

Vermont NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting Minutes

October 16, 2019, Colchester, Vermont

Chaired by VT NRCS State Conservationist Vicky Drew

Attending: Joe Buford, Obe Racicot, Marian Jordan, Chris Smith, Jeff Carter, Jenn Colby, Nancy Everhart, Tom Berry, Wendy Wilton, Marli Rupe, Dave Adams, Jeff Farber, Jill Arace, Ryan Patch, Nina Gage, Jess Buckley, Tucker Malone, Brittany Cole, Keith Thompson, Diane Butler, Kyla Bedard, Laura Ranker, Margaret Fowle, and *on the phone* Kira Jacobs, Eric Perkins, and Karl Honkonen.

Welcome and comments from State Conservationist Vicky Drew:

USDA FPAC Under Secretary Bill Northey, Senator Patrick Leahy and NRCS Chief Lohr Announced New *Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)*-Watershed Assessment Study in Vermont, at October 8 Press Event--

NRCS Chief Matt Lohr moderated the event. Senator Leahy also announced the over \$2,000,000 investment collectively in CEAP work, as well as a new \$3,000,000 appropriation to USDA ARS for a new Dairy Food Systems Science Center at the University of Vermont. Over 150 people attended the standing room only event, followed by a reception sponsored by the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts. The announcement was picked up by the Associated Press as well as several local evening network news stations (NBC and ABC) along with a number of ag-oriented press.

Two paired watersheds will be studied in this assessment, the Dead Creek and the Headwaters Little Otter Creek in Vermont's Lake Champlain Basin.

- NRCS provided \$500,000 for 4 years to the University of Vermont to lead this watershed assessment. Several key partners in the state and region are also providing financial support for the project including: University of Vermont, Vermont Dept. of Env. Conservation (under Vermont Agency of Natural Resources), USGS, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and USDA's Agricultural Research Service (via related projects).
- This will be a long-term study measuring the water quality effects of conservation at the watershed scale and fields within. We will also work on enhancing our understanding of the processes occurring and use that information to improve conservation strategies going forward.
- The study will utilize a combination of field work, monitoring, and, in the future, modeling to document and evaluate conservation effects.
- 3 additional related projects have also been funded to:
 - University of Vermont for \$815,000 for 4 years to evaluate innovative stacked conservation practice effects
 - USDA ARS for \$405,000 for 2 years to evaluate the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework for the Eastern US, including Vermont
 - USDA ARS for \$350,000 for one year to develop and pilot the patented MAPHEX mobile manure treatment system for Vermont

Agreements are signed for watershed study. Monies ready to go.

Drew thanked those who attended last week's CEAP press conference and VACD for hosting the reception at ECHO.

Vermont NRCS Staffing Update—78 percent of FTE Cap. 3 Pathways positions open this week—two in the soils arena and one in engineering. Apply in *USAJobs*. There are also 3 soil conservation technician (3) openings in Newport, Rutland and St. Albans, closing this Friday. Doesn't require a degree. Challenge has been that there is a lack of national HR personnel to keep up with workload.

Starting a strategic planning process for the next 5 years. A bid was issued but all came back over our budget. Trying to pare down the scope to find the right balance. This process will involve all stakeholders. There has been some negative criticism that there is a hyper focus on Lake Champlain while ignoring other parts of the state (Connecticut River). This planning process will help explore options for addressing concerns throughout the state.

New Farm Bill altered State Tech Committee roles. "Summary of State Technical Committees Referenced in the Farm Bill. [View online here](#). An example is looking at innovation, We may need a subcommittee for this led by Joe Buford. Contact joe.buford@usda.gov if interested.

Tom Berry (Senator Leahy's office) delivered a report on legislative issues. Continuing Resolution in place through Nov. 21. Some uncertainty on final spending bills but remaining optimistic. There is a chance for minibus bills to wrap up less controversial bills which would include the agriculture bill. House has passed bills and Senate has their bills through committee.

Vermont's Dairy Innovation Grant—one of 3 centers will be here in Vermont. First year of funding \$400,000. Once established, VAAFM will work in Vermont and support work in surrounding states to provide technical and financial assistance to help dairy producers diversify their products, demonstrate innovative on-farm production practices, and adapt to emerging market trends, with the overall goal of improving dairy farm viability. Leahy has worked to secure an additional \$20 million to support the three initiatives in that bill. If advanced by the Committee, it will need to be approved by the Senate, the House, and ultimately signed by the President. Another announcement made last week was money to support an ARS research center at UVM to work on food systems. Thanked everyone for the press event and said the Senator really enjoyed it.

Kira Jacobs (EPA) said that VT NRCS' work on the source water protection process was exemplary and thanked the staff for their work and effort.

Comments from Keith Thompson—issue with logging bridges b/c they are not owned by the landowners--they are viewed as equipment so it's a challenge to use federal funds for this. If it's the landowner who gets the funding, it's permanent but if its mobile equipment used by logger, it's much more challenging to support loggers. If you have ideas on how to help use funds to make those resources available to loggers, please let him know. Bridges are \$15,000 (metal) and wooden are \$5-8,000 (but not permanent). Jill Arace said she might have some thoughts for District support.

FSA Update-Wendy Wilton and Kim Peck. Joint training with NRCS and FSA nationally on CRP at the end of this month. Kim is going. Toby from NRCS is going. Local staff will then be trained Nov. 20-21. This training will be technical. If a different session is needed for partners, that can be arranged. CRP Sign-Up #52 Vermont focused on re-enrollments and the result was disappointing (about 30 acres re-enrolled). Perhaps b/c there was a lapse and now partners can

help support this effort and get the word out. One stumbling block is soil rental rates aren't as good as they should be. FSA worked on a request to increase these and hopeful for a response soon. Under Secretary Northey was informed as well. DMC signup is complete now in signup for 2020. 7 million into dairy farms under MPP. Kim Peck said right now there is no authorization for CRP. Vicky said the same applies to NRCS programs b/c regulations aren't posted.

Comments from Chris Smith— CREP subcommittee-this is important tool for outreach. How can we do more? Is there an outreach strategy for the state and what is the message? We could meet and work on this now to prepare for the rollout given that we had a lag. Vicky Drew asked about what type of support—outreach, etc—could be provided for this? How best can we accomplish this? Perhaps a role for the VAWQP's ANRCE (Ag and Natural Resources Communicators for the Environment) committee.

Obediah Racicot, Farm Bill Programs Update—the *PowerPoint* displayed by Obe is attached. 2019 was a busy year. \$20.23 million in total financial assistance obligations (straight to producers). \$12.7 in EQIP. \$1.8 RCPP-EQIP. \$710,000 in CSP (a huge increase with 30 contracts). This includes 15 Agricultural Land Contracts @ \$484,403 and 15 Non-Industrial Private Forestland (NIPF) Contracts @ \$225,788.30. \$4.6 million in easements between wetlands and ag land easements. Refer to attached table which breaks down allocations/funding. **Change is coming in all programs.** Lots of little changes with big implications. Can't announce sign up cutoff dates yet but we can always accept applications. *Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)*— new software will replaces a lot of existing software for assessment and ranking. It's causing some frustration with the field b/c they haven't seen it yet. It should be a one stop shop eventually. Refer to CART workflow graphic in attached *PowerPoint*. Anything contracted after October 1 will be via CART. Training is coming. Getting ready for 2020. EQIP subcommittee was hosted in August and a Forestry and Wildlife Subcommittee meeting will be hosted next week. Looking at how to prioritize resource concerns. Recommendations made from the subcommittee were discussed. These included continued priority funding to Lake Champlain; emphasize on source water protection; allocate more to rest of state and/or the Connecticut River; and explore other funding pools like soil health, climate resiliency, pollinators. If anyone is interested in a soil health subcommittee, contact Joe Buford.

In reference to the blue chart in the PowerPoint: still funding seasonal high tunnel pool (\$650,000) and statewide soil health pool. Obe asked that members provide feedback on these funding pools. Vicky asked, "How would this be different than the cropland funding pool?" Jenn Colby mentioned bale grazing and soil health for building up organic matter. This could be an example where soil health doesn't fall under cropland. It's low tech but highly effective. She also asked about CSP, "how does budgeting work for these programs and as we move forward in our outreach, how much room is there for the pushing of it in terms of budget?" Obe said the state resource assessment conducted each year helps with this and each year we ask for more and put in another request for \$770,000. It's always been an acreage-based cap previously. Jeff Carter asked about those applicants that did not get funded in CSP and why? Drew said we could look into this.

Obe said a new RCPP project run by Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited, "Connecting the Connecticut," will start-up this year in the upper CT river headwaters creating fish passages.

NWQI Source Water Protection (Diana Butler, VRWA)-held workgroups and GIS analysis (Reed and Laura Ranker). Great collaboration with USDA, DEC. Looked at eastern side of the state and ID'd where drinking water sources might be impaired. Identified Vernon Dam-Connecticut River and Headwaters Passumpsic River. These will be ranked higher. Kira J, EPA, asked about a presentation on source water protection in Vermont at a future state tech meeting so partners could have a better understanding on how to use this info to protect water supplies. Drew said perhaps training to field staff and a state tech committee presentation would be effective. FSA supports Diana's specialist position, so they are an important partner. Laura and Diana will coordinate on how best to share this process on identifying protection areas. Oftentimes, private landowners don't know their land impacts public water sources. There are 1400 public water supply areas in Vermont (includes campgrounds, gas stations, etc). Karl H. mentioned "[Forest to Faucets,](#)"

Identification of top ten practices for offering 90 payment rate-incentive can be offered to anyone, not just historically underserved. 2 workgroups and a subcommittee discussed it. Next steps are to engage VT agency of ag and state tech members to finalize the list.

Easements/Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC's)— For 2020, changed land category designations. From soil 1,2,3 to *land use designators*. Hired a new company to evaluate upland wetland ag use and wetland forest use. Page 4 of the handout includes the definitions. For example, in central region, wetland ag value went up \$1500 and in our wetland forested as well. Southern zone went down and in some areas there was insufficient data. **ACTION: If you agree/disagree with new proposed GARC's, please contact Obe by next Friday, October 25.**

Chris Smith was asked to comment, specifically. Then Obe will send them into national appraiser. *NOTE:* ACEP-ALE Subcommittee Meeting will be hosted November 7, 9:30 am to 12:00 pm, NRCS State Office Conference Room.

RCPP 2.0—very different. New feature includes CRP-like land rentals. Five-year agreements. When thinking of proposals, ask "Why is this project so compelling and different that it should be done through RCPP instead of other NRCS programs?" Not limited by program rules—not subject to \$450k per contract limit, for example. No national funding pool, only single-state or multi state. Alternative Funding Arrangements (very grant-like, but only 15 nationwide), to be announced in the future. This might be appropriate for payment for ecosystem services. Programmatic agreements were discussed. They do not obligate any money and funds are obligated through supplemental agreements. FA/TA split is defined by statute now. Three types of TA available—NRCS, enhancement, implementation. 70 percent must be FA and 30 percent TA. Enhancement TA can include outreach. An example project budget is included in the *PowerPoint* slides. Congress wants these projects done in 5 years with reportable measurements. Emphasis in on environmental outcomes. Award announcements expected week of March 9, 2020.

State Resource Conservationist Joe Buford provided updates on the practice payment schedule and CART--

CART Overview: efficiency is the goal. Automates over 200,000 questions and 60+ staff years and its program neutral. Outcomes/Conservation Impacts. NRCS has created a new Outcomes division as well. CART helps capture this. Vermont CART intro will be hosted for employees Oct 30, Camp Johnson.

Practice Payment Schedules—each year these are re-evaluated to assess the amount of FA for each practice. Added a few this year. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the practices have a reduction in cost or FY 20 (due to

reductions in component costs). FY 21 Payment Rate Development will begin in January. Compared FY 19 and FY 20 to see reduction. For example, cover crop was 12 percent reduction. **Top Ten Practices Draft**—Proposed practices include: nutrient management; riparian forest buffer; tree and shrub planting; cover crop; fencing; stream crossing; aquatic organism passage; grassed waterway; diversion forage and biomass planting; lined waterway or outlet; no till; prescribed grazing; animal trails and walkways; waste storage facility; and heavy use area. *Let Joe know if you want to be part of this discussion and making the final decision.*

The next meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2020. The meeting adjourned at 12:32

**Vermont
USDA
State Technical
Committee Meeting**

October 16, 2019,
9:30 a.m., Colchester



Call-In Information: (888) 844-9904

Access Code: 2099277



Welcome from NRCS	-Update on NRCS activities and roundtable introduction of partners present	Vicky Drew , NRCS State Conservationist
Legislative Update	-Updates from Capitol Hill	Tom Berry , Agriculture Policy Advisor to Senator Patrick Leahy
FSA Update	-Updates from the Farm Service Agency	Wendy Wilton , FSA State Executive Director - Kim Peck , Agricultural/GIS Program Specialist
NRCS Conservation Programs Update	-Final Program Numbers for FY 19 -EQIP Subcommittee Reports -RCPP Call for Proposals and new program guidelines	Obediah Racicot , NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
Resource Conservation Update	-Practice Payment Schedule -CART	Joe Buford , NRCS State Resource Conservationist
Final Discussion and wrap up	Scheduling next meeting (Jan. 22)	Vicky Drew



Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture

October 16, 2019 State
Technical Committee

NRCS Farm Bill Programs Update



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nrcs.usda.gov/

2019 - a Busy Year (all programs)

- **\$20.23 million in total financial assistance obligations**
- **\$12.7 million in EQIP**
- **\$1.8 million RCPP-EQIP**
- **\$710,000 in CSP**
- **\$4.76 million in easements**



30 contracts!

- *Refer to handout for total breakdown*

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2019 - a Busy Year (cont.)

Summary of 2019 NRCS Financial Assistance Programs - September 27, 2019

Funding Pool	Amount Obligated in Fiscal Year 2019	Number of Contracts	Percentage Breakdown																																														
Lake Champlain Non - Priority Watersheds	<table> <tr><td>Lake Champlain - Farmstead</td><td>\$ 4,486,551.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Lake Champlain - Cropland</td><td>\$ 1,795,018.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Lake Champlain - Perennial Cropland (Grazing)</td><td>\$ 681,572.00</td></tr> <tr><td>NWQI - Rock River</td><td>\$ 462,174.00</td></tr> <tr><td>NWQI - East Creek</td><td>\$ 33,163.00</td></tr> <tr><td>NWQI - Hungerford Brook</td><td>\$ 316,458.00</td></tr> <tr><td>ROS - Farmstead</td><td>\$ 1,349,436.00</td></tr> <tr><td>ROS - Cropland Pool</td><td>\$ 186,011.00</td></tr> <tr><td>ROS - Perennial Cropland (Grazing)</td><td>\$ 514,316.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Statewide Forestry & Wildlife</td><td>\$ 590,621.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Statewide Conservation Activity Plans</td><td>\$ 128,720.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Statewide Beginning Farmer</td><td>\$ 386,309.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Statewide Socially Disadvantaged</td><td>\$ -</td></tr> <tr><td>Statewide Disaster (Drought)</td><td>\$ 867,997.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Statewide Specialty Crop and High Tunnel</td><td>\$ 627,307.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Certified Organic</td><td>\$ 50,487.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Organic Transition</td><td>\$ 2,182.00</td></tr> <tr><td>On-Farm Energy</td><td>\$ 23,750.00</td></tr> <tr><td>On-Farm Energy CAPS</td><td>\$ -</td></tr> <tr><td>Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)</td><td>\$ 191,784.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total EQIP Obligated</td><td>\$ 12,703,856.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Total EQIP Received</td><td>\$ 13,548,302.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Obligation Rate</td><td>94%</td></tr> </table>	Lake Champlain - Farmstead	\$ 4,486,551.00	Lake Champlain - Cropland	\$ 1,795,018.00	Lake Champlain - Perennial Cropland (Grazing)	\$ 681,572.00	NWQI - Rock River	\$ 462,174.00	NWQI - East Creek	\$ 33,163.00	NWQI - Hungerford Brook	\$ 316,458.00	ROS - Farmstead	\$ 1,349,436.00	ROS - Cropland Pool	\$ 186,011.00	ROS - Perennial Cropland (Grazing)	\$ 514,316.00	Statewide Forestry & Wildlife	\$ 590,621.00	Statewide Conservation Activity Plans	\$ 128,720.00	Statewide Beginning Farmer	\$ 386,309.00	Statewide Socially Disadvantaged	\$ -	Statewide Disaster (Drought)	\$ 867,997.00	Statewide Specialty Crop and High Tunnel	\$ 627,307.00	Certified Organic	\$ 50,487.00	Organic Transition	\$ 2,182.00	On-Farm Energy	\$ 23,750.00	On-Farm Energy CAPS	\$ -	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	\$ 191,784.00	Total EQIP Obligated	\$ 12,703,856.00	Total EQIP Received	\$ 13,548,302.00	Obligation Rate	94%	311	61%
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2018 Farm Bill Update

- **Lost authority to operate 9/3/2019**
- **Watch for public comment periods on interim and final rules**
 - EQIP
 - CSP
 - RCPP
 - ACEP
- **Should be published in the Federal Register by December 2019**

STREAMLINE, STREAMLINE, STREAMLINE

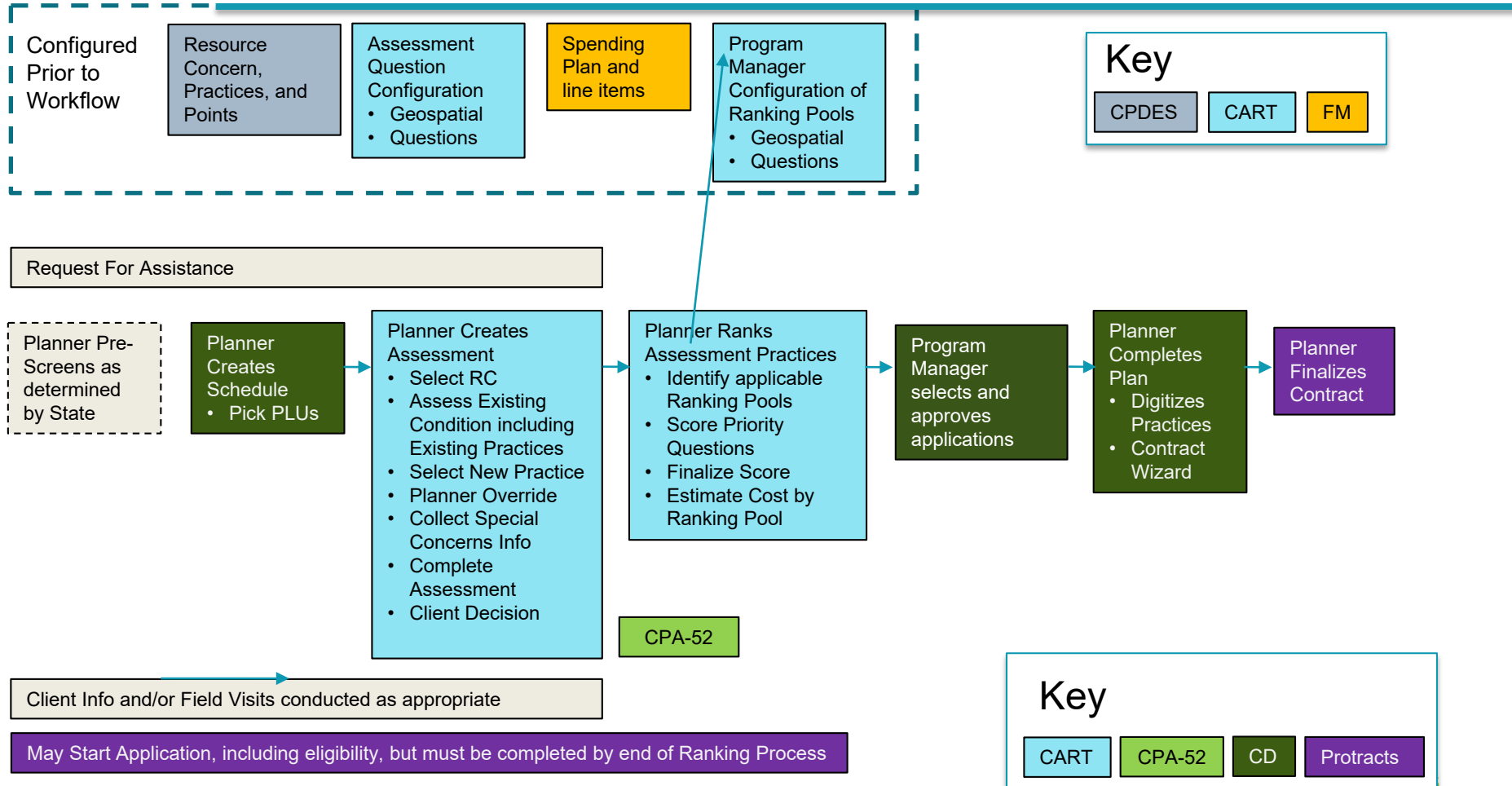


Change is Coming (all programs)

- **No new programs, but lots of little changes**
- **Cannot announce sign-up cutoff dates at this time**
 - EQIP, CSP, AMA, RCPP, WRE, or ALE
- **Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)**
 - Will be released ??????
 - Statewide training and re-gearing of NRCS processes
- **Likely to be another compressed year**



CART Workflow



Getting Ready for 2020 (EQIP)

- **Activities to date to support CART and 2020**
 - EQIP subcommittee – 8/21/2019
 - Forestry and Wildlife Subcommittee – 10/21/2019
 - **Recommendations to the State Technical Committee**
 - Continue to prioritize funding to Lake Champlain
 - Emphasize Source Water Protection
 - Consider allocating more to the Rest of State and/or the CT River Valley if warranted by ranking scores, i.e. fund the best projects in areas outside of Lake Champlain when warranted
 - Explore other funding pool ideas: Soil Health, Climate Resiliency, Pollinator
- *Minutes and materials available upon request*



Getting Ready for 2020 (EQIP - cont.)

Proposed 2020 EQIP Allocations Per Funding Pool 10-16-2019 State Technical Committee - CART State Spending Plan						
CART Ranking Pool Type	CART Subaccount		Proposed Allocation			
Lake Champlain Basin Funding Pools	Lake Champlain Farmstead	100% of EQIP Allocation*	\$ 7,330,000	56%	\$ 4,580,000	
	Lake Champlain Pasture and Perennial (Grazing)				\$ 500,000	
	Lake Champlain Cropland				\$ 1,950,000	
	NWQI - Rock River				\$ 100,000	
	NWQI - East Creek				\$ 100,000	
	NWQI - Hungerford Brook				\$ 100,000	
Rest of State Funding Pools	ROS - Farmstead		\$ 5,670,000	44%	\$ 1,500,000	
	ROS - Pasture and Perennial Cropland (Grazing)				\$ 150,000	
	ROS - Cropland				\$ 750,000	
	NWQI - Source Water Protection				\$ 130,000	
Statewide Funding Pools	Statewide Forestry & Wildlife				\$ 1,100,000	
	Statewide Conservation Activity Plans				\$ 368,000	
	Statewide Soil Health				\$ 150,000	
	Statewide Specialty Crop and Seasonal High Tunnel				\$ 650,000	
Nationally Required Funding Pools	Statewide Beginning Farmer				\$ 500,000	
	Statewide Socially Disadvantaged				\$ 5,000	
	Statewide 2020 Certified Organic				\$ 80,000	
	Statewide 2020 Organic Transition				\$ 12,000	
	Statewide 2020 On-Farm Energy + CAPS				\$ 25,000	
CIG	2020 Conservation Innovation Grants				\$ 250,000	
			\$ 13,000,000		\$ 13,000,000	0.0%
Assumptions are based on an anticipated \$13,000,000 allocation						

Assumptions are based on an anticipated \$13,000,000 allocation

9-27-2020 OSR and HJW

RCPP Project name	RCPP CART Subaccount	Balance Available
RCPP - VACD	NMPs	\$ 233,334
RCPP - DEC	Farmstead Pool	\$ 1,880,000
RCPP - DEC	Forestry Erosion Pool	\$ 191,000
RCPP - CHC	Cold Hollow Woodlot Projects	\$ 267,000
RCPP - WMI	Young Forest Initiative	\$ 1,744
RCPP - LIS	CT River Basin - In Stream	\$ 290,000
RCPP - LIS	CT River Basin - Nitrogen	\$ 12,000
RCPP - OCNRCD	Lake Memphremagog	\$ 3,700
RCPP - TNC	Connecting the Connecticut	\$ 250,000

See handout

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NWQI Source Water Protection

- **Interim Farm Bill Rule (Issued via NB_300_19_25)**
 - Vernon Dam-Connecticut River
 - Headwaters Passumpsic River



Source Water Protection HUC12
Subwatersheds, Vermont



Map prepared by VT-NRCS
24 September, 2019

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Top 10 EQIP Practices (90% payment)

- **Almost there, but not quite**
- **2 workgroups convened – EQIP Subcommittee + Internal NRCS Teams**
- **Suggestions included (not final):**
 - Nutrient management (manure injection), Riparian Forest Buffer, Tree and Shrub Planting, Cover Crop, Fence, Stream Crossing, Aquatic Organism Passage, Grassed Waterway, Diversion, Forage and biomass planting, Lined waterway or outlet, No till, Prescribed grazing, Animal Trails and Walkways
- **Next steps: engage VAAFM and additional STC members to finalize the list**



Getting Ready for 2020 (Easements)

- WRE - Areawide Market Analysis returned last week (AWMA GARC rates). Proposed rates are:

Vermont GARCs from Market Analysis for 2020						
Region	Upland Indicated Value	Upland GARC at 95%	Wetland-Ag Indicated Value	Wetland-Ag GARC at 95%	Wetland-Forest Indicated Value	Wetland-Forest GARC at 95%
Central	\$3,745.00	\$3,550.00	\$3,290.00	\$3,120.00	\$2,150.00	\$2,040.00
South	\$3,785.00	\$3,590.00	Insufficient data; appraisal only		\$1,755.00	\$1,660.00
West	\$3,630.00	\$3,440.00	\$2,395.00	\$2,270.00	\$1,805.00	\$1,710.00
Northeast	Appraisal Only					

Land Class Definition:

Upland:

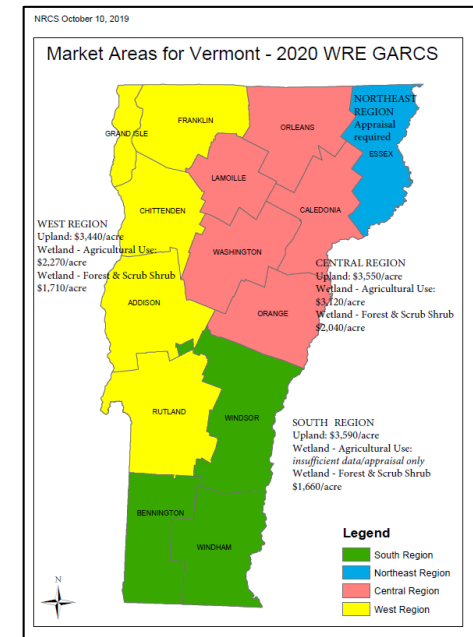
- The sale is not identified as a body of water
- The sale is not on a hydric soil
- The sale does not occur on a mapped wetland

Wetland-Agricultural Use:

- The sale is not identified as a water body but is listed as either a hydric soil or a mapped wetland
- The land is not forest nor in scrub-shrub conditions

Wetland-Forest or Scrub-Shrub:

- The sale is not identified as water but is listed as a hydric soil or is a mapped wetland
- The land is not open agricultural fields, cropland, hay land, nor pasture land



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See handouts

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Getting Ready for 2020 (Easements)

- **Waiting on any changes to National priorities before establishing work groups**
 - ALE subcommittee
 - Ranking
 - Waiver criteria
 - WRE Subcommittee
 - Ranking



RCPP 2019 (AKA: RCPP 2.0)



- **Standalone program with \$300 million annually—RCPP is no longer administered through other Farm Bill programs**
 - 5 Year agreements (no extension option)
- **Think of it as EQIPCSPCRPACEPHFRPPPL-566,**
 - “EQIP-like” contracts
 - “WRE-like” US held easements
 - “ALE-like” entity held easements
 - “CRP-like” land rentals
- **Ask yourself “why is this project so compelling and different that it should be done through RCPP instead of the regular NRCS programs?”**



RCPP 2019 (cont.)

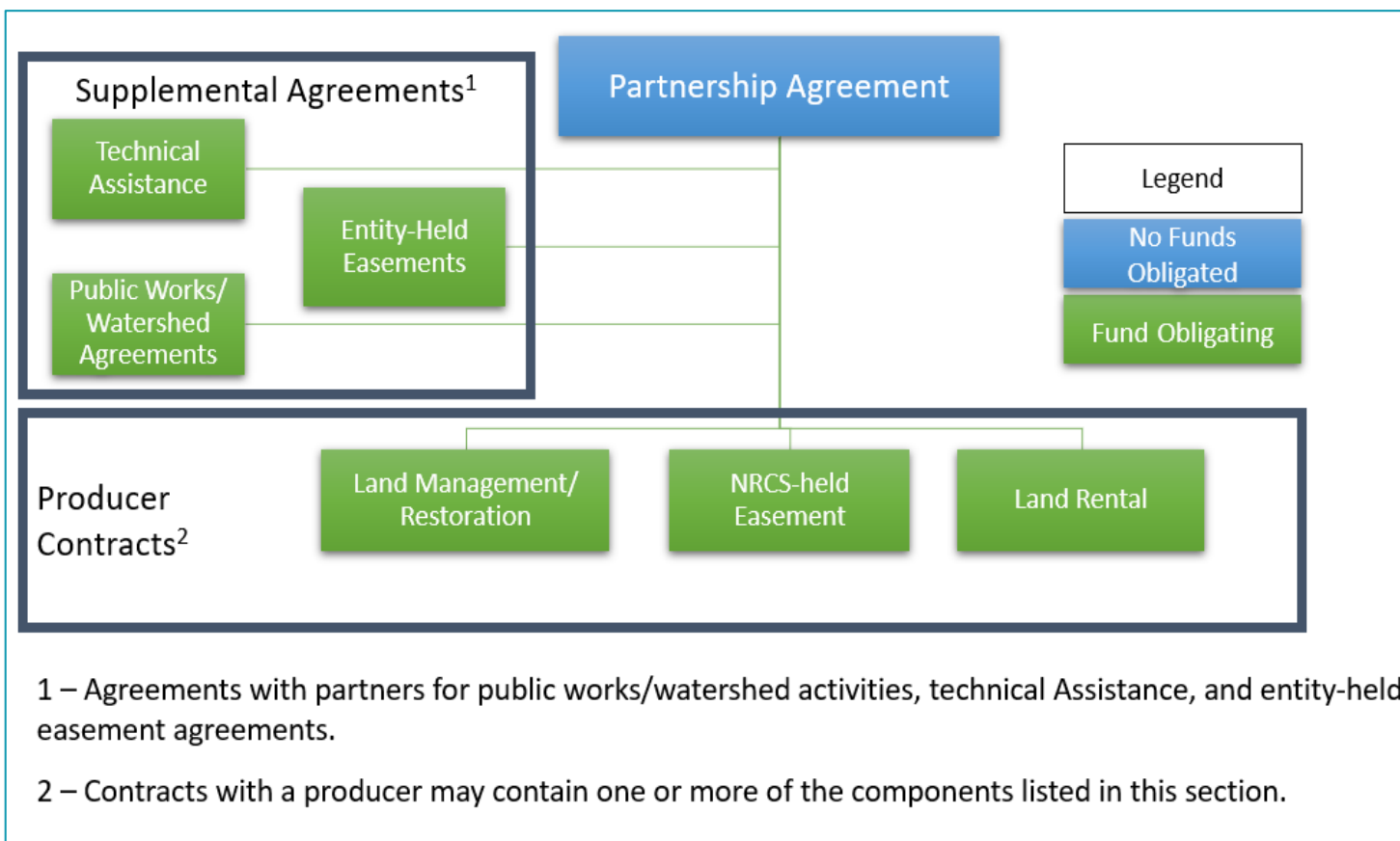


- **Not limited by the Covered Program rules as you know them:**
 - Land eligibility for easements (soil %, wetland restoration requirement)
 - EQIP payment limitation – an RCPP contract is not subject to \$450k per contract
 - Adjustable payments scenarios to allow for foregone income
- **No National funding pool, only single-State or multi-State**
 - Multistate projects must be a “manageable” number of States
 - We do not know the State allocation, apply for a realistic amount
- **Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) – will be announced in the future**
 - Ideas? “pay-for-performance/ecosystem services”



Programmatic Agreements – NEW!

- The programmatic agreement does not obligate any money
- Funds are obligated through CPCs and Supplemental Agreements.



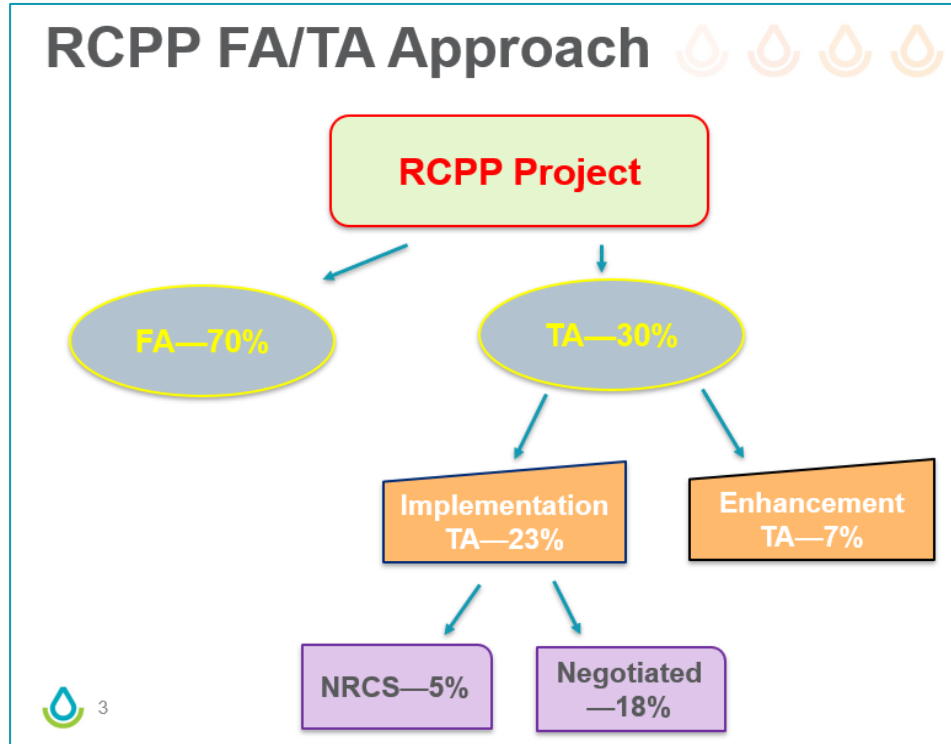
RCPP Activity Crosswalk

RCPP Activity Type	Associated Covered Program Authorities
Land Improvement / Management / Restoration	EQIP, CSP, ACEP-WRE (Restoration), HFRP (Restoration), PL-566
Land Rental	CRP
Easement <u>US-Held</u>	ACEP-WRE, HFRP (Easement), PL-566 (Floodplain Easement); expand to include agricultural land easements
Easement <u>Entity-Held</u>	ACEP-ALE (currently); expand to include other eligible easement types (e.g., wetlands, floodplains, forest lands)
Public Works / Watersheds	PL-566



RCPP Technical Assistance

- **Defined FA/TA split (per Statute)**
 - FA, NRCS TA, Enhancement TA, Implementation TA
 - TA is only obligated through a negotiated Supplemental Agreement



RCPP Project Finances



Example Project Budget

- **Partner requests an NRCS contribution of \$2,000,000**
- **70% must go toward FA - \$1,400,000**
- **30% can go toward TA - \$600,000**
 - NRCS must keep \$100,000 at a minimum
 - Partner can request up to \$140,000 for Enhancement TA (E)
 - \$360,000 must go toward on-ground implementation: design, engineering, etc.
- **It's contribution, not match – 1:1 minimum**
 - Some programs do require cash match (entity-held easements, flood control)



RCPP Partner Responsibilities

- **RCPP is not for everyone**
 - Partners need to demonstrate the capacity to manage a project (manage partners, manage contributions, etc.)
- **Emphasis on project outcomes—each RCPP projects is required to develop, measure and report on environmental outcomes (economic and social outcomes are optional).**



RCPP 2019 Timelines

RCPP Action	Timeline
RCPP FY 2019 funding announcement released	September 3, 2019
RCPP renewals awards announced	By November 15, 2019
Application period closes	December 3, 2019
RCPP review process initiated	December 4, 2019
RCPP Interim Final Rule released	Late 2019/Early 2020
AFA funding announcement released	Soon after IFR release
RCPP review process complete	January 15, 2020
RCPP award announcement	Week of March 9, 2020
FY 2019 RCPP partnership agreements (including renewals) executed	By mid-June 2020
Next funding announcement released	July 1, 2020
AFA awards announced	Summer 2020



- Refer to the **Announcement of Program Funding** for detailed information
- RCPP 2.0 applications are due **December 3, 2019**
- RCPP POC – Obediah.Racicot@usda.gov





United States Department of Agriculture



THE END



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Summary of 2019 NRCS Financial Assistance Programs - September 27, 2019

Funding Pool		Amount Obligated in Fiscal Year 2019		Number of Contracts	Percentage Breakdown	
Lake Champlain Watersheds	Lake Champlain - Farmstead	\$	4,496,551.00		16	57.8%
	Lake Champlain - Cropland	\$	1,795,018.00		49	23.1%
	Lake Champlain - Perennial Cropland (Grazing)	\$	681,572.00		16	8.8%
	NWQI - Rock River	\$	462,174.00		9	5.9%
	NWQI - East Creek	\$	33,163.00		4	0.4%
	NWQI - Hungerford Brook	\$	316,458.00		6	4.1%
Rest of State - Non Lake Champlain Basin Watersheds	ROS - Farmstead	\$	1,349,436.00		5	27.4%
	ROS - Cropland Pool	\$	186,011.00		6	3.8%
	ROS - Perennial Cropland (Grazing)	\$	514,316.00		7	10.5%
State Funding Pools	Statewide Forestry & Wildlife	\$	590,621.00		43	12.0%
	Statewide Conservation Activity Plans	\$	128,720.00		61	2.6%
	Statewide Beginning Farmer	\$	386,309.00		8	7.9%
	Statewide Socially Disadvantaged	\$	-		0	0.0%
	Statewide Disaster (Drought)	\$	867,997.00		35	17.6%
	Statewide Specialty Crop and High Tunnel	\$	627,307.00		37	12.8%
National Funding Pools	Certified Organic	\$	50,487.00		1	1.0%
	Organic Transition	\$	2,182.00		1	0.0%
	On-Farm Energy	\$	23,750.00		4	0.5%
	On-Farm Energy CAPS	\$				
	Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)	\$	191,784.00		3	3.9%

Total EQIP Obligated	\$ 12,703,856.00		311
Total EQIP Received	\$ 13,548,302.00		
Obligation Rate	94%		

RCPP - DEC	Farmstead Pool	\$	1,109,557.00		18
RCPP - DEC	Forestry Erosion Pool	\$	113,057.00		6
RCPP - CHC	Cold Hollow Woodlot Projects	\$	163,051.00		20
RCPP - WMI	Young Forest Initiative	\$	147,775.00		6
RCPP - LIS	CT River Basin - In Stream	\$	-		0
RCPP - LIS	CT River Basin - Nitrogen	\$	196,771.00		10
RCPP - OCNRCD	Lake Memphremagog	\$	80,786.00		4
	Total RCPP Obligated	\$	1,810,997.00		64

Statewide	AMA - Cropland	\$	247,225.00		18
	Total AMA Obligated	\$	247,225.00		18
	Total AMA Received	\$	250,000.00		
	Obligation Rate	99%			

Statewide	CSP (New enrollments + Renewals)	\$	710,117.00		30
	Total CSP Obligated	\$	710,211.00		30
	Total CSP Received	\$	777,000.00		
	Obligation Rate	91%			

Summary of 2019 NRCS Easement Programs

Program Name	Selected and Funded		
	Amount	Number of Parcels	Acres
ACEP-ALE	\$ 3,322,500.00	16	2,005
ACEP-WRE (Acquisition + Restoration)	\$ 927,995.00	2	262
RCPP-ACEP-ALE	\$ 87,500.00	1	157
RCPP-ACEP-WRE (Acquisition + Restoration)	\$ -	0	0
ACEP Funds Obligated + Expended*	\$ 4,757,506.00	19	2,424
Total ACEP Funds Received	\$ 5,830,252.00	82%	

Total of all funds obligated in Fiscal Year 2019 \$ 20,229,795.00

*Includes authorized expenditures of FA funds for easements - additional funds for prior year projects, surveys, appraisals, title searches, records earches, etc.



9/27/2019 - OSR



Proposed 2020 EQIP Allocations Per Funding Pool 10-16-2019 State Technical Committee - CART State Spending Plan

CART Ranking Pool Type	CART Subaccount		Proposed Allocation			
Lake Champlain Basin Funding Pools	Lake Champlain Farmstead	100% of EQIP Allocation*	\$ 7,330,000	56%	\$ 4,580,000	
	Lake Champlain Pasture and Perennial (Grazing)				\$ 500,000	
	Lake Champlain Cropland				\$ 1,950,000	
	NWQI - Rock River				\$ 100,000	
	NWQI - East Creek				\$ 100,000	
	NWQI - Hungerford Brook				\$ 100,000	
Rest of State Funding Pools	ROS - Farmstead		\$ 5,670,000	44%	\$ 1,500,000	
	ROS - Pasture and Perennial Cropland (Grazing)				\$ 150,000	
	ROS - Cropland				\$ 750,000	
	NWQI - Source Water Protection				\$ 130,000	
Statewide Funding Pools	Statewide Forestry & Wildlife				\$ 1,100,000	
	Statewide Conservation Activity Plans				\$ 368,000	
	Statewide Soil Health				\$ 150,000	
	Statewide Specialty Crop and Seasonal High Tunnel				\$ 650,000	
Nationally Required Funding Pools	Statewide Beginning Farmer				\$ 500,000	
	Statewide Socially Disadvantaged				\$ 5,000	
	Statewide 2020 Certified Organic	\$ 80,000				
	Statewide 2020 Organic Transition	\$ 12,000				
	Statewide 2020 On-Farm Energy + CAPS	\$ 25,000				
CIG	2020 Conservation Innovation Grants	\$ 250,000				
			\$ 13,000,000		\$ 13,000,000	0.0%

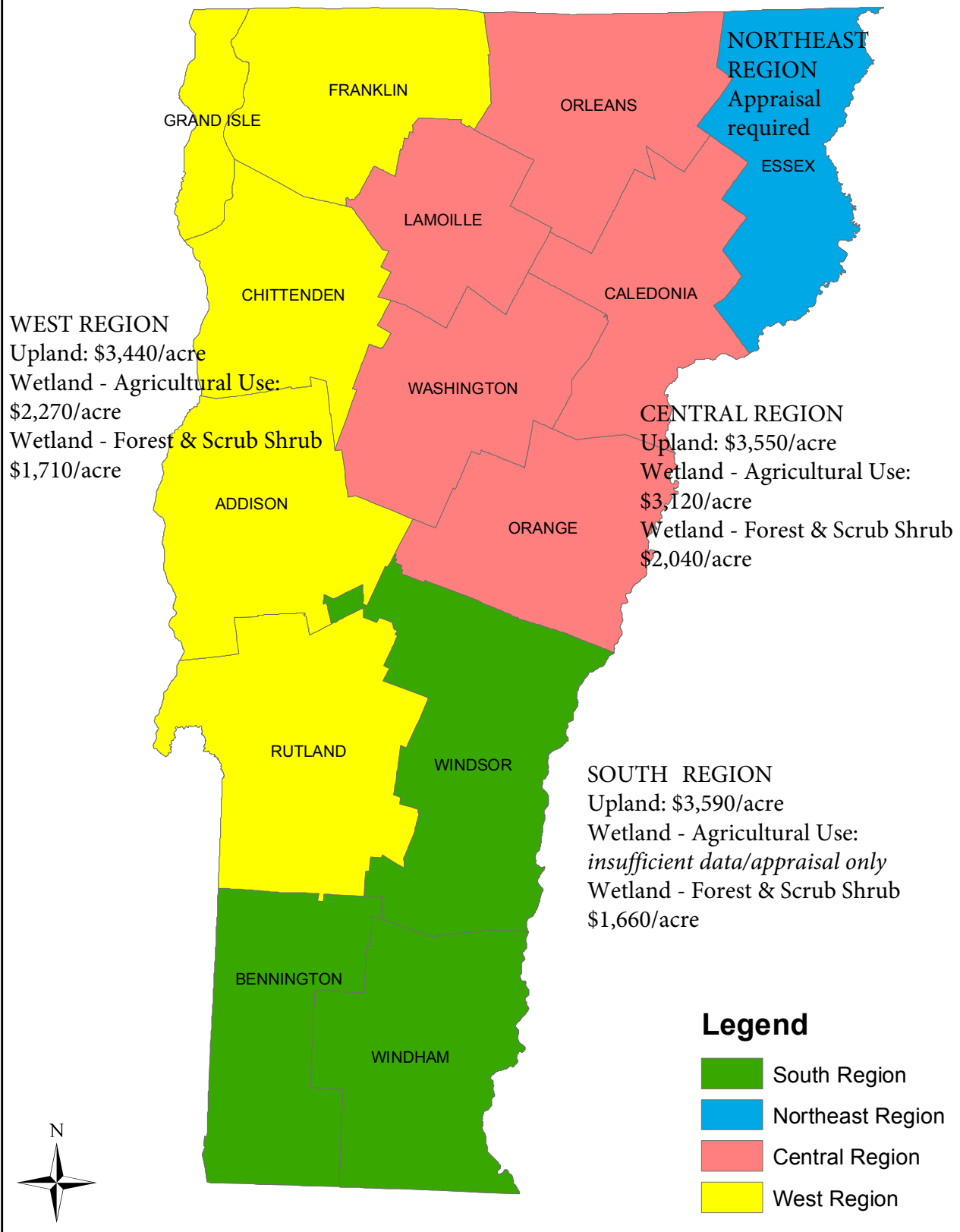
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9-27-2020 OSR and HJW

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RCPP - LIS	CT River Basin - Nitrogen		\$ 12,000
RCPP - OCNRC	Lake Memphremagog		\$ 3,700
RCPP - TNC	Connecting the Connecticut		\$ 250,000

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Market Areas for Vermont - 2020 WRE GARCS



PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Vermont GARC from Market Analysis for 2020						
Region	Upland Indicated Value	Upland GARC at 95%	Wetland-Ag Indicated Value	Wetland-Ag GARC at 95%	Wetland-Forest Indicated Value	Wetland-Forest GARC at 95%
Central	\$3,745.00	\$3,550.00	\$3,290.00	\$3,120.00	\$2,150.00	\$2,040.00
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West	\$3,630.00	\$3,440.00	\$2,395.00	\$2,270.00	\$1,805.00	\$1,710.00
Northeast	Appraisal Only					

Land Class Definition:

Upland:

- The sale is not identified as a body of water
- The sale is not on a hydric soil
- The sale does not occur on a mapped wetland

Wetland-Agricultural Use:

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- The land is not open agricultural fields, cropland, hay land, nor pasture land



United States Department of Agriculture

CART

The Integration of Conservation Planning and Program Delivery

Version 1.0 Overview



October 16th, 2019

Joe D. Buford, VT SRC



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What is CART?

- Conservation
 - Assessment
 - Ranking
 - Tool
- Set of Business Practices to streamline Conservation Planning and Program Delivery
 - Program Neutral integrated Information Technology (IT) Software Application



Any USDA
Conservation
Program!

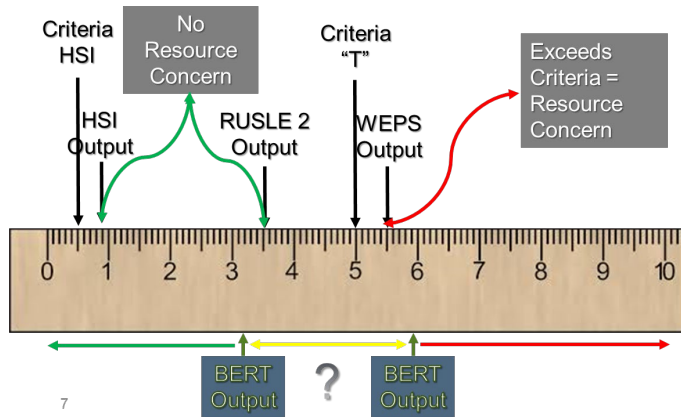
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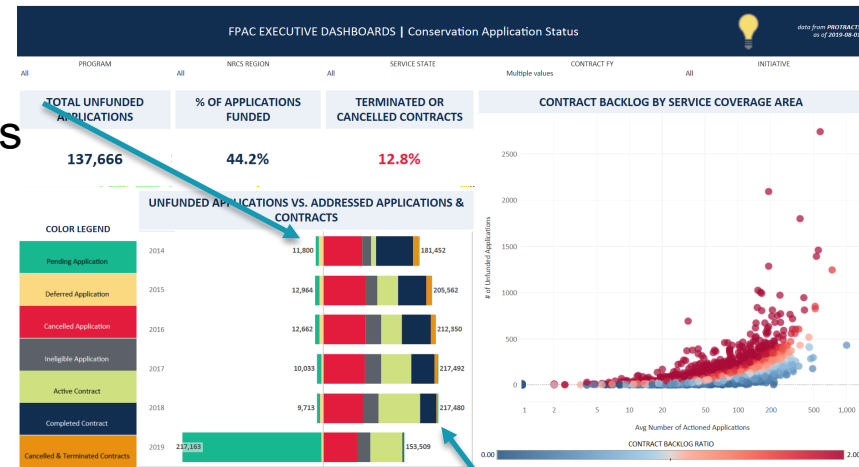
What is CART?

CART is merging/integrating (streamlining) NRCS's Traditional Conservation Planning Process with it's Current Program Planning Process

To Identify a Resource Concern:



193,200 applications



CART

227,200 applications

Traditional Planning

Efficiency

Program Planning

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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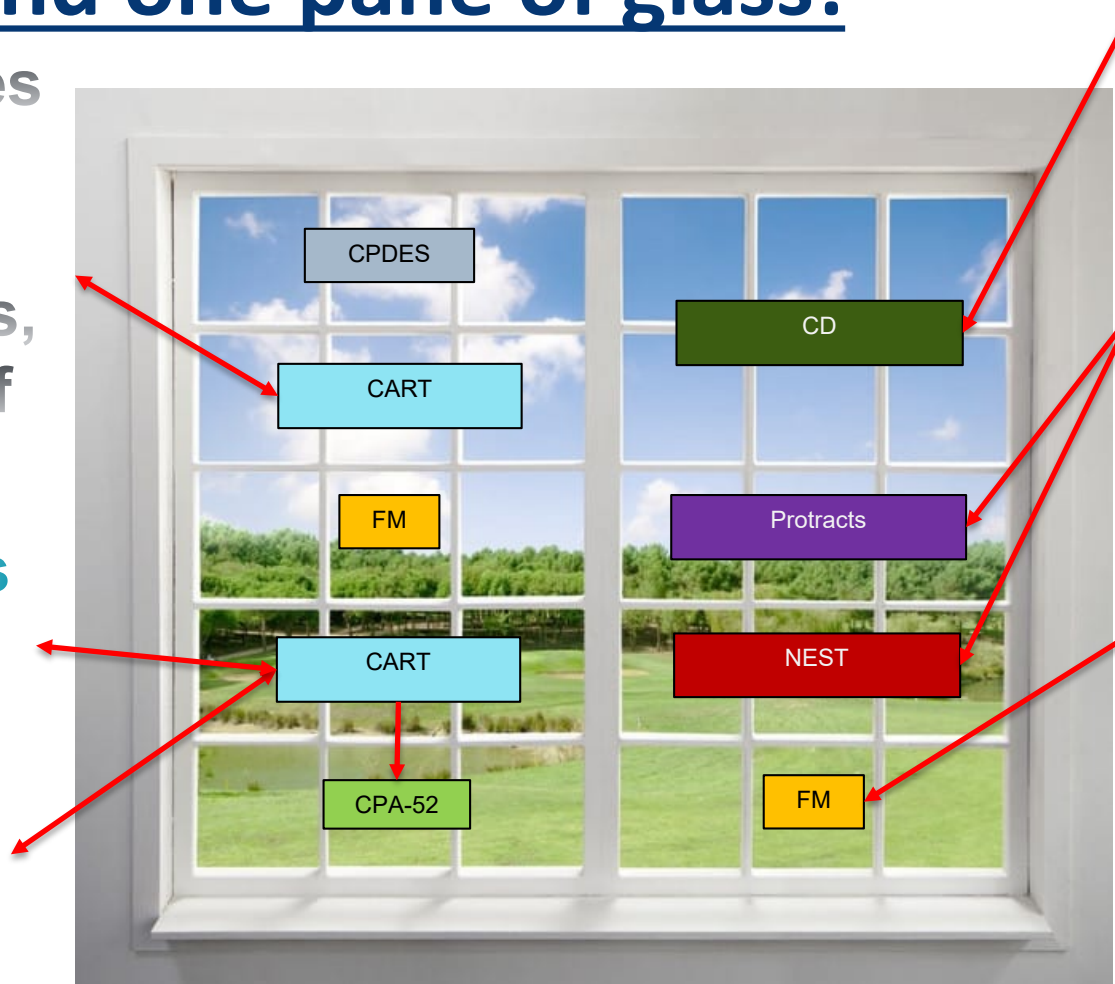
How does CART Work? => IT Integration

• Behind one pane of glass!

Automates
over
200,000
questions,
60+ Staff
Years

Replaces
many
“tools”

TSPs
FY-2021



Enhanced
Functionality

Integration
with CART,
CD, FM, and
NEST

Agency
Program
Management

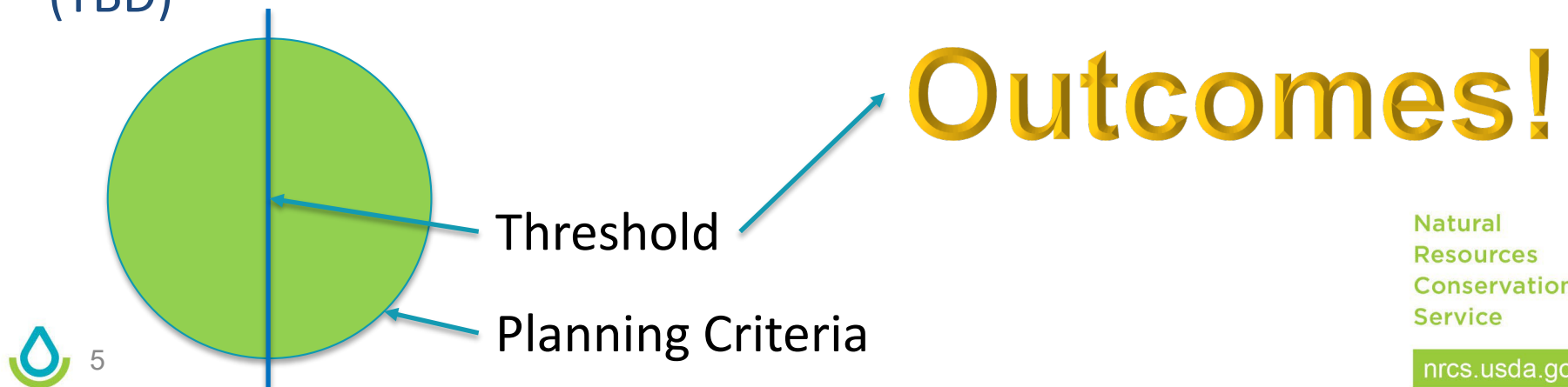
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How does CART work? => Steps 3 thru 6

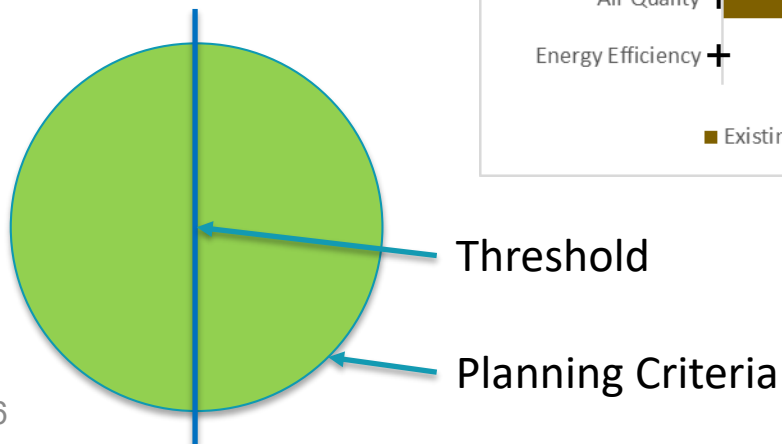
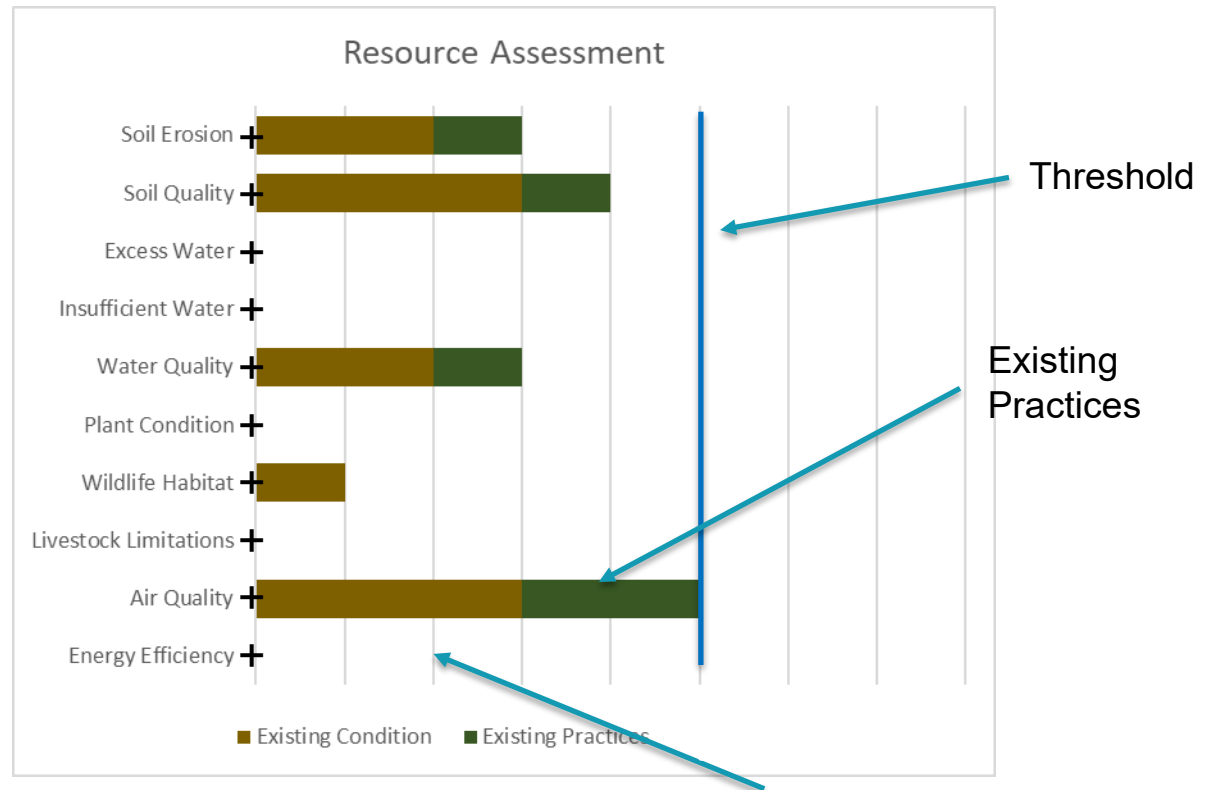
Planning Criteria.—A quantitative or qualitative statement of a treatment level required to achieve a minimum level of treatment for a given resource concern for a particular land area. Source: NPPH 600.2 (101)

Threshold.—A quantitative statement of a treatment level required to achieve a minimum level of treatment for a given resource concern for a particular land area. Source: NPPH 600.2 (TBD)



How does CART work? => Steps 3 and 4

CART assists planners to analyze resource data captured in the inventory and compare against the threshold to determine if planning criteria is met. Planner override will be allowed.

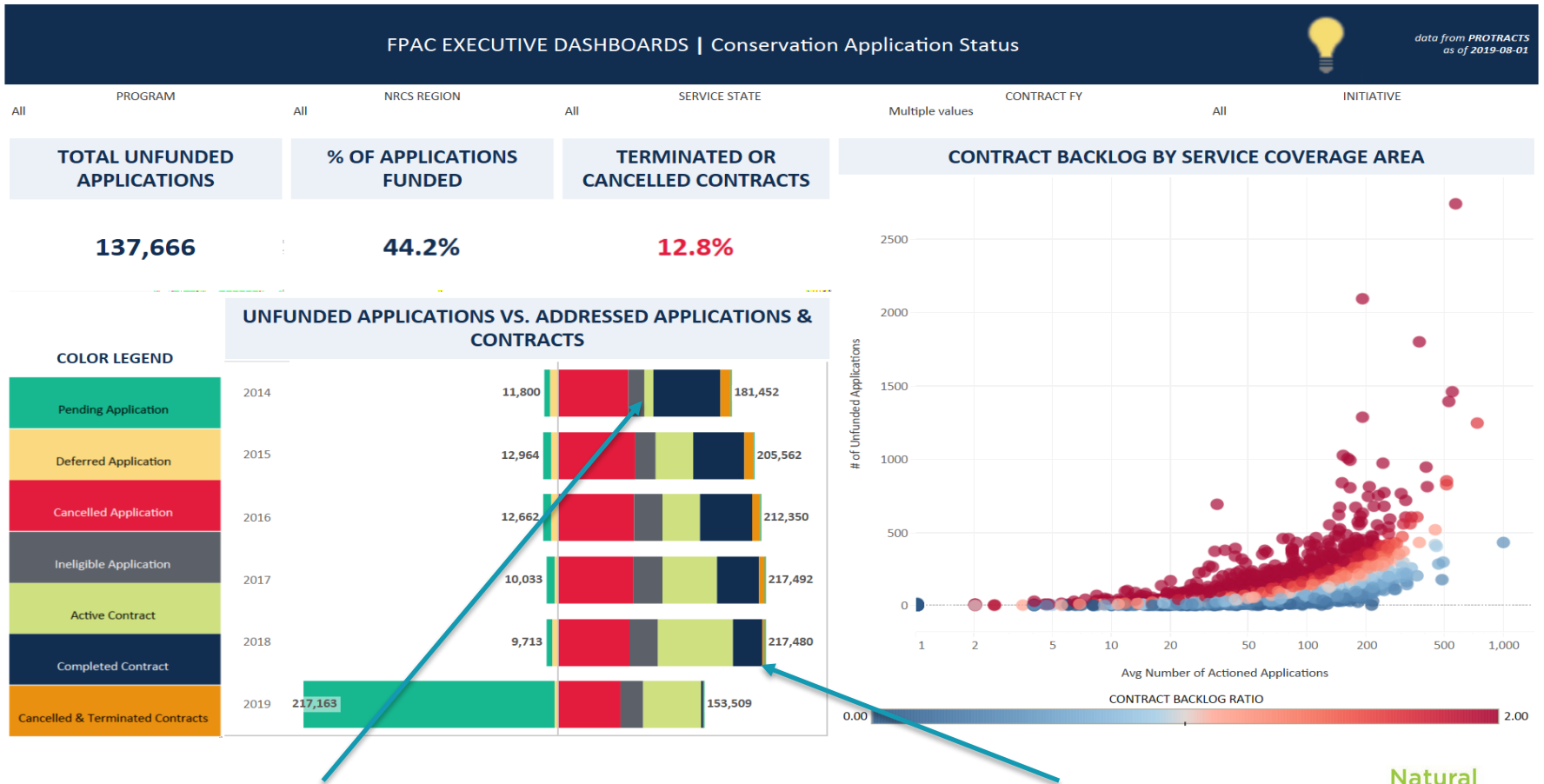


Existing Condition

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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How does CART work? => Step 6



2014 = 80,500 contracts

2018 = 109,900 contracts

29,400 increase

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Why CART? (the picture is clear)



Outcomes!



Farm Bill => 20 Directives

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How does CART work? => Step 9

- Outcomes – NRCS is under new pressure to “define outcomes” associate with conservation investments
- CART – captures Existing vs. Planned Conditions by field, tract, farm, watershed, county, area, state, national scales
- Example: Soil Quality - Organic Matter

Hypothetical: 50 point increase ~
1% increase in Organic Matter

Farm A – 25 pts

County X (20 Practices)
– Average 21 pts

State Z (7,701 Practices)
– Average 17 pts

Nationally (69,911 Practices)
– Average 07 pts

07 pts/50 pts = 14% toward
1% OM increase nationally

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How does CART work? => Step 9



Hypothetical: 50 point increase ~
1% increase in Organic Matter

1% increase on OM saves
27,500 gallons water/acre

**2,074,000 acres with
cover crop practice in
FY-2018**

**Collective increase was 14%
toward a 1% increase in OM**

Nationally, it is estimated
Producers **stored** 784
million gallons of water!

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When Will CART be Deployed?

- June 4** Preparing to Build a Ranking Pool (Webinar)
- August** State Leadership Training (in Person)
- Sept** Building a Ranking Pool (Webinar)
- Sept** National Program Manager Workshops
- Sept 30** CART/CD Train the Trainer (in Person)
- October** Production Tool Roll-out CD v2.3/CART Ranking Pools
- October 29th** Vermont CART Introduction at Camp Johnson
- December** CART Assessments/Ranking
 - Integrated CD/CART Training Team
 - Planning additional webinars and videos to support rollout
 - Farm Bill and CART Training planned in November

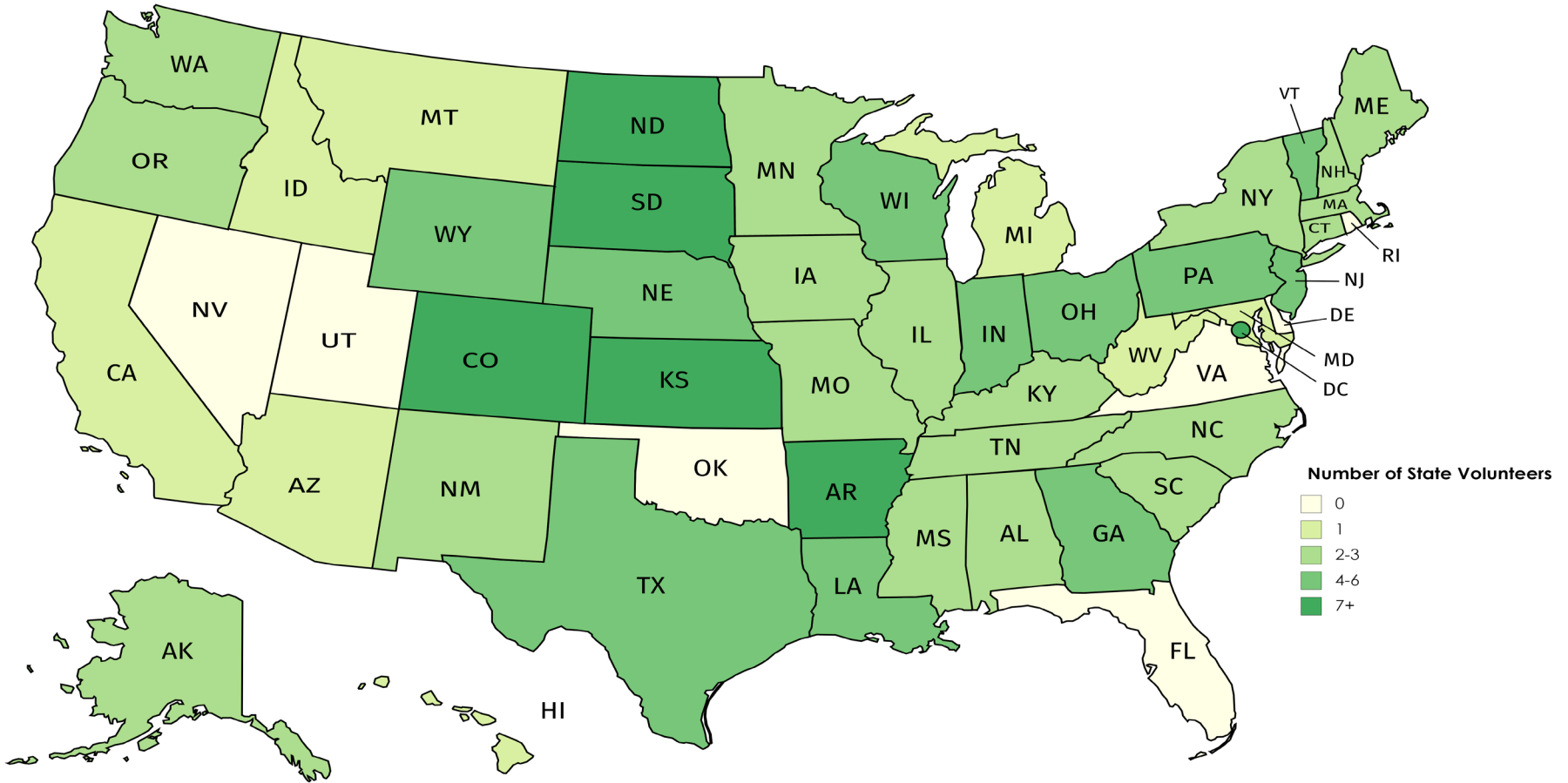


Summary



- What – Streamlining Conservation Planning and Program Delivery
- Why – Law, Secretary Directive, Chief Priority, Customers Demand
- Who – Everyone/“YOU”, volunteers are always welcome
- Where – Nationally, some exceptions (Alaska and PIA)
- When – Partially in FY-2020, Fully in FY-2021
- How – National Meeting, CD Training, Farm Bill Roll-Out, etc.
- How Much – As much, as little as states desire, but Ranking Pools and Points required for ranking (December)





Practice Payment Schedules

- Each year, NRCS re-evaluates the amount of financial assistance available for each practice in each state.
- These evaluations consider the current costs for material and labor within the state, and also the fair marketplace compensation for opportunity costs that may arise (e.g. conversion of productive land).
- If necessary, the amount of financial assistance is adjusted to keep pace with actual costs.



FY 19 vs FY 20 Payment Rate



- **Three fourths of the practices have a reduction in cost for FY20.**
- **Most of the reductions are 10% or less but there are some bigger reductions.**
- **These are due to reductions in some of the component costs.**
- **The only way to increase component costs is to have actual receipts to prove the costs.**
- **FY 21 Payment Rate Development will tentatively begin in January.**





Welcome to NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG)

Select a state for documents.

State:

Vermont

SUBMIT

Document Tree

Document Search

Recently Changed

Keyboard navigation instructions

Section I

Erosion Prediction

FOTG Transmittals

Laws

Manuals and Handbooks

Maps

State Payment Rates and Methods

Technical References

Water Quality Monitoring Activities

Section II

State Payment Rates and Methods

Documents (1)

Document Title	Type	Pub Date	Subject	Keywords	Abstract	Size (kB)	Actions
State Payment Rates and Methods Website		2017-9-29	--	Program Costs; Program Payment Rates;	--	--	



TOP 15 Practices (Draft)

**Nutrient Management
Riparian Forest Buffer
Tree and Shrub Planting
Cover Crop
Fence
Stream Crossing
Aquatic Organism Passage
Grassed Waterway
Diversion Forage and Biomass Planting
Lined Waterway or Outlet
No Till
Prescribed Grazing
Animal Trails and Walkways
Waste Storage Facility
Heavy Use Area**

Summary of State Technical Committee References in the Farm Bill

Areas of FB that site State Technical Committees by Program:

The table below sites the Sections of the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended by the AIA of 2018 that reference State Technical Committees.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	Section 1231A	2202	Payments-Riparian Buffer Management Payments-Limitation	The amount of payments received by an owner or operator under subparagraph (A) shall not be greater than 100 percent of the normal and customary projected management cost, as determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the applicable State technical committee established under section 1261(a); and (II) technical guide standards of the applicable field office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service; and...	Provide guidance to the agency on the normal and customary riparian buffer management costs for the state.
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	1231A	2202	Forested Riparian Buffer Practice-Food Producing Woody Plants	In the case of an agreement under subsection(b)(1) that includes forested riparian buffers as an eligible practice, the Secretary shall allow an owner or operator—to plant	Provide recommendations to the agency for the plants species that contribute to the conservation of soil, water quality, and wildlife

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				food-producing woody plants in the forested riparian buffers, on the conditions that—the plants shall contribute to the conservation of soil, water quality, and wildlife habitat; and the planting shall be consistent with—recommendations of the applicable State technical committee...	habitat of forested riparian buffers in the state.
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	Section 1231B	2203	Drought and Water Conservation Agreements	In the case of an agreement under subsection (b)(1) to address regional drought concerns, in accordance with the conservation purposes of the CREP, the Secretary, in consultation with the applicable State technical committee (1) notwithstanding subsection(a)(2), enroll other agricultural land on which the resource concerns identified in the agreement can be addressed if the enrollment of the land is critical to the accomplishment of the purposes of the agreement;	Provide guidance to the agency on the purposes of CREP for the state as those purposes are applied to agreements.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				(2) permit dryland agricultural uses with the adoption of best management practices on enrolled land if the agreement involves the significant long-term reduction of consumptive water use and dryland production is compatible with the agreement; and (3) calculate annual rental payments consistent with existing administrative practice for similar drought and water conservation agreements under this subtitle and ensure regional consistency in those rates.	
Farmable Wetland Program	Section 1231B	2203	Owner or Operator Enrollment Limitations-Buffer Acreage	The maximum size of any buffer acreage described in subsection (b)(2) that an owner or operator may enroll in the conservation reserve under this section shall be determined by the Secretary in consultation with the State Technical Committee.	Provide recommendations to the agency for maximum number of acres to be enrolled as farmable wetlands in the program for the state.
Pilot Programs	Section 1231C	2204	Soil Health and Income	The term 'eligible land' means cropland that—is selected by	Provide guidance to the agency on the scope of

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
			Protection Pilot Program	the owner or operator of the land for proposed enrollment in the pilot program under this subsection; and as determined by the Secretary— (l) is located within 1 or more States that are part of the prairie pothole region, as selected by the Secretary based on consultation with State Committees of the Farm Service Agency and State technical committees from that region.	cropland located within the prairie pothole region, eligible for inclusion for this program.
Pilot Programs	Section 1231C	2204	Soil Health and Income Protection Pilot Program-Contract Requirements	A contract described in paragraph (2) shall—be entered into by the Secretary, the owner of the eligible land, and (if applicable) the operator of the eligible land; and provide that, during the term of the contract— (l) the lowest practicable cost perennial conserving use cover crop for the eligible land, as determined by the applicable State conservationist after considering the advice of the	Provide guidance to the agency on the lowest practicable cost perennial conserving use cover crop for the eligible land for pilot projects within this program in the state.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				applicable State technical committee, shall be planted on the eligible land.	
Pilot Programs	Section 1231C	2204	Soil Health and Income Protection Pilot Program- Harvesting, Haying, and Grazing Outside Applicable Period	The harvesting for seed, haying, or grazing of eligible land under subparagraph (A)(ii)(III) outside of the primary nesting season established for the applicable county shall be subject to the conditions that—with respect to eligible land that is so hayed or grazed, adequate stubble height shall be maintained to protect the soil on the eligible land, as determined by the applicable State conservationist after considering the advice of the applicable State technical committee; and with respect to eligible land that is so harvested for seed— (I) the eligible land shall not be eligible to be insured or reinsured under the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1501 et seq.); and	Provide guidance to the agency on adequate stubble height to be maintained to protect the soil on the eligible land for this program in the state.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				(II) the rental payment otherwise applicable to the eligible land under this subsection shall be reduced by 25 percent.	
Duties of the Secretary	Section 2206	2206	Specified Activities Permitted	The Secretary, in coordination with the applicable State technical committee established under section 1261(a), shall permit certain activities or commercial uses of established cover on land that is subject to a contract under the conservation reserve program if—those activities or uses—are consistent with the conservation of soil, water quality, and wildlife habitat; are subject to appropriate restrictions during the primary nesting season for birds in the local area that are economically significant, in significant decline, or conserved in accordance with Federal or State law; contribute to the health and vigor of the established cover;	Provide guidance on permitted certain activities or commercial uses of established cover on land that is subject to a contract under the conservation reserve program and those activities or uses are consistent with the conservation of soil, water quality, and wildlife habitat, and are subject to appropriate restrictions. Provide guidance on when the program can assist in the response to a natural disaster event without permanent damage to the established cover.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				and are consistent with a site-specific plan, including vegetative management requirements, stocking rates, and frequency and duration of activity, taking into consideration regional differences, such as climate, soil type, and natural resources; and the Secretary, in coordination with the State technical committee, includes contract modifications— (i) without any reduction in the rental rate for— (I) emergency haying, emergency grazing, or other emergency use of the forage in response to a localized or regional drought, flooding, wildfire, or other emergency, on all practices, outside the primary nesting season, when— (aa) the county is designated as D2 (severe drought) or greater according to the United States Drought Monitor;	

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				(bb) there is at least a 40 percent loss in forage production in the county; or (cc) the Secretary, in coordination with the State technical committee, determines that the program can assist in the response to a natural disaster event without permanent damage to the established cover.	
Duties of the Secretary	Section 2206	2206	Authorized Activities on Grasslands	For eligible land described in section 1231(b)(3), the Secretary shall permit the following activities: (1) Common grazing practices, including maintenance and necessary cultural practices, on the land in a manner that is consistent with maintaining the viability of grassland, forb, and shrub species appropriate to that locality. (2) Haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production, subject to appropriate restrictions during the nesting season for birds in the local area that are	Provide guidance to the agency on appropriate restrictions on haying, mowing, or harvesting for seed production, during the nesting season for birds in the local area that are economically significant, in significant decline, or conserved in accordance with Federal or State law.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				economically significant, in significant decline, or conserved in accordance with Federal or State law, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the State technical committee. (3) Fire suppression, fire-related rehabilitation, and construction of fire breaks. (4) Grazing-related activities, such as fencing and livestock watering.	
Eligible Land; State Law Requirements	SEC. 2209	2209		The Secretary shall revise paragraph (4) of section 1410.6(d) of title 7, Code of Federal Regulations, to provide that land enrolled under a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement initially established before January 1, 2014 (including an amended or successor Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement, as determined by the Secretary), shall not be ineligible for enrollment in the conservation	Provide recommendations to the agency when land enrolled under a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement initially established before January 1, 2014 (including an amended or successor Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement, as determined by the Secretary), shall not be ineligible for enrollment in the conservation reserve program.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				reserve program established under subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.) under that paragraph if the Deputy Administrator (as defined in section 1410.2(b) of title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (or successor regulations)), on recommendation from and in consultation with the applicable State technical committee established under section 1261(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3861(a)) determines, under such terms and conditions as the Deputy Administrator, in consultation with the State technical committee, determines to be appropriate, that making that land eligible for enrollment in that program is not contrary to the purposes of that program.	
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Section 1240B	2304	Establishment and Administration-	Each State, in consultation with the State technical committee established under	Provide guidance to the agency for the state on not more than 10 practices to

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
			Payments-Increased Payment for High Priority Practices-State Determination	section 1261(a) for the State, may designate not more than 10 practices to be eligible for increased payments under subparagraph (B), on the condition that the practice, as determined by the Secretary— (i) addresses specific causes of impairment relating to excessive nutrients in groundwater or surface water; (ii) addresses the conservation of water to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers; (iii) meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or (iv) is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.	be eligible for increased payments that meet the criteria established by the statute.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Section 1240B	2304	Establishment and Administration-Wildlife Habitat	In determining the practices eligible for payment under paragraph (1) and targeted for funding under subsection (f),	At least annually, participate in determination of the practices eligible for payment and targeted for

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
			Incentive Program-State Technical Committee	the Secretary shall consult with the relevant State technical committee not less often than once each year.	funding for the program in the state.
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Section 1240B	2304	Establishment and Administration-Conservation Incentive Contracts-Identification of Eligible Priority Resource Concerns for States	The Secretary, in consultation with the applicable State technical committee under section 1261(a), shall identify watersheds (or other appropriate regions or areas within a state) and the corresponding priority resources concerns for those watersheds or other regions or areas that are eligible to be the subject of a stewardship contract under this section.	Provide recommend watersheds (or other appropriate regions or areas within a state) and the corresponding priority resources concerns for those watersheds or other regions or areas that are eligible to be the subject of a stewardship contract for this program.
Commodity Credit Corporation	Section 1241	2501	Allocations Review and Update-Review	Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, the Secretary, acting through the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Administrator of the Farm Service Agency, shall conduct a review of conservation programs and authorities under this title that utilize	Participate in the review of and provide recommendations for consideration of conservation programs and authorities under this title that utilize annual allocation formulas to determine the sufficiency of the formulas in accounting for relevant natural resource concerns, resource inventories,

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				annual allocation formulas to determine the sufficiency of the formulas in accounting for relevant natural resource concerns, resource inventories, evaluations and reports, recommendations from State technical committees established under section 1261(a), State-level economic factors, level of agricultural infrastructure, or related factors that affect conservation program costs.	evaluations and reports considering State-level economic factors, level of agricultural infrastructure, or related factors that affect conservation program costs.
Delivery of Technical Assistance	Section 1242	2502	Review of Conservation Practice Standards-Consultation	In conducting the review under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall consult with eligible participants, State technical committees established under section 1261(a), crop consultants, cooperative extension and land grant universities, nongovernmental organizations, and other qualified entities.	Participate in the review process of conservation practice standards or interim practice standards for the state.
Delivery of Technical Assistance	Section 1242	2502	Review of Conservation Practice	Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Providing recommendations on innovations or scientific and technological

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
			Standards-Expedited Revision of Standards	of 2018, the Secretary shall develop an administrative process for— (A) expediting the establishment and revision of conservation practice standards; (B) considering conservation innovations and scientific and technological advancements with respect to any establishment or revision under subparagraph (A); (C) allowing local flexibility in the creation of— (i) interim practice standards and supplements to existing practice standards to address the considerations described in subparagraph (B); and (ii) partnership-led proposals for new and innovative techniques to facilitate implementing agreements and grants under this title; and (D) soliciting regular input from State technical committees established under section 1261(a) for	advancements of conservation practice standards or interim practice standards for the state.

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				recommendations that identify innovations or advancements described in subparagraph (B).	
Administrative Requirements for Conservation Programs	Section 1244	2503	Review and Guidance for Practice Costs and Payment Rates-Guidance Review	The Secretary shall— (A) issue guidance to States to annually review and adjust the estimates for practice costs and rates of payments made to producers to reflect the evaluation factors described in paragraph (1)(B); and (B) determine the appropriate practice costs and rates of payments for each State by— (i) annually reviewing each conservation program payment schedule and payment rate used in the State; and (ii) consulting with the State technical committee established under section 1261(a) in that State.	Participate in annual review of each conservation program payment schedule and payment rate used in the state.
Administrative Requirements for Conservation Programs	Section 1244	2503	Source Water Protection Through Targeting of Agricultural	In encouraging practices under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall— (i) work collaboratively with community water systems and	Work collaboratively with the agency and community water systems to identify, in the State, local priority areas for the protection of

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
			Practices- Collaboration with Water Systems and Increased Incentives	State technical committees established under section 1261(a) to identify, in each State, local priority areas for the protection of source waters for drinking water; and (ii) subject to subparagraph (B), for practices described in paragraph (1), offer to producers increased incentives and higher payment rates than are otherwise statutorily authorized by the applicable conservation programs administered by the Secretary.	source waters for drinking water; and identify practices to offer to producers increased incentives and higher payment rates than are otherwise statutorily authorized by the applicable conservation programs.
Establishment of State Technical Committees	Section 1261	2822	(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish a technical committee in each State to assist the Secretary in the considerations relating to implementation and technical aspects of the conservation programs under this title. (b) STANDARDS.— The Secretary shall review and update as necessary— (1) standard operating procedures to standardize the operations of State technical committees; and (2) standards to be used by State technical committees in the development of technical guidelines for the implementation of the conservation provisions of this title. (c) COMPOSITION.—Each State technical committee shall be composed of agricultural producers and other professionals that represent a variety of disciplines in the soil, water, wetland, and wildlife sciences. The technical committee for a State shall include representatives from among the following: (1) The Natural Resources Conservation Service.		

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				(2) The Farm Service Agency. (3) The Forest Service. (4) The National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (5) The State fish and wildlife agency. (6) The State forester or equivalent State official. (7) The State water resources agency. (8) The State department of agriculture. (9) The State association of soil and water conservation districts. (10) Agricultural producers representing the variety of crops and livestock or poultry raised within the State. (11) Owners of nonindustrial private forest land. (12) Nonprofit organizations within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 with demonstrable conservation expertise and experience working with agriculture producers in the State. (13) Agribusiness. (14) <u>The State Cooperative Extension Service and land grant university in the State.</u>	
Establishment of State Technical Committees	Section 1262	2822		(a) IN GENERAL.—Each State technical committee established under section 1261 shall meet regularly to provide information, analysis, and recommendations to appropriate officials of the Department of Agriculture who are charged with implementing the conservation provisions of this title. (b) PUBLIC NOTICE AND ATTENDANCE.—Each State technical committee shall provide public notice of, and permit public attendance at, meetings considering issues of concern related to carrying out this title. (c) ROLE.— (1) IN GENERAL.—The role of State technical committees is advisory in nature, and such committees shall have no implementation or enforcement authority. However, the Secretary shall give strong consideration to the	

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
			recommendations of such committees in administering the programs under this title. (2) ADVISORY ROLE IN ESTABLISHING PROGRAM PRIORITIES AND CRITERIA.—Each State technical committee shall advise the Secretary in establishing priorities and criteria for the programs in this title, including the review of whether local working groups are addressing those priorities. (d) FACA REQUIREMENTS.— (1) EXEMPTION.—Each State technical committee shall be exempt from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.). (2) LOCAL WORKING GROUPS.—For purposes of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), any local working group established under this subtitle shall be considered to be a subcommittee of the applicable State technical committee.		
Agricultural Conservation Easements Program	Section 1265C	2604	Wetland Reserve Easements- Easements-Terms and Conditions of Easement- Compatible Uses- Compatible User Authorization	In evaluating and authorizing a compatible economic use under clause (i), the Secretary shall— (I) request and consider the advice of the applicable State technical committee established under section 1261(a) about the 1 or more types of uses that may be authorized to be conducted on land subject to a wetland reserve easement, including the frequency, timing, and intensity of those uses;	Provide guidance to the agency on 1 or more types of uses that may be authorized to be conducted on land subject to a wetland reserve easement, including the frequency, timing, and intensity of those uses; to facilitate the practical administration and management of that land; and ensure that an authorized use furthers the functions and values for which the wetland reserve

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				(II) consider the ability of an authorized use to facilitate the practical administration and management of that land; and (III) ensure that an authorized use furthers the functions and values for which the wetland reserve easement was established.	easement was established for the state.
Agricultural Conservation Easements Program	Section 1265C	2604	Wetland Reserve Easements- Administration- Alternative Plant Communities	The Secretary, in coordination with State technical committees established under section 1261(a) and pursuant to State-specific criteria and guidelines, may authorize the establishment or restoration of a hydrologically appropriate native community or alternative naturalized vegetative community as part of a wetland reserve easement plan for land subject to a wetland reserve easement if that hydrologically appropriate native or alternative naturalized vegetative community shall—	Provide guidance on state-specific criteria and guidelines, may authorize the establishment or restoration of a hydrologically appropriate native community or alternative naturalized vegetative community as part of a wetland reserve easement plan for land subject to a wetland reserve easement if that hydrologically appropriate native or alternative naturalized vegetative community shall— (A) substantially support or benefit migratory waterfowl or other wetland wildlife; or

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				(A) substantially support or benefit migratory waterfowl or other wetland wildlife; or (B) meet local resource concerns or needs (including as an element of a regional, State, or local wildlife initiative or plan).	(B) meet local resource concerns or needs (including as an element of a regional, State, or local wildlife initiative or plan).
Regional Conservation Partnership Program	Section 1271D	2705	Funding-Allocation of Funding	Of the funds made available for the program under subsection (a) the Secretary shall allocate— (1) 50 percent of the funds to projects based on a State or multistate competitive process administered by the Secretary at the local level with the advice of the applicable State technical committees established under subtitle G; (2) 50 percent of the funds and acres to projects for critical conservation areas designated under section 1271F.	Provide guidance to the agency on allocation of funds utilizing a competitively competitive process for distribution.
Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program	Section 2408	2408	Coordination	The Secretary shall ensure that the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Animal and Plant Health	Provide guidance to NRCS and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Program	Section of the Food Security Act of 1985	Section of the Agriculture Improvement Act	Program Element	Statutory Language	Role of State Technical Committee
				Inspection Service coordinate for purposes of this section through State technical committees established under section 1261(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3861(a)).	on program coordination in the state.