



United States Department of Agriculture

2014

Farm Bill

A large, semi-transparent, light blue graphic of a water drop with a thick outline, positioned on the right side of the page. It overlaps the text of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the background image.

**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**



2014 Farm Bill and Financial Assistance Programs

Financial Assistance Programs – Tom Morgart

- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



Requirements for all programs

Adjusted Gross Income

- \$900,000 for both conservation and commodity program payments and benefits.

RCPP is only program with AGI waiver authority.

- Highly Erodible Land and Wetland compliance is required for all program applicants.

All programs

- All financial assistance program applications are competitively ranked and selected for funding based on the ranking score.
- All financial assistance programs accept applications continuously. We announce application deadlines to enable applications to be ranked and selected for funding.



Agricultural Management Assistance

- Participants will be required to meet new Adjusted Gross Income requirement of \$900,000.
- Applicants are required to be Agricultural Producers.
- Land must be Highly Erodible Land and Wetland compliant.

Agricultural Management Assistance

- In Maryland the focus of AMA is on irrigation and seasonal high tunnels.
- Typical funding for AMA is between \$130,000 and \$200,000.

AMA has an annual payment limitation of \$50,000 per year. Maximum contract is \$450,000

EQIP

- Single EQIP Payment Limitation (\$450,000).
- Maximum Contract Length is set at 10 years.
- If you are a historically underserved producer, you can receive an advance payment up to 50% of a contracted item. The item must be certified within 90 days of the advance. Historically underserved producers are beginning farmers, limited resource producers and socially disadvantage producers.

General Fund Requirements

- Socially Disadvantaged and Beginning Farmers target of 5% of EQIP funding. Veteran farmers receive priority funding.
-
- Minimum 5% Funding Targeted for Wildlife Habitat
- 60% of EQIP funds targeted to Livestock practices.

EQIP



Conservation Stewardship Program

The Conservation Stewardship Program helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resources concerns.

CSP

- Funding for this programs comes in the form of acres. Maryland was awarded slightly less than 1,500 acres in 2015.
- The average payment per acre is less than \$17.00.



United States Department of Agriculture

Partnerships

2014 Farm Bill

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)





RCPP

RCPP is a new regional program that:

- Furthers the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife on a regional scale
- Encourages partners to cooperate with producers
- Provides assistance through:
 - Partnership agreements
 - Program contracts or easement agreements
- Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:
 - Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program (CBWP)
 - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
 - Great Lakes Basin Program for Erosion and Sediment Control



RCPP

Covered programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)



RCPP Funding

Available Funding

- \$100 Million of Direct RCPP funding each year
- 7% of funds from the four covered programs (ACEP, CStP, EQIP, HFRP) reserved annually through April 1st



RCPP

RCPP will implement eligible activities on eligible land through:

- Partnership agreements under which NRCS enters contracts and easement agreements with producers and landowners participating in a project with a selected partner; and
- Conservation Program Contracts (CPCs) or easement agreements in—
 - Critical conservation areas; or
 - In a selected partner project area but who are seeking to implement an eligible activity independent of a partner.



RCPP

Funding Allocation

- 25% for State Projects
- 40% for National Projects
- 35% for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas



RCPP

RCPP Purposes are:

To encourage partners to cooperate with producers in:

- meeting or avoiding the need for national, State, and local natural resource regulatory requirements related to production on eligible land; and
- implementing projects that will result in the installation and maintenance of eligible activities that affect multiple agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operations on a local, regional, State, or multistate basis

To further the regional or watershed scale conservation, restoration and sustainable use of:

- Soil
- Water
- Wildlife
- Related natural resources



RCPP

Eligible Land includes:

- Cropland
- Grassland
- Rangeland
- Pastureland
- Non-industrial private forest land
- Other land incidental to agricultural production
 - Wetlands,
 - Buffers
 - Etc.

RCPP

Critical Conservation Areas

- 8 critical conservation areas have been selected, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed is one of the critical conservation areas.
- Priority consideration given to geographical areas which:
 - Include multiple States with significant ag production
 - Have an existing agreement or work plan
 - Benefit water quality improvement
 - Benefit water quantity improvement
 - Assist producers to meet natural resource regulatory requirements



RCPP

Partnership Agreements:

- NRCS will conduct a competitive process to select applications for partnership agreements
- NRCS will make public the criteria used in evaluating applications



RCPP

Partners are responsible for:

- Contributing a significant portion of the overall costs
- Conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project
- Acting on a landowner's or producer's behalf, if requested by the landowners or producer in applying for assistance
- Leveraging financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives.
- Conducting and providing an assessment of the project costs and conservation effects



RCPP

- In these selected partner project areas, RCPP program assistance is delivered to producers through conservation program contracts and easement agreements under the covered programs.

RCPP proposals funded in 2015

- In 2016, 6 RCPP proposals were selected for funding that will bring more than 13.8 million dollars to funds to Maryland.
 - Partners include:
 - » The Nature Conservancy (Wetland Easements and EQIP)
 - » Maryland Department of Agriculture (EQIP)
 - » Maryland Department of Natural Resources (Ag Easements)
 - » Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (EQIP)
 - » The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (EQIP)
 - » Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (EQIP)

Take home

- Financial assistance programs start with a conservation plan. You can receive a conservation plan for free from your area service center.
- Your local service center will consider the resource concerns on the property and direct the producer to the program or programs that are the best fit for the Ag operation.



United States Department of Agriculture

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

www.md.nrcs.usda.gov

or you can reach Tom Morgart at 443.482.2927