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October 10, 2024

**NEW JERSEY BULLETIN NO. NJ 440-25-02**

**SUBJECT:** PRM – Local Working Group Meetings

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information and procedures for Local Working Group Meetings (LWG).

**EXPIRATION DATE:** September 30, 2025

**EXPLANATION:** As part of an ongoing effort to keep making improvements with our Farm Bill program offerings, it is essential that we obtain input from our conservation partners at the field level. It is the role of NRCS to provide leadership and technical assistance for the conservation of our natural resources to ensure the continued production of food and fiber. Each Conservation District (CD) has the responsibility to chair the LWG. If the CD is unable to, or unwilling to chair the LWG, the DC is responsible for the chair duties. The LWG consists of representatives from the Soil Conservation Distritct (SCD) Board of Directors, Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee, the FSA County Executive Director, the NRCS DCs, as well as other local and state agency representatives. Soliciting participation and input from other partner staff such as the Cooperative Extension Service, NJ Department of Agriculture, NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Division of Forestry, NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife, NJ Conservation Foundation, NJ Audubon Society, Federal, State, and Local elected or appointed officials, etc. is essential. Also included in the LWG is the public participation from farmers, landowners, and other local conservation organizations or groups. The NRCS staff at the State Office and the State Technical Committee will use this information to develop recommendations for FY 2026 program offerings. Additionally, the Soil Conservation Districts may also use this information and feedback from LWGs to collaborate with other local, state, and federal partners to address needs identified and develop solutions and recommendations per guidance from the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP). The LWG Guidebook developed by the NCPP can be found in Attachment A as a reference to assist with LWG meetings.

In accordance with Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 610, Subpart C, Local Working Groups (LWGs) are subcommittees of the State Technical Committee and provide recommendations to the USDA on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for

conservation activities and programs. The LWGs' responsibilities to support locally led conservation are to:

- Ensure a conversation needs assessment is developed using community stakeholder input.
- Utilize the conservation needs assessment to help identify program funding needs and conservation practices.
- Identify priority resource concerns and identify, as appropriate, high-priority areas needing assistance.
- Recommend USDA conservation program application and funding criteria, eligible practices (including limits on practice payments or units), and payment rates.

DCs will review with the LWG the prior year's planning and implementation progress toward long range plans, strategic plans, and other resource recommendations. It is also important to review the report that was presented to the State Technical Committee following the FY2024 LWG meetings and the steps that are being taken to address any suggestions or concerns. The State Technical Committee report can be found in Attachment B.

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

1. **Each LWG will convene no later than February 21, 2025.** Local Working Group meetings are open to the public and should be publicized fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting date. Agendas and information must be provided to the LWG members at least 14 calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting. Please refer to Attachment C, the Conservation Programs Manual (CPM) 440, Part 501, Subpart B, for the purpose, responsibilities, and membership of the LWGs.
2. **District Conservationists will submit the meeting minutes (in MS Word format) to the NRCS State Office Shared drive (PUB\Public_NRCS\Local Working Group Meetings\LWG FY25) no later than March 14, 2025.**

There are statutory funding requirements that must be met for programs. Listed below to help lead off your meetings is a list of some of those requirements.

EQIP – funding targets and mandatory offerings:

- 50 percent of funds targeted to livestock-related practices
- 5 percent of funds targeted to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
- 5 percent of funds targeted to beginning farmers and ranchers
- 10 percent of funds targeted to wildlife habitat-related practices
- National Priorities that do not receive earmarks: High Tunnel Systems, Energy, Organic, Urban, Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), and Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC)
- NJ State Priorities: In addition to Local Work Group areas the following priorities are also identified Source Water Protection, Tree Mortality Initiative, Bobwhite Quail/American Black Duck, Forestry, Irrigation, Urban, and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG).
- Earmarks – dedicated funding that cannot be used elsewhere:
    a. Golden-winged Warbler
    b. National Water Quality Initiative
    c. Joint Chief's Landscape Project
    d. Organic Transition Initiative

CSP – funding targets:

- 5 percent of funds targeted to beginning farmers and ranchers
- 5 percent of funds targeted to socially disadvantaged farmers

- 5 percent of funds targeted to organic and organic transition

AMA

- NJ is one of sixteen states that receives funds for the promotion of diversification of small farms to mitigate risks.

ACEP

- Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) – applications must be from eligible entities that can hold easements.
- Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) – applications must be from private landowners.

RCPP

- The 2018 Farm Bill expanded Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to a standalone program. Partners develop project applications to address specific natural resource objectives in a proposed area or region and submit them during the annual announcement of program funding. Through RCPP, NRCS works with partners to provide a combination of financial and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation practices. RCPP federal assistance is delivered through land management/restoration, rental, easements, and public works/watershed structures activities.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides an additional $19.5 billion over five years to support USDA's conservation programs that yield climate change mitigation benefits. Implementation began in 2023. These investments mean that more producers will have access to conservation assistance. These additional funds will help farmers and ranchers implement expanded conservation practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase storage of carbon in their soil and trees. The conservation funding is in addition to otherwise available program funds, and participation is voluntary, incentive-based and targeted to support climate-smart mitigation activities and other conservation activities that facilitate them. The list of current available practices/enhancements can be found in Attachment D and will be applied to the following programs:

- EQIP - $13.5 million (estimated)
- CSP - $ 1.6 million (estimated)
- ACEP - $7.6 million (estimated)

**CONTACT:** For additional information or assistance, please contact Gail Bartok, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at 732-537-6042 or gail.bartok@usda.gov.

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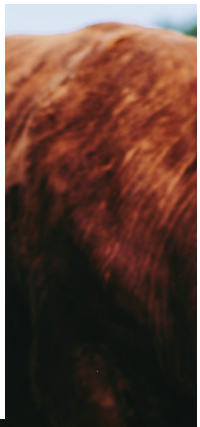
**Julie Hawkins**
*State Conservationist*

DIST: AE (All Employees)

Attachment A: LWG Guidebook
Attachment B: LWG Summary Report
Attachment C: Part 501 Local Work Group
Attachment D: FY25 IRA Practice/Enhancement List

# LOCAL WORK GROUPS

*Resource Guidebook*



This guidebook is a set of resources developed through the National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCPP). NCPP Leadership recognized an opportunity to reengage, enhance and improve the Local Work Group process in July 2021. A project team with formed and explored the requests of field level staff and assisted in developing tools to address their findings. Included in the toolbox are sample agendas, notes documents, a bulletin, training resources, and frequently asked questions. We encourage you to adjust the agenda and notes to fit your needs.

# Table of Contents

Local Work Group

# Membership of Local Work Group

The Local Work Groups are a Sub-Committee of the State Technical Committee and exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). They include representation from the following:

- Conservation District Supervisors and Staff
- State Natural Resource Agencies
- Federal Natural Resource Agencies
- Agriculture Organizations – e.g. Wheat, Potatoes, Etc.
- Fish & Wildlife Organizations – e.g. Pheasants, Ducks, Quail, Salmon, Etc.
- Environmental Organizations – e.g. Audubon, Nature Conservancy, Etc.
- State or local elected officials and/or staff
- Other state-specific natural resource related organizations
- NRCS designated conservationist
- FSA county executive director and/or County Committee Members
- Cooperative Extension
- Representatives of American Indian governments
- Resource Conservation and Development Councils

Notes:
Locally led conservation consists of a series of phases which involve community stakeholders in natural resource planning, implementation of solutions and evaluation of results. Locally led conservation begins with the community itself, working through the local Conservation District. It is based on the principle that community stakeholders are best suited to deal with local resource problems.

Individual members of the local work group may be involved in the locally led conservation effort from the beginning. For example, they may be instrumental in assisting with the conservation needs assessment and conservation action plan; it is the responsibility of the USDA local work group to finalize and forward recommendations to the State Conservationist.

The NRCS designated conservationist will support and advise the local work group concerning technical issues, NRCS cost-share programs, and other matters relating to conservation program delivery.

In cases where the Conservation District does not conduct a conservation needs assessment, it is the responsibility of the local work group, with appropriate outreach and public involvement, to ensure that a conservation needs assessment is completed before submitting priorities and applying for USDA program assistance.

Local Work Group

# Responsibilities

Local Work Group's Supporting Role In the Locally Led Process

The products of the locally led process will provide USDA and the Conservation District with relevant conservation needs, resource concerns, priorities, and recommendations regarding programs that can be used as tools to address those needs. The delivery process for conservation programs is conducted at the local, state, and national levels based on the conservation needs assessment and the conservation action plans developed by community stakeholders as part of the locally led process.

## Conservation District Responsibilities

Assemble the local work group & set the agenda.
Acquire input from community stakeholders in the form of a conservation needs assessment.
Conduct the local work group meetings.

## Local Work Group Responsibilities

Obtain community and stakeholder participation
Identify program funding needs
Identify priority natural resource concerns
Set local priorities based on public inputs and resource needs
Recommend eligible practices
Recommend payment and cost-share levels
Assist in multi-county coordination
Assist with public outreach & information efforts
Identify educational assistance needs
Establish program delivery priorities
Make program policy recommendations
Monitor success of Programs
Update ranking criteria annually
Identify and recommend new conservation initiatives
Coordinate local programs
Provide representatives to serve on multi-county/state committees – as needed
Promote the need for innovative conservation practices
Evaluate achievements and parity in program delivery
Establish program performance indicators
Develop a comprehensive civil rights analysis

Local Work Group

# Meeting Checklist

**When:** Select an appropriate time and date for the meeting. Consult local calendars and other organizations to ensure that other events will not interfere with attendance by the members and quests.

**Where:** Select a central, easily accessible location. The location should be familiar, comfortable, well lighted and well equipped with a adequate room, good tables, and chairs. The recommended meeting room setup would be a large U-shape with a place for one representative from each member government entity. Use a name tent to identify the membership (selected by the Local Work Group). Have an area for guests to sit (but not at the LWG member table). Check location for adequate restroom facilities and rules for participants that smoke.

**Who should be involved:** Each of the member government entities as selected by the Local Work Group - possible participants include:

- Conservation District Supervisors and Staff
- State Natural Resource Agencies
- Federal Natural Resource Agencies
- Agriculture Organizations – e.g., Wheat, Potatoes, Etc.
- Fish & Wildlife Organizations – e.g., Pheasants, Ducks, Quail, Salmon, Etc.
- Environmental Organizations – e.g., Audubon, Nature Conservancy, Etc.
- State or local elected officials and/or staff
- Other specific natural resource related organizations
- Resource Conservation and Development Councils
- FSA county executive director and/or County Committee Members
- Cooperative Extension
- Representatives of American Indian governments

**Invitations:** Prepare a mailing list of appropriate participants. As far in advance of the meeting as possible, send them an invitation describing the nature and importance of the task they are asked to help with. Follow-up phone calls should be made to individuals three to five days prior to the meeting. Consider sending a map to the meeting location, minutes from the last meeting, agenda, and background materials.

**Agenda and Meeting Design:** When designing the meeting agenda, think about how to motivate the participants to become involved and generate significant input. Start the meeting on time and set the tone and purpose of the meeting right away. A brief explanation of the USDA Local Work Group, responsibilities, conservation district, the conservation delivery system, and the conservation needs assessment should be presented.

**Facilitation:** Consider the need to utilize a trained and experienced facilitator for your meeting. Such an individual can be invaluable in keeping the discussion focused, resolving conflicts, and maximizing audience participation. Meet with, or call the facilitator, chair, district employee(s), and NRCS DC before the meeting to discuss goals, procedures, and expectations. Your state NRCS office or Extension office may be able to help you locate a trained facilitator.

**Staffing:** Request assistance from staff members to serve as discussion leaders, presenters, timekeepers, and recorders. The facilitator or discussion leader may need one or more assistants to

record comments on a flip chart and perform other tasks. Technical experts from the district, NRCS, FSA, and county committee staff should also be on hand to answer questions. A lead staff person to take care of meeting logistics, meeting notes preparation, and distribution is essential.

Materials: The right materials at the session, in the right quantities, in the briefest form possible will help your local work group members with their decision making. Examples include agenda, session design, note pages for PowerPoint presentations, data from previous years, ranking sheets & procedure, and resource data.

A large map of the Local Work Group area should be displayed in a prominent position during the meeting. Sign-in sheets should be used to collect participants' names, organizations, mailing addresses, phone, and email. (Add these names to your conservation district mailing list for future contact.)

Equipment: Arranging for, setting-up, and testing equipment for presentations and recording the member's discussions is critical to a successful meeting. Example equipment needs include:

- Projector (for computer and/or overhead)
- Large screen
- Easel(s) with paper
- Markers & Tape
- Phone equipment (if needed)
- Internet access (if needed)
- Electrical cord with multiple outlets
- AV table
- Pens, paper

Refreshments / Meals: Participants appreciate (and often expect) refreshments in the morning and afternoon, and a meal if meeting beyond the lunch or dinner times.

Follow-up: Before participants leave the meeting, be sure to describe to them what the conservation district and NRCS will do with the input they have provided. Plan for the next meeting of the Local Work Group including a date, location, and agenda.

Local Work Group

# Example Documents

Example bulletins, agenda, notes, and announcements are provided as guides to help you plan, run, and document your local work group meetings. On the following pages you will find examples of state bulletins, meeting agendas, meeting note forms, and checklists. They are designed to be fully customizable for your needs. Utilize the correct letterhead, add attachments, or edit to match your local requirements as needed.

Local Work Group

# Example State Bulletin

Date, 20XX

(STATE NAME) BULLETIN NO. (ST) 300-22-__ LTP

Subject: Local Work Groups

Purpose: To provide information and procedures for the Local Work Group meetings.

Expiration Date: Month Day, 20XX

## Explanation

This bulletin addresses the Local Work Group (LWG) activities for FY 20XX in (State). Prior to attending LWG meetings, District Conservationists should review Locally Led Conservation in CPM 440 Part 500, and Local Working Groups in CPM 440 Part 501.

LWG meetings are open to the public. LWGs should be comprised of a diverse group of agricultural and environmental interests. Across the state, many organizations and individuals continue to express interest in participating in LWGs. To facilitate participation, DCs will work with the State Public Affairs Officer to post the schedule for all LWG meetings on the (State) NRCS website. Individuals or groups wanting to become members of a LWG may submit a request that explains their interest and outlines their credentials for becoming a member of the LWG, to the LWG chairperson and the DC. The DC will assist the Conservation District (CD) in making decisions concerning membership of the group.

The Memorandum of Agreement with each CD gives the CD the authority and responsibility to chair the LWG. If the CD is unable to, or unwilling to chair the LWG, the NRCS District Conservationist (DC) is responsible for the chair duties. Districts should work with their DCs and State Associations to consider opportunities to secure facilitation services for the LWG meeting.

DCs will review with the LWG the prior year's planning and implementation progress toward long range plans, strategic plans, and other resource recommendations. Care should be taken to protect personally identifiable information (PII). Generic treatment information such as resource concerns, total acres treated, aggregated practice/enhancements and funds obligated may be shared with the group.

LWG meetings should be an open orderly discussion driven by natural resource conservation needs. The conservation needs assessment should form the basis for collaboration and provide a basis for long range plan development and updates. Once the natural resource concerns are identified and prioritized, appropriate Federal, State, local, and nongovernmental program tools can be used, both individually and in combination, to address these resource concerns

and attempt to meet the established goals of the community stakeholders. Recognizing that funding levels are finite, LWG should develop recommendations that help NRCS focus human and financial resources toward achievable natural resource solutions.

(Note: that the LWGs are advisory in nature and have no implementation or enforcement authority. NRCS uses their input and recommendation to identify conservation planning needs, to prioritize resources concerns for the state's programs, and to develop ranking questions and procedures.)

LWG input and recommendations may assist NRCS in identifying any of the following conditions:

- Identifying significant local, regional, and statewide geographic areas of concern.
- Identifying significant local, regional, and statewide natural resource concerns.
- Technical programmatic recommendation.
- Need for regional or statewide public information and outreach campaign.
- Guidelines for developing ranking criteria for evaluating applications.
- Guidance on eligible conservation activities.
- Technical guidance on conservation practices, including new, innovative practices.
- Identifying, monitoring and analyzing performance indicators.
- Evaluating and reporting program impacts on natural resources and the environment; and
- Coordinating with other Federal, state, tribal, and local public and private activities.

Following the LWG meeting, the Conservationist Districts or DC's will report the outcomes of Local Work Group meetings to the ASTC-FO and ASTC-Programs by Month Day, 20XX. Reports will be provided to the State Conservationist by Month Day, 20XX.

DC Reporting from the LWG meeting will include:

- Identify existing financial resource needs for FY 20XX
- Review the Conservation Needs Assessment:
    - Define other high priority resource concerns needing treatment
    - Recommended activities to solve identified resource concerns
- Identify NRCS and other programs (i.e EQIP, CSP, ACEP, RCPP, state cost share programs, etc) or combination of programs that may be used to address other high priority resource concerns
    - 3-year plan to address identified resource concerns
        - Identify the extent of resource concerns to be treated
        - Identify annual program funding required to treat the resource concerns
        - Identify annual technical assistance requirement to assist producers to treat the resource concerns
- Recommendations for application selection criteria for targeted resource concerns
- Policy/technical recommendation for the State Technical Advisory Committee

**Contact:** For questions contact _____, ASTC-Programs, at ___-___-____or _____.____@usda.gov.

# Meeting Agenda Example 1

**Long meeting**

Long LWG Template Agenda

Local Working Group Invitation Here

(Name of organizing group plus NRCS)

Date:

Time:

Address:

**Welcome and instructions- District and NRCS Designated Conservationist (5 mins)**

1. Purpose and Goals
2. Introductions
3. Introduction of Facilitator

**Overview of Local Work Group formation and Role (10 minutes)**

**NRCS Report (10 Minutes)**

1. Previous year accomplishments Show on large map
2. Changes for coming year
3. Ranking Pools
4. State available money (not specified by National)

**District Report (10 Minutes)**

1. LWG report on previous year findings
2. Previous year accomplishments- **show on large map**
3. Planned work for coming year

**Breakout Sessions (40 Minutes)** Provide large map to show areas of concern

1. Break into groups- facilitator

2. Select Secretary for each group

3. Groups discuss problems and suggest where they would like to see money

Break (15 minutes)

Large group discussion (30-45 minutes)

1. Secretary for each group reports out top three to five problems they deem most important to fix

2. What outcome do you want

3. Allow individual discussion on reported item

Explanation of the process moving forward (15 minutes)

1. How the District and NRCS will use the data.
2. Expected response time from the State Technical Committee.

Discussion of next meeting date and time (5 minutes)

# Meeting Agenda Example 2

Short meeting

LWG Template Agenda

Local Working Group Invitation Here

(Name of organizing group plus NRCS)

Date:

Time:

Address:

**Welcome and Instructions (10 minutes),** CD official or designated CD representative

**Previous year goals and progress on those goals (10 minutes),** CD Official or NRCS designated conservationist

**Overview and Purpose of Meeting (30 Minutes), Designated Conservationist** provide maps

a. General description of NRCS spending and practices as well as location
b. New or changes in funding- Assigned Conservationist

**Priorities, CD Official (40 Minutes)**

a. Participants identify local problems in general
b. Participants identify specific Natural Resources
c. Participants suggest specific possible needed outcomes

**Review and Close (15 minutes)**

**CD Official (after the meeting)**

a. Review information received to ensure accuracy
b. Discuss what will happen to information

Local Work Group

# Notes Example 1

Session Date:
Session Location:
Session Objective:

- Review natural resource data, identify natural resource conservation issues to be addressed in the LWG area, identify high priority projects and practices to promote, identify other private, local, state, and federal programs to influence, develop a listing the LWG membership and operating procedures, develop a Team initiative,

## Overview of the Local Work Group

Formation & Role See presentation slides & handouts

## Natural Resource Conservation Priorities

Participants identify the top 3 natural resource priorities for the LWG area

## Resource Conservation, Priorities Geographic Areas, Potential Projects & Practices

| Resource Issue | Projects & Practices | Geographic Area |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

## Funding

Group discussion of % funding to each Resource Issue, Entities that could fund the work

| Resource Issue | % | Entity & Funding |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

## Building an Area Initiative(s)

Highest priority natural resource issue(s)

- 

High priority area

- 

Practices to promote

- 

Programs to use

- 

Funding needed, and partners to involve

- 

Community development & issues addressed

- 

## Next Steps

| Action | Timeline | Lead |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
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| | | |

Local Work Group

# Notes Example 2

## Local Work Group Reporting Instructions

1. Review Local Work Group Bulletin
2. The Conservation Partnership has the current business plan goals of strategically identifying and analyzing natural resource needs on a landscape-level scale, determining the best solutions to address those needs and prioritize technical and financial assistance to those targeted needs, using locally led conservation and cutting-edge technology. To aid us in moving toward this goal, LWG should develop recommendations that help focus human and financial resources toward achievable natural resource solutions.
3. Based on the action plan developed by the Local Work Group, complete the Conservation Needs Assessment Report to inform NRCS and the State Technical Committee and other partners of opportunities to solve resource concerns.
    a. **Narrative of priority resource issue:** In paragraph form discuss each of the resource concerns. Include items such as geographic area, environmental threats, wildlife, societal, or economic effects of the resource concern. What opportunities identified in the LWG Action Plan are appropriate for Local, State and Federal focused efforts? What is the likelihood of solving the resources concern with a strategic effort?
    b. **NRCS resource concern categories:** Document the NRCS resource concern categories that fit the situation.
    c. **Extent:** document the extent of the resource issue as it exists in appropriate units or detail.
    d. **Recommended activities to solve resource concerns:** List activities (name and code) that have been identified in the LWG Action Plan for addressing the resource concern. Think beyond the commonly used EQIP practice codes. Please consider enhancements and long term protection also.
    e. **Local, State or Federal Programs and fund pools that may help treat the identified resource concerns:** Identify if NRCS funding of practices is appropriate. If so, identify programs and fund pools that would best address the resource concern. If existing pools do not address the resource concern, consider the SFP proposals process, or recommendation of resource specific pools.
    f. **Funding required:**( Local State or Federal) estimate the total funding for each Farm Bill program and other programs necessary to treat the resource concern over the next 3 years.
    g. **Identify suggestion for technical, policy, or application selection criteria that should be forward to the State Technical Committee for consideration in addressing the resource concerns:** Document the concerns and recommendations from the Local Work Group. These items will be reviewed by the appropriate leadership team members and shared with the State technical committee where appropriate. Suggestion will be considered during the annual ranking development.
4. Reports will be completed and submitted to ASTC- FO and ASTC- Programs.

| | |
|---|---|
| TEAM | |
| Local Work Group | |
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## Conservation Needs Assessment Report

Rank in order of Priority resources concerns identified in the Conservation needs assessment.

| | Narrative of priority resource Issue | NRCS resource concern categories | Extent | Recommended activities to solve resource concerns | Local, State and Federal programs and fund pools that may help treat the identified resource concerns | Local Funding Required | | | State Funding Required | | | NRCS Funding Required | | | Recommendation from Local work group | CART Ranking Criteria |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | Identify suggestion for technical, policy, or application selection criteria that should be forward to the State Technical Committee, State Commission or other decision making body for consideration in addressing the resource concerns. | Recommend specific Ranking Questions for CART (if Applicable) |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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# Conservation Needs Assessment Report

| Rank in order of Priority resources concerns identified in the Conservation needs assessment. | | | | | | NRCS Funding Required | | | Recommendation from Local work group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Narrative of priority resource Issue** | **Resource concern categories** | **Extent** | **Recommended activities to solve resource concerns** | **Programs and fund pools that may help treat the identified resource concerns** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** | **Identify suggestion for technical, policy, or application selection criteria that should be forward to the State Technical Committee for consideration in addressing the resource concerns.** |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | | | | | |

Local Work Group

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q1. Why is the local work group important?**

Rooted in the locally led conservation process, Local Work Groups (LWG) make the connection between Districts, NRCS, State, local partners, and producers to work through an assessment of current natural resource concerns in a given area or region and to identify opportunities and challenges that NRCS and partners can address through their conservation programs. This input helps guide local decision making and can influence state, regional and national program, and policy development.

**Q2. What is the purpose of the Local Work Group?**

In accordance with 7 CFR Part 610, Subpart C, Local Work Groups are subcommittees of the State Technical Committee and provide recommendations to USDA on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs. This process can be also valuable to local and state leaders in the development of priorities, programs and policies.

**Q3. Who convenes the Local Work Group?**

It is the responsibility of the Conservation District to convene the Local Work Group. This includes developing the conservation needs assessment, setting the agenda, conducting the meeting, and sharing the information with the designated conservationist or State Technical Committee. Details about responsibilities for hosting the Local Work Group are found in 7 CFR Part 610, Subpart C and the NRCS Directives.

**Q4. What is NRCS's role in the Local Work Group?**

It is the NRCS designated conservationist's responsibility to participate in the USDA Local Work Group and to:

- Encourage and assist other USDA agencies to participate in the locally led conservation and Work group efforts, as feasible.
- Assist with identifying members for the Local Work Group.
- Help identify program priorities and resources available.
- Assist in the development of program priority area proposals.
- Comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, nondiscrimination statement, and other environmental, civil rights, and cultural resource requirements.
- Support and advise the Local Work Group concerning technical issues, program policies and procedures, and other matters relating to conservation program delivery.
- Ensure that populations are—
  - Provided the opportunity to comment before decisions are rendered.
  - Allowed to share the benefits of, not excluded from, and not affected in a disproportionately high and adverse manner by Government programs and activities affecting human health or the environment.
- Analyze performance indicators and reports.
- Report the conservation programs' impacts on resources.
- Perform the responsibilities of the conservation district where a conservation district is not present or chooses not to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A, Section 501.6A.

- Consider the Local Work Group's recommendations on NRCS programs, initiatives, and activities.
- Ensure that recommendations, when adopted, address natural resource concerns.

Q5. What is the authority of the Local Work Group?
Local Work Group is advisory with no implementation or enforcement authority. However, it is policy for NRCS to work with the public as voluntary local work groups to submit annual reports on locally led process to identify natural resource issues facing their areas.

Q6. Is money available to cover cost of planning and running the Local Work Group?
In general, there is no direct funding to cover the cost of planning and running the Local Work Group, Districts are uniquely positioned to work in cooperative agreement with NRCS to extend its reach to deliver a unified conservation mission. In Partnership with SWCD's outreach, technical and financial assistance objectives can be identified. Area wide conservation planning today presents opportunities for Local Work Group's to consider and assess climate resiliency, urban and small acreage agriculture coupled with equitable distribution of resources to meet the nations production and conservation needs. The right set of participants, data and information is recommended in report that results in strong recommendations for the State Conservationist.

Q7. What if the district cannot afford or is otherwise unable to host the Local Work Group?
Districts are encouraged to first reach out to the NRCS District Conservationist to seek assistance in organizing and facilitation of the local work group meetings. If that resource is unavailable, next steps would be to contact their Area Conservationist, Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships or other NRCS contact. In addition, various local and state partners are excellent resources to reach out to.

Q8. What do we do with the data collected?
Local Work Groups should be encouraged ahead of meetings to identify specific information on local agriculture, forestry and natural resources issues. As a group members will compare data and ideas of how it can be shared and analyzed in a collective manner. Meeting facilitation and member diversity to broadly discuss the data and compare to NRCS practices, payment rates, program eligibility, production types and innovation will formulate the recommendations to the State Technical Committee and NRCS State Conservationist to make decisions on technical and financial strategy.

Q9. Will we hear anything back from the State Technical Committee after we submit our report?
Yes, The Local Work Group report and conservation needs assessment is welcomed by the State Technical Committee to assess the states priority resource concerns. Community stakeholder recommendations within the proposal target conservation needs and programs that can be supported by this planning process. The report as appropriate will be compiled and reviewed by members of the State Technical Committee and comments as well as results will be reported back to the Local Work Group.

Q10. Where can I find guidance on the function, establishment and operation of Local Work Groups?

- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) - Title 7 (Agriculture), Subtitle B (Regulations of the Department of Agriculture), Chapter VI (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture), Subchapter B (Conservation Operations), Part 610 (Technical Assistance), Subpart C (State Technical Committees)

- NRCS Directives System - M_440_501_B – Subpart B – Local Work Groups

- Locally Led Conservation - Refer to NRCS Manuals, Title 440 – Programs, Part 500 – Locally Led Conservation (Executive Summary, Locally Led Conservation Defined, Locally Led Leadership and Public Involvement, The Conservation Needs Assessment, The Conservation Action Plan, Implementing the Conservation Action Plan, Evaluating Results).

Local Work Group

# Training

- Locally Led Conservation:  The Imperative for Effective Local Work Groups, Tom Christensen

  In this session, you will learn why Local Work Groups matter, the history and value of the Partnership and the role of Local Work Groups in conservation.
- Leading a Successful Local Work Group, Ray Ledgerwood

  This session will provide tips, techniques and recommendations for leading successful local work group activities including: LWG membership and operating procedures, utilizing data, identification of high priority and development of proposals for USDA programs and other opportunities.
- I hosted my Local Work Group. Now what?
  - Session 1 - Tyler Ross, Madison County SWCD, Marshall, NC

    Hear from Madison County SWCD Director Tyler Ross on how they plan for their LWG and what they do with the data they collect.

  - Session 2 – Lars Santana, NRCS, Redmond, OR

    Lars explains how NRCS can help facilitate a strong LWG when the Conservation District may not have the capacity to help but is still engaged in the process.  Hear the NRCS perspective on planning for your LWG.

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1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
   1400 Independence Avenue, SW
   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Title 440 - Programs
Manuals
Part 501 - USDA Conservation Program Delivery

# Subpart B - Local Working Groups

### 501.10 Purpose

In accordance with 7 CFR Part 610, Subpart C, local working groups are subcommittees of the State Technical Committee and provide recommendations to USDA on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs.

### 501.11 Responsibilities of the Local Working Group

It is the responsibility of the local working group to –

(1) Ensure that a conservation needs assessment is developed using community stakeholder input.
(2) Utilize the conservation needs assessment to help identify program funding needs and conservation practices.
(3) Identify priority resource concerns and identify, as appropriate, high-priority areas needing assistance.
(4) Recommend USDA conservation program application and funding criteria, eligible practices (including limits on practice payments or units), and payment rates.
(5) Participate in multicounty coordination where program funding and priority area proposals cross county boundaries.
(6) Assist NRCS and the conservation district with public outreach and information efforts and identify educational and producers' training needs.
(7) Recommend State and national program policy to the State Technical Committee based on resource data.
(8) Utilize the conservation needs assessment to identify priority resource concerns that can be addressed by USDA programs.
(9) Forward recommendations to the NRCS designated conservationist or Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Executive Director, as appropriate.
(10) Adhere to standard operating procedures identified in Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 501, Subpart B, Section 501.14.

### 501.12 Local Working Group Membership

A. Local working group membership should be diverse and focus on agricultural interests and natural resource issues existing in the local community. Membership should include agricultural producers representing the variety of crops, livestock, and poultry raised within the local area; owners of nonindustrial private forest land, as appropriate; representatives of agricultural and environmental organizations; and representatives of governmental agencies carrying out agricultural and natural resource conservation programs and activities.

B. Membership of the USDA local working group may include but is not limited to Federal, State, county, Tribal, or local government representatives. Examples of potential members include—

(1) NRCS designated conservationist.
(2) Members of conservation district boards or equivalent.
(3) Members of the county FSA committee.
(4) FSA county executive director or designee.
(5) Cooperative extension (board members or manager).
(6) State or local elected or appointed officials.
(7) Other Federal and State government representatives.
(8) Representatives of American Indian and Alaskan Native governments.

C. To ensure that recommendations of the local working group take into account the needs of diverse groups served by USDA, membership must include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent the conservation and related technical concerns of particular historically underserved groups and individuals including but not limited to women, persons with disabilities, socially disadvantaged and limited resource groups.

D. Individuals or groups wanting to become members of a local working group may submit a request that explains their interest and outlines their credentials for becoming a member of the local working group to the local working group chairperson and the NRCS district conservationist (or designated conservationist). The district conservationist (or designated conservationist) will assist the soil and water conservation district in making decisions concerning membership of the group.

### 501.13 Responsibilities of Conservation Districts and NRCS

A. Conservation District

It is the responsibility of the conservation district to—

(i) Develop the conservation needs assessment as outlined in 440-CPM, Part 500, Subpart A.
(ii) Assemble the USDA local working group.
(iii) Set the agenda.
(iv) Conduct the USDA local working group meetings.
(v) Transmit the USDA local working group's priority area and funding requests to the NRCS designated conservationist or the State Technical Committee, as appropriate.

Note: Where a conservation district is not present or chooses not to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A, Section 501.13, the NRCS designated conservationist will have these responsibilities.

B. NRCS Designated Conservationist

It is the NRCS designated conservationist's responsibility to participate in the USDA local working group and to—

(i) Encourage and assist other USDA agencies to participate in the locally led conservation and working group efforts, as feasible.
(ii) Assist with identifying members for the local working group.
(iii) Help identify program priorities and resources available.
(iv) Assist in the development of program priority area proposals.
(v) Comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, nondiscrimination statement, and other environmental, civil rights, and cultural resource requirements.
(vi) Support and advise the local working group concerning technical issues, program policies and procedures, and other matters relating to conservation program delivery.
(vii) Ensure that populations are—

- Provided the opportunity to comment before decisions are rendered.
- Allowed to share the benefits of, not excluded from, and not affected in a disproportionately high and adverse manner by Government programs and activities affecting human health or the environment.

(viii) Analyze performance indicators and reports.
(ix) Report the conservation programs' impacts on resources.
(x) Perform the responsibilities of the conservation district where a conservation district is not present or chooses not to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A, Section 501.6A.
(xi) Give strong consideration to the local working group’s recommendations on NRCS programs, initiatives, and activities.
(xii) Ensure that recommendations, when adopted, address natural resource concerns.

## 501.14 Standard Operating Procedures for Local Working Groups

A. Organization and Function

Local working groups provide recommendations on local natural resource priorities and criteria for USDA conservation activities and programs. Local working groups are normally chaired by the appropriate soil and water conservation district (SWCD). In the event the SWCD is unable or unwilling to chair the local working group, NRCS district conservationist (or designated conservationist) is responsible for those duties.

B. Meeting Scheduling

The local working group should meet at least once each year at a time and place designated by the chairperson, unless otherwise agreed to by the members of the local working group. Other meetings may be held at the discretion of the chairperson. Meetings will be called by the chairperson whenever there is business that should be brought before the local working group.

C. Public Notification

(1) Local working group meetings are open to the public and notification must be published in one or more newspapers, including recommended Tribal publications, to attain the appropriate circulation.
(2) Public notice of local working group meetings should be provided at least 14 calendar days prior to the meeting. Notification will need to exceed the 14-calendar-day minimum where State open meeting laws require a longer notification period. The minimum 14-calendar-day notice requirement may be waived in the case of exceptional conditions, as determined by the chairperson or NRCS district conservationist (or designated conservationist).
(3) The public notice of local working group meetings will include the time, place, and agenda items for the meeting.

D. Meeting Information

Agendas and information must be provided to the local working group members at least 14 calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting. The district conservationist (or designated conservationist) will assist the local working group chairperson, as requested, in preparing meeting agendas and necessary background information for meetings. The minimum 14-calendar-day notice requirement may be waived in the case of exceptional conditions, as determined by the chairperson or NRCS district

conservationist (or designated conservationist).

E. Public Participation

Individuals attending the local working group meetings will be given the opportunity to address the local working group. Opportunity to address nonagenda items will be provided if time allows at the end of the meeting. Presenters are encouraged to provide written records of their comments to the chairperson at the time of the presentation, but are not required to do so. Written comments may be accepted if provided to the chairperson no later than 14 calendar days after a meeting.

F. Conducting Business

(1) The meetings will be conducted as an open discussion among members. Discussion will focus on identifying local natural resource concerns that can be treated using programs and activities identified in 440-CPM, Part 501, Subpart A, Section 501.0C. All recommendations will be considered.

(2) The following guidelines will govern meeting discussions:

(i) The chairperson will lead the discussion.

(ii) Only one person may speak at a time. Every participant should have an opportunity to speak. The chairperson or his or her designee is responsible for recognizing speakers.

(iii) The chairperson, in consultation with those members present, may establish time limits for discussion on individual agenda items.

(iv) State Technical Committees are advisory in nature and all recommendations are considered.

(v) Members may be polled, but voting on issues is not appropriate.

(vi) The chairperson will defer those agenda items not covered because of time limits to the next meeting.

G. Record of Meetings

Summaries for all local working group meetings will be available within 30 calendar days of the meeting and will be filed at the appropriate local NRCS office.

H. Input to State Technical Committee

Local working group recommendations are to be submitted to State Technical Committee chairperson, the district conservationist (or designated conservationist), or both (as appropriate) within 14 calendar days after a meeting.

I. Response to Local Working Group Recommendations

The designated conservationist will inform the local working group as to the decisions made in response to all local working group recommendations within 90 days. This notification will be made in writing to all local working groups members and made available for the public at the appropriate local NRCS office.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**New Jersey State Office**
200 Clocktower Drive
Suite 101
Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 12, 2024
Meeting Location: Field Visit Hart Farms; Field Visit Assunpink Site 8; NRCS State Office Hamilton Square, NJ

Evan Madlinger opened the Hart Farm Field Tour at 9:05 am. He welcomed everyone and thanked both employees and partners for their participation in the State Technical Committee. Those present included:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Amanda Camacho | Gabi Arcadi | Marc Virgilio |
| Amy Hansen | Gail Bartok | Maryanne Tancredi |
| Arelys Ortiz | Hilary Trotman Lane | Michael Kent |
| Brian Cowden | Hunter Ross | Michelle Pedano |
| Bruce Eklund | Jacob Bailey | Mitchell Mickley |
| Cali Alexander | James Strehse | Nagisa Manabe |
| Craig Chianese | Julie Hawkins | Nicole Porter |
| Dave Clapp | Kaitlin Farbotnik | Nina Zimmerman |
| Dave Schaaf | Kass Urban-Mead | Rachel DeFlumeri |
| Don Donnelly | Katelyn Colon | Rick Brown |
| Edwin Muniz | Kathy Hale | Riley Blankenship |
| Eric Schrading | Kristin Adams | Ryan Jiorle |
| Erica Rossetti | Lance Bigelow | Sandra Howland |
| Evan Madlinger | Laura Tessieri | Tara Walker |
| Fran DeFiccio | Liz Thompson | Zeyuan Qiu |

**9:05AM** **Field Tour Site 1- Meet at Hart Farm – Evan Madlinger, NRCS and John Hart, Hart Farms**

John Hart gave an overview of the structures on his property including the home and the brewery that is currently being built on the property. The home was built in 1713, and the barn was built in 1714. The brewery will utilize all personally grown ingredients across the tracks, including 5 acres of barley. The farm was purchased in 1986 and was originally designated as property for 33 homes. After 3 years, he preserved the land through the county and the state. He also preserved an additional 1600 acres in Hopewell Township, including the organic Blue Moon Farm, Chickadees Farm, and the watershed farm. John's farm grows a lot of hay, a little bit of corn (lost 200 acres to affordable housing) but purchase the hops from farms in south Jersey as his area is not conducive to growing that

crop. In addition to the growing operation, Hart Farm also has cows. He has set up the operation where once the brewery starts processing, the brewer's grain will be fed to the cows, the wastewater runs into an underground tank where with the approval of DEP can be used to irrigate the farm. John pointed out a few projects on the property, some of which are NRCS-assisted: the well, gutters on the farm running to the brook, water runoff, and dead Ashwood removal. Oftentimes, Ashwood grow near tributaries and when they become sick and die, removal near waterways becomes difficult.

Evan jumped in with further explanation about Ashwood removal. During the last session of the State Technical Committee meeting, the topic of tree mortality program was discussed. With the increase of IRA money, NRCS was looking for creative ways to help. Removal of dead Ashwood is a very big problem, but it is also very dangerous to remove. Removal is not as simple as pushing the trees over with a tractor or cutting it down with a chainsaw; as the trees die, they break down quickly. By utilizing the obstruction removal practice and engineering, coupled with replanting for carbon sequestration, NRCS has a path forward in helping the producers like John.

John took the group on a tour of the property to show some of things taking place over the years. He stopped at the far side of his property to discuss how in one weeks' time, his property experienced the 100-year flood twice. The Stony Brook experienced downed trees, which diverted the water to his property. A second stop on the property showed ditch erosion. When John first moved onto the property, the ditch was 2 feet deep. Now, the ditch is 5 feet deep because of runoff from the office parks up the road. John is looking to plant trees and riparian shrubs to help offset the runoff. The third stop on the farm was the site of next year's NRCS-assisted project for stream crossing for the cows. They are going to make a fenced in path from side of the farm to another side.

Don added to the discussion – When Ashwood die and fall in a hay field, they break into a million pieces, which clogs the hay bines. Not only is it dangerous but it is tedious work and takes away from productivity on the farm. It is not as simple as half-day moving logs but a full day of clearing just the tops of trees. On John's farm, there were approximately 70 dead Ashwood trees, which seems significant, but other properties have acres and acres of dead Ashwood. One success of this program is how the cost share aspect is commensurable with the cost of doing the work (cost share was meaningful).

Evan prompted Don with a few clarifying questions – where does Ash fit in within the forest ecosystem? Is it an early successional species? Mid-succession? What role does ash play in our ecosystem? Don said it was early successional with wind-born seeds, germinated in abandoned areas first and tends to be little less palatable to deer. Blue Ash and Black Ash have less mortality than White and Green Ash, which is found here in NJ. There is a small percentage of White and Green Ash that are showing signs of genetic resistance and survivability (less than 1%). Over an evolutionary period, ash will be here in some form even though it is impacting us. Emerald Ash Bore emerged in 2002 in Michigan suspected via shipping crates from materials from China. It was first identified in Detroit and while there was a containment area set; they quickly realized it was not contained. Part of the reason is the way the beetle spreads. It lays eggs at the top of the tree, which is not detected until it travels down the trunk to a visible area. By that point, the beetle has gone through a few cycles and has moved on to other areas. Original guidance stated that once Emerald Ash Bore was identified, the producer had an 8-year window before there is a 100% mortality. On small saplings, there was not enough cambion layers (under the bark) for the larvae to feed on and would not lay eggs

there. This has proven to be somewhat true although they have found down at 1 inch diameter stems. However, the Department of Agriculture in NJ has released 3 biocontrol's that prey on the insect at different parts of their life stage. There is optimism this will work but not here in New Jersey as there is a lag time between the buildup and biocontrol effective enough to control it. The cambion layer is underneath the bark and runs along the outside of the tree (that is how the tree moves energy and resources). Emerald Ash Bore don't eat the leaves, they lay eggs, and the larvae eat the cambion layer. It becomes so prolific within the cambion layer that they gurgle the tree (cuts off cambion layer). Farmers want to do the work themselves as it provides a cost benefit. However, removing these types of trees without knowledgeable staff is not encouraged. Human safety is a real concern. A local tree guy was hired to do the work.

The brook along the parameter of the farm has widened because of erosion, which became more prominent with the removal of multiple dams up stream. During the timeframe when NJ had two occurrences of 100-year storms, the brook flooded onto the farm, taking down trees and fences. One week later, the second storm came through and flooded the farm again, taking down more trees. This was a result of the brook being clogged with downed trees.

Question from Don – would John consider putting trees back in for enhancement of the silvopasture? John wants more trees but would require fencing.
Question from Kathy Hale – is there any concern with transporting the downed dead ash trees? John is splitting and storing the trees for firewood on site. General guidance is to not move wood more than 50 miles, so his method falls within the acceptable practice. Most places are utilizing this type of wood as firewood locally or being chipped up and used as mulch on the farms. There is only a window of 1-2 years to utilize the wood for viable saw logs.

Two buildings that John has on his property are World Micro Enterprise, which is a butcher shop, and the Needle Creek Brewery. The butcher shop services private deer and hunter's deer in the fall. Most of the deer are donated to Mercer Feeds Friends in Trenton, NJ. This year, John has donated 300 deer to the foodbank. When the butcher shop is not servicing deer, John utilizes the space for cattle, pigs, and chickens. No killing is done on premise; this is handled at a USDA facility. The brewery was under construction during the visit but has some historical significance. The original barn was built in 1713 with hand additions being made in the late 1700s and milled additions in the mid-1800s. Before Labor Day, John hopes to open the brewery with limited hours of 20 per week.

**11:15AM** **Field Tour Site 2 - Arrive at Assunpink Site 8 (Veterans Lake) – Hilary Trotman Lane, NRCS**
Hilary introduced herself; she is the State Engineer for NRCS NJ. With her presenting is David Schaaf, water resource planner for the watershed program. The location the group was visiting is Assunpink Watershed Dam, constructed in 1968. This location is also known as Site 8 and Veterans Park Dam. The embankment is 20 feet high, constructed of earth. On the left, is the impoundment side (or the pool side) and on the right is the downstream end (where all the water is transmitted down towards Trenton).

Overview – in 1965, SES put together a watershed management plan for the Assunpink Creek. The watershed is 58,000 acres within Mercer and Monmouth Counties. Site 8 is in the southern point/tip of the boundaries. NRCS is working in partnership with Mercer County Soil Conservation District, Freehold Soil Conservation District, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Mercer County, Monmouth County, and Hamilton Township. The owner

and operator of Site 8 Dam is Hamilton Township, and they do a great job maintaining the area. This park is considered the biggest sledding hill in the area and is frequented by many people. The principal problem with the watershed at the time was floodwater damage to residential, commercial, and industrial properties. At the time, land use was 17% crop land, 3% pasture, 11% forestland, 58% urban, and 11% other (good mix of land usage). Structural measures in the watershed involve installation of pours, single purpose flood prevention structures (and that can be found on sites 5, 6, 8, and 21), 3 multi-purpose flood prevention structures for the purpose of fish and wildlife improvements (sites 4, 18, 19), and one multi-purpose flood prevention recreation structure (site 20). They also did almost 2.5 miles of concrete channelization (to confine flood water flows and have a safe non-erosive channel). The planned structures were installed with an estimated cost of 28 million dollars. The land treatment program in this watershed also implemented and assisted the municipalities in development of soil water resource inquiries and plans in watershed. The dams 4, 5, 6, 18, and 19 are managed by NJ DEP, and Fish and Wildlife division and get frequent use by local fisherman and hunters.

Rehabilitation Program – there are over 12,000 SCS dams nationwide that are 50 years or more and have exceeded their lifespan. Often the dams are out of compliance with state and NRCS design criteria and need repairs and/or upgrades. The watershed rehabilitation program is tailored to SCS (Soil Conservation Service) dams only (we only tailor to NRCS and NRCS-assisted dams because we have all the design background and knowledge of watersheds and historic structuring and prevention. NRCS bring the dams through the rehabilitation program to current design criteria. NRCS usually works with a project consultant to undergo a very detailed planning process, evaluating the dam and upgrades that are needed. They also look at a no-action alternative as well as a decommissioned alternative and a structural alternative. All planning and design costs are footed by NRCS; they try to do the work in house but can request assistance from outside consultants. Construction costs are 65% NRCS and 35% sponsor.

Key Features - The dam at site 8 is considered a high hazard dam. It provides flood protection for over 1000 people and protects over 60 roadways and highways. The drainage area to the dam is 2.8 square miles; the dam is 20 feet in height, 1400 feet long, and the pool has a surface area of 16 acres. The principal spillway has a concrete riser on the left side of the dam and a 36-inch reinforced concrete pipe that transmits the flow downstream. On the other end of the dam is a vegetative auxiliary spillway. 200-foot-wide bottom width and has vegetative side slits. During an assessment of dam 8 years ago, they found it was out of NRCS and NJ DEP design criteria. The auxiliary spillway was going to erode during a probable, maximum flood event (34” in a 24-hour period). The plan is to install and construct a roller compacted concrete cutoff all in the auxiliary spillway. This will serve as a barrier or stop for the any advancement of head cut back into the dam as well as stopping any unraveling of the vegetation. The roller compacted concrete is a dryer mix of concrete but does include all the same ingredients as conventional concrete. They can place the concrete in 12” thick lifts and utilize a roller like how they roll out asphalt. Many alternatives were considered before the roller, including a labyrinth weir spillway and a drop spillway. In the end, the roller compacted spillway will be backfilled with earth and will be revegetate (it will not be visible). If erosion does occur after the spillway is installed, the town will be responsible for replacing and revegetating. There are also minor upgrades being implemented during construction. They need to replace the foundation drain (current age is 50 years), minor repairs to impact basin, will be placing rock riffraff around the poolside of the embankment (to stabilize eroding area), and will be lifting the top of the dam by 1 foot (required by NJ DEP to provide 1 foot rebar). Plans have

been submitted for review and approval; the anticipated construction start date is in one year with a cost of 4 million dollars.

Evan Madlinger asked: what size storm would trigger the auxiliary spillway being used? Hilary said it would not be often, probably during the 500-year storm.

Craig Chianese asked: what is the difference between roller compacted concrete and other concrete? Does it have to do with strength or is it easier to work with? Hilary stated there is no difference; they wanted a 4000 psi, reinforceable, easy to place.

Dave Schaaf talked about the watershed program and how it is not as well-known as other programs the NRCS agency offers, like EQIP or CSP. It is a great program with new life breathed into it; it provides great opportunities for local sponsors to achieve projects on a grand scale. Dave ensured all participants had handouts that provided an overview of the watershed program. This park is used for a variety of activities and most people wouldn't know the primary purpose is flood prevention. The design is based on the probable, maximum precipitation.

Question from the group – is NRCS responsible for overseeing construction? They will hire a consultant to handle inspections.

Question from the group – Do you need to have watershed restoration plan in place before the work gets done? NRCS uses a PFIR (preliminary findings investigative report) to determine if the area is eligible for the watershed program, then you go into the planning stage.

Next Hilary brought the group to a concrete riser. It spills over into weirs, which are on either side of the trash racks, then goes down into a 36" pipe. This keeps the water circulating and pushes it downstream. There is also an impact basin that the 36" pipe outlets to and drains down Whitehorse Hamilton Road into culverts. The group moved down to see the auxiliary spillway, which is 200 feet wide, vegetated, and overflows during the 100-year storm. NRCS will be installing a roller compacted cutoff wall (which will go along the bottom width of the auxiliary spillway). Some of the preexisting memorial trees will need to be relocated on the site to allow for construction and construction equipment, as well as remedying the issue of no trees on top of the dam (NRCS discourages woody vegetation on firm structures). The top of the cutoff wall will be the only visible aspect of the construction once finished.

**1:30PM** **Business Meeting - Welcome and Introductions – Evan Madlinger, NRCS**

Evan kicked off the business meeting with a round table introduction. Evan briefly spoke about an NRCS-held mini boot camp for new employees and new partner employees where the training focused on the Musconetcong Valley. A special thank you was given to NJ Water Supply, specifically Kathy Hale, and she was presented with a token of appreciation. Evan welcomed Julie Hawkins back to NRCS NJ after her extended detail at National. Julie thanked Evan and the NRCS NJ team for hosting the State Technical Committee summer edition as well as acknowledging the partner staff for their dedication, hard work, and shared goals.

**1:35PM** **December Meeting Minutes review and acceptance – Evan Madlinger, NRCS**

The December State Technical Committee Minutes were emailed, and printouts were handed out and available. Evan solicited any feedback, corrections, or edits from the group. If anything needs to be revised, please reach out to Evan Madlinger or Tara Walker.

The representative from Farm Service Agency (FSA), Sarah Lally, was unable to attend the meeting. She did provide her update to Evan and that report was printed and distributed. If anyone has any questions or need clarification on, Doreen Beruck from FSA volunteered her time to speak with the group on Sarah's information.

**1:40PM** **FY24 Farm Bill Programs Update – Gail Bartok, NRCS**

In fiscal year 2024, NRCS NJ was allocated 14.335 million dollars in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Gail presented a slide from the overhead projector showcasing the top fund pools (Irrigation with 1.8 million, Livestock with 4.6 million, Aquaculture with 1 million, High Tunnels with 1.9 million, and the remaining allocation was spent between Organics, Beginning Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged, Urban, Energy, CNMP Plans, Forestry Plans, and Local Workgroup Priorities). Gail anticipates by the end of the fiscal year NJ will have approximately 450 contracts. Some of the contracts are from the Farm Bill fund while others are from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) fund. Under the Farm Bill, there are 276 contracts with 153 of them addressing the Historically Underserved.

The IRA allocation received for FY24 was 11.73 million dollars and was primarily spent on Tree Mortality (with 71 contracts totaling 4.61 million dollars), Forestry/Wildlife (with 23 contracts totaling 217,000 dollars), and Soil Health (with 69 contracts totaling 6.9 million dollars). In Soil Health, the primary focus was covering crop, no-till, and reduced till (these practices sequester carbon and address greenhouse gas). Soil Health received 136 applications, but 67 applications were not funded (approximately 5 million dollars in estimates). NRCS did try to get more funding, but none was available. Tree Mortality received 96 applications but 25 were not funded (approximately 2.2 million dollars in estimates). Gail noted that using IRA money for Tree Mortality fund pool is a new approach for NRCS NJ; we couldn't have accomplished this task without Forester Don Donnelly. The Programs division is looking to offer Tree Mortality again in FY25.

Additional allocations NRCS NJ received in FY24 include the Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program with $519,000, Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) with 1.162 million dollars, CSP IRA with $711,000,

High Tunnels were the focus of the AMA allocation, utilizing $485,000 of the $519,000. The remaining funds were spent on other cropland practices, such as irrigation (without prior history). For CSP, NRCS pre-approves applications to go to contract. Fund pools that were included in funding from Farm Bill CSP include Agland (with 21 contracts totaling $528,335), Forestland (with 19 contracts totaling $538,665), and Organic (with 4 contracts totaling $95,000). CSP IRA fund pool included Agland (with 9 contracts totaling $484,231) and Forestland (with 11 contracts totaling $226,769).

In NJ, NRCS has 3 Landscape Conservation Initiatives (LCIs): Golden Winged Warbler (GWW), Joint Chiefs Restoration Project, and National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). These initiatives were provided to NHQ with a 3-year plan. For the Golden Winged Warbler (with a focus in the north), FY24 had $85,000 available with 5

applications submitted while FY25 and FY26 have $100,000 allocated. For the Joint Chiefs Restoration Project (focused on the Pine Barrens), FY24 had $135,000 available with 7 applications submitted) while FY25 and FY26 also have $135,000 allocated each year. For the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), FY24 allocated $400,000 with $500,000 allocated for both FY25 and FY26. Additional funds have been earmarked for Bobwhite Quail and American Black Duck for the past 7+ years.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) focused on NJ Coastal Aquaculture Project with the Ocean County District for FY24. This was the first year NJ handled land management contracts with NJ Coastal Aquaculture. In total, 9 contracts were issued for a total of $192,770 with a primary focus on restoration of coastal reef – spat on shell. Also, under RCPP, NRCS has NJ Water Supply partnered in protecting source water in the Raritan System. This project began in FY21 and will be concluded FY24. Included are 4 contracts for a total of $193,362 with a primary focus on water and soil quality. Finally, NRCS NJ is in the third year of contracting for NJ Small Farm Food Link. In total, 4 contracts total $166,167 with a focus on soil quality, air quality, and source water depletion.

News in the financial world for NRCS NJ – FY24 Regional Conservation Partnership Program NOFO is out with proposals due in the portal by July 2. Along the same line, NRCS NJ hired a RCPP Coordinator from Audubon (Brittany Welch starting in one weeks' time) to handle the workload increase on RCPP. NRCS NJ expects to advertise their FY25 programs in July for an October 18 cutoff for AMA, RCPP, EQIP, GWW, Joint Chiefs, and NWQI.

The next topic Gail reviewed was easements. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) are farmland preservation type easements. For FY24, NRCS NJ was given an allocation of 1.04 million dollars but none of that was spent. NRCS has an umbrella agreement with American Farmland Trust (AFT) where they hired an outreach coordinator to help sell the program to spend the allocations. In addition to the ACEP-ALE easement, NRCS also has ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). The allocation for ACEP-WRE was $632,468 with 1 eligible application for bog-turtle in 29 acres covering $253,080. NRCS also participates in stewardship. Currently, NRCS has 283 ALE Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) preserving over 23,000 acres, 47 WRE Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) preserving over 6,000 acres, 3 Emergency Watershed Protection Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE) preserving over 580 acres, 2 RCPP US Helf easements preserving over 23 acres, and 1 Grassland Reserve Program Easement (GRP) preserving 19 acres of grassland.

Jacob Bailey, NRCS Public Affairs, sent out a news release via email at the end of May about the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP). Proposals for WREP are due August 16. WREP is where NRCS enters into agreements with eligible partners to target priority areas and leverage resources for carrying out restoration and preservation on high priority wetlands. Only state and local units of government, Indian Tribes, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are eligible to submit proposals; No individuals are eligible. Eligible funds for this program total 50 million. There is also a virtual workshop on June 20 (from 2-4pm). The link was provided via email. If you need it again, please email Gail.Bartok@usda.gov.

Additional news released includes ALE signup available until July 1; FY25 WRE and ALE signups end October 31 with a second round of ALE available until March 1, 2025; the AFT ALE outreach agreement runs from FY24 through FY26; and ACEP IRA priorities for FY25 were released.

**1:50PM** **Inflation Reduction Act-ACEP priorities – Gail Bartok and Edwin Muniz, NRCS**

Gail continued her presentation, switching gears to a new topic. NRCS NJ offered ACEP IRA in 2023 and 2024. NJ has 1 WRE funded with IRA money. States were encouraged to identify priorities for FY25 to help assist in spending the ACEP IRA. Guidance for ALE was issued from National Headquarters targeting lands that are in a high threat for conversion (cropland and grasslands). American Farmland Trust released a report and an interactive tool covering farms under threat (the report can be printed by state). The report states that 6 states are under threat of land conversion over 10% by 2040. NJ is one of those 6 states with a predicted rate of conversion of 15% by 2040 (the highest in the nation). Given this information, NRCS wants to target NJ as a priority for ACEP IRA in FY25 specifically Gloucester, Burlington, and Hunterdon (but the entire state is being submitted).

Question from the group – Is there any funding associated with this program to steward land after it has been purchased? For Wetland Reserve Easements, yes.

Edwin Muniz, NRCS NJ, discussed NJ methodology proposal for IRA ACEP priority areas. The wetland enhancement map was created utilizing a combination of spatial data. The scale used on the map is too broad for NJ Edwin created a tool with more refined data looking at soils and hydrology at the same time. This provides more detail delineations of wetlands in 5-meter resolution. Another tool Edwin created was a prediction of carbon stock in NJ soils using machine learning language. The machine is trained with data and allowed to generate an output. The model is inspired by neural connections or the human thinking. This tool is shown in 10-meter resolution. Both of those tools can be combined to establish the suitability model and target areas of wetland enhancement and or restoration plots of the highest carbon stock. Additionally, these tools provide the opportunity to focus financial and technical assistance in areas with a bigger impact in carbon sequestration and wetland enhancements. If anyone is interested in the details, please contact Edwin Muniz at Edwin.Muniz@usda.gov.

Question from the group – the suitability models, is that just for targeting outreach? It's for targeting our funding.
Question from the group – are the suitability models available to the public? Not at the moment but they can be made available as they are GIS layers.

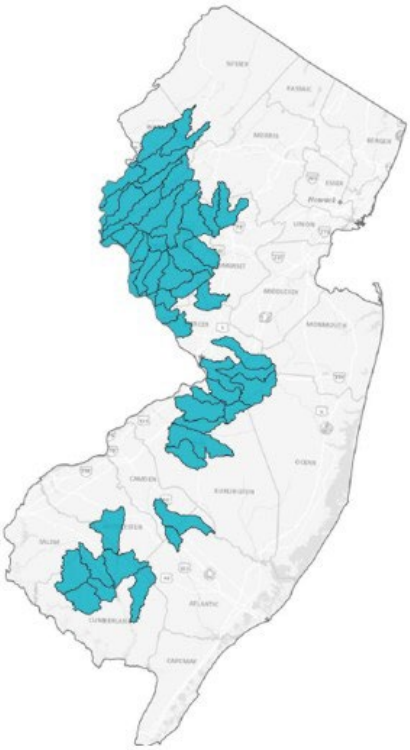
**2:00PM** **Source Water Protection and NWQI – Evan Madlinger, NRCS**

Currently NRCS NJ has two implementation areas (Upper Salem and Upper Cohansey). This program targets watersheds that have a heavy agricultural impact and gives additional funding opportunities in those watersheds. Evan and his staff meeting regularly with DEP and EPA to review monitoring and to discuss opportunities for funding in those watersheds. There are also two projects currently in the plannings phase (as the program also pays for watershed plans for implementation areas), Spruce Run Mulhockaway and the Lower Musconetcong.

In June 2024, a National Bulletin was released asking states if they have any changes or have the need to add additional watersheds. Evan and staff met with EPA and DEP about the watersheds and agreed to continue with the

ones on the books, the ones in planning, as well as the potential of adding the Upper Musconetcong and Middle Musconetcong for FY25. This would lead to a comprehensive plan for the Musconetcong, which is great news.

Evan shared a map of NJ's current Source Water Protection area. These areas have surface and groundwater, or they are critical areas for agricultural impact to surface or groundwater. NRCS NJ has the opportunity to identify up to 20% of the state for these critical watersheds. There is also increased cost-sharing if farmers want to implement certain practices within those watersheds. A national bulletin was released about this topic and NJ is working on identifying an additional 2% on top of the 18% currently identified, as well as the possibility of refining and/or modifying those existing source water areas. This reevaluation needs to be completed by August 23. NRCS has a subcommittee virtual meeting for the State Technical Committee setup with an assortment of people taking place June 25. If you would like to learn more or join the committee, please reach out to Evan Madlinger at evan.madlinger@usda.gov.



When looking at the priority watersheds, risk factors should be considered when selecting areas where agricultural land uses may impact source water. These factors include identified water quality resource concern at watershed and area scale, reports of or likelihood of harmful algal blooms, water system violations related to agricultural land uses, size of population served by an aquifer designated as "sole source", known areas of depletion in aquifers and ground water management areas, other risks that may impact source water such as Karst geology, highly erodible soils, degraded habitat, livestock access to surface water, wildfire risk, and opportunities to address risks to source water and related resource concerns such as fixing impaired surface waters and improving aquatic habitat.

**2:10PM** **Standard Updates and Payment Schedule – Evan Madlinger and Kaitlin Farbotnik, NRCS**

Kaitlin began this sections presentation on updates to the payment schedule. NRCS NJ has 3 people on the payments schedule team: Kaitlin, Hilary Trotman Lane, and Fran DeFiccio with help from Don Donnely (NRCS Forester), Betsy McShane (NRCS NJ Biologist), and Katherine Urban-Mead (partner employee). NJ is part of the Mid-Atlantic payments group, which also includes Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. Any time there are changes to the payment schedule, the states in the designated group need to work collaboratively to arrive at a unanimous decision. If changes are needed for the state, reach out to anyone in the NJ payment group to open a dialog.

There are two standards that were adopted this fiscal year which will have payments rates established going into FY25: Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805) and Water Treatment Facility (724). Regarding Amending Soil Properties with Lime, Kaitlin sees a lot of value, especially in areas with low PH soils and working on more conservation planting. On a larger scale, there is some caution with this one as some of the preexisting scenarios already include lime application (you don't want to double apply). The Water Treatment Facility standard is for livestock waters. There have been instances in the past where the project was unable to be completed as written, requiring reevaluations. In some cases, the fields were not serviceable with pipelines and waters as the water source was contaminated. NRCS NJ State Engineer Hilary Trotman Lane worked with the National Discipline Lead to figure out if a water treatment facility standard would work for NJ. If they find a contaminated water source, NRCS can contract water treatment facility or plan a water treatment facility to help with those types of situations. As a reminder, NRCS can offer technical assistance for any standard they adopt for NJ.

The Mid-Atlantic payment group has been working quite a few new scenarios as well as a few national standards (or master practice list). There are two Herbaceous Weed Control scenarios proposed with a high payment rate between $1700 and $2000 per acre (geared towards invasive control, specifically phragmites control). There is also a Rapid Compact Composter scenario that came from a conversation with the urban clients. This scenario is different from the in-vessel composter, which was adopted last year. The in-vessel composter required a new component to be created, which was approved, but now requires a build-out of the scenarios.

Hilary joined in and provided more information about the rapid composter. It is a very small composter that looks like an oven and is meant for food scraps and food waste. You will find this type of unit in urban settings, where farms can dump daily waste into the cooker and have compost within 24 hours and can apply to their beds. The units are expensive, $30,000, and far exceeded the in-vessel composting scenario that they had previously. As a result, NRCS NJ arrived at a new scenario for this 24-hour composting unit.

Kaitlin continued her presentation with Soil Carbon Amendment (336). The analysis is in depth for the compost testing requirements and very expensive ($500). The components included are expensive, as well. They collected receipts for actual costs and were able to get a new component called Complete Compost Analysis, which was approved. NRCS is now rewriting the scenarios to switch out those components. This should help farmers who want to use the composter with an addition $500 available. Wildlife Habitat Planting (420) is a new scenario for small scale plantings. NRCS partner employee Katherine Urban-Mead assisted with redoing some of the scenarios, which were just submitted for approval. Inside the practice is mostly just one scenario of plantings with bugs whereas the

other options were all seeding. There are a few new irrigation scenarios that NRCS has been working on. Before now, there was a pivot and VRI with retrofit. However, now there is a new pivot with VRI (Sprinkler System (442)). Also, corner swing arms scenario used to be in the Northeast Region but wasn't being used. Collectively they decided to bring it back, also under Sprinkler Systems (442). In addition to the state and region scenarios, NRCS also has been working on a few national scenarios, such as bird netting to control avian influenza for roofs structures (could be a retrofit or contract a new one). This would fall under Access Control (472). Mulching (484) is another scenario; this is focused on perennial fruits. This could be used for orchards as well as this scenario covers in-row mulching. Instead of just throwing dirt from row middle to the plants, producers can mulch the rows with wood chips or something similar. Another proposed national standard is the Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644) for turtle habitat. Additional scenarios covered include: the updated cost for spraying in Forest Stand Improvement (666), Sapling Weeding (666), and Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805) with 3 National Scenarios adopted (as the rest of the region was not interested). In the TSP work realm, the region is asking for over 100 new Technical Service Payment Rates (TSPR) scenarios.

This year, NRCS has been talking about putting together Suites and Practices and selling them to the producers. Instead of just one practice for the contract, they want to pair or bundle to achieve a higher level of conservation. One of the areas the specialists of NRCS thought they could bundle practices was in small perennial fruits through EQIP. By bundling Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805) with Mulching (484), Conservation Cover (327), Pest Management System (595), and Row Arrangements, the cost per acre would increase significantly. They also offer CSP Enhancement bundles of 327X Maintain vegetation heights for erosion control and 484D Lowbush blueberry field mulching for moisture management.

Irrigation is a topic that can be built out. Kaitlin shared a slide and Hilary talked about the fine points. We want to look at a field wholistically. Areas that could addressed are row arrangement, automated irrigation and automatic controllers, strategically placed vegetative plantings, planning access roads, and integrating water and sediment control basin (WASCOBs).

**2:20PM** **Local Work Group Discussion – Evan Madlinger, NRCS**

Evan and his team went through all the minutes taken from the different local work groups in the state and compiled a list of things they felt were important, items that needed clarification, as well as items that needed follow up.

Jacob Bailey, Public Affairs NRCS, presented on outreach. Historically, the agency used the public affairs position to handle outreach. However, there has been a change in the organization and now our state (along with others) has hired a dedicated outreach coordinator. NJ has Tairi Melchiorre on staff. One thing the feedback highlighted was the tedious process of getting started in an NRCS program. The Chief of NRCS spoke about this very topic when he visited NJ in April 2024. Streamlining the process would make things easier and including both public affairs and outreach in the initiative would help considerably with our producers, farmers, stakeholders, and staff. In 2022, NRCS NJ public affairs created a printed guide "Getting Started in NRCS". NJ is one of only a few states that have this guide available. It is a short, concise roadmap on how to navigate the NRCS process and how to get started. It has a yes/no contract, explains the contractual process, and what's next/what to expect. National is looking to expand the use of this guide for all states. Another item the feedback highlighted was the lack of opportunities to

learn about NRCS programs or other agencies/organizations available for producers. With the new coordinator position on staff, Tairi is taking this very seriously and wants to ensure boots on the ground have all the knowledge and tools available. One of the ways NRCS is addressing those concerns is holding outreach events. In February of 2024, NRCS hosted an Intro to USDA and NJ Department of Agriculture meeting with the Cape Atlantic Conservation District, FSA, RD, and NJ Department of Agriculture. Approximately 30 people were in attendance and this meeting garnered great questions from both experienced and new producers. There was a lot of interest in renewable energy. In March 2024, NRCS hosted a CSP Informational event, with 25 people in attendance. There is a recording of this event on YouTube. There were multiple inquiries and applications received for the CSP program. Additionally in March of 2024, NRCS and NJ Department of Agriculture hosted an event with FSA and Foodshed Alliance in attendance. The recording for this meeting can also be found on YouTube. In May, NRCS hosted a Joint Chiefs Field Day with NJ Audubon, Quail Forever, and NJ Forest Fire Service in attendance. There were approximately 25 people in attendance and this event garnered multiple inquiries and applications. These events are great for not only offering information but also gathering information as well, such as email contacts and putting faces to names we see in printed materials or emails. These events target students, producers, landowners, and the public. If you want to know more about these, or other, events, please contact Jacob Bailey with NRCS NJ. Upcoming events include: the Organic Webinar Series (1, 2, and 3), which will be held June 26. Agencies included in this webinar include NOFA, NRCS, FSA, and PAO where they will discuss eligibility, TOPP, OTI, and application processes; NRCS Video Series to take place in the late summer or fall where the series will discuss the main programs and initiatives, they will explain eligibility and ranking processes, and will be available on the NRCS NJ YouTube channel; and the SCD Local Outreach events in the summer and fall where NRCS will work with local soil conservation districts to reach out and target areas and provide information and assistance to NRCS programs.

NRCS has an internal outreach tracker. In FY24, they estimate over 4,000 contacts made throughout the state, with more events still forthcoming for the remainder of the year. While The Chief was in NJ, equity was a topic brought up for both internal and out producers. As part of NJ Equity Section of the Outreach Plan, it is their primary responsibility to increase Historically Underserved (HU) participation in the programs. As of May 28, NJ increased HU participants obligation by 3.2 % compared to FY2023. There were 379 total contracts as of May 28 (199 of those are HU participants). The national target rate is 10% of the allocation to HU; NRCS NJ is over 15%. That fact speaks volumes about NJ.

Arelys Ortiz, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations, for NRCS NJ presented next. Liz started her presentation with a staffing update. Since June 2023, 11 positions have been staffed across the state (2 in the Columbus Field Office, 1 in the Freehold Field Office, 1 in the Frenchtown Field Office, 4 in the Woodstown Field Office, 2 in the Hackettstown Field Office, and 1 in the State Office). In addition to the staffing, NRCS NJ also entered into agreements for partner employees (3 planners and one civil engineering technician (CET)). As of the date of this meeting, NRCS field staff (including those in the state office) totals 47 people, 75% of those have less than 2 years in their respected positions.

Taking feedback from the local work groups, there have been some comments about backlogs for irrigation practices. In response to that, NRCS NJ has 1 irrigation specialist, 2 engineers, 2 CETs, 1 CET through an agreement,

and 1 Agriculture Conservation Experienced Services (ACES) employee. NRCS NJ is looking to expand the staffing by adding 1 additional engineer, 1 additional CET, and 1 additional CET through an agreement. Furthermore, an irrigation tracker has been created to help address the backlog and to help the agency move forward with a streamlined approach. A comment was made in the local work group about irrigation programs and how it should not be just center pivots. Under ACT Now in 2023, there were some practices linked to irrigation. For FY24, a few ranking questions were put together in irrigation beyond center pivots (what resource concern were identified during the inventory process that will be addressed through practices proposed in the application and will concentrated/gully erosion on the irrigated acres associated with the application be addressed). For FY25, Liz hopes to discuss linking soil health practices to irrigation. Please be aware that NRCS is listening and are working towards addressing the concerns brought to their attention.

Gail Bartok, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs in NRCS NJ also presented a few slides on local work groups. One suggestion/concern brought to the table was the ask of consideration for additional points for Farmland Preserved land in the ranking process. NRCS already does that as part of the program questions in every ranking process. They give the most points if the entire area under contract is permanently deed restricted for agriculture through the NJ Farmland Preservation Program or any other state/local/private program and will also give a smaller set of points if a part of the land under contract is permanently deed restricted for agriculture through the NJ Farmland Preservation Program or any other state/local/private program. Another comment brought up was providing early start waivers in some cases. Again, NRCS has already been doing this for a few years. In 2022, NRCS tightened up the criteria to follow the policy in the National Manual. 3 circumstances where an early start waiver would be applicable include alleviation of imminent and significant environmental problems, prevention of endangerment of life or property, and unusual or extreme weather constraints. NRCS does give out these early start waivers. A third local work group concern was to consider participants share of funds in the contracting process. One option NRCS has available to address the concern is an advanced payment for Historically Underserved farmers in the EQIP program, where they can receive 50% of the cost of the line item in advance to purchase materials to get started installing their practice. The advanced payment is supposed to be expended in 90 days. The term Historically Underserved producer includes beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and veteran farmer (which is defined as a producer who served in the US Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof; and was released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable; and has not operated a farm or ranch, or has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period).

Question from the group – does FSA still have their conservation loan program and is that a long process?
Answer – Doreen Beruck from FSA said they used to have that loan program, but it wasn't offered this FY.

Fran Deficcio, Programs Specialist with NRCS, informed the group that this year at the Veggie's Grower Conference, NRCS will be one of three agencies (NRCS, FSA, and RD) on the agenda providing an educational session. That meeting will be taking place in February of 2025.

Question from the group – regarding the early start waiver, is that something rarely issued?
Answer – when the farmer is requesting an early start waiver, they are signing that they understand there is no

guarantee for funding and the practice must be installed according to NRCS standards. There are quite a few aspects that need to line up: eligibility, conservation plan in place, and a design in place. It's not that NRCS doesn't want to provide an early start waiver, they want to protect the applicants by saying if it's not one of the three extreme reasons to please hold off. Also, early start waivers expire at the end of the fiscal year; The agency is unable to pay for installation in one FY if chosen for funding in a separate fiscal year. It is important to note that once an applicant is preapproved for funding, there would be no reason to go forward with an early start waiver.

The local work group made a comment that high tunnels may lead to additional runoff concerns. NRCS has recognized that and have encouraged NRCS planners to plan appropriate runoff control practices if they are needed. They also offer additional ranking points if those practices are included with the high tunnel. Another comment made at a local work group was it is hard for participants (especially in the urban fund pool) to get land control for the contract period. NRCS allows for landowner concurrence when there is a structural practice planned on ground that is not owned by the participant Structural practices include any practice with a lifespan of greater than one year. Control of land is self-certified by the participant and documented by using Farm Data Reports generated by the FSA Agency when establishing farm records. It is the participants responsibility to keep these records current. Self-certifications are eligible for spot checks; NRCS does not require every participant to verify that they absolutely have control of the land for the next 5 years. The Farm Data Report serves as proof of control. NRCS will not enter into contract with anyone that does not have landowner concurrence for structural practice, which is greater than one year lifespan of a practice.

Evan Madlinger joined the conversation to present on local work group general resources. The first concern that came up was that the State Technical Committee meetings are not discussing or enacting programs addressing resource concerns; the meetings only report on program statistics. Evan explained that the State Technical Committee is geared towards advising Julie Hawkins, State Conservationist of NRCS NJ. NRCS wants to present information that they know by informing the audience of their actions and decisions. The winter occurrence of the State Technical Committee meeting really focuses on NRCS partners and partner staff while the summer occurrence highlights work that has been done or that will be coming up. It is important to note that the State Technical Committee has a broad over scope whereas the local work groups provide the finer details. Evan asked that if there are any suggestions, comments, or ideas that they feel would benefit the committee, please reach out to him. There is no locked format. Another comment from the local work groups was ideas or programs shared with NRCS never turn into actual conservation practices for cost sharing. NRCS has adopted many ideas and interim practices as well as increasing cost share. Other items that were implemented to address this concern include grazing cover crops, planting green, expanding agro-forestry, tree mortality, urban-raised beds, small composting drawings, and aquaculture (tank replacement, livestock structures, biofouling). NRCS is working hard to turn ideas into actionable items to address the need. The local work groups provide localized feedback; there is a specialized local work group fund pool to fund specific items. There are many standards, often with a lot of flexibility (or, if not, there are other options like waiver).

In the southern area of NJ, coastal issues arose, specifically Bayshore erosion, sea level rise, living shorelines, loss of marshland, ghost forests, and saltwater intrusion. Another concern brought up was the lack of engineering support

to get projects on the ground. It does take a lot of engineering work to get these types of issues resolved but NRCS is making strides to bridge that issue.

Kaitlin highlighted some of the comments and concerns from the local work group on agronomic-related issues. The first comment was cover crop rules allow/incentivize fall tillage, creating erosion to plant late season cover crops. If a producer is not meeting the standard exactly, NJ EQIP rules allow for late season planting as long as they have 70% coverage in the fall and resource concerns are treated. Potential solutions discussed include no late planting of cover crops allowed, late planting is allowable is soil erosion models are run, and annual erosion is shown to be at tolerable levels, and late planting would be allowed only if the cover crop is no tilled/broadcasted. However, these options do put a burden on the planners. If there are any additional suggestions, feedback, or comments, please reach out to Kaitlin Farbotnik.

Suggestion from the group – allow late planting followed by early termination (which would mean the cover drop didn't really do anything). If late planting is allowable, suggest minimum number of days or minimum height before termination.

Question from the group – is the producer causing that much more erosion by tilling late instead of not planting anything at all and let the vegetable cover/stubble go all winter? During RUSLE runs where cover crop was installed and till in the fall late, there is a lot more erosion. Another question from the same local work group meeting was why NRCS isn't requiring it to be planted no till. Kaitlin said that is what they wanted us to require, no till or broadcast.

Another comment brought up was why aren't there programs for drone spraying, cover crop seeding, variable rate fertilizer, and lime application. Some of these NRCS already covers through technical and financial assistance. The agency has historically paid for precision nutrient management, which includes lime application. Drone application is currently being looked at by a few different regions in scenarios and payment rates. If national has an aerial application scenario, NRCS NJ can adopt that. As a side note, standards have a maximum of scenarios allowable; if the maximum threshold is met, other scenarios must be removed – there is no increasing the maximum, set by the National Disciple Leads. Depending on the resource concern, the use of drones for applying chemicals and cover crop could be covered under Pest Management System (595) or Cover Crop (340), or could be covered under energy, air quality, or a variety of other CSP enhancements. The third comment/question was asking if NRCS help with set up smaller community composting systems for food waste; is there a way to work with farmers, local businesses, and municipalities to provide funding, resources, and education to make leaf mulching programs possible?  As a resource-based agency, NRCS would be able to coordinate the help with composting; their role is to provide technical and financial assistance to treat resource concerns as defined by the "National Resource Concern List and Planning Criteria". The legality of food waste and plate waste in New Jersey is complicated. All NRCS participants must adhere to Federal, state, and municipal laws and regulations. However, leaf mulching is regulated by NJ DEP; NRCS participants apply mulch as an amendment to the soil to treat a resource concern. The fourth comment indicated that Jersey City does not allow producers to do soil health screening for heavy metals; all producers must use raised beds if they want to do a community garden; this presents a barrier for producers receiving NRCS assistance since some financial assistance is tied to this type of screening. To address this concern, NRCS has a Raised Bed (812) conservation practice standard. The raised beds can be used anywhere the growing

media is deemed to be unsuitable for growing, the purposes is to reduce concentration of salts or other chemicals, reduce field operation-induced particulate emissions, increase plant health and productivity, and it is required in New Jersey's standard for the pXRF to be used to deem the substrate unsuitable for chemical rather than physical restrictions. NRCS NJ could possibly pursue a waiver, however, the potential for contamination would still need to be proven on active cropland. It is important to note that NRCS NJ allows for barriers in the raised beds, if that is a problem, as well as allowing raised beds in high tunnels with barriers (under certain circumstances).

The local work group also commented that practices should be combined so they are most effective and sold that way to the producer. NRCS NJ is working on multiple conservation suites to focus on in FY25. This is a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary effort that includes proposing new payment scenarios and enhancements to have good incentive rates for implementing suites, educating field offices on the technical background of the practices and how the practices can be planned together, appropriately wording outreach materials to promote suites to farmers, and adjusting program rankings so producers with the most resource concerns that make the greatest conservation impacts are prioritized in funding. The last comment recorded from the local work group indicated that it is extremely difficult for vegetable producers in Northern NJ to meet soil erosion levels. How can NRCS make growing vegetables more sustainable? This needs to be driven by the producers. NRCS cannot tell the producers what to do. However, NRCS suggests implementing suites of conservation practices from a holistic approach. For example, if a producer is farming a field that has land capability class of 4 and trying to do intensive vegetables, what does that mean? It means farming on the contour, putting in strips and contour buffering strips, to name a few. There are adaptive management scenarios producers and farmers can experiment with on their farm with cover crop, no till, reduced till, nutrient management, etc. These are underutilized in the state. These allow the producers to conduct research projects on their land in conjunction with an NRCS planner (someone that can do statistical analysis). Payment rates are very high and that allows NRCS and producers to work outside of the standard through EQIP (that is the **only** time they can work outside of the standard). If producers want to be more innovative, they need to push their planners to do so, as well as looking at the whole field and not just tract by tract. On a bigger scale, consider trialing new technologies through Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs).

Don Donnelly, Forester for NRCS, presented next. There has been an increase of interest in agroforestry, which is the intentional integration of trees and/or shrubs with crops and/or livestock to meet a variety of objectives. One comment from the local work group was that the surrounding states are reluctant to implement a few practices, particularly silvopasture and forest farming. Don sees a lot of opportunities for these, particularly degraded forest since NJ has many areas that are impacted by invasive species. Silvopasture has seen an increase of interest but there are challenges with that. To implement correctly, the farmer needs to do rotational grazing (you need to have enough space for that). In the forestry curriculum, they engrain you should not put cows in the woods and unfortunately that is what a lot of producers want to do. The nuance of this is managing the trees intentionally, in addition to the forages below, to have a balance, as well as informing producers that they have to a lot of work (it's not just putting animals in the woods). Some things NRCS has done to overcome this is Don has been participating in proactive outreach with formal presentation at the annual NOFA conference and at the NJ Forestry Association meeting, as well as discussing joint outreach with the State Forest Service. Don has also been working with the Department of Agriculture on outreach to identify sites where they can develop good demonstration projects. One

challenge a producer can face in agroforestry include agricultural producers may be unfamiliar with tree biology, planting and care, and the compatibility with different crops. Since trees can be slow to establish and mature compared to most agricultural crops, smaller farms need to be reminded there are delayed benefits (years vs. months) and there is a greater risk of exposure to stress and loss (right tree for the right place). It is one thing to plant beans or corn on the ground during planting season, trees take 20 years to mature and produce a crop. These systems are more complex. In agriculture systems, producers strive for simplicity and predictable conditions for better yields. When you start integrating trees and multiple types of trees, the producer needs to manage conditions both horizontally and vertically, but also temporal changes as trees grow over time; you need to plan for when the trees will be at maturity, which limits a lot of agricultural annual crop space which small producers cannot afford. There is also an increase of maintenance cost. A few things to keep in mind: 1) trees take up a lot of space – is it practical on small acreage? 2) is the producer producing enough from trees to market effectively?

The regional TSP coordinator provided a slide during a presentation, which Don asked to borrow. The slide shows FY23 planning contracts that were done in NJ, which includes 98 Forest Management Plans (CPA), 20 Forest Management Practice Designs (DIA), and 2 Forest Management Assessments (CEMA). NRCS cannot implement without planning contracts. In FY24, there were 120 Forest Management Plans and 85 Forest Management Practice Designs. NRCS uses Technical Service Providers (TSPs) to write plans. Currently there are 483 individual TSPs currently certified for CPA106 Forest Plans.; in NJ, there are 11 (below the average). In FY23, NJ had 98 plans written while states like NY and NH had far less (even though they have more TSPs). There is a demand for writing plans, which would lead to implementation, but NJ does not have a lot of TSPs. This is reflective of forestry statewide (there are approximately 7000 landowners that currently operate under a forest management plan for tax purposes) but only 12 forestry consultants in state that do this full time to help them. As you can see, there is a capacity issue. Don has been engaging forestry consultants that are not TSPs, particularly in south Jersey as there is a need in the area. That type of outreach lead to meeting with National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Forestry Program Manager to explore opportunities for national association support in NJ. Recently, Cape-Atlantic and Freehold SCD's are looking to hire foresters. The NACD Forestry Program Manager is looking to do an exposé on forestry and the needs of NJ forestry with input from a couple of people, Don included, showcasing what NRCS NJ wants to do and what the shortfalls are.

Furthermore, Don has been working to support Rutgers University in pursing Society of American Foresters (SAF) accreditation for their urban forestry and natural resource management programs. The outcome of the SAF accreditation will be released in September; if approved, this will be a steppingstone for getting more people educated in the state and be able to work in the fields. There has been some difficulty in getting out-of-state people to work in New Jersey. Don has also been informally mentoring the younger employees and partners who are pursing advanced degrees in forestry.

Hilary Trotman Lane, NRCS State Engineer, had a few responses to comments and concerns in the engineering concentration. The first comment was producers can typically install a similar, more efficient project for less money than their portion of an NRCS design. NRCS designed practices are VERY expensive. Hilary sees that practices can be very expensive to implement. Payment tables are reviewed and adjusted annually. NRCS does not require

construction receipts and invoices for payment. However, it is highly recommended to include them to support improvements to the reimbursement rates. NRCS is obligated to address environmental concerns according to federal, state and local regulations and requirements. This is usually more expensive than a producer-installed practice; NRCS has requirements to their standards as well as construction and material specifications. NRCS also designs and implements with practice longevity in mind. The agency uses taxpayer money and want to ensure that these projects last as long as possible. NRCS reviews and updates conservation practice standards every 5 years to accommodate new technologies and procedures, which might result in construction cost savings. As a reminder, NRCS technical assistance is free! NRCS is a nonregulatory agency and program participation is voluntary.

Another item from the local work group stated Energy Efficiency Cost Share Practices such as electric forklifts instead of propane fueled forklifts should be added. This is an interesting item and is being taken into consideration and is under evaluation for FY25. The third item to come from the local work group for engineering: Cost Share Practice to replace diesel irrigation pumps with electric irrigation pumps. This practice needs to consider additional components required for conversion. Could they be included in cost share? NRCS is willing to review additional components needed for the conversion. However, utility connections to all the conversation practices are the responsibility of the owner. The local work group comments that NRCS practices may not work as well with extreme weather; designed for old rainfall values.; DEP updated rainfall values for NJ and changes were made to the 5, 10, 25, and 100-year storm events. NRCS is aware of the DEP changes; DEP shared a rainfall study report and Hilary is requesting assistance from National Headquarters to review that study so NRCS can incorporate that information into hydrology tools. The rainfall study revealed an adjustment factor range 1.0 to 1.06 for the more frequent storms (2-year and 10-year (5-inch rainfall in 24-hour period)). The 100-year storm saw the greatest adjustment, which went from 1.1 to 1.15. It is important to note the NJ DEP storm water basin designs are to project out to the year 2100 and this applies an adjustment factor range from 1.23 to 1.5. NRCS will use current rainfall values to implement conservation practices on agricultural land. Conservation practice lifespans are on the order of 10 to 15 years and will expire well before the year 2100. Where DEP permits are needed to implement conservation activity, NRCS will certainly plan, design and implement according to necessary projected rainfall values.

Last week during the NRCS mini boot camp, Hilary was with a farmer in Warren County who experienced that significant rainfall event in July 2023. He said that capacities of pipes and waterways in his field were exceeded but they still held up with little damage. He was impressed and pleased since surrounding road drainage systems were severely compromised and the field drainage system held up.

The last presenter on the topic of local work groups is James Strehse, NRCS Acting Urban Conservationist. When it comes to rain gardens and program delivery, NRCS offers urban specific funding pools that can be used for not just rain gardens but also other practices. There are 2 separate fund pools: EQIP and RCPP small farm food link agreement. NRCS has 5 preapproved applications for both of those programs, with a total of $64,364 in EQIP and $158,733 in RCPP. There is also a Community Garden Grant available, for the second time in two years. This grant closed June 7; 6 applications were submitted, and $75,000 in CTA funds are earmarked for these community garden grants. This is a good opportunity for education as there is an emphasis in this program for an aspect called Peoeple's Gardens., which is an initiative through USDA where sites can sign up and pledge through their garden, they will

have this community element (outreach to the community, education through the community, working that into their site). There are 16 of these People's Gardens in the state and to apply for financial assistance for this request, NRCS asked that the participants sign up through the People's Garden.

In addition to the financial assistance programs, NRCS also offers technical assistance. NRCS can go to urban sites to do soil screenings, check for contamination, to see if the site needs raised beds or offer other options. They also handle micro-sites in urban areas, micro forests in different areas, pollinator, and rain gardens. NRCS offers urban outreach through hands-on educational field days, visit school groups, staff-trainings, committees and coalitions through the states (Green Coalition in Atlantic City, to name one). There is also an urban local work group meeting that take place in Passaic County.

Fran added – there is no advanced payment option for RCPP Urban and that has not been helpful in the agreements.

**4:00PM** **Open Discussion – Evan Madlinger, NRCS**

**4:05PM** **Closing Remarks – Julie Hawkins, NRCS**

**4:10PM** **Adjourn – Evan Madlinger, NRCS**

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List for FY2025

Highlighted activities have been added or updated in FY2025.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name[1] (practice unit) | Code | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 311 | Alley Cropping (acres) | None Available | |
| 313 | Waste Storage Facility (number)<br>• Used to implement compost bedded-pack[2] | None Available | |
| 314 | Brush Management (acres)<br>• Used to remove woody invasive vegetation in arid regions and the removed material will be left onsite[2] | E314A | Brush management to improve wildlife habitat |
| 315 | Herbaceous Weed Treatment (acres)<br>• Used to release desired deep rooted perennial species[2] | E315A | Herbaceous weed treatment to create desired plant communities consistent with the ecological site |
| 317 | Composting Facility (number) | None Available | |
| 327 | Conservation Cover (acres) | E327A | Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects |
| | | E327B | Establish Monarch butterfly habitat |
| | | E327C | Wildlife habitat for nesting and brooding in non-cropped areas |
| 328 | Conservation Crop Rotation (acres) | E328A | Resource conserving crop rotation |
| | | E328B | Improved resource conserving crop rotation |
| | | E328E | Soil health crop rotation |
| | | E328F | Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter |
| | | E328H | Conservation crop rotation to reduce the concentration of salts |
| | | E328N | Intercropping to improve soil health |
| | | E328O | Perennial grain crop conservation rotation |
| 329 | Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (acres) | E329A | No till to reduce soil erosion |
| | | E329B | No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter |
| | | E329C | No till to increase plant-available moisture |
| | | E329D | No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content |
| | | E329E | No till to reduce energy |
| 332 | Contour Buffer Strips (acres) | None Available | |
| 336 | Soil Carbon Amendment (acres) | None Available | |
| 338 | Prescribed Burning (acres)<br>• To reduce wildfire hazards in forest systems at risk of wildfire[2] | None Available | |

Highlighted activities have been added or updated in FY2025.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name[1] (practice unit) | Code | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 340 | Cover Crop (acres) | E340A | Cover crop to reduce soil erosion |
| | | E340B | Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content |
| | | E340C | Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter |
| | | E340D | Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health |
| | | E340E | Use of soil health assessment to assist with development of cover crop mix to improve soil health |
| | | E340F | Cover crop to minimize soil compaction |
| | | E340G | Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients |
| | | E340H | Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles |
| | | E340I | Using cover crops for biological strip till |
| | | E340J | Cover crop to improve moisture use efficiency and reduce salts |
| 342 | Critical Area Planting (acres) | None Available | |
| 345 | Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (acres) | E345A | Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion |
| | | E345B | Reduced tillage to reduce tillage induced particulate matter |
| | | E345C | Reduced tillage to increase plant-available moisture |
| | | E345D | Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content |
| | | E345E | Reduced tillage to reduce energy use |
| 366 | Anaerobic Digester (number) | None Available | |
| 367 | Roofs and Covers (number)<br>• Used to cover a waste management facility to capture biogas[2] | None Available | |
| 372 | Combustion System Improvement (number)<br>• Used for stationary or mobile engine replacement or repower to electric motor[2] | E372A | Switch to Renewable Power Source |
| | | E372B | Renewable Energy Source for Large Internal Combustion Engines |
| 374 | Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation (number) | None Available | |
| 379 | Forest Farming (acres) | None Available | |
| 380 | Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation (feet) | None Available | |
| 381 | Silvopasture (acres)<br>• Establishing woody plant species[2] | E381A | Silvopasture to improve wildlife habitat |
| 383 | Fuel Break (acres) | E383A | Grazing-maintained fuel break to reduce the risk of fire |
| 384 | Woody Residue Treatment (acres) | E384A | Biochar production from woody residue |

Highlighted activities have been added or updated in FY2025.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name[1] (practice unit) | Code | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 386 | Field Border (acres) | E386A | Enhanced field borders to reduce soil erosion along the edge(s) of a field |
| | | E386B | Enhanced field borders to increase carbon storage along the edge(s) of the field |
| | | E386C | Enhanced field borders to decrease particulate emissions along the edge(s) of the field |
| | | E386D | Enhanced field borders to increase food for pollinators along the edge(s) of a field |
| | | E386E | Enhanced field borders to increase wildlife food and habitat along the edge(s) of a field |
| 390 | Riparian Herbaceous Cover (acres) | E390A | Increase riparian herbaceous cover width for sediment and nutrient reduction |
| | | E390B | Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat |
| 391 | Riparian Forest Buffer (acres) | E391A | Increase riparian forest buffer width for sediment and nutrient reduction |
| | | E391B | Increase stream shading for stream temperature reduction |
| | | E391C | Increase riparian forest buffer width to enhance wildlife habitat |
| 393 | Filter Strips (acres) | E393A | Extend existing filter strip to reduce water quality impacts |
| 412 | Grassed Waterways (acres) | E412A | Enhance a grassed waterway |
| 420 | Wildlife Habitat Planting (acres) | E420A | Establish pollinator habitat |
| | | E420B | Establish monarch butterfly habitat |
| 422 | Hedgerow Planting (feet) | None Available | |
| 430 | Irrigation Pipeline (feet)<br>• Used to reduce fossil fuel energy use[2] | None Available | |
| 441 | Irrigation System, Microirrigation (acres)<br>• Used to reduce fossil fuel energy use[2] | None Available | |
| 442 | Sprinkler System (acres)<br>• Used to reduce fossil fuel energy use[2] | None Available | |
| 449 | Irrigation Water Management (acres)<br>• Used as part of an alternated wetting and drying (AWD) system in rice fields[2] | E449B | Alternated Wetting and Drying (AWD) of rice fields |
| 453 | Land Reclamation, Landslide Treatment (acres)[3] | None Available | |
| 484 | Mulching (acres)<br>• Apply natural mulch materials[2] | E484A | Mulching to improve soil health |
| | | E484B | Reduce particulate matter emissions by using orchard or vineyard generated woody materials as mulch |
| | | E484C | Mulching with natural materials in specialty crops for weed control |
| | | E484D | Lowbush Blueberry Mulching for Moisture Management |

Highlighted activities have been added or updated in FY2025.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name[1] (practice unit) | Code | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 512 | Pasture and Hay Planting (acres) | E512A | Cropland conversion to grass-based agriculture to reduce soil erosion |
| | | E512B | Forage and biomass planting to reduce soil erosion or increase organic matter to build soil health |
| | | E512C | Cropland conversion to grass for soil organic matter improvement |
| | | E512D | Forage plantings that help increase organic matter in depleted soils |
| | | E512I | Establish pollinator and/or beneficial insect and/or monarch habitat |
| | | E512J | Establish wildlife corridors to provide habitat continuity or access to water |
| | | E512L | Diversifying forage base with interseeding forbs and legumes to increase pasture quality |
| | | E512M | Forage plantings that improve wildlife habitat cover and shelter or structure and composition |
| 528 | Prescribed Grazing (acres) | E528A | Maintaining quantity and quality of forage for animal health and productivity |
| | | E528D | Grazing management for improving quantity and quality of food or cover and shelter for wildlife |
| | | E528E | Improved grazing management for enhanced plant structure and composition for wildlife |
| | | E528F | Stockpiling cool season forage to improve structure and composition or plant productivity and health |
| | | E528G | Improved grazing management on pasture for plant productivity and health with monitoring activities |
| | | E528H | Prescribed grazing to improve/maintain riparian and watershed function-elevated water temperature |
| | | E528I | Grazing management that protects sensitive areas-surface or ground water from nutrients |
| | | E528J | Prescribed grazing on pastureland that improves riparian and watershed function |
| | | E528L | Prescribed grazing that improves or maintains riparian and watershed function-erosion |
| | | E528M | Grazing management that protects sensitive areas from gully erosion |
| | | E528N | Improved grazing management through monitoring activities |
| | | E528O | Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality |
| | | E528P | Implementing Bale or Swath Grazing to increase organic matter and reduce nutrients in surface water |
| | | E528R | Management intensive rotational grazing |
| | | E528S | Soil Health Improvements on Pasture |
| | | E528T | Grazing to Reduce Wildfire Risks on Forests |
| | | E528U | Contingency Planning for Resiliency |
| 533 | Pumping Plant (number)<br>• Used to reduce fossil fuel energy use[2] | E533C | Install VFDs on pumps |
| | | E533D | Switch fuel source for pumps |
| 543 | Land Reclamation, Abandoned Mined Land (acres)[3] | None Available | |

Highlighted activities have been added or updated in FY2025.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name[1] (practice unit) | Code | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 550 | Range Planting (acres) | E550A | Range planting for increasing/maintaining organic matter |
| | | E550B | Range planting for improving forage, browse, or cover for wildlife |
| 554 | Drainage Water Management<br>• Raise the groundwater table on organic soils in offseason[2] | None Available | |
| 585 | Stripcropping (acres) | None Available | |
| 590 | Nutrient Management (acres) | E590A | Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses |
| | | E590B | Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies |
| | | E590C | Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses on pasture |
| | | E590D | Reduce risks of nutrient losses to surface and groundwater by increasing setback awareness via precision technology |
| 592 | Feed Management (animal unit)<br>• Used to reduce enteric methane emissions[2] | None Available | |
| 601 | Vegetative Barriers (feet) | None Available | |
| 603 | Herbaceous Wind Barriers (feet) | None Available | |
| 604 | Saturated Buffer<br>• Replacing a cultivated riparian area[2] | None Available | |
| 612 | Tree-Shrub Establishment (acres) | E612B | Planting for high carbon sequestration rate |
| | | E612C | Establishing tree/shrub species to restore native plant communities |
| | | E612D | Adding food-producing trees/shrubs to an agroforestry system |
| | | E612E | Cultural plantings |
| | | E612F | Sugarbush management |
| | | E612G | Tree/shrub planting for wildlife food |
| 632 | Waste Separation Facility (number) | None Available | |
| 643 | Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (ac)<br>• Used to restore floodplain hydrology or restore an oyster reef[2] | E643A | Restoration of sensitive coastal vegetative communities |
| | | E643D | Low-tech process-based restoration to enhance floodplain connectivity |
| 657 | Wetland Restoration (acres)<br>• Restoration of histosol wetland[2] | None Available | |

Highlighted activities have been added or updated in FY2025.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name[1] (practice unit) | Code | Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Enhancement Activities[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 666 | Forest Stand Improvement (acres) | E666A | Maintaining and improving forest soil quality |
| | | E666D | Forest management to enhance understory vegetation |
| | | E666E | Reduce height of the forest understory to limit wildfire risk |
| | | E666F | Reduce forest stand density to create open stand structure |
| | | E666G | Reduce forest density and manage understory along roads to limit wildfire risk and improve habitat |
| | | E666H | Increase on-site carbon storage |
| | | E666I | Crop tree management for mast production |
| | | E666J | Facilitating oak forest regeneration |
| | | E666K | Creating structural diversity with patch openings |
| | | E666L | Forest Stand Improvement to rehabilitate degraded hardwood stands |
| | | E666O | Snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris for wildlife habitat |
| | | E666P | Summer roosting habitat for native forest-dwelling bat species |
| | | E666R | Forest songbird habitat maintenance |
| | | E666S | Facilitating longleaf pine regeneration and establishment |
| 670 | Energy Efficient Lighting System (number) | None Available | |
| 672 | Energy Efficient Building Envelope (number) | None Available | |

## Notes

In addition to the designated CSAF conservation activities listed, conservation practices that facilitate the management or the function of a CSAF activity but may not achieve the desired effects on their own (and may not have a quantifiable benefit), may be planned as applicable in consultation with your local professional conservation planner. Examples: Tree-Shrub Establishment (612) may need facilitating practices such as Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490) or Access Control (472). Conservation Crop Rotation (328) may need facilitating practices such as Pest Management Conservation System (595), Cover Crops (340), Irrigation Water Management (449), or Drainage Water Management (554). Waste Separation Facility (632) may need facilitating practices such as Waste Transfer (634) or Roofs and Covers (367). Prescribed Grazing (528) may need facilitating practices such as Watering Facility (614), Stream Crossing (578), Brush Management (314), Fence (382), or Livestock Shelter Structure (576).

The following was removed from the list for FY2025: Enhancement (338B) Strategically planned, patch burning for grazing distribution and wildlife habitat. Bundles for CSP and NRCS Easement activities are not listed in this document, please refer to program guidance for information.

**[1]** The included Conservation Practice Standard and Conservation Stewardship Program links provide national information. Please consult the NRCS office at your local USDA Service Center for any local and state level criteria. Visit **farmers.gov/service-locator** to find contact information for your local office.

**[2]** The practice is considered a mitigation activity only when implemented in a specified way. The practice is considered a mitigation activity only when implemented in the specified way; as identified in the brief description. See the associated narrative and additional planner guidance section at the end of this document.

**[3]** Eligibility for financial assistance is based on the land use where practice would be applied.





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# Additional Planner Guidance for FY25 Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities with Specified Implementations

This document provides a conservation planner with additional guidance to plan, design, and implement the identified CSAF Mitigation Activities with specific implementations to meet the intended goal of providing mitigation benefits. The practices in the table below are only considered CSAF Mitigation Activities when implemented according to the description in the corresponding narrative.

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name (practice unit) | Narrative | | Additional Planner Guidance/Applicability of the Practice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 313 | Waste Storage Facility (number) | 01N | Compost Bedded Pack waste storage facility — a livestock agricultural waste storage fabricated structure where manure is composted within the animal housing. | • Use 01N when specifically planning a compost bedded pack structure. When implemented this way, the practice can lead to reduced methane ($CH_4$) emissions resulting from the added carbonaceous bedding material and regularly tilling to promote composting, as compared to a liquid storage system.<br>• **For any other waste storage structure, use 00N (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 314 | Brush Management (acres) | 03N | Remove woody (non-herbaceous and succulent) invasive vegetation to maintain or enhance deep rooted native perennial grass and forb communities, in arid regions leaving treated woody material onsite to mitigate above ground carbon loss. | • Use 03N when specifically planning the practice to remove woody (non-herbaceous and succulent) invasive vegetation to maintain or enhance native perennial grass and forb communities in arid regions. Woody residue from mechanical or chemical treatments must be left onsite. When implemented this way, the practice can be used to maintain or re-establish native perennial plant communities and associated carbon stocks and carbon balance equilibrium. Restoring reference perennial plant communities may increase resistance to disturbances such as wildfire that would result in even greater carbon losses.<br>• Practice must be implemented in areas where mean annual precipitation is less than 340 millimeters or 13.4 inches. Literature suggests that in these arid areas, woody infestations that result in a decrease in above and below ground carbon stocks, as compared to reference native communities, can be mitigated through brush management.<br>• Use the climate normals annual precipitation map, available as a data layer in Conservation Desktop, from Climate.gov, NOAA data for the reference period 1991–2020 to determine applicability.<br>• Woody residue left on site should be treated in a manner (i.e., lop and scatter) not to cause additional resource concerns or increase wildfire hazard.<br>• When available, planners should use Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) to assess the potential for a plant community to address carbon sequestration. Determining if the practice can maintain or increase carbon stocks is situational and relies on planners' professional judgment and familiarity with the ecological site being evaluated. Planning the practice in a way that addresses soil erosion and the soil organic matter depletion resource concern components should result in an application designed to re-establish an equilibrium, which may increase soil organic carbon.<br>• **For any other application of brush management that does not meet these criteria, including for instance implementations that involve burn piles or hauled residue, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name (practice unit) | Narrative | | Additional Planner Guidance/Applicability of the Practice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 315 | Herbaceous Weed Treatment (acres) | 01N | Removal of herbaceous weeds to release desired deep rooted perennial grass and forb species. | • Use 01N when specifically planning the practice to treat herbaceous weeds to release desired deep rooted perennial species. When implemented this way, the practice can be used to restore plant communities containing significant herbaceous weeds to deep rooted perennial dominated plant communities, which can result in increased soil organic carbon stocks over time.<br>• When available, planners should use Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) to assess the potential for a plant community to address soil carbon sequestration. Determining if the practice can maintain or increase carbon stocks is situational and relies on planners' professional judgment and familiarity with the ecological site being evaluated. Planning the practice in a way that addresses soil erosion and the soil organic matter depletion resource concern components should result in an application designed to re-establish an equilibrium, which may increase soil organic carbon stocks over time.<br>• For best results, practice should be applied early when invasive species begin to occupy and infest a desirable plant community.<br>• **For any other application of herbaceous weed treatment that does not meet these criteria, use 00N (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 338 | Prescribed Burning (acres) | 01N | Conducting a prescribed burn on a forested ecosystem with the purpose of reducing wildfire hazards in an area with increased risk of wildfire. | • Use 01N when specifically conducting a prescribed burn on a forested ecosystem with the purpose of reducing wildfire hazards in an area with increased risk of wildfire. When implemented this way, the practice is expected to result overall in decreased net emissions compared to emissions that would result from catastrophic wildlife even though there are emissions associated with its implementation.<br>• Practices should be applied only on areas with increased risk of wildfire with a fire return interval of 20 years or less. Use resources such as LANDFIRE.gov to determine the fire return interval at each location.<br>• Practices should be applied for the primary purpose of reducing wildfire hazards from biomass accumulation.<br>• **For any other application of prescribed burning that does not meet these criteria, including applications in areas where the fire return interval is greater than 20 years and on other land uses, use 00N (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 367 | Roofs and Covers (number) | 01N | Capture Biogas — Place a rigid, semirigid, or flexible manufactured membrane, composite material, or roof structure placed over a waste management facility to capture biogas and reduce odor. | • Use 01N when specifically planning a waste facility cover to capture biogas. When implemented this way, the practice can lead to reduced $CH_4$ emissions as biogas is captured and either flared or used as a natural gas substitute, as compared to an uncovered anaerobic lagoon or liquid storage system.<br>• **For other applications, such as a rain exclusion cover, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 372 | Combustion System Improvement | 02N | Stationary engine to electric motor replacement or repower — Replace or repower an existing stationary engine with an electric motor. | • Use 02N when specifically replacing or repowering an existing diesel or gas-powered stationary engine (e.g., irrigation engine, emergency generator, etc.) with an electric motor.<br>• Use 05N when specifically replacing existing on-farm mobile equipment (e.g., tractor, loader, forklift, etc.) powered by an internal combustion engine with a new mobile device powered by an electric motor.<br>• **For other applications of this practice, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| | | 05N | Mobile internal combustion engine to electric motor replacement — Replace an existing on-farm mobile device (i.e., tractor, loader, forklift, etc.) powered by an internal combustion engine with a new mobile device powered by an electric motor. | |

| Code | Conservation Practice Standard Name (practice unit) | Narrative | | Additional Planner Guidance/Applicability of the Practice |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 381 | Silvopasture (acres) | 01N | Establishment - Establish desired woody plant species and forage resources for livestock. | • Use 01N when specifically establishing desired woody plant species and forage resources on pasture or cropland for livestock. When implemented this way, the practice is expected to increase biomass carbon stocks and enhance soil carbon stocks over time.<br>• **When using the practice to manage existing tree canopy and forage resources for livestock, including through tree removal and maintenance of reduced tree stocking levels, use narrative 00N, which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity as doing so would remove stored carbon and reduce potential for sequestering and storing carbon on the site.** |
| 430 | Irrigation Pipeline (feet) | 01N | Replacement of an earthen channel that is supplied by pumping water with a closed conduit, resulting in enhanced conveyance efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use. | • Use 01N when specifically replacing an earthen channel system with a closed conduit system supplied irrigation water by a pumping plant. When implemented this way, this practice enables more efficient water conveyance due to reduced seepage and evaporation, which in turn would result in fossil fuel energy savings that, in most cases, would lead to GHG emission reductions.<br>• The system must not currently be supplied water solely by a renewable energy driven pumping plant to provide expected energy savings.<br>• Additional criteria in the practice standard to meet the purpose of reducing energy use is required to be met when using this narrative and to be considered a mitigation activity.<br>• Because the potential mitigation benefits from energy efficiency and reduction assume a baseline scenario that relies on a fossil fuel-based energy source, some areas of the country (i.e., those already using solely renewable or nuclear energy sources) would therefore not realize any GHG emissions benefits from the implementation of this practice. Planners must consider local energy sources when planning the practice as a CSAF mitigation activity; existing system must not be solely powered by a renewable or nuclear energy source.<br>• When considering downstream flows of irrigation water, if in the planner's judgment there is a reasonable likelihood that irrigation water saved through this practice will be used downstream, this practice may not result in the desired overall GHG emissions reductions.<br>• **For other applications of the practice, use 00N (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 441 | Irrigation System, Microirrigation (acres) | 02N | Switching from higher to lower pressure irrigation system, resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use. | • Use 02N when specifically switching an existing system from a higher to lower pressure micro-irrigation system. When implemented this way, this practice enables more precise and efficient water use which would result in fossil fuel energy savings that, in most cases, would lead to GHG emission reductions.<br>• Only applicable when changes are made to an existing system that is not supplied water solely by a renewable energy driven pumping plant. Do not use for implementation of a new irrigation system.<br>• Practice implementation should not result in increased irrigated acres on the operation.<br>• Because the potential mitigation benefits from energy efficiency and reduction assume a baseline scenario that relies on a fossil fuel-based energy source, some areas of the country (i.e., those already using solely renewable or nuclear energy sources) would therefore not realize any GHG emissions benefits from the implementation of this practice. Planners must consider local energy sources when planning the practice as a CSAF mitigation activity; existing system must not be powered solely by a renewable or nuclear energy source.<br>• **For other applications of the practice, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |

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| 442 | Sprinkler System (acres) | 02N | Utilization of variable rate irrigation (VRI) technology resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use. | • Use 02N when specifically using the practice to use variable rate irrigation (VRI) technology resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use.<br>• Use 03N when specifically using the practice to switch from higher to lower pressure irrigation systems resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use.<br>• Use 04N when specifically using the practice to renozzle the sprinkler head resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use.<br>• When using narratives 02N, 03N, and 04N, this practice enables more precise and efficient water use which in turn would result in fossil fuel energy savings that, in most cases, would lead to GHG emission reductions.<br>• Practice implementation should not result in increased irrigated acres on the operation.<br>• Additional criteria regarding the analysis of pressure, flow rate, seasonal hours of operation, and application depth in the practice standard to meet the purpose of reducing energy use is required to be met when using this narrative and to be considered a mitigation activity.<br>• Because the potential mitigation benefits from energy efficiency and reduction assume a baseline scenario that relies on a fossil fuel-based energy source, some areas of the country (i.e., those already using solely renewable or nuclear energy sources) would not realize any GHG emissions benefits from the implementation of this practice. Planners must consider local energy sources when planning the practice as a CSAF mitigation activity; existing system must not be solely powered by a renewable or nuclear energy source.<br>• When considering downstream flows of irrigation water, if in the planner's judgment there is a reasonable likelihood that irrigation water saved through this practice will be used downstream, this practice may not result in the desired overall GHG emissions reductions.<br>• **For other applications of the practice that do not meet the criteria above, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| | | 03N | Switching from higher to lower pressure irrigation systems resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use. | |
| | | 04N | Renozzling sprinkler head resulting in enhanced application efficiency and reduced fossil fuel energy use. | |
| 449 | Irrigation Water Management (acres) | 03N | Managing water levels in rice fields to include dry down between full flood conditions prior to re-flooding (alternated wetting and drying) to minimize greenhouse gas production in accordance with an irrigation water management plan. | • Use 03N only when implementing the practice as part of an alternated wetting and drying (AWD) system in rice fields. When implemented this way, this practice may reduce $CH_4$ emissions from rice production.<br>• **For other applications of the practice, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 484 | Mulching (acres) | 02N | Natural Material- Apply only natural mulch materials for full or partial soil coverage. | • Use 02N when specifically applying natural mulches. When implemented mulch application is expected to improve soil organic matter and increase carbon stocks.<br>• The main natural types of mulches include: straw, hay, pine needles, woody residue (shredded), woody residue (chopped).<br>• **Other mulch materials applied for this practice are not a CSAF mitigation activity.** |

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| 533 | Pumping Plant (number) | 02N | Replacing existing pumps with high-efficiency pump. | • Use 02N when specifically using the practice to replace an existing pump with a higher-efficiency pump. When implemented this way, this practice increases pump efficiency, which in turn would result in energy savings that, in most cases, would lead to emission reductions.<br>• Additional criteria in the practice standard to meet the purpose of reducing energy use is required to be met when using this narrative and to be considered a mitigation activity, including but not limited to meeting or exceeding the Nebraska Pumping Plant Performance Criteria for fossil fuel or electrical grid powered pumping plants.<br>• Because the potential mitigation benefits from energy efficiency and reduction assume baseline scenarios that rely on a fossil fuel-based energy source; some areas of the country (i.e., those already using solely renewable or nuclear energy sources) would therefore not realize any GHG emissions benefits from the implementation of this practice. Planners must consider local energy sources when planning the practice as a CSAF mitigation activity; existing system must not be powered solely by a renewable energy or nuclear source.<br>• If the objective is switching the power source for the pumping system and not replacing the pump itself with a high-efficiency pump, CPS Combustion System<br>• Improvement (Code 372) should be considered. Where payment scenarios for CPS Code 372 do not adequately support switching power sources due to the size of the pump system, CPS Code 533 can be used as applicable. If the narrative is used to switch from a diesel source to an on-farm renewable power source thereby eliminating fossil fuel associated emissions, additional criteria to reduce energy used is not required.<br>• **For other applications of the practice, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 554 | Drainage Water Management (acres) | 03N | Drainage Water Management is conducted on cultivated organic soils to raise the groundwater table in the non-growing season. | • Use 03N when specifically using the practice to implement drainage water management on cultivated organic soils to raise the water table in the non-growing season. When implemented this way the practice is expected to reduce carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions, while maintaining crop productivity. Fields must contain existing drainage systems; this practice should not result in increased drainage acres on the operation.<br>• Use appropriate data layers to determine soil type to support determination of site applicability.<br>• Consider the likelihood of methane emissions when water tables are maintained close to or above the peat surface when establishing non-growing season water table elevations.<br>• Additional criteria in the practice standard to meet the purpose of reducing oxidation of organic matter in soils is required to be met when using this narrative and to be considered a mitigation activity.<br>• **For other applications of the practice, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 592 | Feed Management (animal unit) | 03N | Reduce enteric methane emissions from animal feeding operations by manipulating the quantity and quality of dietary nutrients, incorporating feed additives and feed ingredients, or adjusting concentrate to forage ratio in livestock and poultry diets to lower methane produced and emitted during digestion. | • Use 03N when specifically using the practice to reduce enteric $CH_4$ emissions from animal feeding operations by manipulating the quantity and quality of dietary nutrients, incorporating feed additives and feed ingredients, or adjusting concentrate to forage ratio in livestock and poultry diets to lower $CH_4$ produced and emitted during digestion. When implemented this way, this practice can lead to reduced enteric $CH_4$ emissions through adjustments in animal feed and management, diet formulation, and feed additives that influence $CH_4$ production during animal digestion.<br>• **For applications of the practice other than methane reduction, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| 604 | Saturated Buffer (feet) | 02N | Replacement of a cultivated riparian area with an optimized saturated buffer system. | • Use 02N only when implementing the practice in a way that replaces a cultivated riparian area with an optimized saturated buffer system with perennial vegetation. When implemented this way, this practice can lead to increased carbon sequestration in soils and perennial biomass, as well as minor $N_2O$ emissions reductions associated with the reduced fertilizer application on the formerly-cultivated cropland and nitrogen scavenging of nitrogen runoff.<br>• **For any other implementation of the practice, use 00N (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |

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| 643 | Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (acres) | 01N | Restoration of streams and associated floodplains using low-tech structures (such as beaver dam analogs or other stick-and-stone structures) to kick-start natural ecological and hydrologic processes required for maintenance of healthy and functioning streams and associated floodplains. | • Use 01N only when implementing the practice to restore streams and associated floodplains using low-tech structures to kick-start natural ecological and hydrologic processes required for maintenance of healthy and functioning streams and associated floodplains. When implemented this way, this practice can revitalize hydrologic conditions that limit the decomposition and extend the residence time of soil organic carbon stocks and enhance organic matter input from regenerated riparian vegetation, leading to increased carbon sequestration.<br>• Use 02N only when implementing the practice to restore oyster reefs on shallow, subtidal, subaqueous soils without harvest of oysters. When implemented this way, this practice can reduce the availability of carbon and nitrogen by removal, assimilation into oyster biomass, and burial, in addition to nutrient removal through nitrogen burial and promoting microbial conditions that promote denitrification in nearby subaqueous soils.<br>• **For other applications of this practice, use the appropriate narrative (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |
| | | 02N | Restoration of an oyster reef on shallow subtidal, subaqueous soils without harvest. | |
| 657 | Wetland Restoration (acres) | 01N | Restoration of a previously drained wetland on temperate or boreal histosols. | • Use 01N only when implementing the practice to restore previously drained wetlands on temperate and boreal histosols. When implemented this way, the practice is expected to result in lower net greenhouse gas emissions through a decrease in $CO_2$ emissions related to the oxidation of soil carbon and enhancement of its function as a carbon sink, despite an increase in potential $CH_4$ emissions.<br>• Use appropriate data layers to determine soil type and climate region to support determination of applicability<br>• Tropical histosols are not applicable at this time.<br>• **For any other implementation of the practice, use 00N (which would not be a CSAF mitigation activity).** |