry:** search for 116 and 162; AFT, Northern Tilth, and a few consultants

UConn Extension and Conservation Districts have some staff that meet QI requirements.

Customer may ask about a specific individual's eligibility as a QI. We likely have customers that have at least a 2-year degree in Agronomy and sampling soils for 217-type analysis. We recommend sharing the QI requirements from the 216 practice standard and ask them to document their eligibility, and State Office can help with reviewing the potential QI's eligibility.

Soil Health Testing CEMA 216 Laboratories

Lab criteria from standard:

- 9) Ensure laboratories maintain current certification from one of the following:
 - a) The Performance Assessment Program (PAP) from The North American Proficiency Testing Program (NAPT) under the auspices of the Soil Science Society of America, or
 - b) The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) National Accreditation Board (ANAB), or
 - c) The International Organization for Standardization (ISO/IEC 17043:2010) for ISO 10694:1995, or
 - d) State-approved certification program that considers laboratory performance and proficiency to assure accuracy of soil test results.

Excerpt from CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing document

In addition to the certification requirements, we must use labs that can analyze for the required SH indicators...

Details on next slide

Soil Health Testing CEMA 216 Laboratories

Which labs?: **Cornell**, **UMaine** (regional labs recommended for better interpretation of results)

Analyses: soil texture, soil pH, and the 5 soil health indicator categories are all required

+ Soil penetrometer readings recommended, not required; many labs will take data and interpret

this can be part of the IFSHA also (wire flag is alternative)

Lab Analysis Backlogs

-Cornell projects 6-8 week turnaround from receiving samples, longer during peak seasons

-CEMA Payment cannot occur until deliverables received ***including*** test results

Soil Health

Soil is not an inert growing medium – it is a living and life-giving natural resource.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review CEMA 216
- Contact local Qualified Individuals
- Provide resources to find Certified Laboratories
- Train field staff how to communicate with clients on the benefits of soil health and testing.

Soil Health Website

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/soil/soil-health>

RESOURCES

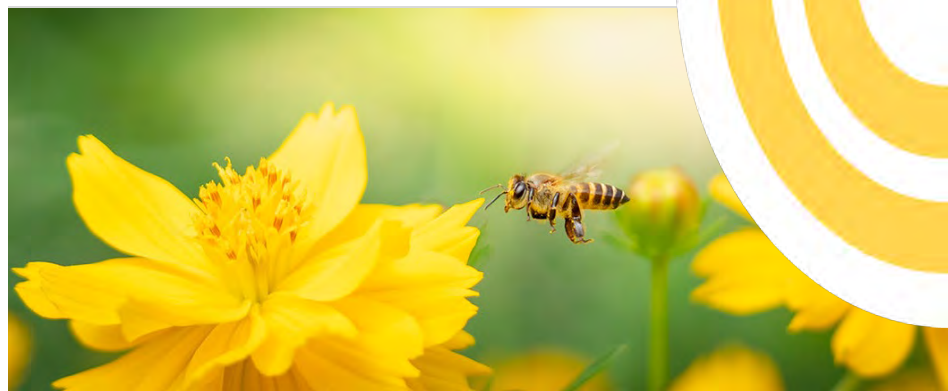
- Recorded webinar on the S&T Training Library (conservationwebinars.net): [Implementing Soil Health Testing – Conservation Evaluation Monitoring Activity 216](#)
- [CEMA 216 Job Aid](#)
- Three tech notes on eDirectives:
- [TN-470-01 Choosing a Laboratory for Soil Health Testing](#)
- [TN-470-07 Guidance on Grab Sampling for Soil Health Testing](#)
- [TN-470-16 Soil Health Testing to Support Conservation Planning](#)

Questions & Answers





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FY 26 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

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FY-26 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CSP offers a 5-year contract focusing on enhancing a producer's operation to a higher level of stewardship
 - Participants have more opportunity to adopt new activities across the operation.
 - Activity list includes practices, along with conservation activities that support the objectives of the operation

CSP Fund Management

- States must establish separate funding opportunities for the following:
 - Agricultural land (crop, pasture, rangeland)
 - Non-industrial private forest land (NIPF)
- States must target at least 5 percent of available funds to both beginning farmers and ranchers (BFR) and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR)
- States must give preference to veteran farmers and ranchers (VFR)
- States will offer initiatives and pilots as separate categories

FY-26 CSP Overview

- Existing Activity Payment (EAP) – Simplified
 - **\$4,000/year** per contract for new contracts starting in FY2026.
- Contract Limits for FY2026:
 - \$300,000 for individuals and entities (that are not joint operations)
 - \$600,000 for Joint Operations (Business Type 2 or 3)



increased costs



inflation



higher payment
rates for new
activities

FY-26 CSP Overview

Nationally Required RCs Removed

- Consistent assessments are needed for each program participant, as this impacts CSP Stewardship Threshold Eligibility.
- States determine the appropriate RCs to evaluate per land use when those RCs are applicable to a Planning Land Unit (PLU).



State Priority Resource Concern Category (SPRC)

FY2026 CT NRCS CSP: State Priority Resource Concern Categories		
	Ranking Pool	
Resource Concern Category	Agriculture: General, BF, SD and Organic	NIPF: General, BF, SD and Organic
Air quality emissions		
Aquatic habitat		X
Concentrated erosion		
Degraded plant condition		X
Field pesticide loss	X	
Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss	X	
Fire management		
Inefficient energy use		
Livestock production limitation	X	
Pest pressure		X
Salt losses to water		
Soil quality limitations	X	X
Source water depletion	X	X
Storage and handling of pollutants		
Terrestrial habitat	X	X
Weather resilience	X	X
Wind and water erosion	X	X

FY-26 CSP Overview

- The list of CSP activities was altered in FY-26
 - Includes vegetative and management activities offered for CSP in FY-25.
 - CSP Enhancements/Bundles will no longer be available
 - Continuing towards program-neutral Planning
- These are the structural activities currently offered in CSP FY-26 :
 - 374 – Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation
 - 382 – Fence
 - 516 – Livestock Pipeline
 - 533 – Pumping Plant
 - 561 – Heavy Use Area Protection
 - 574 – Spring Development
 - 576 – Livestock Shelter Structure
 - 614 – Watering Facility
 - 654 – Road/Trail/Landing Closures and Treatment
 - 655 – Forest Trails and Landings
 - 670 – Energy Efficient Lighting System
 - 672 – Energy Efficient Building Envelope.

FY-26 CSP Overview

- Includes CPA/DIA/CEMA activities that would support the Regenerative Pilot Program and planning options on Forest and Farmstead land uses:
 - CPA 106 – Forest Management Plan
 - CPA 116 – Soil Health Management Plan
 - DIA 120 – Agricultural Energy Design
 - DIA 162 – Soil Health Management System Design
 - CPA 199 – Conservation Plan (*takes place of E199A – Comprehensive Conservation Plan*)
 - CEMA 204 – Adaptive Management for Soil Health
 - CEMA 216 – Soil Health Testing
 - CEMA 217 – Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management
 - CEMA 228 – Agricultural Energy Assessment.
- CPA/DIA/CEMA activities will not serve to meet Stewardship Threshold Eligibility (STE) for additionality.

FY-26 CSP Payments

New Activity Payment	FY26 Status
Conservation Practices	75% of payment schedule
Cover Crop payments	125% of payment schedule
Supplemental Payments:	
Advanced Grazing Management CPS 528	150%
Resource Conserving Crop Rotation CPS 328	150%
Improved Resource Conserving Crop Rotation CPS 328	150%
Bundles	Not Offered



FY-26 CSP Payments

- Enhancement Activity Sheets will not be used for new contracts in FY2026.
- Implementation of a practice will be done according to:
 - The FOTG Conservation Practice Standard Implementation Requirements
 - NRCS Practice Designs.



2026 Easements

NRCS Easement Monitoring in CT

We monitor **77** conservation easements yearly throughout the state:

- 5 WRP (wetlands)
- 10 GRP (grasslands)
- 32 EWPP-FPE (floodplains)
- 29 FRPP (agricultural preservation)
- 1 RCPP (regional conservation easement)

We also review **233** easement monitoring reports yearly from entity partners (Dept. of Ag, CFT, DEEP, land conservancies, land trusts, cities and towns). These easements are agriculturally based (FRPP and ACEP-ALE).

We maintain contact with easement landowners, track land ownership, and manage files on all these easements.



ACEP ALE Eligibility and Sign Up

■ *Who is eligible?*

- Eligible partners include American Indian tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that have farmland, rangeland, or grassland protection programs
- Eligible landowners include owners of privately held land including land that is held by tribes and tribal members.
- All landowners, including required members of landowner-legal entities, must meet adjusted gross income limitations and must be compliant with the HEL/WC provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985.

■ *What land is eligible?*

- *At least 50% of the entire offered parcel must be prime or statewide important soils*
- Includes private or Tribal land
 - Agricultural
 - Cropland
 - Rangeland
 - Grassland/pastureland
 - Nonindustrial private forest land (no more than 2/3 of offered land)

ACEP ALE Eligibility and Sign Up

- Must meet one of the four following criteria:
 - Parcels enrolled to protect Prime, Unique, or other productive soil
 - Parcels enrolled to provide protection of grazing uses and related conservation values
 - Parcels containing historical or archaeological resources
 - Land that furthers a state or local policy consistent with the purposes of ACEP-ALE



FY 2026 ACEP ALE & ACEP WRE

FY 2026 Applications

- ACEP - ALE = 10 applications
- ACEP- WRE= 0 applications

FY 2026 Easements- RCPP

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

RCPP- HFRP

Healthy Forest Reserve Program

- NRCS anticipates to close on another 2023 RCPP HFRP this year
- Will include 184.77 acres to be protected
- Will include restoration post closing

RCPP- 2018

- Anticipate signing agreements for 6 proposed easements

ACEP WRE Eligibility and Sign Up

ACEP WRE Wetland Reserve Program

■ Purpose

- To restore, protect, and enhance wetlands on eligible private lands while maximizing wildlife habitat benefits and wetland functions and values

■ *Who is eligible?*

- Owners of privately owned land including land that is held by American Indian tribes
- All landowners who meet the adjusted gross income limitations, including all members of landowner-legal entities, and those compliant with the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985

■ *What land is eligible?*

- Privately held farmed or converted wetlands that were previously degraded due to agricultural use and can be successfully and cost-effectively restored

ACEP WRE Eligibility and Sign Up

Enrollment Options

1. 30-year contract – Indian tribes only
 2. 30-year easement – private landowners and Indian tribes
 3. Permanent easement – private landowners and Indian tribes
- Application form **NRCS CPA 1200**
 - Applications accepted on a continuous basis – application batching periods and cutoff dates during the fiscal year

Post Close

- NRCS restores wetland functionality
- Deed is highly restrictive: land use is “quiet enjoyment”
- Monitored in Perpetuity





2025 ACEP-WRE Easement Compensation and GARC

Determining Easement Compensation: FY-25 ACEP-WRE

For all counties in Connecticut, the basis for compensation will be:

- Fair Market Value of the land using Individual USPAP* appraisal
- Offer would be the lowest of the following:
 - 90% of the appraised fair market value,
 - Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) of **\$9,600** per acre, or
 - Landowner written offer, on a per acre basis.

*Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices

RATIONALE for GARC:

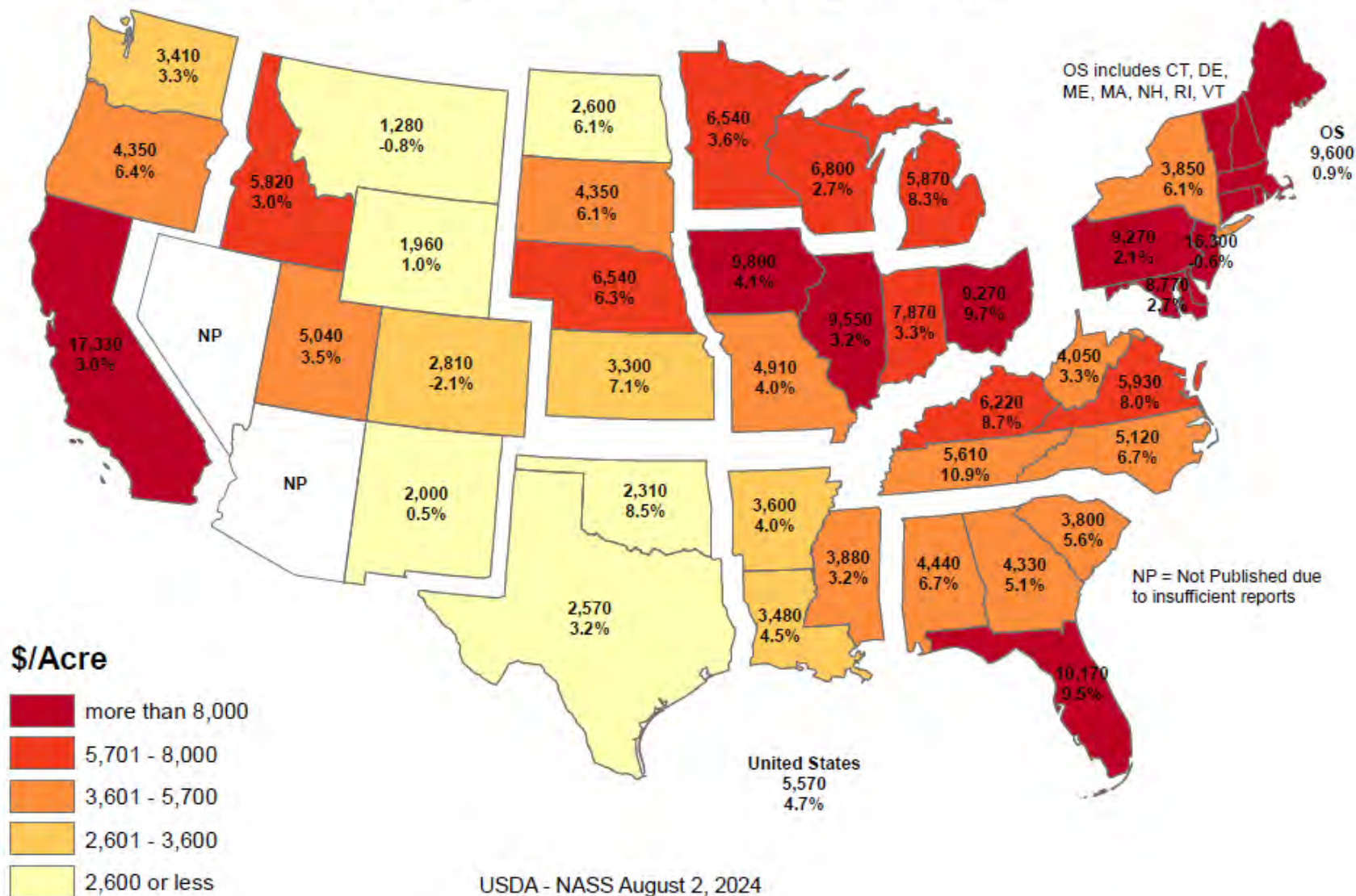
- Although NRCS is acquiring a majority of the property rights associated with the land, the landowner still retains certain reserved rights; as a result, GARCs will always be less than the fair market value of the land as determined by the AWMA or appraisal.
- WRE easements are more restrictive than ALE easements (farming and farming activities are discontinued). The residual value is about 10-12% of the Fair Market Value.
- Therefore, the proposed WRE GARC for CT would be set at 90% of the Fair Market Valued, as determined by an appraisal which meets the WRE appraisal specifications.

RATIONALE for GARC:

- The NTE rate of \$9,600.00, reflects the 2024 Cropland Value, as published by USDA NASS, 8/2/2024, and reflects the increasingly high cost of land in Connecticut. (2025 NASS Cropland Value was not published due to insufficient reports)
 - This same NTE rate of \$9,600 will be used for areas identified as habitat for wetland dependent species such as Bog, Wood and Spotted Turtles.
- ✓ Note: this also aligns with neighboring states

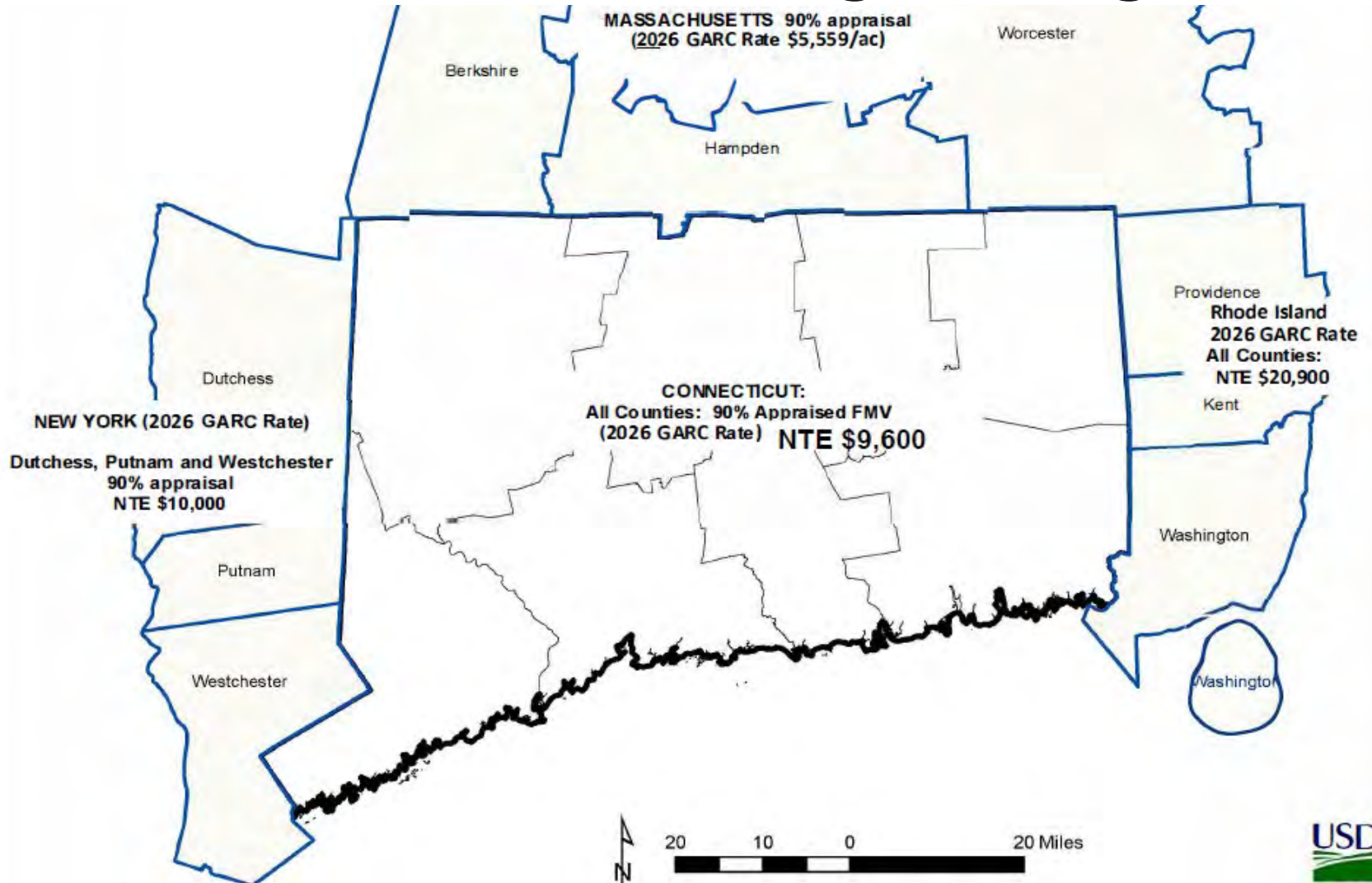
2024 Cropland Value by State

Dollars per Acre and Percent Change from 2023



**Connecticut ACEP-WRE FY2026
Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC)**

GARC Values CT and Neighboring states



Resources

- NRCS electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG):
<https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/>
- NRCS Payment Schedules:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules>
- NRCS Application Dates:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ranking-dates>
- NRCS Applications and Forms:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/financial-help/applications-and-forms>
- NRCS Financial Assistance Program Data:
<https://www.farmers.gov/data/financial-assistance-overview>

Questions & Answers



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

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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