

Vermont NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting

January 22, 2026| 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
In-person: USDA State Office, Colchester
Virtual: Microsoft Teams

NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 15, 2026

Attendees (Colchester): Travis Thomason (NRCS), Adam Dellinger (NRCS), Phyllicia Moore (NRCS), Quentin Melson (NRCS), Wendy Wilton (FSA), Chris E. Smith (USFWS), Ryan Karb (AFT), and Jess Rubin (UVM/MycoEvolve)

Attending (MS Teams): Maggie Payne (NRCS), David Blodgett (NRCS), Brandon Carpenter (NRCS), Stephanie Vasilopoulos (NRCS), Bob Thompson (NRCS), Marybeth Whitten (NRCS), Kia Olsson (NRCS), Karl Honkonen (USFS – Retired), Kira Jacobs (EPA), Patrick Suprunowicz (RD), Thomas Renner (Representative Balint), Dave Adams (VFWD), Noel Dodge (VFWD), Travis Hart (VFWD), Marli Rupe (DEC), Ben Gabos (VAAFM), Laura DiPietro (VAAFM), Nina Gage (VAAFM), Phillip Wilson (VAAFM), Keith Thompson (VT FPR), Carly Bass (UVM Extension), Chris Callahan (UVM Extension), Vernon Grubinger (UVM Extension), Rachael Stievater (UVM Extension), Heather Darby (UVM Extension), Julie Callahan (UVM Extension), Desiree Robertson-Dubois (AFT), Emily Nummer (VACD), Jill Arace (VACD - Retired), Jennifer Byrne (WRNRCD), Holly McClintock (VHCB), Nancy LaRowe (NOFA-VT), Peg Merrens (UULT), Colene Reed (VGFA), and Ian Johnson (Interlace Commons).

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	Wendy Wilton
9:55 - 10:05 am	Rural Development Update	Patrick Suprunowicz
10:05 - 10:20 am	Legislative Update	VT Congressional Delegation
10:20 - 11:00 am	NRCS Programs Update: Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) Ecological Sciences Partnerships and Initiatives	Diana Dellinger Brandon Carpenter Luis Aponte
11:00 - 11:30 am	Partner Updates	Ryan Karb
11:30 - 11:45 am	Questions	
11:45 - 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.

Apology for no October State Technical Committee meeting.

Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) is connective tissue between “Make America Healthy Again” dietary guidelines and NRCS working with producers on regenerative agriculture. NRCS team will explain what regenerative agriculture means and what specifically this pilot is for in regard to producers.

January 15, 2026, was the national deadline that rendered moot the August 2025 deadline. All of the applications that we received in August are also being considered with the applications received by January 15. All applications are going through the normal process being considered for all of our conservation programs. The exception nationally is RCPP (from a nationwide perspective).

We are working with the agency to see if we can have an earlier deadline. We’ve received feedback that an earlier application deadline is better because producers have more time to work with our technical staff in the field for conservation planning.

We will Vermonticize these programs to make sure we are catering these programs to Vermont, and we are maximizing the potential for producers and partners to take advantage of these federal programs.

I’m going to share new priorities for awareness so that we can think together on how to address them. The more you know about our priorities, the better off you’ll be.

NRCS Chief’s Priorities:

1. Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land (RPP)
2. Modernize NRCS Infrastructure and Technology
3. Recenter Field Engagement and Technical Assistance
4. Strengthen Partnerships by Streamlining Processes and Accountability
5. Shift to Outcome-Based Conservation and Farmer Empowerment.

Farm Service Update:

Wendy Wilton, State Executive Director, FSA Vermont (See presentation slides for details)

- Met with Vermont Senate Ag Committee to share FSA update
- Great partnership with NRCS
- Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Loan & Program Results and New Programs
- The portfolio has been reduced due to dairy consolidation
- Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA)
- OBBBA Program changes expected
- Farmers First – support for small family farms and streamline processes for programs and approvals

Comments/Questions: None

Rural Development Update:

Patrick Suprunowicz, State Director, RD Vermont & New Hampshire

- Rural Energy for America (REAP) Grant update – program has yet to establish open window for new applicants
- Once announcement is made, we expect REAP to operate at pre-IRA levels. REAP loans still being processed

- Value-Added Producer Grant application window opened January 15, accepted until April 15. \$50,000 planning grant; \$200,000 maximum working grant
- Disaster Assistance fund money – \$31 million for Vermont
- REAP Zone Funding went back into general pooling; will have update in 2 weeks. Would like to retain \$1.24 million for Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG). Will be dispersed as quickly as possible
- New Hampshire RD staff down 68 percent due to DRP; Internal promotions/External update next week
- Single Family housing pulling work from central servicing center; doing well
- Question for Travis on what to do with foreclosed house rotting with asbestos. Depends on federal dollars/Travis will discuss later
- Want to try pilot program on taking back housing stock and offer it to people moving into rural communities. Some houses have environmental issues.
- Looking into new office space

Comments/Questions:

Comment: Kira Jacobs (EPA): EPA can help with the environmental issues with housing stock.

Legislative Updates

Senator Sanders' Office

No update

Senator Welch's Office

No update

Congresswoman Balint's Office

Thomas Renner, Community Liaison/Constituent Service Representative

- Staff update for senate offices. Ryan Joseph no longer with Senator Sanders' office.
- Appropriations committee moving along and hoping to avoid shutdown
- Congressionally directed spending rolling out. All 15 of Balint's project have been funded. Three are in the Ag space.

Comments/Questions: None

NRCS Programs Updates *(See slides for details)*

Diana Dellinger, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS Vermont

Improving Management of Programs Applications and Contracts (IMPAC)

- Improving Customer Service to Farmers. Reduce program complexity.
- Foundational Concepts. Restore program identities (EQIP, CSP). Improve Application Management. Effective Contract Management

Simplifying Programs

- Reduce Contract types: CSP Renewals – consolidated into the CSP Classic sign-up
- Streamline Rankings: Only 1-5 ranking pools per state. Goal is to rank an application one time per program

Improved Contract Management

- Reduce Contract Modification
- Simplifying Contract Management

FY26 Targeted Investments

- Identified Local Led Priorities
- Focus on national priorities: Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP), National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), Golden Winged Warbler (GWW), Wildlife

STC Priorities

- Livestock, CPA/DIA/CEMA

VT 2026 Allocations

- 50% of EQIP goes to Locally Led Proposals
- 25% of EQIP and CSP goes to RPP
- 5% to Beginning Farmer, 5% to Socially Disadvantaged, 10% to Wildlife

2026 Ranking Pools and Categories

- EQIP, CSP, AMA, RCPP, and ACEP

2026 Deadlines

Comments/Questions: None

NRCS Ecological Sciences Updates *(See slides for details)*

Brandon Carpenter, State Resource Conservationist (acting), NRCS Vermont

Payment Schedules

- Streamlining Initiatives
 - Abbreviations eliminated.
 - Naming conventions simplified
 - Payment Schedules are publicly available

CSP has been updated/enhanced

- Unique enhancement codes no longer used
- Enhancement activity sheets will not be used for new contracts

Virtual Fence

- We now have a scenario for Virtual Fence

Nitrate Leaching Index

- Will be reviewed during Soils Subcommittee
- Soils, Rainfall, and methodology data has changed

Resource Concern Changes

- The goal is to consolidate where it makes sense, and simplify the verbiage where possible

Cultural Resources State Instruction - Updated guidance coming out; review of the “why” for the updates.

Comments/Questions: None

NRCS Partnerships Updates *(See slides for details)*

Luis Aponte, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives, NRCS Vermont

Obligated \$1.2 million to Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects last year. Lost funding for 2 projects due to Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) rescission. Will update in the future

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Future Partner Opportunities

- RCPP General NFO will be in the near future (will be first NFO). Would love to hear ideas.

Potential Planned Notices of Funding Opportunities

- Currently planning for Strategic Partnerships and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) in the near future.

Partnership Contacts:

- Cheyanne Rico (Outreach), Adam Dellinger (RCPP), Quentin Melson (Communication), and Luis Aponte (Grants/Agreements)

Comments/Questions: None

NRCS Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) Update

Brandon Carpenter, State Resource Conservationist (acting)

RPP will be guiding our planning efforts in FY26

25% of allocation is for EQIP and CSP

- Pilot program being offered through two separate programs. The goal is the same. CSP is hardwired for whole farm planning. EQIP policy supports more focused effort.

Regenerative Pilot Program summary

- Farmer first. Streamlines programs. Looks at whole farm. Outcomes based.
- Requirements
 - Whole Farm Assessment
 - Primary Practices
 - Soil Health Testing
 - Minimum 5-year contract. Gives us a chance to measure the outcomes

Requirements for Conservation Plans

- Must be 5 years
- A minimum of one Regen Practice
 - Existing
 - Planned
- Soil health testing
- Soil and Water Resource Concerns planned condition must meet or exceed threshold

There is a list of eligible practices and activities.

Comments/Questions: None

Wrap-up

Travis Thomason, State Conservationist, NRCS Vermont

This was an intense NRCS update. Part of Vermonticizing federal programs is getting into the weeds, so that we can help to tweak it in ways that's maybe not working for us. We share these things so that I know how we can best adjust these program priorities for Vermont. My job is to maximize CSP, EQIP, ACEP: all of our programs for our producers in Vermont. We should maybe do a State Tech 101 in the future. Reach out if you have any questions.

Comments/Questions:

Question: Ryan Karb (AFT) - Since Act Now is optional, is Vermont taking the Act Now route?

Response: Diana Dillinger (NRCS) - We are not going to be pursuing Act Now this year. We decided it's not a good fit for this fiscal year. It will remain optional for future years. We will consider feedback.

Comment: Ryan Karb (AFT) - We like how we can get to work immediately with Act Now funding. Contracting is faster since a lot of assessments have been done. We also like to have an early start waiver.

Response: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - Ryan knows our stuff. Act Now is always an option. The more that we offer, the more complex it gets for producers. We're sensitive to that. Producers do have the ability to ask for an early start waiver. Typically, in federal contracting, we can't reimburse for activities that have commenced prior to the signing of a contract. EQIP policy allows State Conservationists to sign on an individual basis an early start waiver where everything is in place. The design is done. The NEPA is done. Cultural Resources is done. It doesn't guarantee funding, but if a producer is willing to roll the dice, we do have the ability to do those things. It's an option on a case-by-case basis. The producer can work with the local field office, and we'll work through that process and figure it out.

Question: Marli Rupe (DEC) - Regarding the required practices, can you do cover cropping and also get your barnyard fixed in the same contract?

Answer: Brandon Carpenter (NRCS) - In the national instructions you need to agree to the bare requirements of soil health testing (before and after) and you need to have at least one primary practice existing or planned in order to qualify. So, there is flexibility within the regenerative pilot program to fit the needs of the producer. There are several scenarios where supportive practices could be included in an application that could go through the Regenerative Pilot Program. Our approach is to explore the flexibilities as long as the requirements of the program are met.

Comment: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - This the Regenerative "Pilot" Program so we will be taking feedback and things will likely change in the future. As of right now, things are a bit flexible in this pilot program.

Comment: Michael Fernandez (BCNRCD) - Silvopasture practice scenarios are incongruous with silvopasture and agroforest work that's being done throughout the state. There is a deleterious effect on the Bennington County Local Fund Pool. A number of producers either scaled back their proposed work or chose to defer to next year in hopes that the deciduous agroforestry will be placed back. Most of the existing scenarios center around conifer agroforestry or the clearance of existing forests to establish silvopasture systems. Silvopasture is the most popular practice in Bennington County. Any guidance on the status around silvopasture would be appreciated.

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - It was shocking how much the payment schedules changed. Probably the biggest change I've seen. We recognize that there are some issues with payment scenarios. We do have some flexibility to work through some scenarios. We've been told they wouldn't be adding scenarios this year, but through the local workgroup process and others to be able to provide feedback on changes we might be able to make for future years. I'll see if there's anything we can do with agroforestry guidance for payment scenarios in your situation. When I saw the changes, my heart sank. I'm sorry about that. We'll work through that.

Answer: Brandon Carpenter (NRCS) - We're all in favor of finding ways to make something work within reason. We're working through those scenarios and we're taking feedback on those scenarios. I'm happy to talk more about those options with you. You're not alone. The feedback has been received and it's been elevated. We hope for improvements in the future.

Comment: Jennifer Byrne (WR NRCD) - It's hard to believe the local worker process can have any effect.

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - It is frustrating. I sincerely apologize.

Question: Ben Gabos (FAAFM) - Can NRCS please provide a doc that includes all the practice scenarios in one pdf versus having to download them one at a time like the old gray box pdf?

Answer: Brandon Carpenter (NRCS) - Yes, I pulled down the individual scenarios and combined them into one pdf. We can provide that.

Question: Travis Thomason (NRCS): The line item excel spreadsheet has just the line item for payment scenarios and is still available correct?

Answer: Brandon Carpenter (NRCS) - It's available right now. I'm referring folks to the publicly available information on the website for individual payment rates at this time.

Question: Nina Gage (VAAFM) - Can you confirm the timeline of the current local funding pools? Are they in place for the current fiscal year? New ones would have to be in place for future federal fiscal years?

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - That is correct.

Question: Nina Gage (VAAFM) - There was a pretty short time frame between when the regenerative pilot program was released and the deadline for January 15 applications. Will USDA utilized previously received applications that fit the bill for that program? Or are you really looking specifically at applications that came in for that program in assigning that 25% of EQIP or CSP funding for the fiscal year?

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - Any application that was received prior to January 15 is eligible for regenerative ag. So essentially, the message to our team is to work with producers talking about the regenerative pilot program. Anybody that fits the bill. Anybody's application can be considered for regenerative ag if they're interested in meeting those requirements.

Question: Nina Gage (VAAFM) - We anticipated 590 to go up for review last year. I think it's going forward for review this year. I'm wondering if you guys have any potential timeline on when the state might be able to provide any input on that process.

Answer: Brandon Carpenter (NRCS) - Yes, we're looking at a 2026 update. We've received it internally. We're starting to generate state-level comments on it. Let's collaborate on it now. Let's talk about it. Will you be my POC?

Answer: Nina Gage (VAAFM) - Yes, I'm sure there might be some others from our team, but in terms of getting something together, yes.

Answer: Brandon Carpenter (NRCS) - I'll send a draft around and we'll get going.

Comment: Diana Dellinger (NRCS) - Practice schedules aside, we are really trying to preserve what is important to Vermont in programs and how we implement them. With 50% of our EQIP going toward locally led priorities, that is a significant accomplishment for Vermont. Even though National is saying "here are our priorities", we are figuring out a way to make the national priorities match well with Vermont priorities.

Comment: Chris Smith (USFWS) - Ten percent (10%) of the EQIP allocation is directed toward Fish and Wildlife. I realize there's overlap, but we're looking at 50% for locally led, 25% for regenerative ag which seems like not a whole lot of Fish and Wildlife opportunity. We should look at the percentages of the EQIP allocation that gets divided up and figure out if we have things in the queue that will address programs. Wildlife and Forestry Subcommittee should keep an eye on this.

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - Great capture. The RPP caught us off guard. And 25% is a large amount. We have about \$14 million in EQIP this year and we have \$5 million in CSP and \$6 million in ACEP. That \$14 million initial allocation is almost double what we receive for EQIP. They've seen Vermont's ability to obligate, so I anticipate if we do want to ask for more funds and there's more regenerative ag or Wildlife demand out there, we can say we need these additional funds to meet these priorities.

Question: Colene Reed (NRCS) - Is the category in the funding pool for organic just for CSP? **Answer:** Diana Dellinger (NRCS) - Yes

Question: Colene Reed (VGFA) - Is it following the National Organic Initiative program or the Organic Transition Initiative (OTI)?

Answer: Diana Dellinger (NRCS) - The OTI and the Organic Initiative are combined this year.

Comment: Jennifer Byrne (WRNRCD) - Having more Fish and Wildlife involvement in our local workgroups would be a great way to ensure more representation in our local farm pools.

Comment: Keith Thompson (VT FPR) - Happy to see Forest Stand Improvement in the list of regenerative practices and glad to see important forest land habitat work include a few of the local conservation priorities. The shuffling of the deck has made a moving target requiring some recalibration.

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - Agree. Thanks for joining us.

Question: Vern Grubinger (UVM Extension) - Can you provide an update on NRCS staffing. Are you going to be adding planners and engineers in the near future?

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - We haven't heard many updates on USDA reorganization. USDA, as a part of their reorganization efforts, are going to let folks in Washington D.C. know where they're going to be relocated in some of the regional hubs. I don't expect there to be much impact on the state and field offices, but more information to come.

We're not able to hire right now, but when there does come a time to do that, our focus is going to be on putting folks in the field working directly with producers to highlight the Chief's Priorities. We may learn more iteratively as USDA implements their reorganization plan.

Question: Ryan Karb (AFT) - We have an engineer starting with us next week. For technical assistance funding, if the money is there and the staff is not, is there any opportunity for the 900 series to hire outside engineers.

Answer: Travis Thomason (NRCS) - To be determined. USDA did receive its full year appropriation after the shutdown. So, we have funding to continue this work. As we see the need and we see partners stepping in to do some of this work, we will step into the 900 series. We'll need to lean on those folks if we don't have the staff to do it. Those technical assistant providers. We're grateful for AFT.

Comments: Travis Thomason (NRCS)

- Thanks to Jen and team (WRNRCD) for the Trees for Livestock farmers program.
- Luis and team will be leading a State Tech Meeting 2.0. I want to see what's working well. I want to see what's not working well. I want to hear from you. Our partners. I want to see feedback.
- Thanks for the feedback on our Vermonticizing and holding our team accountable.

Future meetings:

- July 15, 2026, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm
- October 21, 2026

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm

Welcome! VT State Tech Committee | Jan. 22, 2026

Ground Rules for Hybrid Meetings

■ REMOTE attendees:

- MUTE your microphone in TEAMS
- Attendance: Type your name, title and affiliation into the chat
- Questions: "Raise your hand" or type your question in the chat
- Important reminder: The chat is for questions or comments relevant to the current topic/presentation. Please do not have "side conversations" in the chat

■ IN-PERSON attendees:

- Attendance: Sign in on the attendance sheet
- We are using a video camera, "Poly" which is in the north-central area of the room
 - Talk clearly and look towards the Poly
 - If logged into TEAMS, mute your speaker, microphone, and camera
 - Poly will serve as the speaker, microphone, and camera for the room
 - Please avoid side conversations as the Poly will pick them up and make it difficult for Teams participants to hear and it will distort the recording and transcript
- Questions: Raise your hand or use the chat in Teams

Agenda – January 22, 2026

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9:45 - 9:55 am	Farm Service Agency Update	Wendy Wilton
9:55 - 10:05 am	Rural Development Update	Patrick Suprunowicz
10:05 - 10:20 am	Legislative Update	VT Congressional Delegation
10:20 – 11:00 am	FY26 NRCS Programs Update (Regenerative Pilot Program [RPP] Ecological Sciences, etc.)	Diana Dellinger and Brandon Carpenter
11:00 -11:30 am	Partner Updates	
11:30 - 12:00 pm	Questions and Wrap-up	Travis Thomason

USDA Vermont State Office
 356 Mountain View Drive,
 Colchester, VT

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 United States, Washington DC
 Phone Conference ID:
 432 964 245#



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Chief's Priorities:

"A vision for strengthening service to producers, modernizing how we operate, and delivering measurable conservation outcomes while keeping farmers and ranchers at the center of everything we do."

- Chief Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt



NRCS

Helping People Help the Land Since 1935

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

1. Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land

Goal: *Reduce the loss of productive farmland and safeguard the long-term viability of America's agricultural landscapes.*

- Expand targeted conservation easement programs to slow the loss of 5,000 acres of farmland per day.
- Partner with local governments and land trusts to prioritize farmland preservation.
- Advocate for policies that incentivize keeping land in agricultural production.
- Promote regenerative practices that strengthen soil health and ensure long-term productivity and profitability.
- Integrate whole farm planning into conservation efforts to provide comprehensive support to farmers.

2. Modernize NRCS Infrastructure and Technology

Goal: *Transform NRCS into a digitally agile agency that empowers staff and farmers through modern tools and systems.*

- Ensure adequate broadband connectivity in every county office to eliminate digital bottlenecks.
- Integrate core software systems into a unified, cloud-based platform for in-field technical service.
- Implement a “One Farmer, One File” system to streamline data access and reduce duplication.
- Replace paper-heavy workflows with real-time digital conservation planning.

3. Recenter Field Engagement and Technical Assistance

Goal: *Re-establish NRCS's presence in the field to deliver hands-on, personalized support to farmers.*

- Reallocate staff time from administrative tasks to direct, field-based service delivery.
- Train and deploy certified conservation planners quickly and effectively.
- Flip the service model: meet farmers where they are, not just in the office.
- Use mobile tools and digital platforms to co-create conservation plans on-site.
- Build the next robust generation of technical service providers to ensure producers continue receiving expert, on-the-ground support.

4. Strengthen Partnerships by Streamlining Processes and Accountability

Goal: *Leverage partnerships as force multipliers while reducing internal friction to accelerate conservation outcomes.*

- Accept third-party certified conservation plans that meet or exceed NRCS standards.
- Strengthen local decision-making while maintaining scientific integrity.
- Increase accountability while simultaneously improving responsiveness and services to producers.
- Align partner strengths to maximize measurable conservation plans for producers.
- Support on-farm partnerships that deliver Farmer First, direct-to-producer, conservation services and payments.

5. Shift to Outcome-Based Conservation and Farmer Empowerment

Goal: *Measure success through outcomes and empower farmers with data, recognition, and market access.*

- Move beyond acres and dollars to track real improvements in water management, soil health, and natural vitality.
- Recognize farmers as the heroes of conservation and highlight their accomplishments through data.
- Support precision agriculture and digital farming tools to enhance productivity and profit.
- Help farmers achieve their goals and receive regulatory and marketplace credit for the voluntary work they have accomplished.

Upcoming State Tech Committee Meetings

- January 22, 2026
- May 20, 2026
- July 15, 2026
- October 21, 2026*

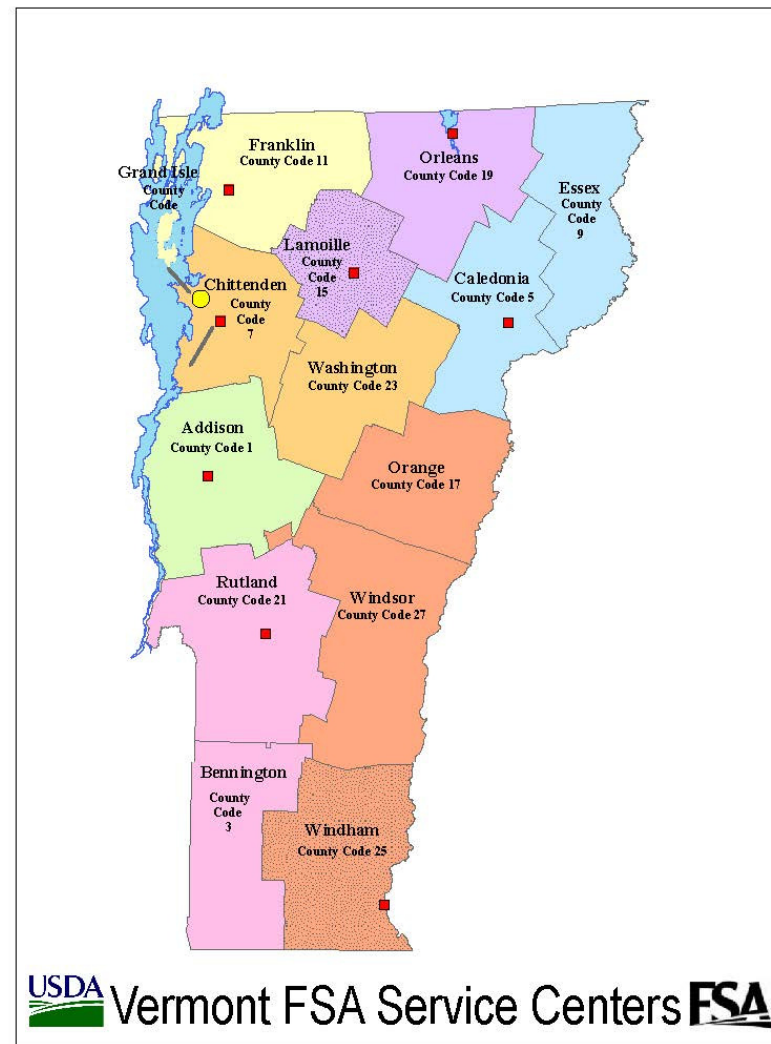
* Tentative Date – Calendar invites will be sent when determined.



Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Loan & Program Results and New Programs

Wendy Wilton, FSA State Executive Director
VT Senate Agriculture Committee 1-14-26

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/vermont>



A graphic for the Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Loan 2025. It features a dark blue background with a large, lighter blue circle. The text "Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Loan 2025" is written in white, stacked vertically within the circle.

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Loan 2025

FSA Farm Loans

\$112 Million in current & proposed loans:

Direct Loan caseload: \$45 Million

Guaranteed Loan caseload: \$66 Million

Direct Loans pending (new): \$848,780

Loans to Beginning Farmers: \$1.58 Million

Current Direct lending rate is 4.625% for operating loans, 5.625% for ownership loans—favorable rates compared to other credit sources

Emergency Loans, 3.75%

Delinquency rate for Direct loans: 2.2%,

Delinquency rate for Guaranteed Loans, 0.4%

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left, there is a vertical bar with a lighter blue square at the top. To the right of this bar is a large blue circle. The text "Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Results 2025" is written in white, centered within the blue circle.

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Results 2025

Disaster Program Payments

Disaster payments made to date

***\$10.6 million for 2023 & 2024 flood
and 2025 drought***

ECAP: \$3.9 million (flooding, excess moisture affecting crop loss, planting)

ECP: \$2.1 million for flooding, 2025 drought in application phase

EFRP: \$22,073

ELAP: \$60,207 (includes honeybees)

LFP: \$100,363

LIP: \$33,184 (livestock loss, flood)

NAP: \$774,028

SDRP: \$3.6 million (new program, to date)

A graphic with a dark blue background. A large, lighter blue circle is centered on the right side. Inside the circle, the text "Vermont Farm Service Agency New Farm Programs 2026" is written in white, sans-serif font, stacked in five lines.

Vermont Farm Service Agency New Farm Programs 2026

New FSA Programs

Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA)

\$11 B for row crops, \$1 B for specialty, Feb 28, 2026 payment date for \$11 B

American Relief Act of 2025, \$30 Billion total funding

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/resources/programs/disaster-assistance-programs>

- ELRP, Emergency Livestock Relief Program for Flooding, application deadline Nov 2025, 582 applications, payments in Feb 2026 expected
- SDRP, Supplemental Disaster Relief Program, loss of revenue or quality of crops, Two phases, sign up deadline April 30, 2026, 200 applications, \$3.6 Million, so far
- Small States Block Grants (VT) working with VAAFM

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left, there is a vertical bar with a lighter blue square at the top. To the right of this bar is a large, light blue circle. Inside the circle, the text "Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Changes 2026" is written in white, centered.

Vermont Farm Service Agency Farm Program Changes 2026

OBBA Program changes expected

ARC-PLC:

VT: \$1.5 million payments for 2025 crop year

Changes for 2026:

- Increase in reference prices
- 30 million base acres added nationally
- Increased payment limit

DMC:

VT: \$29.2 million, 2024, 2025 not yet completed.

Changes for 2026:

- Tier 1: increase to 6 million from 5 million#
- Establish new production history

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left, there is a vertical bar with a lighter blue section at the top and a darker blue section at the bottom. In the center, there is a large light blue circle containing the text "Vermont Farm Service Agency USDA Secretary Priorities" in white. The text is arranged in four lines: "Vermont Farm", "Service Agency", "USDA Secretary", and "Priorities".

Vermont Farm Service Agency USDA Secretary Priorities

Farmers First:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/farmers-first-small-family-farms-policy-agenda.pdf>

9 USDA Policy Goals including the following:

- Support for small family farms, 86% of all US farms
- Farm transition tax treatment
- Special focus on new and beginning famers
- Reform to H-2A & H-2B
- Streamline processes for programs and approvals
- Easier applications, online access



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



State Technical Committee
1/22/26

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



NRCS Programs Updates

- Programs
- Ecological Sciences
- Partnerships & Initiatives



Programs Update



Improving Management of Programs, Applications, and Contracts (IMPAC)

■ Improving Customer Service to Farmers

- Reduce program complexity
- Reduce administrative burden
- Ensure farmer focus and farmer driven strategy in all aspects of program delivery

■ Foundational Concepts

- Restoring Program Identity- bring clarity to our customers
- Improving Application Management- reduce complexity
- Effective Contract Management- getting conservation on the ground

Restoring Program Identity

- EQIP – Focuses on helping farmers address natural resource concerns.
- CSP – Focuses on enhancing a producer's operation to a higher level of stewardship.
- States with AMA should target funding to address priorities that do not overlap with EQIP.

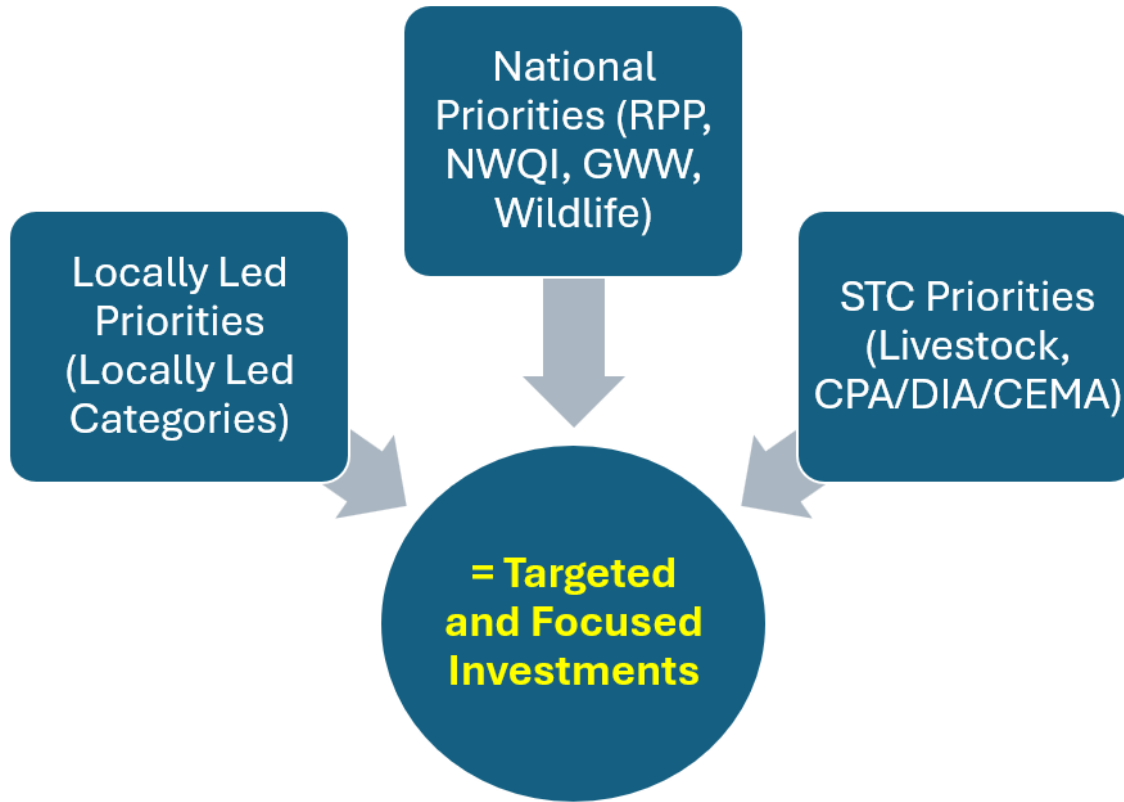
Simplifying Programs

- Reduce Contract Types by eliminating:
 - CSP Renewals- consolidated into the CSP Classic sign-up
 - EQIP CIC- handled through regular EQIP
 - Organic Transition Initiative- handled through regular EQIP
 - Only Conventional and Water Conservation contract types available
 - Act Now will be optional- suggested using AFA instead
- Streamline Rankings
 - Only 1-5 ranking pools per program per State (geographic focused)
 - Rely heavily on categories within each ranking pool
 - Use the WPT to help manage workload
 - **Goal is to rank an application ONE time per program**

Improved Contract Management

- **Reducing Contract Modifications**
 - Reducing the need to modify to reschedule contract items behind schedule.
 - Increasing the threshold for minor modifications reducing the need for modifications.
- **Simplifying Contract Management**
 - Improving how contract reviews are completed to focus on contracts that need assistance and providing assistance.
 - Removing National quality assurance checklists.
 - Reducing liquidated damages and cost-recovery.

FY 26 Targeted Investments



- Strengthening the local led conservation delivery model to make targeted and focused investments in addressing high priority natural resource challenges
- Focusing on National Priorities that include the shift to whole farm planning and addressing soil health and water quality through testing and targeted practices.
- Putting planning first through STC priorities

VT 2026 Allocations

Program	FY26 Allocation
EQIP	\$14,395,000 (FY25 Obligated \$17,449,885)
CSP	\$5,058,000 (no renewals) (FY25 Obligations \$3,180,265)
AMA	\$107,591 (FY25 Obligated \$94,269)
ACEP- ALE	\$5,122,000 (FY25 Obligation \$5,423,0363)
ACEP-WRE	\$1,169,000 (FY25 Obligation \$1,091,312)

National Initiatives & Local Priorities	FY26 Allocation (Discretion of STC)
Locally Led Proposals	Up to 50% of EQIP Allocation
Regenerative Pilot Program	25% (EQIP and CSP)
NWQI	\$642,000
GWW	\$183,000
CIG	\$150,000
Beginning Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged, Wildlife	5%, 5%, 10% respectively
CPA/DIA/CEMA	\$160,000

2026 Ranking Pools and Categories

Program	Ranking Pool	Category
CIG	NA	State CIG
EQIP	VT Initiatives	Beginning Farmer
		Socially Disadvantaged Farmer
		NWQI
		WLFW GWW
		Forest & Upland Wildlife Habitat
		Livestock
		Required Reserved 1
		Required Reserved 2
		Required Reserved 3
	Northeast Zone	White River Ottauquechee CPA
		Caledonia Small Scale
		Orleans Invasives
		Orleans Small Scale
		Orleans Slow the Flow
		CPA/DIA/CEMA
		Regenerative Pilot Program
	Northwest Zone	Franklin Farmstead
		Grand Isle Soil Health
		Lamoille Forest Structure
		CPA/DIA/CEMA
		Regenerative Ag
	Central Zone	Winooski Riparian
		CPA/DIA/CEMA
		Regenerative Pilot Program
	South Zone	Bennington Agroforestry
		Rutland Poultney WQ
		Windham FMP
		Windham Forestry
		Windham Small Farm
		White River Ottauquechee CPA
		CPA/DIA/CEMA
		Regenerative Pilot Program

2026 Ranking Pools and Categories

CSP	Agland	Regenerative Pilot Program
		SZ
		NEZ
		NWZ
		CZ
		Socially Disadvantaged
		Beginning Farmer
		Regenerative Pilot Program
		Organic / Transitioning to Organic
		Reserved 1
		Reserved 2
		Reserved 3
	NIPF	SZ
		NEZ
		NWZ
		CZ
		Socially Disadvantaged
		Beginning Farmer
		Regenerative Pilot Program
		Organic/ Transitioning to Organic
		Reserved 1
		Reserved 2
		Reserved 3

2026 Ranking Pools and Categories

AMA	General	Geospatial- Vermont
RCPP	2311_Regenerative Agriculture for Western New England	LMR Producer
	1865_Northern Tier Stream Restoration	
	2132 Easements	
ACEP	ALE	
	WRE	



2026 Deadlines

New FY26 Dates	Program	Action
1/15/2026	EQIP/AMA/CSP/ACEP	Application Deadline/Sign-Up 1 Deadline
8/22/2025	RCPP 1865, 2311, 2132	Application Deadline/Sign-Up 1 Deadline
10/10/2025	RCPP 2132	Application Deadline/Sign-Up 1 Deadline
3/27/2026	EQIP/AMA/RCPP	CART Assessment and Ranking Deadline
4/3/2026	EQIP/AMA/RCPP	Notification of Preapproved Applications- Intent to proceed letter must be sent out with eligibility requirements within 3 days. If participate does not return required eligibility paperwork by the deadline they will be moved to Round 2.
5/8/2026	CSP	CART Assessment and Ranking Deadline
5/13/2026	CSP	Notification of Preapproved Applications- Intent to proceed letter must be sent out with eligibility requirements within 3 days. If participate does not return required eligibility paperwork by the deadline they will be moved to Round 2.
6/26/2026	EQIP/AMA/ RCPP	Field Office Approval Deadline (DC moves application to "Approve")
7/10/2026	EQIP/AMA/ RCPP	Field Office Submission to State Office for Obligation
7/17/2026	EQIP/AMA/ RCPP	Final Obligation Target Date (100% obligation)
7/17/2026	CSP	Field Office Approval Deadline (DC moves application to "Approve")
7/31/2026	CSP	Field Office Submission to State Office for Obligation
8/14/2026	CSP	Final Obligation Target Date (100% obligation)
9/4/2026	EQIP/AMA/RCPP	Field Office Submission to State Office for Obligation- "Late" Preapprovals
9/11/2026	EQIP/AMA/RCPP	Final Obligation Target Date (100% obligation)- "Late" Preapprovals
1/19/2026	Easements	WRE CART Assessment and Ranking Deadline Sign up 1
2/15/2026	Easements	ALE CART Assessment and Ranking Deadline Sign up 2
1/30/2026	Easements	WRE/ALE/RCPP Eligibility Deadline Sign up 1 & 2 , Ranking Deadline Sign up 2
3/30/2026	Easements	WRE/ALE Approval Deadline and submit to Internal Controls
4/30/2025	Easements	RCPP Easements Approval and submit to IC
5/1/2026	Easements	WRE/ALE Send for Obligation
7/30/2026	Easements	WRE/ALE Final Obligation
3/15/2025	RCPP 2132 Easements	Ranking Deadline before EAB Deadline

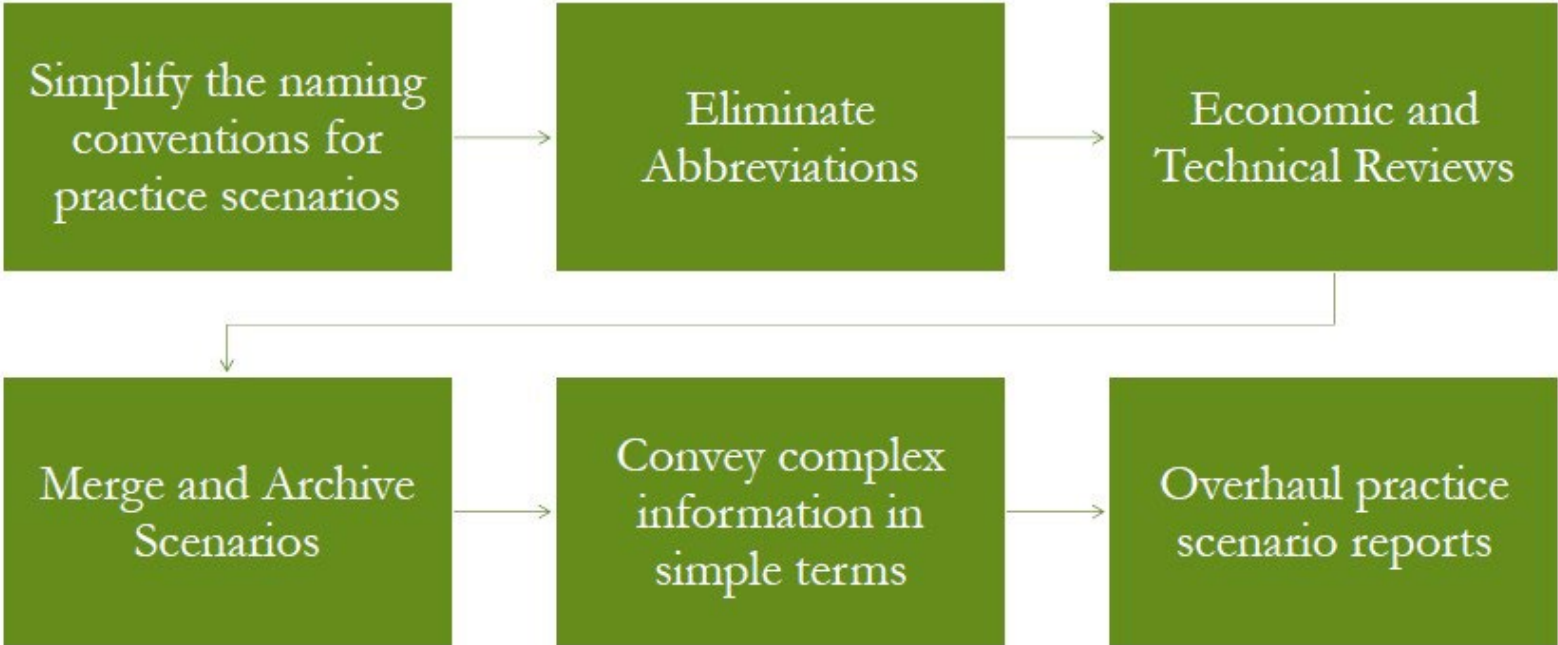


Ecological Sciences



Payment Schedules

Streamlining Initiative



106	EQIP	Forest Management Plan	Nonindustrial Private Forest, Base Cost	No	1763.0
106	EQIP	Forest Management Plan	Nonindustrial Private Forest, Implementation Cost	Ac	5.75

Payment Schedules



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CONSERVATION BASICSGETTING ASSISTANCESTATE OFFICESPROGRAMS & INITIATIVES



Payment Schedules

Vermont: Vermont EQIP-1

RESET

CSV EXPORT

State Name	Cost List Name	Practice Code	Practice Name	Component	Unit	Unit Cost
Vermont	Vermont EQIP-1	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	All Livestock Operations with Land Application, Base Cost	No	\$3,449.42
Vermont	Vermont EQIP-1	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-All Livestock Operations with Land Application, Base Cost	No	\$4,139.31
Vermont	Vermont EQIP-1	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	All Livestock Operations with Land Application, Implementation Cost	AU	\$5.14
Vermont	Vermont EQIP-1	101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity	HU-All Livestock Operations with Land Application, Implementation Cost	AU	\$6.17

Payment Schedules

Practice Scenario Reports



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Fiscal Year 2025

Practice Code Name: 204 - Adaptive Management for Soil Health

Scenario Number: 18

Scenario Name: Basic with Soil Health Test

Scenario Description: Field study with replicated plots for the implementation of any of the conservation practices outlined in Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA) 204 Adaptive Management for Soil Health. Includes soil health testing as a minimum requirement.

Before Situation: A producer is adopting the practice for the first time and wants to learn how to best apply the practice within their unique landscape and management style or is interested in improving the effectiveness of an existing practice or evaluating a new technology related to a given practice.

After Situation: Study plots were installed with treatments applied per the study design. Plot field data is collected over three years and were measured and statistically summarized following the procedures in Agronomy Technical Note 10 - Adaptive Management. Results will guide future management decisions for the conservation practice to improve or maintain soil health.

Associated Practices: Additional practices may be required to ensure effective implementation. The costs associated with these practices are not included in the current practice scenario.

Resource Concerns: The conservation practice standard provides implementation specifications to achieve the desired conservation objective(s) by addressing identified natural resource concern(s).

Feature Measure: Number of field study plots

Scenario Unit: Number

Scenario Typical Size: 1.00

Cost Summary:

Cost Category	Total Cost	Scenario Cost/Unit
Materials	\$1,100.77	\$25.20
Equipment Installation	\$0.00	\$0.00
Labor	\$2,720.51	\$60.46
Mobilization	\$0.00	\$0.00
Acquisition of Technical Knowledge	\$0.00	\$0.00
Foregone Income	\$0.00	\$0.00
Risk	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	\$3,821.28	\$3,821.28

Disclaimer: This information is not intended for practical implementation. Please adhere to the specific design or implementation requirements applicable to your site.



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Fiscal Year 2025

Practice Code Name: 101 - CRMP Design and Implementation Activity

Scenario Number: 11

Scenario Name: Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan Revision

Scenario Description: A Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) will be updated to reflect any changes in manure management, adjustments in volume or nutrient analysis, as well as updates to plant and crop management strategies. Additionally, the plan will be modified to ensure proper nutrient balance within the Animal Feeding Operation (AFO). No changes will be necessary for engineered practices within the farmstead or production area. The producer may choose to export a portion of the manure or organic products from the farm. The producer also oversees an animal production area where nutrients are applied to the land.

Before Situation: The operator of an AFO currently possesses a CNMP that addresses the resource concerns and client objectives relevant to both facility production and land application areas. Nevertheless, the existing CNMP is outdated and fails to align with the current operational needs and goals. There have been changes in various levels of management and conservation practices within the operation. Furthermore, recent soil tests, manure analyses, and modifications to the cropping system necessitate adjustments to the nutrient balance to ensure the CNMP remains pertinent and effective.

After Situation: Utilize a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) to design planned conservation practices that address the handling, storing, and application of animal waste in an environmentally safe manner. Design and implementation will meet each conservation practice's general and additional applicable criteria.

Associated Practices: Additional practices may be required to ensure effective implementation. The costs associated with these practices are not included in the current practice scenario.

Resource Concerns: The conservation practice standard provides implementation specifications to achieve the desired conservation objective(s) by addressing identified natural resource concern(s).

Feature Measure: Number

Scenario Unit: Number

Scenario Typical Size: 1.00

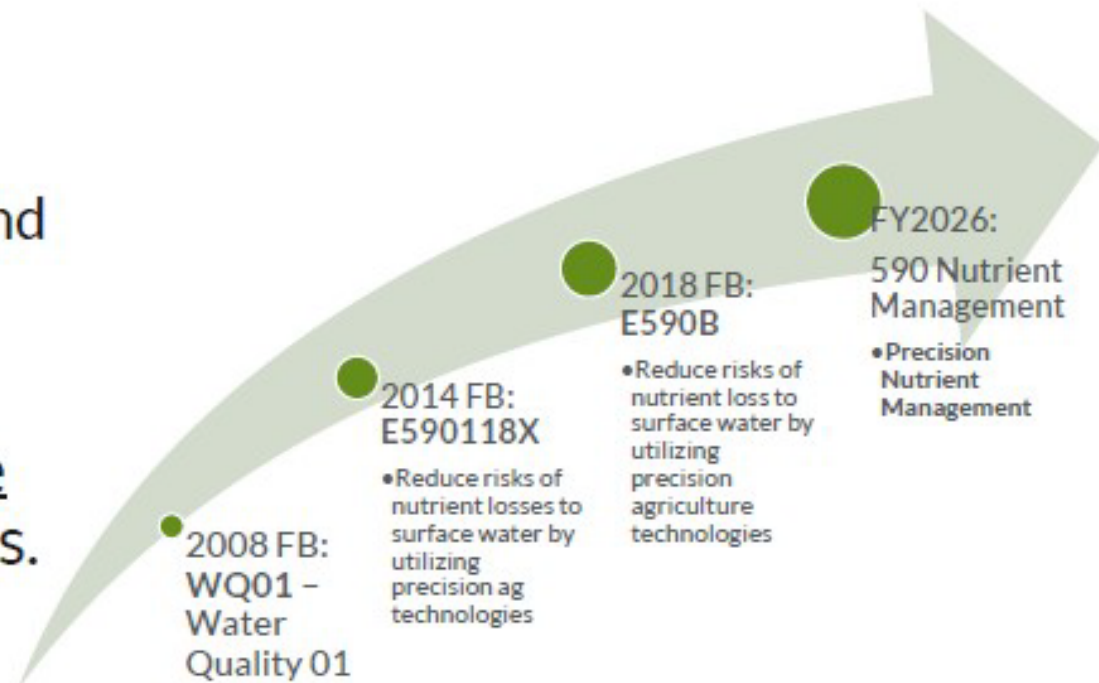
Cost Summary:

Cost Category	Total Cost	Scenario Cost/Unit
Materials	\$0.00	\$0.00
Equipment Installation	\$0.00	\$0.00
Labor	\$4,051.74	\$4,051.74
Mobilization	\$0.00	\$0.00
Acquisition of Technical Knowledge	\$0.00	\$0.00
Foregone Income	\$0.00	\$0.00
Risk	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	\$4,051.74	\$4,051.74

Disclaimer: This information is not intended for practical implementation. Please adhere to the specific design or implementation requirements applicable to your site.

CSP Enhancements

- Unique enhancement codes (“E” codes) no longer used.
 - Allows program neutral planning and CART assessment.
- CSP is an opportunity to enhance practices and Ag/NIPF operations.
- **Old:** Enhancement
- **New:** Enhancing practices and the operation



CSP Enhancements

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

Virtual Fence



Clear Form

382 Fence
Implementation Requirements
Virtual Fence

Producer:

Location:

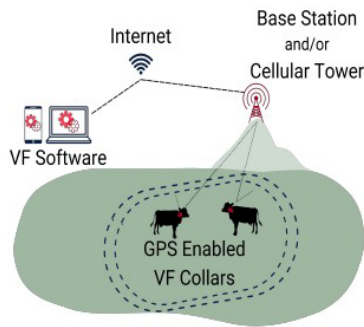
Project/Contract:

Tract:

Field(s):

Heads or Collars:

Diagram of Virtual Fence
Image by Amber Dalke, University of Arizona
reprinted with permission



382	EQIP	Fence	Virtual Fence, Startup Year 1, Base Cost	No	8366.56
382	EQIP	Fence	Virtual Fence, Startup Year 1, Implementation Cost	No	40.84
528	EQIP	Grazing Management	Virtual Fence Adaptive Management, Years Two Through Five	No	53.48
528	EQIP	Grazing Management	HU-Virtual Fence Adaptive Management, Years Two Through Five	No	64.18

Refer to attached map for practice location(s).

Practice Purpose

Control the movement of animals

Select type and number the animals to control:

Dairy Cattle,

Beef Cattle,

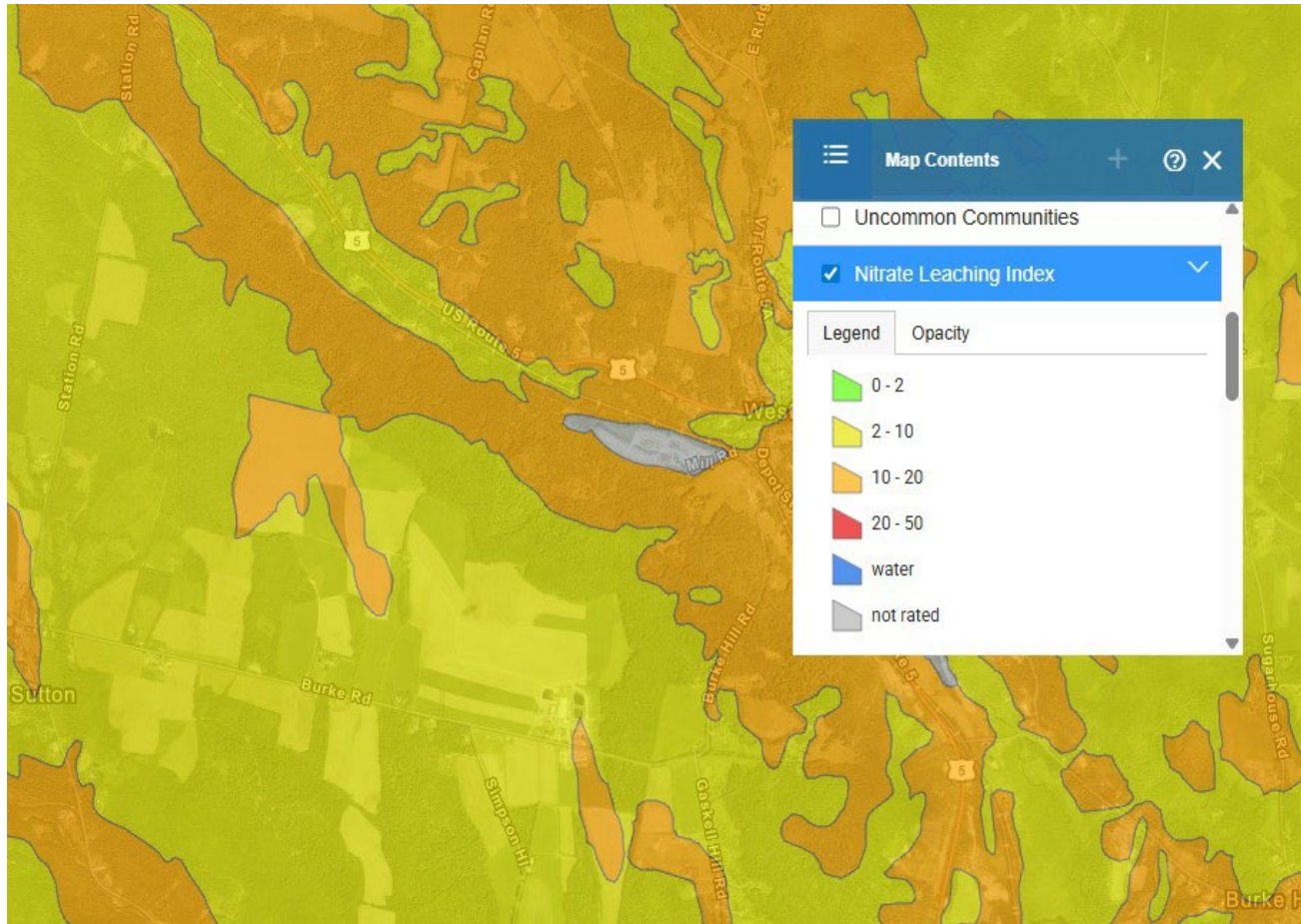
Sheep,

Goats,

Description of Work

Producer Goals and Objectives:

Nitrate Leaching Index



Data has changed since layer was developed:

- Soils
- Rainfall
- Methodology

590 Nutrient Management implications

Will be reviewed during March Soils Subcommittee

Resource Concern Changes – FY 2027

- The Goal: to consolidate where it makes sense, and simplify the verbiage where possible.
- Where are we heading?

Natural Resource Concerns			
Number Now		Number After	
Resource Categories	18	SWAPAE+H	7
Resource Concerns	49	Resource Concerns	13
RC Components	86	RC Components	70

Resource Concern Changes – FY 2027

SWAPAE – Future Resource Concerns

Soil

- Soil Health
- Soil Erosion

Animals

- Aquatic Habitat
- Livestock Health
- Terrestrial Habitat

Water

- Water Quality
- Water Quantity

Energy

- Energy Use

Air

- Air Quality

Plants

- Plant Health
- Wildfire Hazard

Human Considerations

- Loss of Functions and Values
- Threat of Conversion



SWAPAE – Existing Resource Concerns

Soil

- Bank erosion from streams, shorelines or water conveyance channels
- Classic gully erosion
- Ephemeral gully erosion
- Aggregate instability
- Compaction
- Concentration of salts or other chemicals
- Organic matter depletion
- Soil organism habitat loss or degradation
- Subsidence
- Sheet and rill erosion
- Wind erosion

Water

- Pesticides transported to groundwater
- Pesticides transported to surface water
- Nutrients transported to groundwater

- Nutrients transported to surface water
- Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to groundwater
- Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to surface water
- Sediment transported to surface water
- Salts transported to groundwater
- Salts transported to surface water
- Groundwater depletion
- Inefficient irrigation water use
- Surface water depletion
- Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to groundwater
- Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to surface water
- Drifted snow
- Naturally available moisture use
- Ponding and flooding
- Seasonal high water table
- Seeps

Air

- Emissions of airborne reactive nitrogen
- Emissions of greenhouse gases - GHGs
- Emissions of ozone precursors
- Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors
- Objectionable odor

Plants

- Plant pest pressure
- Plant productivity and health
- Plant structure and composition
- Wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation

Animals

- Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms
- Elevated water temperature
- Food and forage balance
- Inadequate livestock shelter

- Inadequate livestock water quantity, quality and distribution
- Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates

Energy

- Energy efficiency of equipment and facilities
- Energy efficiency of farming/ranching practices and field operations

Human Considerations

- Loss of functions and values
- Threat of conversion



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

State Technical Committee

Vermont NRCS



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

Regenerative Pilot Program

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



Whole Farm Assessment

Defined for Regen Program Pilot

- EQIP Regen - EQIP policy supports a subset of land under control of the customer to be part of the application, therefore in conjunction with input from the customer the planner will determine the extent of the whole farm. Logical factors such as multiple farming enterprises (row crops, orchard, livestock, owned verses leased lands etc.), or extensive geographical separation of land could determine separate whole farms.
- CSP Regen - follows CSP policy requiring all land that the operator has control of for 5 years to be a part of the application and thus the whole farm assessment.

**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

- **Whole Farm Assessment:** A complete assessment of all resource concerns is required, with the goal of establishing a whole farm plan before the end of the contract period. At a minimum, whole farm plans must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories. These plans may be developed by NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers.

Excerpt from NI 440 307.14 Regenerative Nov. 2025

A complete assessment of all resource concerns is required

- All applicable Resource Concerns and corresponding Components will be evaluated

with the goal of establishing a 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 – all land units in the whole farm
 - EQIP – can be subset of all land units based on client objectives



Add Resource Concerns

Select Resource Concern Components to add to the selected land units. Components that are not applicable to all the selected Land Uses.

Resource Concern Categories

- > ☐ Air (Air quality emissions)
- > ☐ Animals (Aquatic habitat)
- > ☐ Animals (Livestock production limitation)
- > ☐ Animals (Terrestrial habitat)
- > ☐ Energy (Inefficient energy use)
- > ☐ Plants (Degraded plant condition)
- > ☐ Plants (Fire management)
- > ☐ Plants (Pest pressure)
- > ☐ Soil (Concentrated erosion)
- > ☐ Water (Field pesticide loss)
- > ☐ Water (Source water depletion)
- > ☐ Water (Storage and handling of pollutants)
- > ☐ Water (Weather resilience)

CANCEL

ADD SELECTED

Documentation of Planned Condition

- **Whole Farm Assessment:** A complete assessment of all resource concerns is required, with the goal of establishing a whole farm plan before the end of the contract period. **At a minimum, whole farm plans must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories.** These plans may be developed by NRCS staff, partners, or technical service providers.

Excerpt from NI 440 307.14 Regenerative Nov. 2025

At a minimum, whole farm plans must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories.

- Documenting planning criteria has been met is accomplished through CART by meeting or exceeding a Resource Concern's threshold, as calculated on the Results page.

Table View Graph View								
Results								
Category	Resource Concerns	Components	Existing Conditions	Existing Practices	Existing Total	Planned Practices	Planned Total	Threshold
Soil (Concentrated erosion)	Soil Erosion (Classic gully erosion)	Classic gully erosion	1	0	1 ▲	50	51	50
	Soil Erosion (Ephemeral gully erosion)	Ephemeral gully erosion	51	30	81	75	156	50
Soil (Soil quality limitations)	Soil Health (Aggregate instability)	Aggregate instability	0	55	55	25	80	40
	Soil Health (Compaction)	Compaction	1	40	41	20	61	30
	Soil Health (Concentration of salts or other chemicals)	Concentration of salts or other chemicals	51	35	86	20	106	1
	Soil Health (Organic matter depletion)	Organic matter depletion	51	50	101	20	121	50
	Soil Health (Soil organism habitat loss or degradation)	Soil organism habitat loss or degradation	6	50	56	25	81	50
	Soil Health (Subsidence)	Subsidence	51	0	51	0	51	1
Water (Field pesticide loss)	Water Quality (Pesticides transported to groundwater)	Nonpoint pesticide leaching loss	60	20	80	25	105	60
	Water Quality (Pesticides transported to surface water)	Nonpoint pesticide surface loss	70	30	100	55	155	30

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 beginning and end of plan
- Soil and Water Resource Concerns planned condition must meet or exceeded threshold

Optional

- Supporting and other practices are eligible
- CPA199 supports the client hiring a certified TSP to write the conservation plan.
- 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

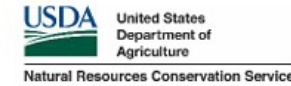
Practice Implementation Requirements

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.

Excerpts from NI 440 307.14 Regenerative Dec. 2025

Within the Conservation Practice Standard, the general and additional criteria that align with Soil and Water resource concerns must be incorporated in the Implementation Requirement document provided to the client.



340 – Cover Crop Implementation Requirements (Single Species)

Producer:

Location:

Farm Name:

Project or Contract:

County:

Tract Number:

Practice Lifespan – 1 year



Practice Purpose(s): (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion | ☐ Supply nitrogen to subsequent crop |
| ☐ Maintain or increase soil organic matter | ☐ Improve soil aggregate stability |
| ☐ Improve habitat for soil organisms | |
| ☐ Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess nutrients | |
| ☐ Reduce weed and plant pest pressure | |
| ☐ Improve moisture management | |
| ☐ Improve habitat for pollinators, beneficial organisms, or natural enemies of crop pests | |

Description of work:



Practice Implementation Requirements

COVER CROP

Additional Criteria to Reduce Sheet, Rill, and Wind Erosion

Time the cover crop establishment in conjunction with other practices to adequately protect the soil during the critical erosion periods.

Select cover crops that will have the physical characteristics necessary to provide adequate erosion protection.

Use the current erosion prediction technology to determine the amount of surface and canopy cover needed from the cover crop to achieve the predicted erosion reduction.

Additional Criteria to Maintain or Increase Soil Organic Matter Quantity

Select cover crop species that produce high volumes of aboveground biomass and root mass to maintain or increase soil organic matter.

The planned crop rotation including the cover crop and associated management activities will score a Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) value > 0 , and be higher than the benchmark system, as determined, using the current approved NRCS SCI procedure, with appropriate adjustments for additions to and subtractions from plant biomass.

Additional Criteria to Improve Habitat for Pollinators, Beneficial Organisms, or Natural Enemies of Crop Pest

Use cover crop mixes that contain at least 50% forbs of known habitat, pollen, or nectar value to targeted pollinators or other beneficial organisms. Allow these forbs to achieve at least 50% bloom before termination.

Cover crop seeds must not be treated with systemic insecticide coatings that may pose a risk to beneficial organisms. Cover crops must not be exposed to pesticide sprays, seed coatings, or drift that can negatively impact the targeted pollinators or beneficial organisms. [See Agronomy Technical Note 9 for determining potential impacts.]

REQUIRED

OPTIONAL

Planning CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing

Through the planning process customers should be 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....

When does Soil Health Testing need to be planned?

- Minimally at beginning and end of the conservation plan / contract

Soil Health Testing

Participants must agree to perform **Soil Health Testing** in the first and last year of the contract (at a minimum) 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 10-2024](#)

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

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

Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

- 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

Soil Health

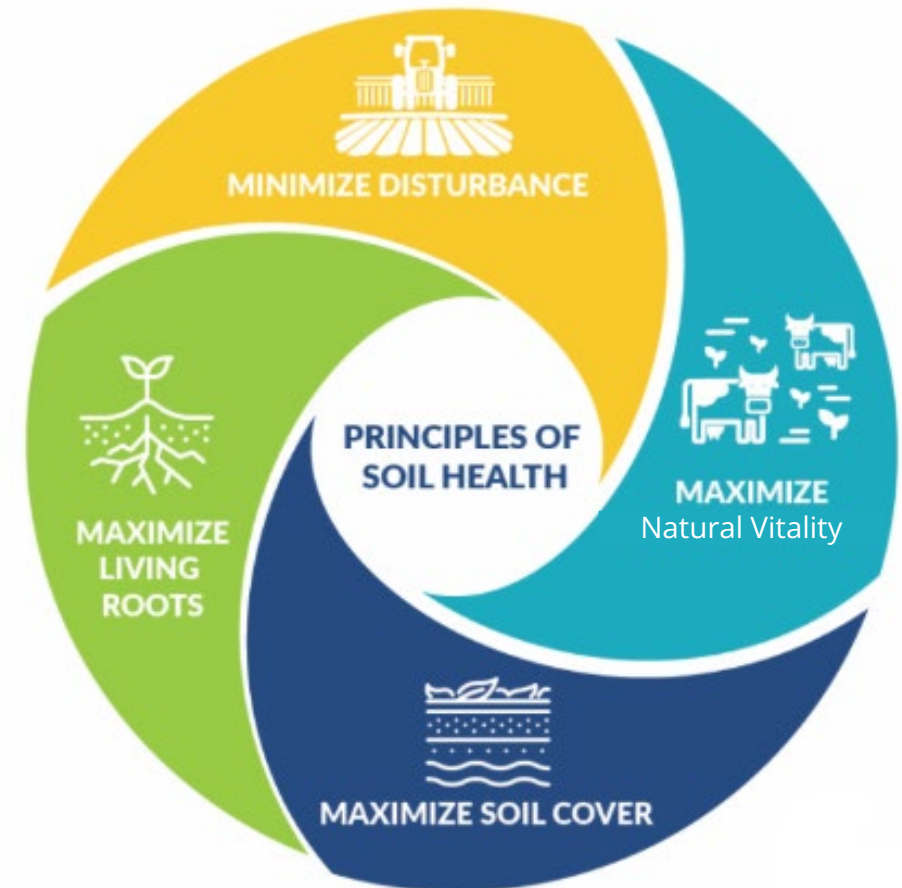
Soil is not an inert growing medium – it is a living and life-giving natural resource.

Soil Health Website – Resources Available

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

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.



Conservation Plan Done!

Regen EQIP

EQIP

To qualify for Regen Pilot Program:

- All land under control for the life of contract will be evaluated
- All 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
- Soil Health Testing beginning and end of contract

Conservation Plan Done!

Regen CSP

CSP

- To qualify for Regen Pilot Program:
 - All land under control for the life of the contract will be evaluated
 - All Resource Concerns evaluated
 - Meet CSP Stewardship Threshold Eligibility
 - Soil and Water RC thresholds are at met condition by end of contract on all land units

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 beginning and end of contract

Regenerative Pilot Program - Ranking

- Category within CSP and EQIP Ranking Pools
- Only assessments that meet the pilot's requirements may be ranked in the category
- NI-440-310, "NRCS Program Ranking Through CART" instructs to ensure soil and water priorities earn points
- States will target approx. 25% of EQIP and CSP FA for FY26



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Questions and Answers



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Partnerships Update



Future Partner Opportunities

- Upcoming Notices of Funding Opportunities:
 - RCPP General NFO
- Potential Planned Notices of Funding Opportunities:
 - Strategic Partnerships
 - Conservation Innovation Grants

If you have any ideas on collaborations, we would love to hear from you.

Partnerships Contacts:

- Events/Collaborations: Cheyanne Rico, cheyanne.rico@usda.gov
- RCPP: Adam Dellinger, adam.dellinger@usda.gov
- Communications: Quentin Melson, quentin.melson@usda.gov
- Grants/Agreements: Luis Aponte, luis.Aponte@usda.gov



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