



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NRCS Review and FY27 Updates



Maryland NRCS Conservation Programs Overview
STAC September Meeting
September 9, 2026

MARYLAND



FY 2026 Recap



Maryland Program Changes

- ◆ Policy Changes
- 🛡 Integrity and Verification
- 📊 Eligibility & Contract Management
- ⚠ Oversight & Program Compliance



Maryland Program Delivery

- Streamlined Payment Schedules
- CSP Renewals rolled into general sign up
- Ranking streamlined to reduce confusion and workload
- Using the Regenerative Pilot Program to build on conservation work through soil health, water management, and natural vitality



Things Considered for FY 2026

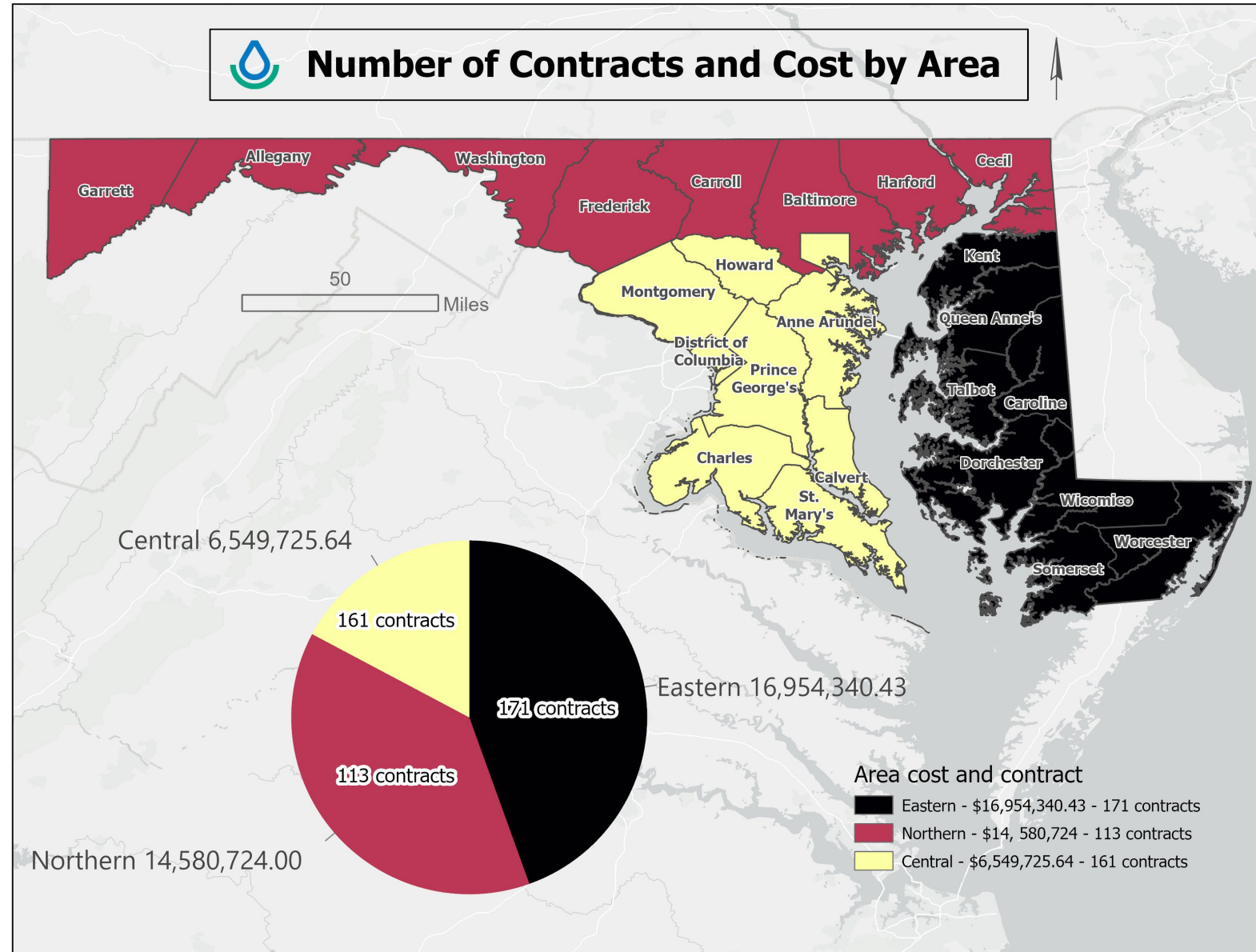
- **How changes in ranking are designed to simplify the process**
 - *Aid workload management*
 - *Reduced redundancy in ranking*
 - *Less potential for partial funding*
 - *Consolidate ranking pools to streamline the ranking process*
- **LWGs feedback**
- **Determined ranking pool categories and funding priorities**
- **Category selection, especially important for all initiatives, pilots, and projects**
 - *Concise criteria is helpful for quick decision-making*
 - *Category applicability for certain practices or other conditions*
- **Example: Regenerative Pilot Program - The applicant must be willing to develop a whole farm plan and include soil health testing to select the category.**



FY26 Highlights: All FA Programs

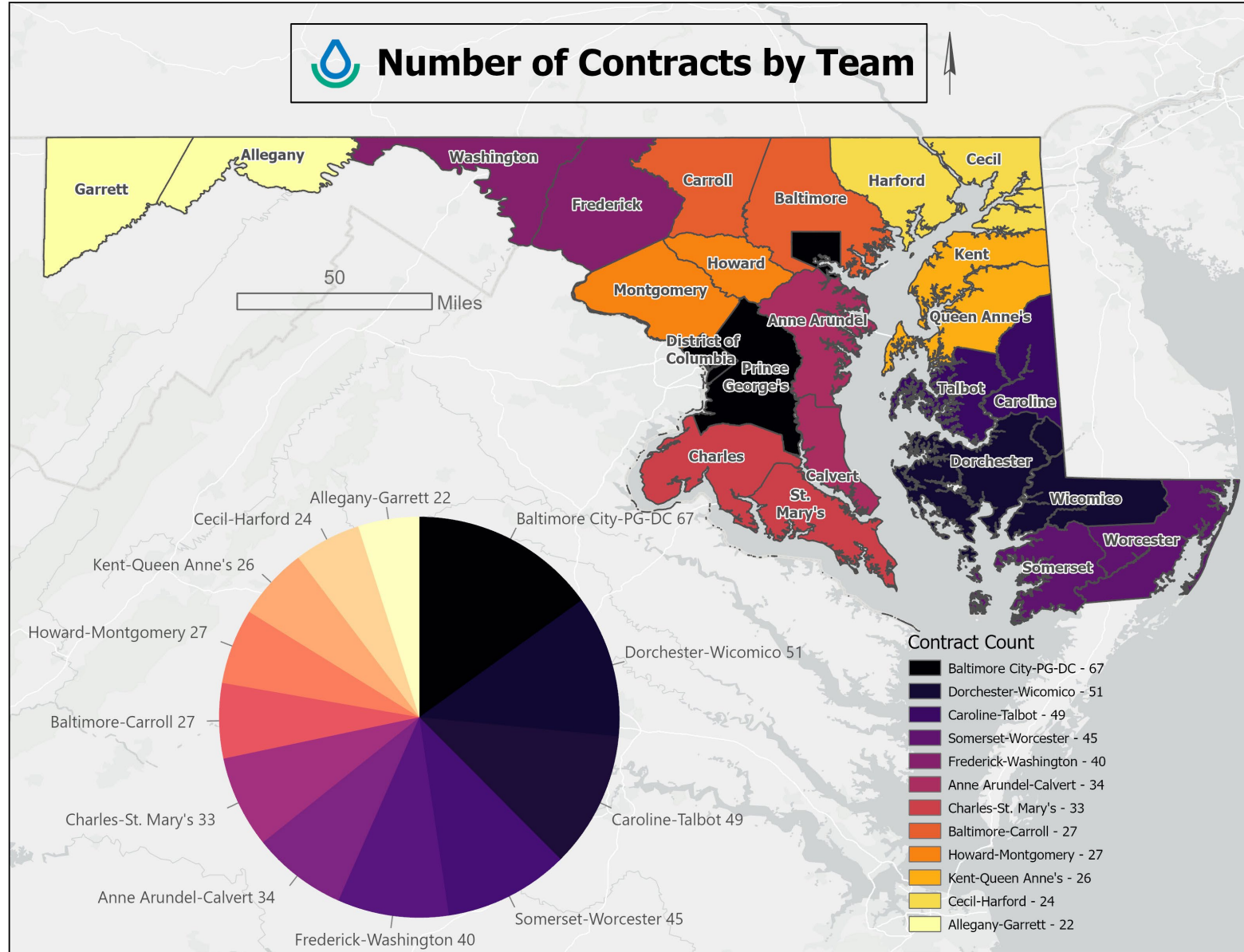
- EQIP, CSP, RCPP, AMA
- As of July 17, 2026
- Area dollar obligations:
 - Northern: \$14,580,724
 - Central: \$6,549,725
 - Eastern: \$16,954,340

Projected Obligations based on obligations and estimated costs.



FY26 Highlights: All FA Programs, by County Pairs

- Total: 481 Contracts
- EQIP: 370
- CSP: 95
- RCPP: 12
- AMA: 4
- Avg 37 contracts per county cluster

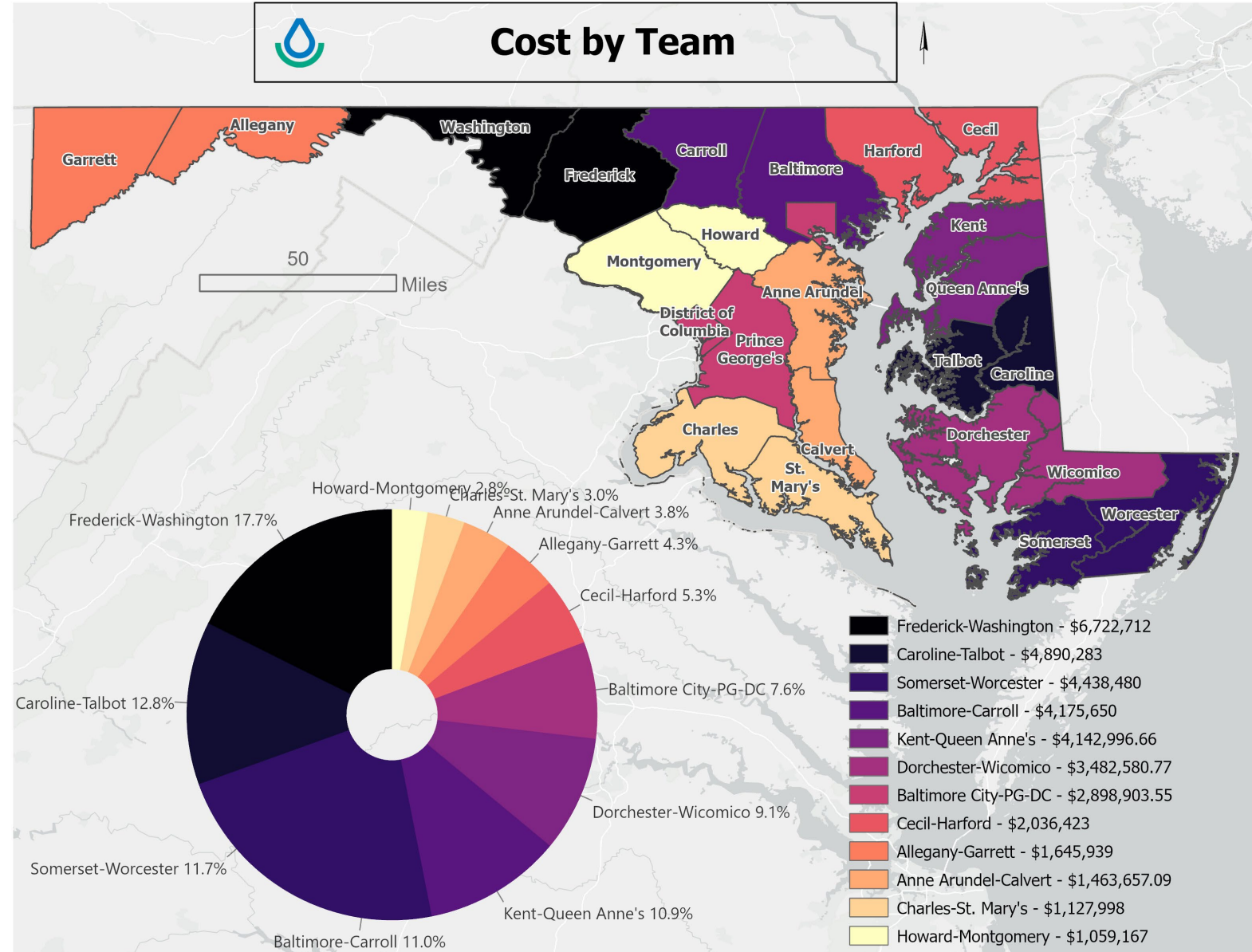


FY26 Highlights: All FA Programs, by County Pairs

Projected obligation totals

- EQIP: \$29,944,255
- CSP: \$8,317,483
- RCPP: \$769,793
- AMA: \$106,500
- Avg contract obligation is \$87,848

As of July 17, 2026



Project Types:

- Achieving WIP Goals & NM Compliance in MD - *MD Department of Ag (One LMR Contract Obligated)*
- Grazing for Water Quality & Soil Health (One LMR Contract Obligated)
- Million Acre Challenge-Future Harvest
- Engaging Small AFOs in the NM Planning Process - *Sustainable Chesapeake (Two – LMR Contracts Obligated)*
- Connecting Small and Urban Farms in the Baltimore and Washington D.C. Urban Corridor with Conservation Resources - *Sustainable Chesapeake (Seven – LMR Contract Obligated)*



FY26 RCPP: All Projects

Project Types:

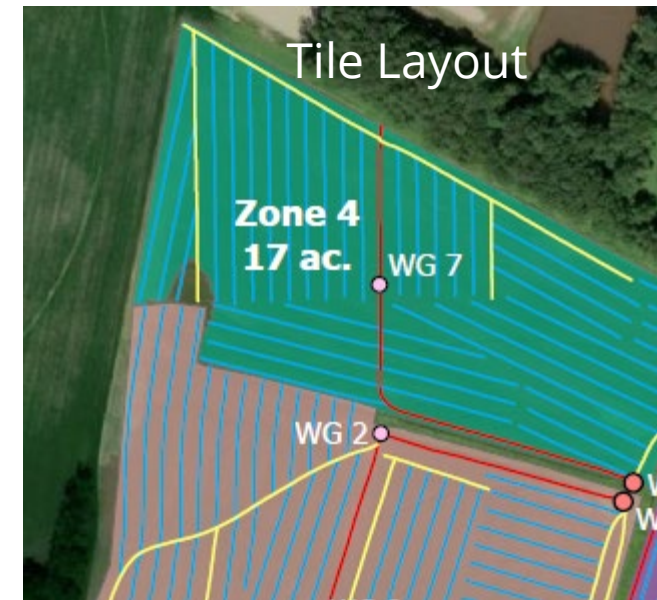
AFA

- Scaling the adoption of adaptive nitrogen management using low-cost cover crop imaging and nitrogen crediting technology-*The Nature Conservancy*
 - Supplement Agreement Active – FY 2026
- Maryland Clean Water Commerce Outcomes Project –*Sand County Foundation*

Year	Total N Pounds Reductions	Total Value of N Reductions
2025 Oyster Restoration	167	\$6,744.00
2026 Oyster Restoration and Drainage System	1878	\$76,459.40
2026 Oyster Restoration and Drainage System	2387	\$85,531.40



Plant Map 3D- a New Tool to Support Farm Decisions



FY26 Highlights: ACEP

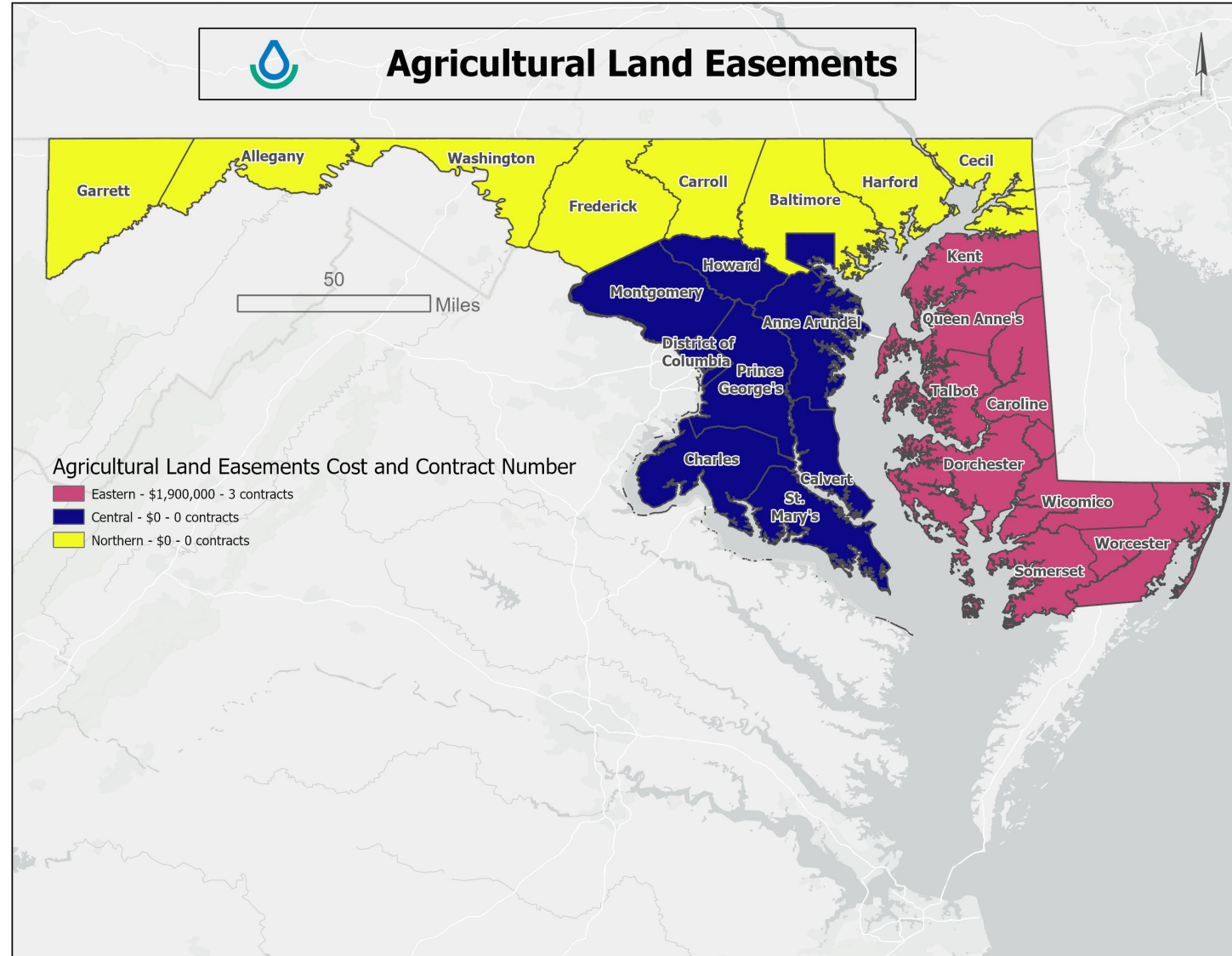
■ Agricultural Land Easements

- Contracts: 3
- Area dollar obligations:
 - Eastern: \$ 1,900,000



3 times more \$ than FY25

Projected Obligations based on obligations and estimated costs.



FY26 Highlights: ACEP

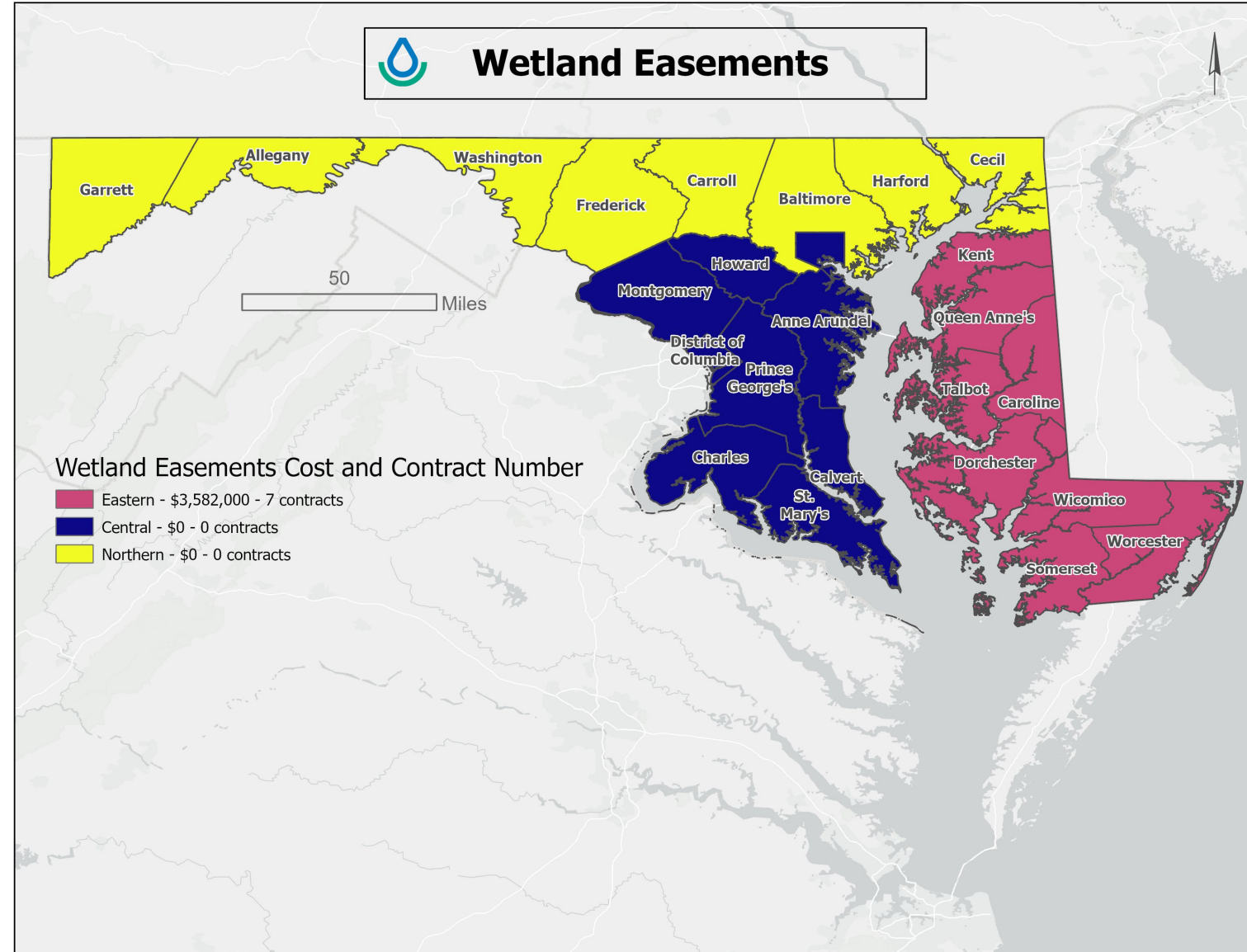
■ Wetland Easements

- Contracts: 7
- Area dollar obligations:
 - Eastern: \$ 3,582,000



11 times more \$ than FY25

Projected Obligations based on obligations and estimated costs.



FY 26 Wetland Easements Closed/Established

Easements = Protected Lands

- Easements Closed/Established in FY26: 5
- Protected Acres: 247
- Dollars Disbursed: \$973,785.00
- Locations: Wicomico (2), Somerset (2), Caroline (1)



AMA Fund Pool

FY2025

- \$258,466 dollars obligated
- 6 contracts

FY2026

- Micro-Irrigation Fund Pool
- \$102,245 dollars obligated
- 4 contracts





Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

CSP

FY2025

- 101 contracts
- \$6,054,750 obligated





FY2026 Highlights: CSP Projected End-of-Year Obligations

FY26 CSP Status

FY26 Allocation \$8,864,000

Obligated to Date \$5,490,140

Remaining Allocation \$3,373,860

Total Applications: 107

Contracts Obligated: 63

Active/Remaining Applications: 35

Cancelled/Deferred 9

Projected Obligations by Fund Pool/Category

Fund Pool/ Category	Contracts	Projected \$
AgLand – Cropland/Pastureland General	10	\$ 1,877,355.00
AgLand- Specialty Crop/Urban	3	\$ 230,376.00
AgLand – Beginning Farmer	6	\$ 266,932.00
AgLand – Social Disadvantaged	4	\$ 92,296.00
AgLand RPP	4	\$ 1,004,930.00
NIPF General	22	\$ 1,431,683.00
NIPF Beginning Farmer	10	\$ 393,674.00
NIPF Socially Disadvantaged	0	\$ -
NIPF Regenerative Pilot Program	4	\$ 192,894.00



FY 2026 EQIP Metrics & Accomplishments





United States Department of Agriculture

FY 2026 EQIP Allocation Breakdown

General

Total FA
\$29,967,000
Million

General FA
\$24,858,996
Million

Initiatives FA
\$5,108,004
Million

**Amounts are estimates and subject to change*

EQIP Local and Statewide Fund Pool

FY 2025

- 20 EQIP Fund Pools
- \$17.07 Million Farm Bill
- 266 total contracts



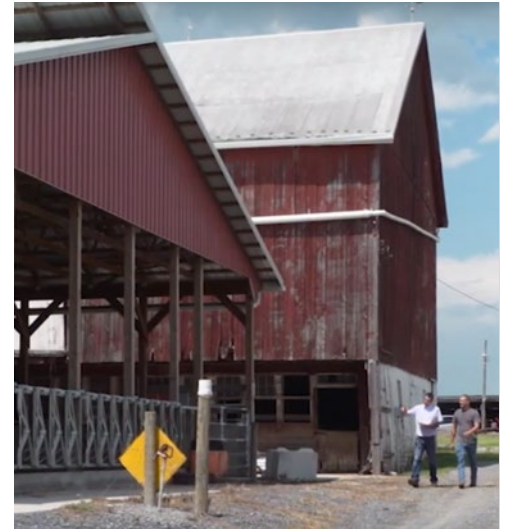
FY 2026 (as of July 17, 2026)

- 4 Fund Pools
- \$19.7 million Farm Bill
- 339 contracts and applications to-date



EQIP Factors and Priorities Considered

- Dominate land use
 - Central – Small acre and complexity in operation types
 - Northern – Larger livestock
 - Eastern – Cropland and Poultry
- Statewide Initiatives
 - National Water Quality
 - Air Quality
 - Wildlife – Golden Winged Warbler



FY 2026 EQIP General – Ranking Pools & Categories

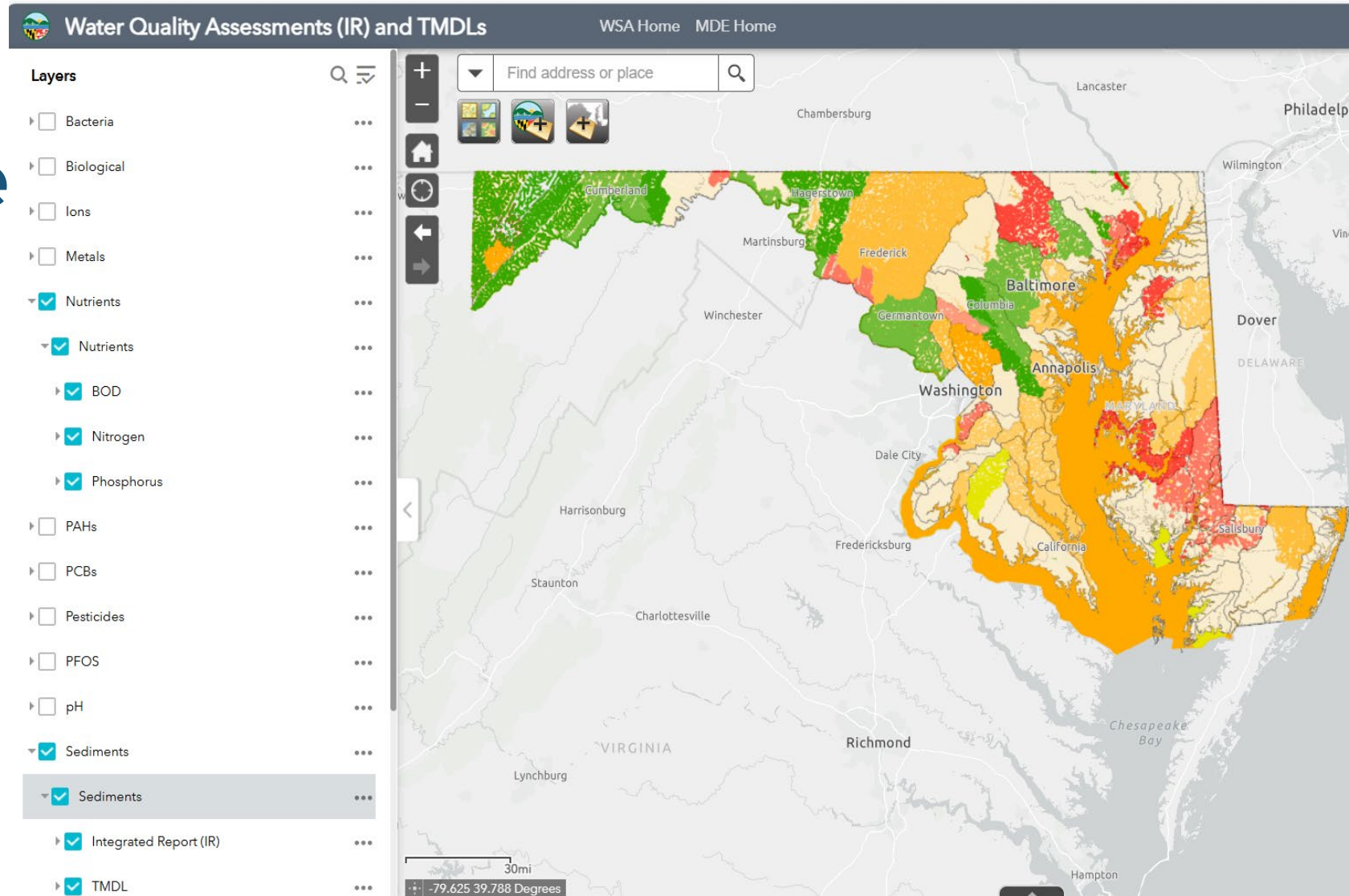
Northern	Central	Eastern	National Initiatives
Cropland	Cropland	Cropland	National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI)
Grazing	Grazing	Grazing	WLFW Golden-Winged Warbler
Small Grazing	Small Grazing	Small Grazing	NWQI - Catoctin Creek (L, M, U)
Livestock	Livestock	Livestock	NWQI - Little Pipe Creek (L, M, U)
Forestry-Wildlife	Forestry-Wildlife	Forestry-Wildlife	NWQI - Prettyboy Reservoir
National Organic Initiative	National Organic Initiative	National Organic Initiative	RESERVED
Beginning Farmer	Beginning Farmer	Beginning Farmer	
Socially Disadvantaged	Socially Disadvantaged	Socially Disadvantaged	
Irrigation	Irrigation	Irrigation	
Specialty Crop & Urban	Specialty Crop & Urban	Specialty Crop & Urban	
Cover Crop	Oyster Restoration	Oyster Restoration	
Regenerative Agriculture	Cover Crop	Cover Crop	
RESERVED	Regenerative Agriculture	Regenerative Agriculture	
	RESERVED	RESERVED	

FY26 EQIP: National Water Quality Initiative

MD continues to target conservation implementation for water quality through NWQI priority watersheds (HUC12)

Watersheds:

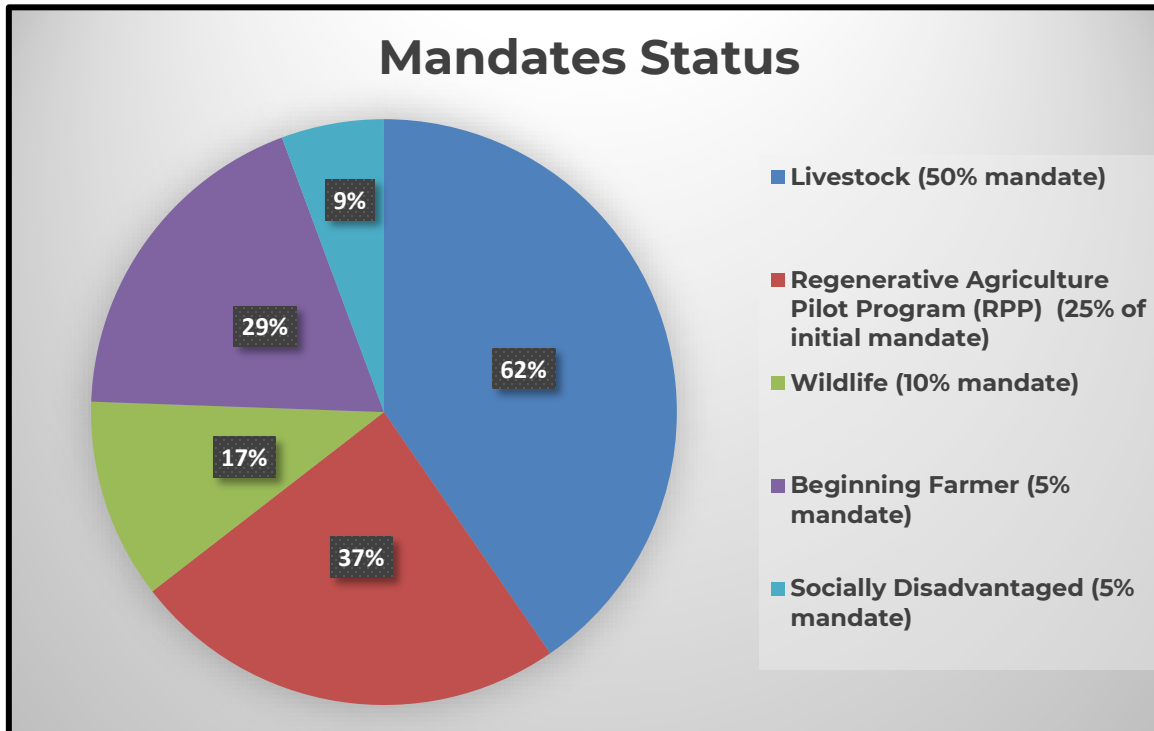
- Catoctin Creek
- Little Pipe Creek
- Prettyboy



FY 2026 EQIP - Obligations

Contract and Financial Summary

- ✓ **\$26,212,736 Obligated (*in progress*)**
- ✓ **311 Contracts (*in progress*)**



Total EQIP Obligations By Category	Obligations
Livestock	\$5,839,217
Beginning Farmer	\$959,213
Cover Crop	\$571,052
CPA-DIA-CEMA	\$400,881
Cropland	\$2,130,675
Forestry-Wildlife	\$492,122
Grazing	\$528,103
High Tunnel	\$928,270
Irrigation	\$531,787
National Organic Initiative (NOI)	\$73,946
On-Farm Energy	\$747,619
Oyster Restoration	\$718,624
Regenerative Pilot Program	\$6,785,687
Small Grazing	\$138,243
Socially Disadvantaged	\$1,333,944
Specialty Crop & Urban	\$565,148
WLFW Golden-winged Warbler	\$190,782
National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI)	\$1,361,111
NWQI-Catoctin Creek (L, M, U)	\$1,057,698
NWQI-Little Pipe Creek (L, M, U)	\$858,614





FY 2026 EQIP General – Top Ten Practices

Planned

Code	Practice	Items	Extent	Units
216	Soil Health Testing	216	270.20	No
340	Cover Crop	165	10,934.20	Ac
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	161	362,543.00	SqFt
382	Fence	158	379,742.00	Ft
528	Grazing Management	146	2,892.30	Ac
484	Mulching	127	60.80	Ac
516	Livestock Pipeline	119	116,585.00	Ft
614	Watering Facility	117	592.00	No
325	High Tunnel System	96	259,073.10	SqFt
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	90	2,277.50	Ac

Obligated

Code	Practice	Obligation
367	Roofs and Covers	\$4,740,744.79
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	\$3,898,260.41
336	Soil Carbon Amendment	\$2,527,401.52
325	High Tunnel System	\$2,033,407.35
382	Fence	\$1,213,045.36
313	Waste Storage Facility	\$881,901.00
591	Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste	\$881,820.00
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	\$716,611.54
590	Nutrient Management	\$709,647.00
642	Water Well	\$678,239.00

**Amounts are estimates and subject to change*



FY 2026 Funding Priorities – EQIP Northern

General-Northern \$9,774,432.00	Obligations
Cropland	1.1%
Grazing	1.8%
Small Grazing	1.2%
Livestock	34.7%
Forestry-Wildlife	2.8%
Beginning Farmer	4.6%
Socially Disadvantaged	3.7%
National Organic Initiative (NOI)	0.2%
Irrigation	0.4%
Specialty Crop & Urban	0.5%
Cover Crop	3.1%
Regenerative Pilot Program	36.3%
CPA-DIA-CEMA	1.6%
High Tunnel	3.3%
On-Farm Energy	4.8%

**Amounts are estimates and subject to change*



FY 2026 Funding Priorities – EQIP Eastern

General-Eastern	Obligations
\$9,038,857.00	
Cropland	16.8%
Grazing	1.5%
Livestock	15.1%
Forestry-Wildlife	1.6%
Beginning Farmer	3.4%
Socially Disadvantaged	8.3%
National Organic Initiative (NOI)	0.6%
Irrigation	5.4%
Specialty Crop & Urban	4.8%
Oyster Restoration	7.0%
Cover Crop	2.3%
Regenerative Pilot Program	24.2%
CPA-DIA-CEMA	2.7%
High Tunnel	3.2%
On-Farm Energy	3.0%

**Amounts are estimates and subject to change*



FY 2026 Funding Priorities – EQIP Central

General-Central	Obligations
\$3,931,242.00	
Cropland	12.9%
Grazing	5.4%
Small Grazing	0.6%
Livestock	27.5%
Forestry-Wildlife	1.9%
Beginning Farmer	5.1%
Socially Disadvantaged	5.8%
Specialty Crop & Urban	2.1%
Oyster Restoration	2.2%
Cover Crop	1.6%
Regenerative Pilot Program	26.7%
High Tunnel	8.2%

**Amounts are estimates and subject to change*



United States Department of Agriculture

FY 2026 Funding Priorities – EQIP National Initiatives

National Initiatives \$3,468,205.00		Obligations
National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI)		39.2%
WLFW Golden-winged Warbler		5.5%
NWQI-Catoctin Creek (L, M, U)		30.5%
NWQI-Little Pipe Creek (L, M, U)		24.8%

**Amounts are estimates and subject to change*



Questions



Producer Roundtable Feedback



Producer Roundtable Feedback

- Maryland held 4 producer roundtable events
- Meetings held between March and May 2026
- Obtain in-person and in-field feedback from farmers about the successes and opportunity to improve conservation practice standards
- 2 of the meetings had increased focus on dairy and poultry producers, but all producer types attended
- Included some producers from DE where interested



Producer Roundtable Feedback - Practices

- 590 Nutrient management
- 309 Agricultural Chemical Handling Facility
- 436 Irrigation reservoir
- 442 Sprinkler
- 355 Groundwater testing
- 330 Contour farming
- 317 Composting Facility
- 342 Critical Area Planting
- 382 Fence
- 516 Livestock Pipeline
- 558 Roof Runoff Structure
- 591 Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste
- 558 Roof Runoff Structure
- 591 Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste
- 627 Waste Treatment, Milkhouse
- 629 Waste Treatment
- 632 Waste Separation Facility
- 634 Waste Transfer

Producer Roundtable Feedback - Practices

- 317 Composting Facility
- 318 Short Term Storage of Animal Waste and By Product
- 342 Critical Area Planting
- 371 Air Filtration and Scrubbing
- 374 Energy Efficient Ag Operations
- 375 Dust Management for Pen Surface



- 314 Brush Management
- 315 Herbaceous Weed Treatment
- 432 Dry Hydrant
- 575 Trails and Walkways
- 643 Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities
- 649 Structures for Wildlife
- 666 Forest Stand Improvement
- 670 Energy Efficient Lighting System
- 672 Energy Efficient Building Envelope

Producer Roundtable Feedback

- NRCS is improving and modernizing key conservation practices, part of the effort to put farmers first
- Goal is to make sure our conservation practice meet the needs of farmers and supporting efforts to address natural resource challenges
- NRCS will use the feedback to better integrate real-world needs, with consideration for precision and regenerative agriculture.





Questions



FY 27 Program Survey Feedback Summary & Proposals



State Technical MS Form - Feedback

- Collecting partner feedback via MS Forms
- Getting feedback on state priorities, priority areas, shoreline restoration and protection areas, and conservation gaps
 - Are there additional resource concerns, modifications, or priorities that should be considered for Maryland?
- Also collecting feedback on RPP
- **Responses by EOD TODAY, Sept 9**

FY 2027 State Technical Advisory
Committee Feedback - Maryland
NRCS

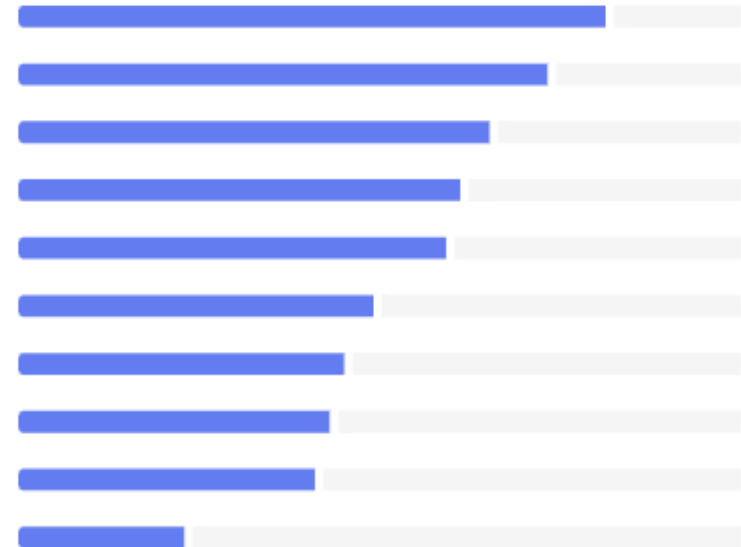


State Technical MS Form - Feedback

- Current rankings of technical and financial priority needs.

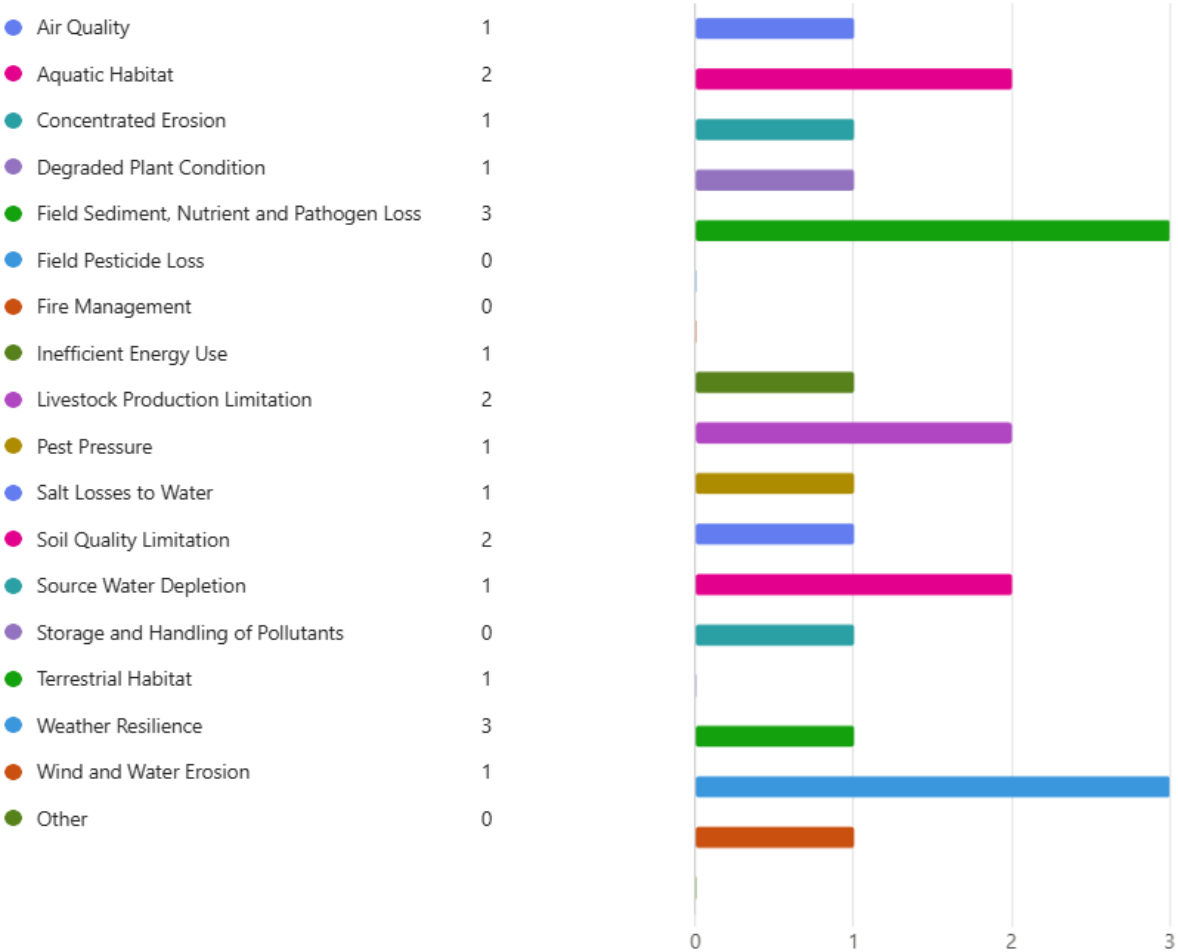
3. Rank the possible EQIP categories according to your perceived needs for technical and financial assistance. Highest priority at the top and lowest at the bottom. Statute mandates (Beginning Farmer, Socially disadvantaged farmer, etc.) are excluded since they're required.

- 1 Regenerative Agriculture
- 2 Grazing
- 3 Forestry/ Wildlife
- 4 Cover Crop
- 5 Cropland
- 6 Urban/ Specialty Crop
- 7 Livestock (AFO, CAFO)
- 8 Oysters
- 9 Energy
- 10 High Tunnel



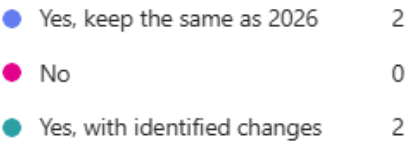
State Technical MS Form - Feedback

4. Select top 3 to 5 Resources Concerns



13. Do you think Maryland should use the Maryland resource concern list as specified in the link for FY 2027 RPP?

[More details](#)





FY2027 CSP Priorities Resource Concerns Consideration

Proposed Resource Concern Categories (SWAPA+E)

- Air – Air Quality Emissions
- Animals – Aquatic Habitat; Livestock Production Limitation; Terrestrial Habitat
- Energy – Inefficient Energy Use
- Plants – Degraded Plant Condition; Fire Management; Pest Pressure
- Soil – Concentrated Erosion; Soil Quality Limitations; Wind & Water Erosion
- Water – Pesticide Loss; Sediment, Nutrient & Pathogen Loss, Source Water Depletion; Storage & Handling of Pollutants
- Weather Resilience – Natural Available Moisture Use; Ponding & Flooding; Seasonal High-Water Table



FY2027 CSP Priorities Resource Concerns Consideration

Proposed Resource Concern Categories (SWAPA+E)

Ag Land

- **Animals** – Livestock Production Limitation; Terrestrial Habitat
- **Plant Health** – Plant Pest Pressure
- **Plants** – Degraded Plant Condition
- **Soil** – Concentrated Erosion; Soil Quality Limitations; Wind & Water Erosion
- **Water** – Sediment, Nutrient & Pathogen Loss

Forest

- **Animals** – Terrestrial Habitat; Aquatic Habitat
- **Plant Health** – Plant Pest Pressure
- **Plants** – Degraded Plant Condition; Fire Management
- **Soil** – Concentrated Erosion; Soil Quality Limitations; Wind & Water Erosion



FY2027 CSP Priorities Resource Concerns Consideration

CSP Priorities Land Uses

- Associated AgLand
- Crop
- Farmstead
- Forest
- Pasture



FY 2027 EQIP Program Priorities



FY 2027 EQIP General - Geographic Regions

Northern	Central	Eastern
Garrett	Anne Arundel	Caroline
Allegany	Baltimore City	Dorchester
Washington	Calvert	Kent
Frederick	Charles	Queen Annes
Carroll	Prince Georges	Somerset
Baltimore	St. Mary's	Talbot
Cecil	Howard	Wicomico
Harford	Montgomery	Worcester

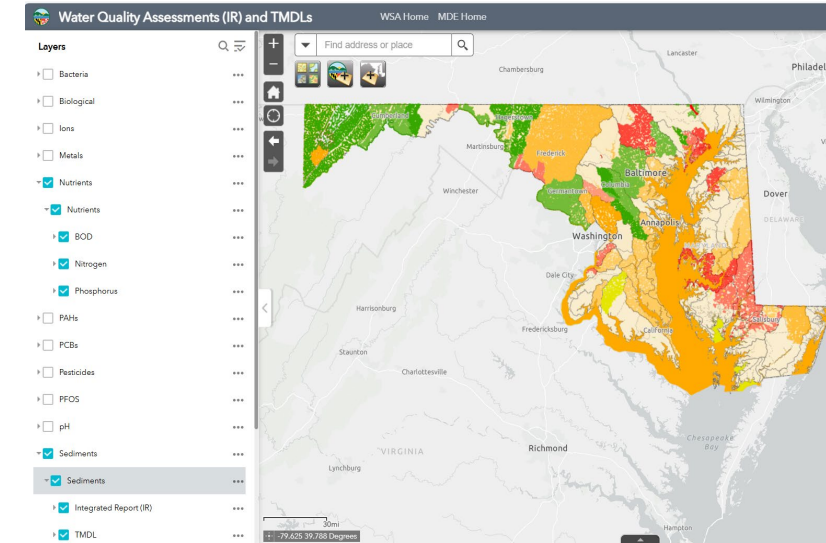
FY 2027
EQIP
General –
Ranking
Pools &
Categories

Note: Categories marked with a “+” have been merged, while those with a strike-through are discontinued for FY 2027.

Northern	Central	Eastern	National Initiatives
Cropland + Cover Crop + Specialty Crop & Urban	Cropland + Cover Crop	Cropland + Cover Crop	National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI)
Grazing	Grazing + Small Grazing	Grazing + Small Grazing	WLFW Golden-Winged Warbler
Small Grazing	Livestock	Saltwater Intrusion	NWQI - Catoctin Creek (L, M, U)
Livestock	Forestry-Wildlife	Poultry	NWQI - Little Pipe Creek (L, M, U)
Forestry-Wildlife	National Organic Initiative	Livestock	NWQI - Prettyboy Reservoir
National Organic Initiative	Beginning Farmer	Forestry-Wildlife	
Beginning Farmer	Socially Disadvantaged	National Organic Initiative	
Socially Disadvantaged	Irrigation	Beginning Farmer	
Irrigation	Specialty Crop & Urban	Socially Disadvantaged	
Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)	Oyster Restoration	Irrigation	
CPA-DIA-CEMA	Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)	Specialty Crop & Urban	
High Tunnel	CPA-DIA-CEMA	Oyster Restoration	
On-Farm Energy	High Tunnel	Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)	
	On-Farm Energy	CPA-DIA-CEMA	
		High-Tunnel	
		On-Farm Energy	

FY27 EQIP: National Water Quality Initiative & Priority Watersheds

Are there any other watersheds that are recommended for consideration for NWQI?



Current NWQI

Watersheds:

- Catoctin Creek
- Little Pipe Creek
- Prettyboy

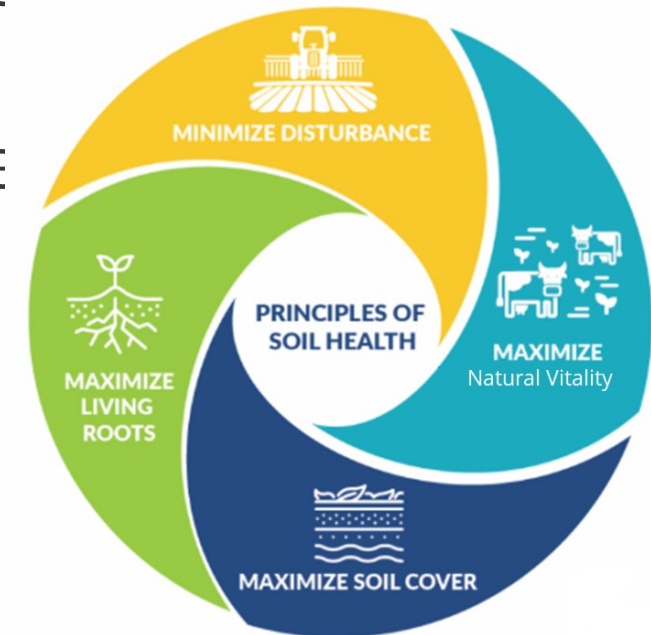


Regenerative Ag Pilot Program (RPP) Resource Concerns and Practices



Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)

- In FY26, RPP participants were required to meet ALL soil and water concerns
- In FY27, producers will be required to address all RPP Critical Resource Concerns, as identified by the state NRCS with input from the STAC
- Resource concerns are for the 3 main land use
 - Crop
 - Pasture
 - Forest



RPP Proposed Critical Resource Concerns

Resource Concerns	Resource Concern Components	Crop	Forest	Pasture
Soil (Concentrated erosion)	Bank erosion from streams, shorelines, conveyance channels	X	X	X
	Classic gully erosion	X	X	X
	Ephemeral gully erosion	X		X
Soil (Soil quality limitations)	Aggregate instability	X	X	X
	Compaction	X	X	X
	Organic matter depletion	X	X	X
	Soil organism habitat loss or degradation	X	X	X
Soil (Wind and water erosion)	Sheet and rill erosion	X		X
Water (Field pesticide loss)	Nonpoint pesticide leaching loss	X		X
	Nonpoint pesticide surface loss	X		X
Water (Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss)	Nonpoint nitrogen and phosphorus leaching loss	X	X	X
	Nonpoint nitrogen and phosphorus surface loss	X	X	X
	Nonpoint pathogen loss to groundwater	X	X	X
	Nonpoint pathogen surface loss	X	X	X
	Sediment from erosion sources	X	X	X
Water (Source water depletion)	Groundwater depletion	X		X
	Inefficient irrigation water use	X		X
	Surface water depletion	X		X
Water (Storage and handling of pollutants)	Surface loss from domestic animals standing in surface water	X	X	X
Water (Weather resilience)	Moisture management	X		

RPP Proposed Priority Practices

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

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