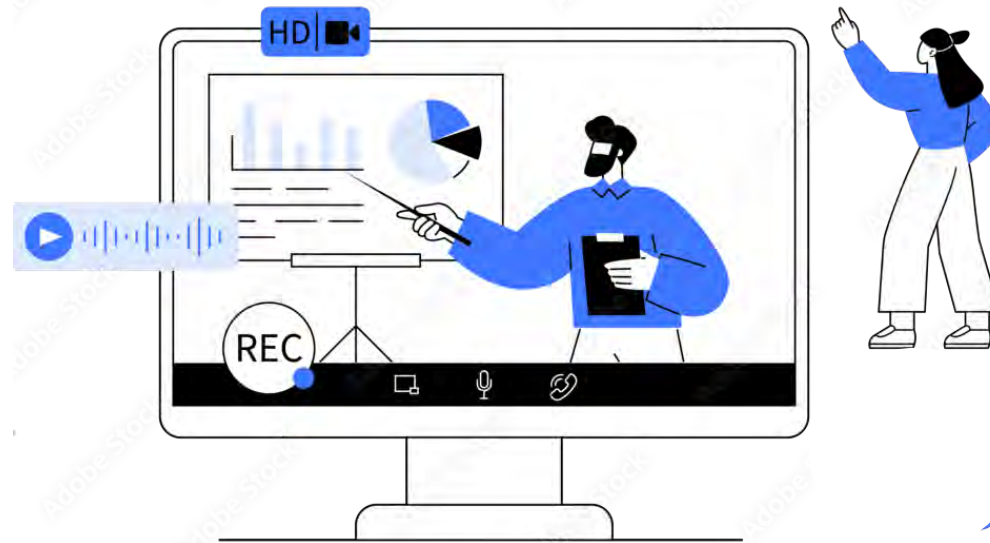


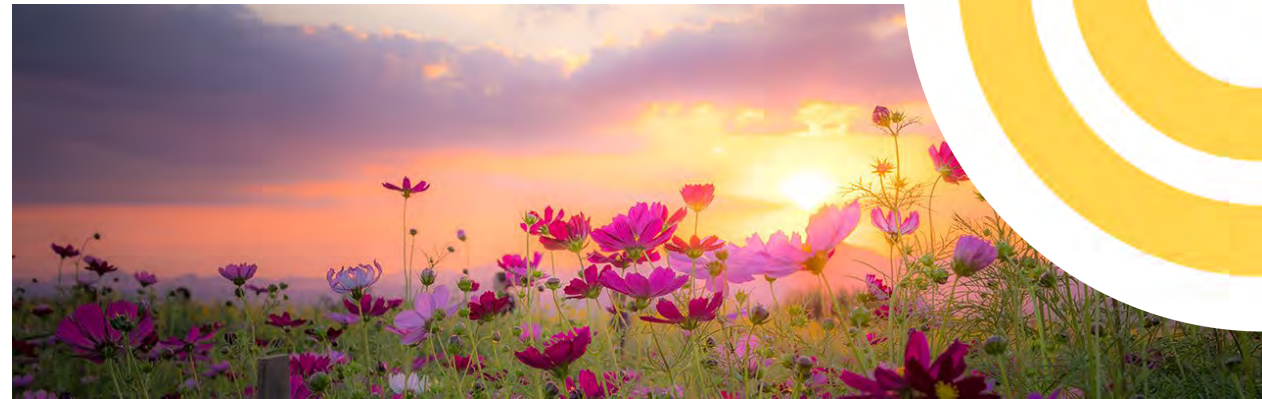


**The meeting will start at
9:30 AM. Please stand-by.**





Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Rhode Island State Technical Committee

4/28/2026

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



Contact

RI Acting State Conservationist

Thomas L. Morgart

thomas.morgart@usda.gov

p: (860) 871-4014

c: (860) 202-5555



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Programs Team Report

4/28/2026 Leadership Report

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Financial Assistance (FA) Farm Bill Programs FY26



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Fiscal Year 2026 Allocations by Program

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- \$6,404,000

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- \$3,294,000

Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)

- Farmer first, outcomes-based approach to conservation
- Requirements:
 - Whole farm assessment
 - Minimum 5-year contract
 - One RPP practice planned or already implemented
 - Soil Health Testing (216) in first and last year of contract
 - All Soil and Water resource concerns must be met
 - On at least one land **UNIT** in EQIP
 - On at least one land **USE** in CSP
- CSP and EQIP only



RPP Core Practices

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	Grazing Management	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





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FY26 Spending Plan

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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FY26 EQIP Fund Pools

 = *NHQ mandated allocations

Fund Pool		FY26 Allocation
<u>EQIP GENERAL</u>		<u>\$ 5,238,645.01</u>
 *Regenerative Pilot Program		\$ 1,601,000.00
 *National Water Quality Initiative		\$ 899,643.00
 *Beginner Farmer or Rancher		\$ 195,167.85
 *Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher		\$ 195,167.85
CPA, DIA, CEMA		\$ 90,000.00
Energy & Combustion		\$ 200,000.00
High Tunnels		\$ 120,000.00
Organic/Transition to Organic		\$ 25,000.00
Northern LWG		\$ 765,066.52
Southern LWG		\$ 765,066.52
Eastern LWG		\$ 382,533.26
<u>EQIP AQUACULTURE INITIATIVE</u>		<u>\$ 700,000.00</u>
 *EQIP CIG		<u>\$ 195,167.85</u>
<u>EQIP EMERGENCY</u>		<u>\$ 78,067.14</u>
<u>EQIP RESERVE</u>		<u>\$ 192,120.00</u>

State initiatives



EQIP Total \$ 6,404,000.00

FY26 Local Working Group Priorities

District	Priorities
Northern	• Inefficient Energy Usage • Operations that fall within Urban Ag layer • Grazing and/or hay land operations • Implementation of Forest Management Plan
Southern	• Forestry practices • Biofouling • CNMP implementation
Eastern	• Seasonal High Tunnels • Concentrated Erosion, Field, Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss, Source Water Depletion, Wind and Water Erosion, and Storage and Handling of Pollutants • Wildlife practices

FY26 CSP Fund Pools

 = *NHQ mandated allocations



Fund Pool	FY26 Allocation
CSP NIPF	\$ 1,917,108.00
*Beginner Farmer or Rancher	\$ 95,855.40
*Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher	\$ 95,855.40
*Regenerative Pilot Program	\$ 479,277.00
Northern LWG	\$ 498,448.08
Southern LWG	\$ 498,448.08
Eastern LWG	\$ 249,224.04
CSP AgLand	\$ 1,278,072.00
*Beginner Farmer or Rancher	\$ 63,903.60
*Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher	\$ 63,903.60
*Regenerative Pilot Program	\$ 319,518.00
Organic/Transition to Organic	\$ 20,000.00
Northern LWG	\$ 324,298.72
Southern LWG	\$ 324,298.72
Eastern LWG	\$ 162,149.36
CSP Reserve	\$ 98,820.00
CSP Total	\$ 3,294,000.00



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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FY26 Sign Up 1 – High Level Review



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FY26 Sign Up 1 Outcomes

Number of Apps Received	CSP	EQIP	TOTAL
Eastern	16	31	51
Northern	31	64	98
Southern	20	49	81

A total of 221 applications were received statewide
in sign up 1

FY26 Sign Up 1 Outcomes

Mandated Allocations	EQIP Preapprovals	CSP Preapprovals
Beginner Farmer/Rancher (5%)	35%	16%
Socially Disadvantaged (5%)	11%	2%
Regenerative Pilot Program (25%)	53%	36%



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Easement Programs

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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Easement Programs



Agricultural Land Easement (ACEP-ALE)



Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE)



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



Fiscal Year 2026 Easement Allocations

**Agricultural Conservation
Easement Program
Agricultural Land Easements
(ACEP-ALE)**

- \$1,000,000

**Agricultural Conservation
Easement Program
Wetland Reserve Easements
(ACEP-WRE)**

- \$1,000,000

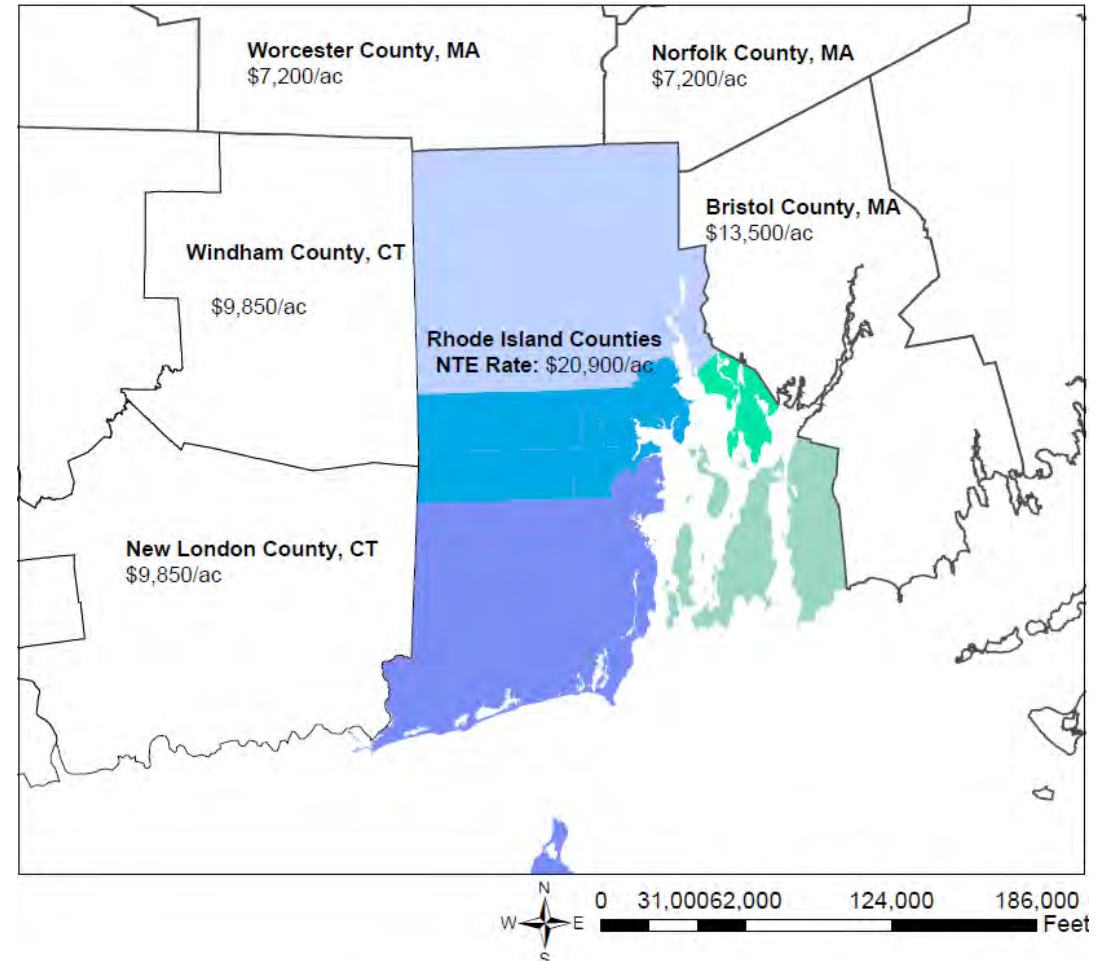
**Regional Conservation
Partnership Program (RCPP)
Forest Health Works Project**

- \$579,077 (US Held)
- \$765,216 (Entity Held)

FY26 Anticipated Easement Closings: 6
FY26 Anticipated Easement Offers: 13

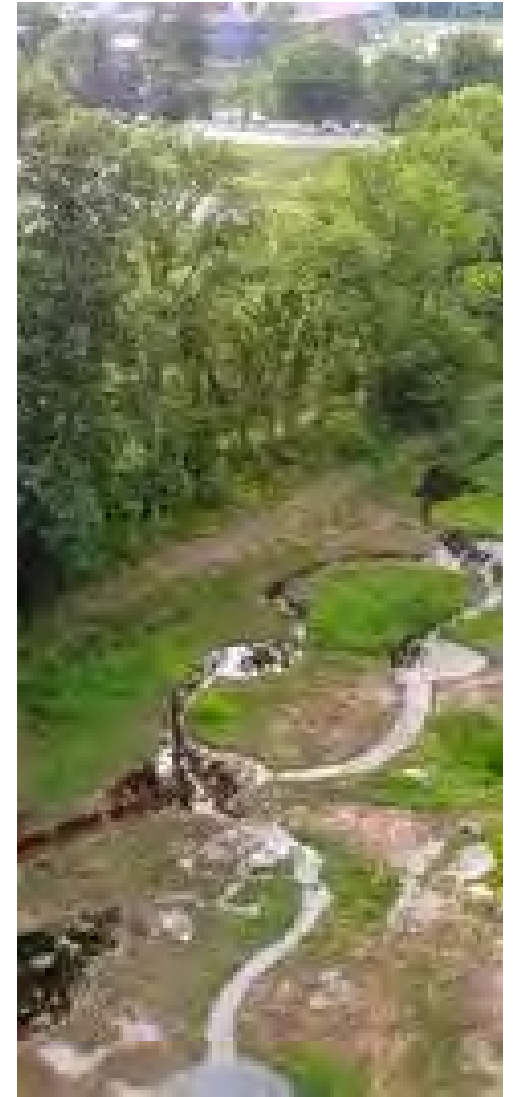
FY26 Geographical Area Rate Cap (GARC)

- The GARC is developed yearly to inform compensation rates for the ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements
- In RI, WRE targets habitat areas most ideal for saltmarsh sparrow, northern diamondback terrapin, wood turtle, and spotted turtle; all eligible land is considered also.
- The FY26 NTE Rate is \$20,900/acre. This is a \$950/acre increase from FY2025.
 - Actual appraisal values range from **\$3,400 to \$8,400 per acre**

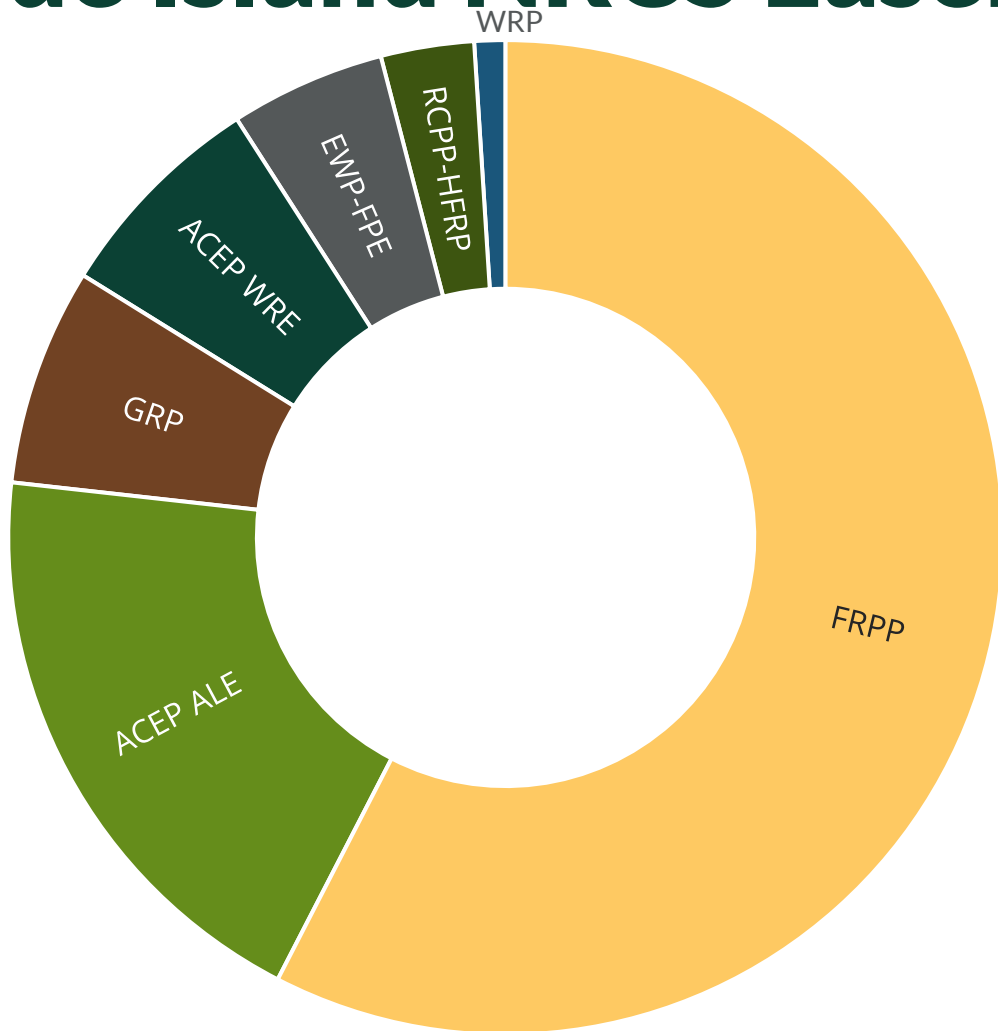


Special Project: EWPP-FPE

- NRCS received approval from the Deputy Chief of Programs to acquire six parcels impacted by a failed flood mitigation structure
- In partnership with the Town of West Warwick, NRCS will place an easement across each of the six parcels, the town will purchase the residual value of the land/structure, purchasing the property in full from the impacted landowner
- These homes will be demolished, and the land will be restored to floodplain
- Estimated project cost is \$3,203,129
- Acquisition of parcels underway



Rhode Island NRCS Easement Portfolio



Program	# Easements	Approx. Acres (ac)
ACEP ALE	19	404
ACEP WRE	7	478
FRPP	57	2,866
WRP	1	30
RCPP-HFRP	3	275
GRP	7	119
EWPP-FPE	5	111
Total	99	4,265

- ✓ 33 U.S. held (stewardship) easements monitored
- ✓ 2 violations remediated
- ✓ 10 violations active

How to Join a STAC Subcommittee

■ Covered Programs & Tasks

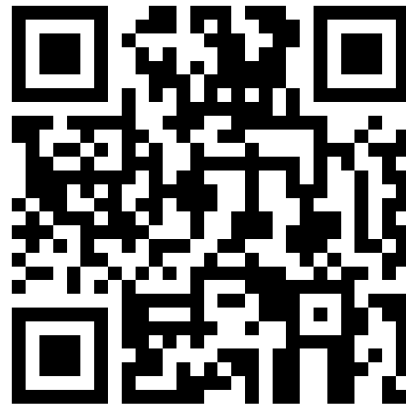
- **FA Program Ranking** (EQIP, CSP, AMA): Recommend State ranking criteria to the State Technical Committee.
- **Easement Program Ranking** (ACEP-ALE, ACEP-WRE): Provide input on State ranking criteria and recommendations.
- **Easement Geographic Rate Subcommittee** (ACEP-WRE, EWP-FPE): Develop geographic area rate cap recommendations for the State Technical Committee.
- **Priority Watershed / Source Water** (All Programs): Recommend priority watersheds to focus funding for maximum impact.
- **State Forestry Subcommittee** (All Programs): Provide recommendations on forestry practices and payment rates.
- **Payment Schedule Subcommittee** (All Programs): Recommend practice payment schedules and percentages aligned with program objectives and local priorities.



Subcommittee Groups

- The public is welcome to join Subcommittee Groups
- Submit a response to this form:

<https://forms.office.com/g/8FpSUG5E2h>





Historic Subcommittee Groups

Specialized Subcommittees	Program or Topic	Task
FA Program Ranking	EQIP, CSP, AMA	Provide input to develop State ranking criteria and make recommendations to the State Technical Committee.
Easement Program Ranking	ACEP ALE, ACEP WRE	Provide input to develop State ranking criteria and make recommendations to the State Technical Committee.
Conservation Easement Geographic Rate Subcommittee	ACEP-WRE and EWP-FPE	Develop recommendations for the geographic area rate cap and present it the State Technical Committee.
Priority Watershed Subcommittee/Source Water	All programs	Recommend priority watersheds for focusing funding for effective use of available resources
State Forestry Subcommittee	All programs	Provide recommendations to the State Technical Committee on forestry conservation practices and payment rates to be supported in conservation programs.
Payment Schedule Subcommittee	All programs	Provide recommendations for practices and program payment percentages for conservation programs that support program objectives and State and local priorities



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rhode Island State Technical Committee



Ecological Sciences Team Report

FY2026 Practice Planning and Implementation

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

Key Updates Since Last STC Meeting

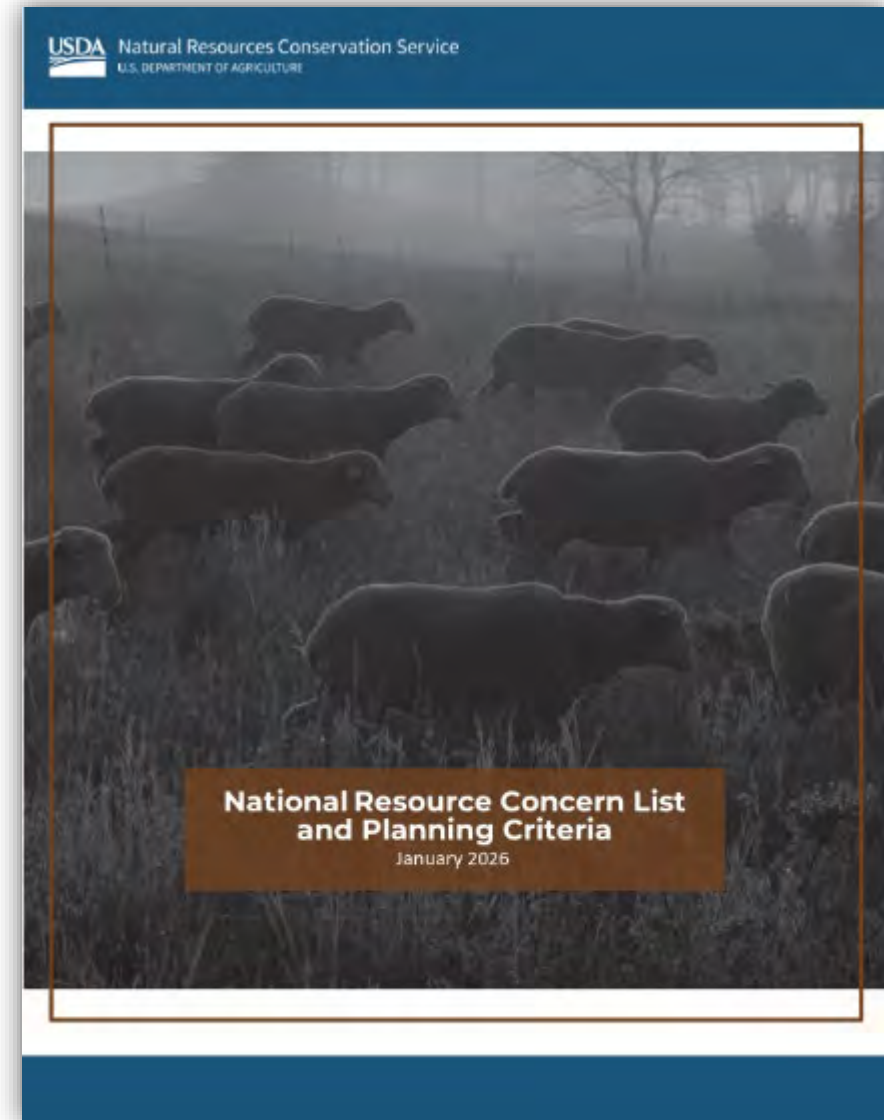
- National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria
- New Implementation Requirements (IRs) & Technical Guidance
- Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) Planning Overview - Technical Service Providers
- Ecological Science Training Plan (FY25–FY26)
- Environmental Compliance Updates

National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria

All resource concerns and applicable planning criteria are found in the National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria document. (Jan. 2026)

- The planning criteria includes the minimum treatment necessary to address the resource concern to the point where it is sustainably functioning for its intended purpose.
- The 2026 update streamlines the previous list of 49 Resource Concerns into 13 broader, more concise groupings.

<https://directives.nrcs.usda.gov//sites/default/files2/1770666176/National%20Resource%20Concern%20List%20and%20Planning%20Criteria.pdf>



National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria

A condition that reduces the health, function, or intended use of a natural resource.

NRCS Framework: SWAPA E+H

Soil • Water • Air • Plants • Animals • Energy • Humans

Soil



Water



Air



Plants



Animals





Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE)

CPPEs are used to describe the effects of each conservation practice on resource concerns.
Example: Cover Crop and Soil Erosion concerns

Resource Concerns FY2026				Sheet and Rill Erosion		Wind Erosion		Ephemeral Gully Erosion		Classic Gully Erosion	
Practice	Lead Discipline(s)	Practice Code	Unit	Effect	Rationale	Effect	Rationale	Effect	Rationale	Effect	Rationale
Cover Crop	ESD-Agron	340	ac.	Moderate to Substantial Improvement	Increased cover during erosive periods will reduce soil detachment by water.	Moderate to Substantial Improvement	Increased cover during erosive periods will reduce soil detachment by wind.	Moderate Improvement	Increased cover during erosive periods will reduce concentrated flow and associated soil detachment.	No Effect	Not Applicable

Updated FY 26 CPPE Spreadsheet available at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/conservation-practice-physical-effects>

Resource Concerns - RI Fact Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Natural Resource Concerns

Identify & Get Help with Conservation Issues

Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides conservation assistance to landowners and land managers to address natural resource concerns on private lands. This fact sheet provides an overview of the resource concerns that may be addressed through NRCS programs and services.

What is a natural resource concern?

A natural resource concern is a problem or issue that impairs the sustainability or intended use of that resource. For example, soil compaction is a natural resource concern that occurs when soil particles become compressed. This can cause the soil to become overly dense, which can impact the rate of water drainage and saturation, and can make it difficult for roots to effectively penetrate the soil. If left untreated, too much soil compaction can hinder the ability to grow certain crops.

SWAPAE+H: Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals, Energy, Humans

NRCS identifies natural resource concerns under seven broad categories. The acronym

What is a conservation practice?

A conservation practice is an action you take on the property to address a natural resource concern. Conservation practices can be structural activities, such as building a fence. They can be engineering projects,

such as designing and installing an irrigation system. They can be vegetative activities, such as planting trees or shrubs. They also can be management activities that require you to change the way you operate the land, such as changing the crops you plant in certain areas each year (crop rotation) or rotating livestock to graze in specific areas for a limited duration (rotational grazing).

Conservation Concerns Tool

Learn about different types of conservation issues that might impact the productivity or natural resources on your land by exploring the Conservation Concerns Tool on Farmers.gov.

This tool provides photos and videos of resource concerns and allows you to build a list of concerns to discuss with a local NRCS conservation planner.

How do I fix a natural

Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP) Conservation Planning Overview



Regenerative agriculture is a conservation management approach that emphasizes

Natural resources through
improved soil health

Water management

Natural vitality for the
productivity and prosperity of
agriculture and communities



The RPP addresses whole-farm resource concerns through support for
voluntary regenerative agriculture Conservation Plans

RPP Planning and Contract Requirements



Whole Farm Assessment



Primary Practices*



Soil Health Testing



Minimum 5-year contract

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

RPP in EQIP and CSP

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
All land that encompasses the “whole farm” will be evaluated	All land under control for the life of the contract will be evaluated
All applicable Resource Concerns evaluated	
<u>For at least one land unit:</u> Soil & Water Resource Concern thresholds are at met condition by end of contract*	<u>On at least one land use</u> (range, pasture, crop, forest): Soil & Water Resource Concern thresholds are at met condition by end of contract*
<u>At least one land unit</u> must meet the following: - One Primary RPP Practice planned or currently being implemented - Soil Health Testing beginning and end of contract	
Minimum 5-year contract	

**Planned practices necessary to achieve these Soil and Water Outcomes must be contracted.*

Notes: All other applicable program requirements, including CSP Stewardship Threshold Eligibility, still apply. Qualified applications may or may not be funded.

RPP Primary Practices and Required Activity

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	Grazing Management	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 Activity

Code	Asset Name
CEMA 216	Soil Health Testing



Excerpts from NI 440 307.14 Regenerative Dec. 2025

RPP and Technical Service Providers (TSPs)

Certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs) may be hired by RPP Program Participants with Financial Assistance Contracts.

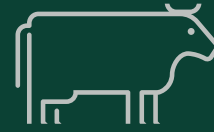
Certified TSPs may be hired by Program Participants to:

- Develop Conservation Plans (CPA-199)
 - Conduct required Whole-Farm Assessments
- Design RPP Primary and Supporting Conservation Practices
- Perform Technical Assistance for Practice Design, Installation Oversight, and/or checkout
- Conduct Soil Testing (CEMA 216)

www.nrcs.usda.gov/tsp

Technical Service
Providers

Types of TSPs



Range and Pasture Specialists



Agronomists



Foresters



Biologists



Soil Specialists



Organic Specialists



Engineers

Conservation Practice Updates

Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805) Adjust the soil pH with lime to change physical and chemical properties of the soil to achieve a conservation objective.

- Implementation Requirements **NEW**

Low Tunnel Systems (821)

An enclosed polyethylene, polycarbonate, plastic, or fabric covered structure that is used to cover and protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold, and to extend the growing season or to reduce pest pressure.

- Implementation Requirements **NEW**
 - Low Tunnel System to Address Abiotic Conditions (821) – RI NRCS Implementation Requirements
 - Low Tunnel System to Exclude Insect Pests (821) – RI Implementation Requirements



Northeast Strawberry Production Season Extension Using Low Tunnels
USDA-Agricultural Research Service

Conservation Practice Updates

[Fuel Break \(383\)](#) - A strip or appropriately sized block of land on which the vegetation, debris, and litter have been reduced and/or modified to control or diminish the spread of fire.

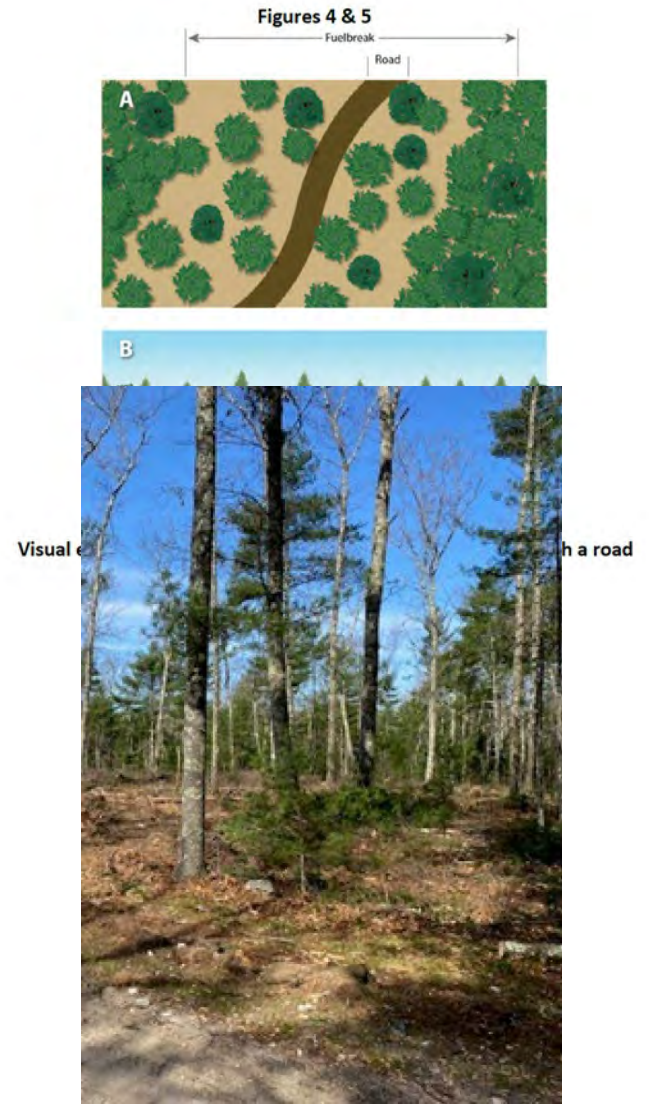
- [Implementation Requirements](#) **NEW**
- [New Practice Specifications \(RI\)](#) **NEW**

[Soil Carbon Amendment \(336\)](#) - Application of carbon-based amendments derived from plant materials or treated animal byproducts.

- [Implementation Requirements](#) **NEW**

COMING SOON

- ☐ Non-Ruminant Livestock Outdoor Management of Vegetative Cover (822)
- ☐ Pest Management Conservation Systems (595)



Trainings Provided (FY25–FY26)

Forestry and Wildlife Trainings:

- Coverts Workshop (November 2025)
- Common Forest Pests and Diseases (February 2026)
- Winter Plant ID (March 2026)
- Shaded Fuel Breaks (April 2026)
- Supporting Practices for Wildlife and Forestry (January 2026)

Grazing Lands & Agronomy Trainings:

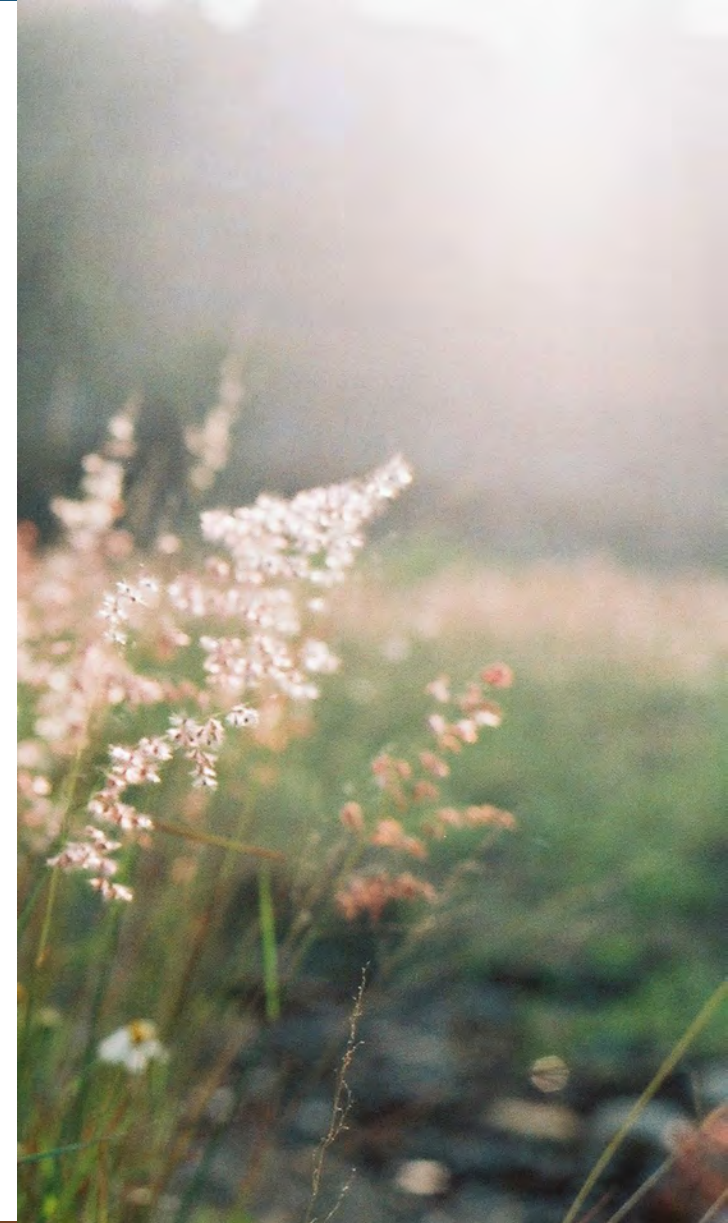
- Cover Crops
- Low Tunnel Planning
- Basics of Conservation Planning
- Fence Standard and Planning
- Livestock Production and Animal Husbandry
- Planning CEMA 216 and 217
- RUSLE
- High Tunnel Planning





Upcoming Trainings

- ☐ Adoption of the Environmental Evaluation in CD (TBD)
- ☐ Stream Crossings in Timber Harvest Operations (May 2026)
- ☐ Planning and Implementation of Woody Residue Treatment (Summer 2026)
- ☐ Forestry Technical Service Provider annual update meeting (TBD)
- ☐ Pasture Plant ID
- ☐ Pasture Health and Paddock Calculations
- ☐ Animal Behavior, Handling and Farm Safety



Environmental Compliance Updates

- CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation form was updated in January 2026
 - Changes include:
 - Analysis of the 'no action' alternative is now optional
 - Updated resource concerns list to match FY26 updates
 - Other updates can be found at ([NEPA Interim Guidance on the No Action Alternative, Cumulative Effects, and Updated National Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, Form NRCS-CPA-52](#))
- CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation form will be moving to CD with adoption by states by October 1, 2026