# Conservation Operations

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Is authorized by the Conservation Operations Act of April 27, 1935, P.L. 74-46 (16 U.S.C. 590a - 590f) and the Soil and Water Resources Act of 1997, (16 U.S.C. 2001 - 2009.)

**ACTIVITIES:** Conservation technical assistance is the foundation program of NRCS. Under it the agency provides technical assistance and services to land users, communities, units of State and local governments, and other Federal agencies for the purpose of sustaining agricultural productivity and protecting and enhancing the natural resource base. This assistance is based on voluntary local landowner cooperation and involves comprehensive approaches to reduce soil erosion, improve soil and water quantity and quality, improve and conserve wetlands, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, improve pasture and range condition, reduce upstream flooding, and improve woodlands. More than 1,000,000 land users receive these technical services which are channeled through nearly 3,000 conservation districts across the United States and its territories.

This program was key to American agriculture's success in meeting the conservation compliance provisions of the 1985 and 1990 farm bills - the most ambitious conservation effort ever attempted on private lands where assistance was provided to implement the highly erodible land (HEL), wetland (swampbuster), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (16 U.S.C. 380 t et. Seq.). NRCS technical field staff make HEL and wetland determinations and assist land users to develop and implement conservation plans needed to ensure compliance with the law. The NRCS is also the designated lead Federal agency for delineating wetlands on agricultural lands for purposes of implementing both the provisions of the Food Security Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief for Natural Resource Conservation Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-4527.

# Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention *(Small Watershed Program; PL-566 Operations Phase)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 83-566, 68 Stat. 666, as amended; Public Law 84-1018, 70 Stat. 1088; Public Law 85-624, 72 Stat. 563; Public Law 85-865, 72 Stat. 1605; Public Law 86-468, .74 Stat. 131, 132; Public Law 86-545, 74 Stat. 254; Public Law 87-170, 75 Stat. 408; Public Law 87-703, 76 Stat. 608; Public Law 89-337, 79 Stat. 1300; Public Law 90-361, 82 Stat. 250; Public Law 92-419, 86 Stat. 667; Public Law 95-113, 91 Stat. 913; Public Law 97-98, 95 Stat. 1213; Public Law 99-662, 100 Stat. 4196; Public Law 101-624, 104 Stat. 3359.

**OBJECTIVES:** To provide technical and financial assistance in carrying out works of improvement to protect, develop, and utilize the land and water resources in small watersheds.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Project Grants; Advisory Services and Counseling.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Technical assistance is provided in designing, and installing watershed works of improvement. Financial assistance is provided for sharing costs of measures for watershed protection, flood prevention, agricultural water management, sedimentation control, public water based fish, wildlife, recreation; and in extending long term credit to help local interests with their share of the costs. Watershed area must not exceed 250,000 acres. Capacity of a single structure is limited to 25,000 acre-feet of total capacity and 12,500 acre-feet of floodwater detention capacity.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Any State agency, county or groups of counties, municipality, town or township, soil and water conservation district, flood prevention or flood control district, Indian tribe or tribal organization, or any other nonprofit agency with authority under State law to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed works of improvement may apply for assistance.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Any State agency, county or groups of counties, municipality, town or township, soil and water conservation district, flood prevention or flood control district, Indian tribe or tribal organization, or any other nonprofit agency with authority under State law to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed works of improvement may apply for assistance. This program is available in Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Mariana Islands, and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands.

Credentials/Documentation: Applications must designate the proposed project area, be properly signed and attested to by all applicants, and set forth the need for the proposed project. Costs will be determined in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-87 for State and local governments.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: Potential applicants must notify State(s) Single Point of Contact for Federal assistance that they intend to apply for assistance. Up to 60 days is allowed for review. The standard application forms, as furnished by the Federal agency and required by OMB Circular No. A-102, must be used for this program. Environmental impact statements required for many Public Law 83-566 projects approved for operations after January 1, 1970, which, on the basis of environmental evaluations, are determined to be major Federal actions significantly affecting the environment. In projects approved before January 1, 1970, need for environmental impact statements are decided on case-by-case basis; those with channel modification generally require statements. Environmental assessments are required for all other projects. This program is eligible for coverage under E.O. 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” An applicant should consult the office or official designated as the Single Point of Contact in his or her State for more information on the process the State requires to be followed in applying for assistance, if the State has selected the program for review.

Application Procedure: Application forms and information are available in all NRCS offices and from designated State agencies. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-110.

Award Procedure: Details of the procedure are available from the State and field offices of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Receipt of the application is acknowledged as soon as it is determined to be valid.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Technical and financial assistance under which program funds provide certain prescribed services and costs and a percentage of other costs on the basis of a contract vary according to purpose of the works of improvement. For example, for construction costs under the Act, program funds may pay 100 percent for flood prevention; up to 50 percent of agricultural water management, public recreation and fish and wildlife purposes; and none of the costs for certain other nonagricultural water management purposes. All of the applicants' installation costs are eligible for program loans. Reimbursable advances are available for preservation of sites and future municipal water supply.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Continues until all works of improvement are installed or their installation is terminated by mutual agreement.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Annual operation and maintenance inspection and report.

Audits: In accordance with the provisions of OMB Circular No. A-128, "Audits of State and Local Governments," State and local governments that receive financial assistance of $100,000 or more within the State's fiscal year shall have an audit made for that year. State and local governments that receive between $25,000 and $100,000 w~thin the State's fiscal year shall have an audit made in accordance with Circular No. A-128, or in accordance with Federal laws and regulations governing the programs in which they participate.

Records: Records of operation and maintenance activities are maintained for the life of the project.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Obligations: (Grants watershed and flood prevention operations) FY 96 $26,323,479; FY 97 est $39,600,000; and FY 98 est $40,000,000. (Salaries and expenses-watershed and flood prevention operations) FY 96$55,566,575; FY 97 est $53,400,000; and FY 98 est $60,000,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: (per State) $0 to $2,164,000; $650,000.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** In fiscal year 1996, 13 projects were approved for Operations. A total of 532 projects were at the-construction stage. Projects with construction completed under the program totaled 893. In fiscal year 1997, it is estimated that 14 projects will be approved for operations, 523 projects will be at the construction stage, and construction on 915 projects will be completed under the program.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** "What is a Watershed," PA-420; "Flood Plain Management "Why We Need It," PA-1276; "Multiple-Purpose Watershed Projects," PA-575; and "Small Watershed Projects," PA-1354.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief for Natural Resource Conservation Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-4527.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.664, Cooperative Forestry Assistance; 10.765, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Loans; 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.903, Soil Survey; 10.905, Plant Materials for Conservation; 10.906, Watershed Surveys and Planning; 10.907, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting; 12.104, Flood Plain Management Services.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** To date, Federal assistance for installation has been authorized on 1,604 watershed projects. This program provides technical and financial assistance to State agencies and units of local government in solving problems caused by flooding, erosion and sediment damage, conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water, including the development of multipurpose facilities for such uses as recreation, improvement of fish and wild-life habitat, irrigation, and water supply to municipal and industrial users.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** 1) The watershed must meet the requirements of the law; 2) an approved watershed has been prepared; 3) the local sponsors should indicate willingness to carry out a watershed project; 4) the project has environmental, economic and social benefits exceed the costs for a favorable benefit-cost ratio; and 5) no critical environmental issues exist.

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program *(EQIP)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Federal Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Public Law 104-127, as amended; Food Security Act of 1985, Subtitle D, Title XII, 16 U.S.C. 3830 et seq.

**OBJECTIVES:** Technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. This program provides assistance to farmers and ranchers in complying with Federal, State, and tribal environmental laws, and encourages environmental enhancement. The purpose of this program are achieved through the implementation of structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible land. This program is funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). NRCS provides overall program management and implementation leadership for conservation planning and implementation. The Farm Service Agency provides leadership for administrative processes and procedures for the program.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Technical assistance is provided in conservation planning for eligible participants. Education and financial assistance is provided for implementation of structural, vegetative, and land management practices. Cost-share payments may be made to implement one or more eligible structural or vegetative practices. Incentive payments can be made to implement one or more land management practices. Fifty percent of the funding available for technical, cost-share payments, incentive payments, and education shall be targeted at practices relating to livestock production.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Individual/family farmers and ranchers who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources, or who need assistance with complying with Federal and State environment laws. A participant may be an owner, landlord, operator, or tenant of eligible agricultural lands. Limited resource producers, small-scale producers, producers of minority groups, Federally recognized Indian tribal governments, Alaska natives, and Pacific Islanders are encouraged to apply.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Individual/family farmers and ranchers who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources, or who need assistance with complying with Federal and State environmental laws. A participant may be an owner, landlord, operator, or tenant of eligible agricultural lands. Limited resource producers, small-scale producers, producers of minority groups, Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments, Alaska natives, and Pacific Islanders are encouraged to apply.

Credentials/Documentation: Evidence that applicant has control over land to be entered into contract and submits an acceptable conservation plan for the farm or ranch unit of concern that incorporates needed natural resource conservation practices. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87.

***APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:***

Preapplication Coordination: None. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102 and E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Program participation is voluntary. The applicant applies at the local USDA Service Center on Form CCC-1200. Applications may be filed at any time during the year. The participant develops a conservation plan for the farm or ranching unit of concern. The participant's conservation plan serves as the basis for the EQIP contract. Technical assistance, educational assistance and cost-share or incentive payments may be provided to apply needed conservation practices and land use adjustments within a time schedule specified by the conservation

plan. A contract with a participant may apply one or more land management practices or one or more structural or vegetative practices or both.

Award Procedure: Natural' Resources Conservation Service may designate a watershed, an area, or a region of special environmental sensitivity or having significant soil, water, or related natural resource concern as a priority area. The priority areas are designated based on recommendations of local work groups which are convened by the local conservation district. NRCS will give special consideration to applicants in priority areas who have conservation plans that address the natural resource concerns for which the priority area was designated. Technical, educational, and financial assistance may also be provided to participants with significant statewide natural resource concerns outside a priority area. Applications will be periodically ranked and selected for funding.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: From 10 to 60 days.

Appeals: A participant may appeal any adverse determination to the FSA county committee.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Structural and vegetative practices can be funded by cost-sharing up to 75 percent of the total cost of establishing the practice. Incentive payments can be made for land management practices in an amount and rate that NRCS determines is necessary to encourage a participant to perform the practice that would not otherwise be initiated without government assistance. Other practices may be required to be installed without program payments.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Contract period is between 5 to 10 years, depending on the conservation systems that need to be applied. Obligations for assistance are tied to the schedule for applying conservation practices included in the conservation plan used as the basis for the 5 to 10 year contract. Payments are made when the participant and NRCS certify that conservation practice is completed in accordance with contract. CCC expenditures under a contract entered into during a fiscal year will not be made until the subsequent fiscal year.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: There are no reports and the participants makes an annual status review during the length of the contract that includes maintenance of completed contract items and need for deletion or addition of contract items. Participants must operate and maintain a conservation practice for its intended purpose for the life span of the practice.

Audits: Natural Resources Conservation Service makes periodic random reviews of the operation and maintenance of the contract items during the life span of the conservation practice. Participants are subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General, USDA.

Records: Maintained in local NRCS office, FSA county office, and Federal record centers for specified number of years.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-4336-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Grants) FY 96 $180,000,000; FY 97 est $180,000,000; and FY 98 est $180,000,000. (Salaries and expenses) FY 96 $20,000,000; FY 97 est $20,000,000; and FY 98 est $20,000,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: Cost-share and incentive payments are limited to $10,000 per person per year and to $50,000 over the length of the contract. Average contract payments are estimated to be $30,000.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None. This program is in its first year of implementation.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** 7 CFR Part 1466. Program is announced through news media and in announcements to agricultural producers, farm and ranch owners and operators in the county. Program manuals, handbooks, and leaflets issued by NRCS and FSA.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief for Natural Resource Conservation Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Attn: Deputy Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Programs. Telephone: (202) 720-1845. FAX: (202) 720-4265.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.054, Emergency Conservation Program; 10.064, Forestry Incentives Program; 10.069, Conservation Reserve Program; 10.072, Wetlands Reserve Program; 10.764, Resource Conservation and Development Loans; 10.901, Resource Conservation and Development; 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** No projects were funded at the time of publication.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Applications will be periodically ranked and selected for funding based on: the environmental benefits per dollar expended; the cost-effectiveness of the conversation practices; the environmental benefits derived; extent to which the contract will assist the applicant in complying with Federal, State, tribal or local environmental laws; whether the land is located in a priority area and the extent the contract will assist the priority area goals and objectives.

# Conservation Reserve Program *(CRP)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Public Law 99-198, as amended; Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Public Law 101-624; Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Public Law 104-127.

**OBJECTIVES:** To protect the Nation's long-term capability to produce food and fiber; to reduce soil erosion; to reduce sedimentation; to improve water quality; to create a better habitat for wildlife; to provide some needed income support for farmers.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Eligible owners or operators may place highly erodible or other environmentally sensitive land into a 10-15 year .contract. The participant, in return for annual payments, agrees to implement a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district for converting highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive land to a long-term resource conserving cover i.e., eligible land must be planted with a vegetative cover, such as, perennial grasses, legumes, forbs, shrubs, or trees. The participant agrees to reduce the aggregate total of allotments and quotas for the contract period for each farm which contains land that is subject to a Conservation Reserve Program contract by an amount based on the ratio of the total cropland acreage on each farm, to the total acreage on each farm subject to the CRP contract. Financial and technical assistance are available to participants to assist in the establishment of a long-term resource conserving cover.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: An individual, partnership, association, Indian Tribal ventures corporation, estate, trust, other business enterprises or other legal entities and, whenever applicable, a State, a political subdivision of a State, or any agency thereof owning or operating private croplands, and State or local government croplands may apply.

Beneficiary Eligibility: An individual, partnership, association, Indian Tribal ventures, corporation, estate, trust, other business enterprises or other legal entities and, whenever applicable, a State, political subdivision of State, or any agency thereof owning or operating private croplands, and State or local government croplands will benefit.

Credentials/Documentation: The cropland must be owned or operated for not less than 12 months prior to the close of the signup period, unless the land was acquired by will or succession or the Department determines that ownership was not acquired for the purpose of placing the land in the conservation reserve. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: An environmental impact assessment has been prepared for this program. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102 and E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: FSA has two methods for enrolling acreage in the CRP. One method is a continuous signup process where acreage suitable for certain environmental priority practices, including but not limited to grass waterways, riparian buffers or filterstrips, and acreage within wellhead protection areas may be offered and accepted without going through a competitive offer process. The second method is to offer acreage during a general signup period where offers to enroll highly erodible and other environmentally sensitive acreage are accepted and ranked competitively based on an environmental benefits index. Regardless of the method of enrollment, the local FSA office, that serves the area in which the farm or ranch is located, will provide

applicants the maximum payment rate CCC will accept to enroll certain acreage in the program. Applicants will submit a rental rate per acre offered that may be equal to or less than CCC's maximum payment rate. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular Nos. A-102 and A-110.

Award Procedure: The Department will notify persons whose offers are accepted as soon as practicable after the close of the signup.

Deadlines: The rental rate per acre offered must be filed at the county FSA office by the end of the announced signup period.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: From 7 to 120 days.

Appeals: Participant may appeal any determination to county FSA committee or office, State committee or Deputy Administrator, or National Appeals Division.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Annual rental payments are made at the rate set in the accepted offer. A one time cost-share payment is made when approved conservation practices are established.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Annual rental payments in cash or generic commodity certificates will be made for 10-15 years. A cost-share payment up to 50 percent of the cost of establishing conservation practices will be made after the practice is established. CCC may provide certain incentives for restoring wetlands or other lands.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: None.

Audits: Recipients are subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General, USDA.

Records: Maintained in county FSA office and Federal Record centers for a specified number of years.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-3319-0-1-302 and 12-4336-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Grants) FY 96 $1,726,894,313; FY 97 est $1,856,702,000; and FY 98 est $1,926,374,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: $50 to $50,000; $5,324.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** In fiscal years 1986 through 1995, contracts were signed through the thirteenth signup covering 36.4 million acres. Each contract covers an average of 97 acres with an average rental rate of $49.67. Acres enrolled for crop. years as follows: 1986 - 2 million acres; 1987 13.7 million acres; 1988 - 8.8 million acres; 1989 5.4 million acres; 1990 4.1 million acres; 1991 -.5 million acres; 1992 - 1.0 million acres; 1993 - 1.03 million acres; and 1995 683 thousand replacement acres. The average soil erosion reduction on land contracted in CRP is 19 tons per acre per year. This is the latest actual data.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Program is announced through news media and in letters to agricultural producers in the county. Regulations published in the Federal Register, 7 CFR Part 1410.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, STOP 0513, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-6221.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.054, Emergency Conservation Program; 10.064, Forestry Incentives Program; 10.072, Wetlands Reserve Program; 10.070, Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program; 10.764, Resource Conservation and Development Loans; 10.901, Resource Conservation and Development; 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** County FSA offices will provide producers the maximum acceptable rental rate for the acreage offered. All offers will be screened at both the local and national level to determine the suitability of the acreage and acceptability of the rental rate offered. In addition, offers will be evaluated in terms of cost for the environmental benefits obtained. Acres accepted will be limited to the Secretary's authority to maintain 36.4 million acres or less or amount determined by the Secretary.

# Watershed Surveys and Planning *(Small Watershed Program; PL-566; Watershed Surveys and Planning)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 83-566, 68 Stat. 666, as amended: Public Law 84-1018, 70 Stat. 1088; Public Law 85-624, 72 Stat. 563; Public Law 85-865, 72 Stat. 1605; Public Law 86-468, 74 Stat. 131, 132; Public Law 86-545, 74 Stat. 254; Public Law 87-170, 75 Stat. 408; Public Law 87-703, 76 Stat. 608; Public Law 89-337, 79 Star. 1300; Public Law 90-361, 82 Star. 250; Public Law 97-98, 95 Stat. 1213; Public Law 99-662, 100 Stat. 4196; Public Law 101-624, 104 Stat. 3359.

**OBJECTIVES:** To provide planning assistance to Federal, State, and local agencies for the development of coordinated water and related land resources programs in watersheds and river basins. Priority will be given to studies which: (1) Contribute to achieving the National Conservation Program high priority objectives; (2) have a high likelihood of being implemented; (3) will be implemented with no or relatively little Federal assistance; (4) have State and local assistance in the study; and (5) are of short duration (2 to 4 years) and (6) low cost. Special priority is given to the (objectives of setting priorities in helping to solve problems of upstream rural community flooding, water quality improvement coming from agricultural nonpoint sources, wetland preservation and drought management for agriculture and rural communities. Special emphasis is given to assisting communities which desire to adopt floodplain management regulations to meet the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program and State agencies in developing a strategic water resource plan.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Provision of Specialized Services; Advisory Services and Counseling.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Technical assistance is provided in planning activities to help solve water and related land resources problems. It is available through disciplines such as engineering, economics, social sciences, agronomy, range management, forestry, biology, hydrology, archaeology, landscape architecture, waste management, recreation, etc.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Any local or State water resource agency or other Federal agency concerned with water and related land resource development, counties, municipalities, town or township, soil and water conservation district, flood prevention or flood control district, Indian tribe or tribal organization or nonprofit organization. USDA participation is based on a cooperative effort with a sponsoring organization(s). State and local agencies are expected to participate in the studies and to fund their own activities. This program is also available in Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Mariana Islands and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Any local or State water resource agency or other Federal agency concerned with water and related land resource development that can benefit from the development of alternative plans and recommendations.

Credentials/Documentation: Requests must designate the proposed study area, describe the basic planning and/or study objective, and indicate joint participation and be signed and attested to by all applicants.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: This program is eligible for coverage under E.O. 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.” An applicant should consult the office or official designated as the Single Point of Contact in his or her State for more information on the process the State requires to be followed in applying for assistance, if the State has selected the program for review.

Application Procedure: Application materials and information are available in all NRCS offices. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-110. The letter of request addressed to the appropriate State Conservation of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Award Procedure: Not applicable.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Receipt of request is acknowledged when received by the State Conservationist.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Each cooperating agency is to fund its own participation. The extent of participation and funding are to be defined in a plan of work that establishes the basis for the study effort.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: The length of the study is defined in the plan of work. It is subject to some modification, depending on the availability of funds to each of the cooperating agencies. Federal assistance for planning is provided as rapidly as possible depending on availability of funds and personnel resources. Sponsors are encouraged to focus their studies on a limited number of critical problems of special concern nationally, such as flood damage reduction, erosion control, water conservation, preservation of wetlands, and water quality improvement. Short duration, low cost studies that support ongoing State and local programs are encouraged.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Interim reports may be prepared during the study. Final reports are prepared at the completion of each study. Post study assistance may be provided through the operations phase of this program (see program no. 10.904).

Audits: Not applicable.

Records: Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1069-0-1-301.

Obligations: (Salaries and expenses) FY 96 $13,491,727; FY 97 est $16,000,000; and FY 98 est $5,000,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: Not applicable.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** USDA has cooperated with local, State, and concerned Federal agencies in the preparation and updating of State water resource plans and other water, land, and related studies for floodplain management and flood prevention. There have been over 16,000 watershed plans and 550 flood insurance studies, 597 floodplain management studies, (detailed studies) and 423 cooperative river basin studies (broad based studies) completed under this program since it was authorized in 1954.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Regulations for the program are found in 7 CFR 621 and 622. Guidelines and policy is contained in the National Watersheds Manual (NWSM), National Basin and Area Planning Manual (NRBM), and NRCS General Manual (GM) 150-Basin and Area Planning, Part 401. Literature available through the NRCS include “What the Natural Resources Conservation Service Does,” SCS-CI-3; “Local- State-Federal Watershed Projects,” SCS-CI-4; “Multiple-Purpose Watershed Projects,” PA-575.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief For Natural Resource Conservation Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-4527. FTS is not available.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention; 12.110, Planning Assistance to States.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** 1) New York City Watershed Cooperative River Basin Study to assess agriculturally related nonpoint source pollution affecting the quality of water for half of New York's population. The State of New York will analyze the data collected and develop a comprehensive protection plan with strategies for addressing the water quality concerns. 2) In New Castle Counties Delaware, the Central Pencader flood plain management study was initiated to guide land use, zoning, and subdivision decisions to develop sound flood plain and storm water management practices. The local government will use the flood hazard analysis and flood plain information to direct major development activities in a responsible manner. 3) State strategic water management plan for N. D. has been instrumental in organizing a State water quality task force for prioritizing and addressing natural resource problems and opportunities on a watershed basis.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Not applicable.

# Soil Survey

**AUTHORIZATION:** Public Law 74-46; Public Law 89-560.

**OBJECTIVES:** To maintain up to date published soil surveys and other forms of soil survey databases of counties or other comparable size areas for wide-spread use by interested agencies, organizations, and individuals and to assist in the use of this information.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Dissemination of Technical Information.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Soil surveys are for planners, environmentalists, engineers, zoning commissions, tax commissions, homeowners, farmers, ranchers, developers, landowners, and operators who use them to evaluate soil suitability for homesites, subdivisions, commercial and industrial sites, farms, wildlife and recreational areas, prime agricultural land, hydric soils, highly erodible lands, highways, and airports and to select and implement appropriate use and treatment of those soils.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: All individuals and groups that have a need for soil surveys are eligible to receive these documents by contacting the local Natural Resources Conservation Service Office.

Beneficiary Eligibility: All individuals and groups that have a need for soil surveys are eligible to receive these documents.

Credentials/Documentation: None.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: This program is excluded from coverage under E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Applicants may request information from the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Districts, Extension Service, the State office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Agricultural Experiment Station and from Senators and Congressmen. Local units of government submit requests to State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, see Appendix IV in the Catalog for addresses. Soil Conservation District (SCD) cooperators submit requests to SCD board of supervisors.

Award Procedure: Not applicable.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Not applicable.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Not applicable.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Not applicable.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Not applicable.

Audits: Not applicable.

Records: Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1000-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Salaries and expenses) FY 96 $75,926,720; FY 97 est $76,409,000; and FY 98 est $82,248,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: Not applicable.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** In fiscal year 1996, 9,413,183 acres of new soil surveys were completed and 8,323,203 acres of outdated soil surveys were updated. Estimates for fiscal year 1997 are 17,000,000 acres and fiscal year 1998, 17,000,000 acres.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** "List of Published Soil Surveys;" "Know the Soil You Build On," AIB 320; "Know Your Soil," AIB 267; "Soil Surveys Can Help You," PA-1054. These publications are available from the Office of Public Affairs, NRCS-USDA, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013, at no charge.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief For Soil Science and Resource Assessment, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-4630.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Not applicable.

# Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting *(Snow Surveys)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936, as amended, Public Law 74-46.

**OBJECTIVES:** To provide information on forthcoming seasonal water supplies from streams that derive most of their run off from snow melt. To help farm operators, rural communities, and municipalities use water-supply forecasts in managing water resources. To provide hydrometeorological data for regulating reservoir storage and managing stream flow. To obtain, evaluate and disseminate climate data in support of NRCS conservation activities including models.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Dissemination of Technical Information.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** The information is used by the owners and operators of the 30,000,000 irrigated acres in the mountain States, and the far West. The data are also used in administering international and interstate river flow distribution contracts and agreements, and in the regulation of hundreds of small and large reservoirs for irrigation, flood control, power generation, recreation, industry, and municipal supplies. Cooperators include other Federal agencies, State agencies, municipalities, irrigation districts, water associations and private utilities, and water management officials of Canada and Mexico.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: General public, including those located in the U.S. Territories.

Beneficiary Eligibility: General public, including those located in the U.S. Territories.

Credentials/Documentation: None.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: This program is excluded from coverage under E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Individuals can make requests for reports from NRCS Field and State offices that issued them, and from the NRCS National Water and Climate Center at Portland, OR.

Award Procedure: Not applicable.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Not applicable.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Not applicable.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Not applicable.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Not applicable.

Audits: Not applicable.

Records: Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1000-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Salaries and expenses) FY 96 $5,725,417; FY 97 est $5,835,000; and FY 98 est $5,888,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: Not applicable.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Snow Surveys, AIB 536.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: State and local offices of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and the National Water & Climate Center, Portland, OR. See Appendix IV of the Catalog for addresses. California's Department of Water Resources, which coordinates and issues snow surveys for that State, and the British Columbia Department of Lands, Forests and Water Resources, supply data for the monthly west-wide summaries.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief for Science and Technology Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-3905. FTS is not available.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Not applicable.

# 10.072 Wetlands Reserve Program *(WRP)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Food Security Act of 1985, Title XII, Public Law 99-198, as amended; Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Title XIV, Section 1237, Public Law 101-624, 104 Stat. 3584, 7 U.S.C. 3837, as amended; Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993; Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996; Agriculture Appropriations Act of 1997.

**OBJECTIVES:** To restore and protect farmed wetlands, prior converted wetlands, wetlands farmed under natural condition, riparian areas, and eligible buffer areas for landowners who have eligible land on which they agree to enter into a permanent or long-term easement or restoration agreement contract with the Secretary. The goal of WRP is to have 975,000 acres enrolled by the year 2000 with one-third as permanent easements, one-third as 30-year easements and one-third as restoration agreement acres.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Eligible landowners may offer farmed wetlands, prior converted wetlands, wetlands farmed under natural condition, intensively managed pasture and hayland riparian areas, along with eligible buffer areas to be placed under a permanent or 30-year easement or restoration agreement. A deed restriction covering the land approved under easement must be recorded in the local land deeds office. The landowner will receive financial and technical assistance to install necessary restoration practices on the land under easement or the practice will be installed by the Secretary. Subject to the acceptance of an offer by the Federal Government, the landowner will receive in cash an amount specified in the WRP contract but not to exceed the fair agricultural market value of the land "as is" condition less the fair market value of such land encumbered by the permanent easement or 75% for a 30-year easement. The landowner shall ensure that the easement granted to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is superior to the rights of all others and shall agree to implement a wetland restoration plan designed to restore and maintain the easement area. The plan will include a designated access route to be used as necessary for easement management and monitoring. The landowner shall agree to a permanent retirement of crop acreage bases, allotments, and quotas to the extent that the sum of the crop acreage bases and allotments will not exceed the remaining cropland of the present farm or subsequently reconstituted farm. In cases involving restoration agreements there is only on restoration cost-share and no land payment.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: An individual landowner, partnership, association, corporation, estate, trust, other business or other legal entities and, whenever applicable, a State, a political subdivision of a State, or any agency thereof owning private croplands.

Beneficiary Eligibility: An individual landowner, partnership, association, corporation, estate, trust, other business enterprises or other legal entities and, whenever applicable, a State, a political subdivision of a State, or any agency thereof owning private croplands will benefit.

Credentials/Documentation: The landowner must have owned the land offered for at least the preceding 12 months prior to the end of the period in which the intent to participate in an easement is declared unless the land was acquired by will or succession as a result of the death of the previous owner; or the Department determines that the new owner did not acquire such land for the purpose of placing it in the WRP. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87. The 12 month requirement is not applicable to restoration agreement.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: An environmental impact assessment has been prepared for this program. This program is excluded from coverage under E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Submit an intention to enroll to the local NRCS office that serves the area in which the farm or ranch is located during the designated sign-up period. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular Nos. A-102 and A-110.

Award Procedure: The States will provide a list of potential acceptable offers and request for allocation of funds. The Department will allocate funding in a manner designed to achieve cost effectiveness. The States will notify the landowners of the status of their intention. This process will be completed as soon as practical after funding becomes available. For all tentatively accepted intentions a market analysis or appraisal of agriculture value will be conducted. The market analysis will be conducted by NRCS personnel with the assistance of other Federal, State and private entities having knowledge of market conditions. Appraisals will be done by certified appraiser.

Deadlines: The intention to participate must be filed at the county ASCS office during the designated sign-up period. Currently there is an open continuous sign-up period.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: From 60 to 180 days after the end of the sign-up. Landowner application may remain on sign-up list for subsequent funding consideration.

Appeals: Landowner may appeal any determination to the National Appeals Division.

Renewals: The land offered may be reoffered in a future sign-up unless land or landowner is ineligible.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Lump sum payments are made for permanent easements. Cost-share payments 100 percent of the cost of implementing the Wetland Restoration Plan will be paid for a permanent easement from five to 30 annual payments of equal or unequal amount apply to 30-year easement payment with 75 percent of permanent easement amounts being paid.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Cash easement payments for permanent easement will be made in a lump sum amount, at closing or in annual installments beginning at closing. Cost share payments for implementation of easement practices will be made when a specific practice has been implemented by either the landowner or contractor

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: None.

Audits: Recipients are subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General, USDA.

Records: Records will be maintained in the county NRCS office, State NRCS office and Federal Record Centers for the length of the agreement. The easement (deed restriction) and applicable documents will be filed in the local land records office for the duration of the easement. Agreements are filed with the Agency.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1080-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Direct Payments) FY 96 $128,235,547; FY 97 est $188,000,000; and FY 98 est $0.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: Not applicable.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Fiscal year 1997 funds will provide for the enrollment of an estimated 130,000 acres and the program will continue to be implemented nationwide.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** The program is announced through news media and in letters to agricultural landowners in the county. Regulations published in the Federal Register and 7 CFR XIV.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory for location of the NRCS office.

Headquarters Office: Watersheds & Wetlands Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 690-0848. Use the same number for FTS.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.069, Conservation Reserve Program; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** All offers are screened at both the local and State level to determine the acceptability of the intention to ensure that offers will not be accepted in excess of the value of agricultural land in its “as is” condition; and long-term costs for providing easement access route. Offers will be evaluated based on the environmental benefits and government expenditures on restoration and easement purchase and the requirement that wildlife benefits be materialized.

# Water Bank Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Water Bank Act, Public Law 91-559, Public Law 96-182.

**OBJECTIVES:** To conserve surface waters; preserve and improve the Nation's Wetlands; increase migratory waterfowl habitat in nesting, breeding and feeding areas in the U.S.; and secure environmental benefits for the Nation.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Agreements are for 10 years with eligible landowners to help preserve important nesting, breeding, and feeding areas of migratory waterfowl. During the agreement, the participants agree in return for annual payments not to drain, burn, fill, or otherwise destroy the wetland character of such areas and not to use areas for agricultural purposes, as determined by the Secretary. The Secretary carries out the program in harmony with wetlands programs administered by the Secretary of the Interior and uses technical and related services of appropriate State, Federal, and private conservation agencies to assure proper coordination.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Landowners and operators of specified types of wetlands in designated important migratory waterfowl nesting, breeding and feeding areas.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Landowners and operators of specified types of wetlands in designated important migratory waterfowl nesting, breeding and feeding areas.

Credentials/Documentation: Identification as an owner and/or operator of eligible land; a conservation plan developed in cooperation with the local soil and water conservation district; and proof of required compliance. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: None. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102 and E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Make application at the NRCS office for the county in which the land is located. Applicants must develop an approved conservation plan with local soil and water conservation district representatives. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular Nos. A-102 and A-110.

Award Procedure: Not Available at printing

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: The period officially specified for the program year.

Appeals: Participants may appeal to the National Appeals Division.

Renewals: Subject to mutual agreement between the Secretary and the participants, within program provisions specified by the Secretary, for additional 10-year periods.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Annual payments may be made within the announced rate structures, for the eligible acreage. Participant must undertake needed land and water management measures.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Annual payments will be made for 10 years, and may be continued for additional periods of 10 years if mutually agreed to at the rates offered by the Secretary.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Performance reports, if any annual payments are made in advance of performance. (statistical reports are made by administering offices.)

Audits: Recipients are subject to audit by Office of Inspector General, USDA.

Records: Maintained in the NRCS office and Federal record centers for a specified number of years.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-3320-0-1-302.

Obligations: FY 96 $699,044; FY 97 est $0; and FY 98 est $0.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: $7 to $75 per acre; $13.00.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** From 1985 through September 1996, 7,335 agreements were signed covering 832,276 acres.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Program regulations published in the Federal Register, 7 CFR Part 752. Program is announced through the news media and in letters to eligible participants in the county area designated by the Secretary of Agriculture as a participating county.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: For more information on this and other related programs, consult the local telephone directory for location of the NRCS office where your land is located.

Headquarters Office: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-1870.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.900, Great Plains Conservation; 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 15.611, Wildlife Restoration.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Not applicable.

# Plant Materials for Conservation

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1936,as amended, Public Law 74-46.

**OBJECTIVES:** To assemble, evaluate, select, release, and introduce into commerce, and promote the use of new and improved plant materials for soil, water, and related resource conservation and environmental improvement programs. To develop technology for land management and restoration with plant materials.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Provision of Specialized Services.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Plant materials are used in all phases of the soil and water conservation program. This program emphasizes field testing to determine the plant's value and restoration techniques. It is limited to conservation cooperators properties in conjunction with soil conservation districts, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, State Crop Improvement Associations and other Federal and State agencies. The program also provides commercial seed growers with breeder and foundation quality seed or propagules. Other plants or seed are not provided to the general public. Large-scale production is conducted by cooperating commercial producers.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Cooperating State and Federal agencies and cooperators of conservation districts where structured evaluations are conducted and commercial seed growers and nurserymen interested in the commercial production of selected plant materials. Applicants are also eligible in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The general public is not eligible to participate in this program.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Cooperating State and Federal agencies and cooperators of conservation districts and commercial seed growers and nurserymen interested in the production of selected plant materials. Applicants are also eligible in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Credentials/Documentation: None.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: This program is excluded from coverage under E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Contact the local Natural Resources Conservation Service office.

Award Procedure: Not applicable.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Not applicable.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: This program has no statutory formula and no matching requirements.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Not applicable.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Not applicable.

Audits: Not applicable.

Records: Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1000-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Salaries and expenses) FY 96 $9,327,131; FY 97 est $8,825,000[ and FY 98 est $8,891,000.

**Range and Average of Financial Assistance:** Not applicable.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Over 300 cultivars of grasses, legumes, forbs, shrubs, and trees have been developed and released for commercial increase through this program. Uses include erosion control and sediment reduction, roadside and stream bank protection, surface-mined land reclamation, and wildlife food and cover. The annual commercial production of NRCS released grasses, legumes and woody plants by commercial seed growers and nurserymen is equivalent to the amount required to establish vegetative cover on over 2,000,000 acres of land.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** National Plant Materials Manual; "Grass Seed Production and Harvest in the Great Plains," FB 2226; "Building, Planting and Maintaining Sand Dunes," L 42; "Grasses and Legumes for Soil Conservation in the Pacific Northwest and Great Basin States," AH 339. "Conservation Plants for the Northeast," NRCS, USDA Program Aid No. 1154; "Plant Performance on Surface Coal Mine Spoil in the Eastern United States," NRCS TP 155; "Plant Materials For Conservation," NRCS Program Aid No. 1219; "Plant Materials For Use On Surfaced Mined Land in Arid and Semiarid Regions," NRCS TP 157; "New Plants For Conservation," NRCS Environmental Quality Aid; "Grass Varieties in the United States," SCS Handbook 170.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: NRCS State offices and field offices.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief For Technology, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-3905. Use the same number for FTS.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Not applicable.

# Forestry Incentives Program
***(FIP)***

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-313.

**OBJECTIVES:** To bring private non-industrial forest land under intensified management; to increase timber production; to assure adequate supplies of timber; and to enhance other forest resources through a combination of public and private investments on the most productive sites on eligible individual or consolidated ownership of efficient size and operation.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Cost-sharing of up to 65 percent of the total cost is available under the Forestry Incentives Program for tree planning, timber stand improvement, and site preparation for natural regeneration. Special forestry practices may be approved if needed for a significant and unique local condition for which national FIP practices are not adequate. Owners of non-industrial private forest lands of 1,000 acres or less, capable of producing industrial wood crops are eligible for Forestry Incentives Program cost-sharing. In order for an individual within a county to receive Forestry Incentives Program funds, the county must be designated as a Forestry Incentives Program county by the State Technical Committee in consultation with the State Forester and the State Conservationist. A forest management plan developed by the State Forester and landowner is required for participation in FIP.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: A private individual, group, association, Indian Tribe or other native group, corporation (except corporations whose stocks are publicly traded) or other legal entity which owns "non-industrial" private forest lands capable of producing industrial wood crops is eligible to apply for cost-sharing assistance. Cost-share agreements are limited to eligible ownership of land of not more than 1,000 acres of non-industrial private forest land, capable of producing at least 50 cubic feet of wood per acre per year, except by special approval. This program is available to eligible landowners in the United States or any commonwealth, territory or possession of the United States.

Beneficiary Eligibility: A private individual, group, association, Indian Tribe or other native group, corporation (except corporations whose stocks are publicly traded) or other legal entity which owns "non-industrial" private forest lands capable of producing industrial wood crops is eligible to apply for cost-sharing assistance. Cost-share agreements are limited to eligible ownership of land of not more than 1,000 acres of non-industrial private forest land, capable of producing at least 50 cubic feet of wood per acre per year, except by special approval. This program is available to eligible landowners in the United States or any commonwealth, territory or possession of the United States.

Credentials/Documentation: Identification as an eligible person, and proof of contribution to the cost of performing the practice. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: None. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102 and E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Eligible persons will make application for annual cost-sharing agreements. Applications may be filed at any time during the year at the NRCS office for the designated county in which the land is located. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular Nos. A-102 and A-110.

Award Procedure: Not applicable.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Generally from 30 to 60 days.

Appeals: Participants may appeal to the National Appeals Division.

Renewals: Extension of time to complete a practice may be granted, if requested by the applicant before approval expires or within 15 days after the expiration date.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Essential factors used to allocate funds to States are: (1) Acreage; (2) number of eligible owners; (3) productivity potential and; (4) need for reforestation. Cost-shares under Forestry Incentives Program are limited to not more than 65 percent of the total cost.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Normally the length of the program is from 1-to-10 years. There may be certain restrictions on time limits on certain practices to be performed. Cost-shares are paid when the practice is performed. The assistance is awarded by performance.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: None.

Audits: Recipients are subject to audit by Office of Inspector General, USDA.

Records: Maintained in NRCS office and Federal record centers for a specified number of years.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-3336-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Direct payments) FY 96 $6,513,026; FY 97 est $6,325,000; and FY 98 est $6,625,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: $50 to $10,000 per year; $1,600.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** For fiscal year 1996, $6.5 million in cost-share assistance was paid to owners of forest land. It is estimated that approximately $6.3 million in cost-share assistance will be paid to owners of forest land in fiscal year 1997, and $6.3 million will be paid in fiscal year 1998.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Program is announced through news media and notices to all applicants and private forest owners on record and all interested governmental agencies and agricultural organizations. Program regulations published in the Federal Register, Part 701.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory for location of the NRCS office where your land is located.

Headquarters Office: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-1845.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** None.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Stewardship Incentive Program Administered by U.S. Forest Service.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Not applicable.

# Emergency Conservation Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY FARM SERVICE AGENCY, USDA**

**AUTHORIZATION:** Agricultural Credit Act of 1978, Title V, Public Law 95-334, 16 U.S.C. 2201-2205.

**OBJECTIVES:** To enable farmers to perform emergency conservation measures to control wind erosion on farmlands, or to rehabilitate farmlands damaged by wind erosion, floods, hurricanes, or other natural disasters and to carry out emergency water conservation or water enhancing measures during periods of severe drought.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Emergency cost-sharing is limited to new conservation problems created by natural disasters which, if not treated will impair or endanger the land, materially affect the productive capacity of the land, represent damage that is unusual in character and, except for wind erosion, is not the type that would recur frequently in the same area and will be so costly to rehabilitate that Federal assistance is or will be required to return the land to productive agricultural use. Severe drought situations for water enhancing measures are to be determined by the Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, FSA.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Any person who as owner, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper on a farm or ranch, including associated groups, and bears a part of the cost of an approved conservation practice in a disaster area, is eligible to apply for cost-share conservation assistance. This program is available in Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Any person who as owner, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper on a farm or ranch, including associated groups, and bears a part of the cost of an approved conservation practice in a disaster area, is eligible to apply for cost-share conservation assistance. This program is available in Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Credentials/Documentation: Identification as an eligible person and proof of contribution to the cost of performing the conservation practice. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: None. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102 and E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Eligible persons make application on Form ACP-245, for cost-sharing, at the county FSA office for the county in which the land is located. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular Nos. A-102 and A-110.

Award Procedure: The county Farm Service Agency (FSA) committee must approve applications in whole or in part within the county allocation of Federal funds for that purpose.

Deadlines: Application for payment must be filed with the county FSA committee by a prescribed date. The conservation practice for which cost-shares have been approved must be completed during the program year, within the time specified by the county FSA committee, and such performance reported to the county office within a specified time.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: From 2 to 3 weeks.

Appeals: Participants may appeal to county FSA committee or office, State committee, or Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs, on any determination.

Renewals: Certain approvals may be extended by the FSA county committee, when necessary, with proper justification.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Cost-share payment is required. The agricultural producer pays a portion of the conservation practice. County committees shall establish levels of cost-sharing for each practice for which payments may be made by FSA as follows: 1) Not to exceed 64 percent of the first $62,500 of the eligible cost of restoring the loss; 2) not to exceed 40 percent of the second $62,500 of restoring the loss; 3) not to exceed 20 percent of the eligible cost above $125,000 to restore the loss; and 4) not to exceed $200,000 for total cost-sharing paid to one person for a disaster loss.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Practice cost-share approvals are given on a fiscal year basis. The approvals specify the time that the practice must be carried out. Payment is by check following completion of the measure.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Not applicable.

Audits: Recipients are subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General, USDA.
Records: Maintained in the county FSA office and Federal record centers for a specified number of years.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-3316-0-1-453,

Obligations: (Direct payments) FY 96 $18,233,122; FY 97 est $46,681,615; and FY 98 est $0.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: $50 to $64,000; $2,681.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** As a result of natural disasters in fiscal year 1996 as well as carry over work associated with Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki, Typhoon Omar, and the Midwest Flood of 1993, $25,405,741 in cost-share and technical assistance was paid to farmers and ranchers in 40 States and the Virgin Islands and Guam to help rehabilitate farmland damaged by flood, hurricane, tornado, and other natural disasters in fiscal year 1996. In fiscal year 1997, it is estimated that $58.0 million in cost-share and technical assistance will be paid to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters during fiscal year 1997.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Program regulations published in the Federal Register, 7 CFR, Part 701. Program is announced through the news media in the county area designated as a disaster area. Also, Program Handbook 1-ECP is issued by FSA.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Farmers are advised to contact their local county FSA office after a natural disaster has occurred to determine eligibility for emergency cost-share assistance. Consult the local telephone directory for location of the county FSA office.

Headquarters Office: Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, Ag Box 0520, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-6221.

**RELATED PROGRAMS**: 10.404, Emergency Loans.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Not applicable.

# Farm Land Protection Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Section 388.

**OBJECTIVES:** To purchase conservation easements or other interests in lands to limit non-agricultural uses of farmland with prime, unique, or other productive soils.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Financial assistance is provided to establish partnerships with States, Tribes, or units of local government to enhance their purchase of development rights programs. Federal cost share for any easement acquisition is limited to a maximum of 50 percent of the fair market easement value. A conservation plan is required for each easement acquired. Acquisition of an easement or other interests in land is for a minimum duration of 30 years, preferably, in perpetuity. A contingent remainder right would be incorporated in the easement deed for the protection of the Federal investment. A failure of title would require the cooperating entity to reimburse the United States for the Federal share of the easement value.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: Any local or State agency, county or groups of counties, municipality, town or township, soil and water conservation district, or Indian tribe or tribal organization, that has a farmland protection program that purchases conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses of land, and that has pending offers may apply for assistance.

Beneficiary Eligibility: Any local or State agency, county or groups of counties, municipality, town or township, soil and water conservation district or Indian tribe or tribal organization may apply for assistance.

Credentials/Documentation: Applicants must provide documents indicating their commitment to long-term conservation of agricultural lands through legal devices, such as right-to-farm laws, agricultural districts, zoning, or land use plan; uses of voluntary approach to protect farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses; and their capability to acquire, manage, and enforce rights in land or interests in land. Programs must have a systematic plan for acquiring conservation easements and have a proven commitment.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: Potential applicants must submit documents to the appropriate State Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and work with NRCS to develop a statewide priority list.

Application Procedure: Application information is included in the Notice of Request for Proposals published in the Federal Register. It is available from the State Offices of the (NRCS), the Federal Register and USDA NRCS home page, and the Farm Land Information Center.

Award Procedure: NRCS State Offices work with the applicant entities to review their programs, evaluate the priority lists, and forward the proposals to NRCS National Headquarters for national consideration.

Deadlines: Annually, depending on funding availability and is announced through a Notice of Request for Proposals published in the Federal Register.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Indicated on the Notice of Request for Proposals published in the Federal Register.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Each cooperating agency is to fund its own participation for easement acquisition. Nonfederal funds must be at least 50 percent of the fair market easement value. Each cooperating agency is to fund its own administrative costs in acquiring easements, such as survey or title search, and costs incurred in managing the easements.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Federal financial assistance must be disbursed within two years after signing the cooperative agreement. Technical assistance to maintain the conservation plan, however, is provided through the life of the easement.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Annual reports on the status of the easements acquired will be prepared by NRCS. Reports on the financial assistance will be prepared by the Farm Service Agency.

Audits: An audit may be made in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-102 Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and local governments and other related Circulars.

Records: Records of easements acquired will be maintained for the life of the easements by the cooperating entity.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Obligations: FY 96 $14,375,000; Technical assistance $575,000; FY 97 est $0; and FY 98 est $0.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: FY 96 from $100,000 to $1.900,000 per cooperating entity; $387,162.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS: USDA cooperated with 37 entities in 17 States in fiscal year 1996 to initiate the process to acquire conservation easements on approximately 200 farms, 76,000 acres, and an estimate of $116 million in easement values. The FPP has increased awareness and interest nationwide in establishing local purchase of development rights programs for the protection of the farmland from conversion to non-agricultural uses.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** Notice of Request for Proposals, Federal Register, 61 FR 43226.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Community Assistance and Resource Development Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, P. O. Box 2890, Washington, D. C. 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-2847, fax: (202) 690-0639.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** None.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** 1) California Department-of Conservation's Agricultural Land Stewardship Program; 2) Florida St. Johns River Water Management District's Georgia-Pacific Project; 3) Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program; 4) Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Farmland Purchase of Development Rights Program; and 5) Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's Farmland Conservation Easement Program. The Farmland Protection Program provides an opportunity to expand the Federal partnerships with States, Tribes, and units of local government to preserve farmland for future generations; to protect strategic farmland from urbanization; maintain, restore, and enhance ecosystem; protect historic landscapes, scenic beauty, and open space; and sustain rural economic stability and development.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Criteria used for selecting proposals are: The type and terms of easements, the level of cost sharing provided by the cooperating entity, the use by a cooperating entity of a land evaluation and site assessment system to evaluate applications for their program, a programmatic process for systematic easement acquisition evidence of a successful program, and the magnitude of the resources protected.

# Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program *(WHIP)*

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Federal Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, Public Law 104-127; Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 3830 et seq.

**OBJECTIVES:** This program was created to develop upland wildlife habitat, wetland wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species habitat, fish habitat and other types of wildlife habitat.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Direct Payments for Specified Use.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Technical assistance is provided to develop a Wildlife Habitat Development Plan for eligible participants. Cost-share payments may be made to implement wildlife habitat practices. Seventy-five percent cost-share is available to reimburse participants for installing practices beneficial to wildlife.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: A participant may be an owner, landlord, operator, or tenant of eligible lands. Limited resource producers, small scale producers, producers of minority groups, Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments, Alaska natives, and Pacific Islanders are encouraged to apply.

Beneficiary Eligibility: A participant may be an owner, landlord, operator, or tenant of eligible lands. Limited resource producers, small-scale producers, producers of minority groups, Federally Recognized Indian Tribal Governments, Alaska natives, and Pacific Islanders are encouraged to apply.

Credentials/Documentation: Evidence that applicant has control over land to be entered into contract and submits an acceptable Wildlife Habitat Development Plan for the land unit of concern that incorporates needed wildlife habitat practices. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-87.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: None. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102 and E.O. 12372.

Application Procedure: Program participation is voluntary. The applicant applies at the local USDA service center on Form CCC-1200. Applications may be filed at any time during the year. The participant develops and submits a Wildlife Habitat Development Plan for the land unit of concern. The participant's plan serves as the basis for the WHIP contract. Technical assistance, and cost-share payments may be provided to apply the needed wildlife habitat practices within a time schedule specified by the plan. A contract with a participant may apply more than one wildlife habitat practice.

Award Procedure: NRCS may designate a wildlife habitat type or a region of special wildlife habitat concern as a priority. The priorities are designated based on recommendations of local work groups which are convened by the local conservation district. NRCS will give special consideration to applicants who have Wildlife Habitat Development Plans that address wildlife habitat concerns for which the priority was designated. Applications will be ranked and selected for funding.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: None.

Appeals: A participant may appeal any adverse determination to the FSA county committee.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Installation of cost-share practices to develop wildlife habitat can be funded by cost-sharing up to 75 percent of the total cost of establishing the practice. Other practices may be required to be installed without program payments.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: In the proposed WHIP rule the contract period is a minimum of 10 years. Obligations for assistance are tied to the schedule for applying wildlife **habitat** practices included in the Wildlife **Habitat** Development Plan used as the basis for contract. Payments are made when the participant and NRCS certify that a conservation practice is completed in accordance with the contract.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: No reports. NRCS and the participant make an annual status review during the length of the contract that includes maintenance of completed contract items and need for deletion or addition of contract items.

Audits: NRCS makes periodic random reviews of the operation and maintenance of the contract items during the life span of the conservation practice. Participants are subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General, USDA.

Records: Maintained in local NRCS office, FSA county office, and Federal records centers for specified number of years.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1000-0-1-302

Obligations: FY 96 $0; FY 97 est $20,000,000; and FY 98 est $30,000,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: Cost-share payments are generally limited to $10,000 per contract. Average contract payments are estimated to be $2,000.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** None. This program is in its first year of implementation.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** 7 CFR Part 1466. Program is announced through news media and in announcements to agricultural producers, farm and ranch owners and operators in the county. Program manuals, handbooks, and leaflets issued by NRCS and FSA.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, P. O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. ATTN: Deputy Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Programs. Telephone: (202) 720-1845. FAX: (202) 720-4265.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.054, Emergency Conservation Program; 10.064, Forestry Incentives Program; 10.069, Conservation Reserve Program; 10.072, Wetlands Reserve Program; 10.764, Resource Conservation and Development Loans; 10.901, Resource Conservation and Development; 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation; 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention; 10.912, Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** No projects were funded at the time of publication.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Applications will be ranked and selected for funding based on: The wildlife habitat benefits derived and the extent the contract will assist in achieving the wildlife habitat priority goals and objectives in the area the land unit is located.

# Resource Conservation and Development

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Public Law 97-98, 95 Stat. 1213.

**OBJECTIVES:** To encourage and improve the capability of State and local units of government and local nonprofit organizations in rural areas to plan, develop and carry out programs for resource conservation and development.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Project Grants; Advisory Services and Counseling.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** Technical and limited financial assistance is available only to RC&D sponsors within areas authorized by the Secretary of Agriculture for assistance. Grants are not available to individuals or businesses. Technical and limited financial assistance is available for the planning and installation of approved projects specified in RC&D area plans, for land conservation, water management, community development and environmental enhancement elements.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: State and local governments and nonprofit organizations with authority to plan or carry out activities relating to resource use and development in multi jurisdictional areas. This program is also available in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam and Mariana Islands.

Beneficiary Eligibility: State and local governments and nonprofit organizations within areas designated as RC&D areas by the Secretary of Agriculture with authority to plan or carry out activities relating to resource use and development in multi jurisdictional areas.

Credentials/Documentation: Applicant agency(ies) and nonprofit organizations must document that application is made as a result of official action of the governing body. Applications are honored only from agencies for which applicant eligibility has been established. Costs will be determined in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-87 for State and local governments.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: This program is eligible for coverage under E.O. 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs." An applicant should consult the office or official designated as the Single Point of Contact in his or her State for more information on the process the State requires to be followed in applying for assistance, if the State has selected the program for review. This program is excluded from coverage under OMB Circular No. A-102.

Application Procedure: Written application must be in the form suggested in the National Resource Conservation and Development Manual. This program is subject to the provisions of OMB Circular No. A-110.

Award Procedure: Details of the procedure are available from State and field offices of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Deadlines: None.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Indeterminate. Authorization of applications is dependent upon the level of appropriations for the program.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Not applicable.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: Local or State agencies must provide land rights needed for the installation of all projects. RC&D grant assistance (up to 25 percent not to exceed $50,000 of the total project cost) may be provided for a project. Local or State agencies generally must provide ten percent of the total cost and be responsible for any needed operation and maintenance. Loan assistance may be provided for the local share of measure cost.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Not applicable.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Periodic inspections and reports are required to insure that structural projects for which Federal financial assistance has been provided are being properly operated and maintained in accordance with agreements.

Audits: In accordance with the provisions of Circular No. A-128, "Audits of State and Local Governments," State and local governments that receive financial assistance of $100,000 or more within the State's fiscal year shall have an audit made for that year. State and local governments that receive between $25,000 and $100,000 within the State's fiscal year shall have an audit made in accordance with Circular No. A-128, or in accordance with Federal laws and regulations governing the programs in which they participate.

Records: None.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Account Identification: 12-1010-0-1-302.

Obligations: (Grants) FY 96 $262,572; FY 97 est $39.038; and FY 98 est $0; (Salaries and Expenses) FY 96 $29,169,511; FY 97 est $29,377,000; and FY 98 est $47,700,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: $0 to **$50,000;** $10,000.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Completed projects by local citizens to improve the economy and quality of living in RC&D areas totaled 31,634, as of September 30, 1996.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** "Assistance available from the Natural Resources Conservation Service," AIB-345; "Resource Conservation and Development Manual, 390-V, Third Ed.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center. For loans, contacts should be made with the Rural Economic and Community Development office serving the county in which the RC&D project is located.

Headquarters Office: Deputy Chief for Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 2890, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 720-4527. FTS is not available.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.764, Resource Conservation and Development Loans; 10.902, Soil and Water Conservation.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** The following examples reflect the concepts that make RC&D a truly unique government program. These concepts include: The value of public/private partnerships in making the best use of limited resources; the value of grass-roots involvement in making decisions about local issues; bringing USDA agencies together to focus on the same problems and opportunities; the ability to leverage limited federal dollars with private funds to accomplish goals; and achieving a balance between rural economic development and natural resource protection.

1) The Potomac Headwaters RC&D Council in West Virginia helped two soil conservation districts, a county, and several fire departments plan and implement a project to improve safety and reduce fire insurance rates. These partners have invested just over $40,000 into the installation of 76 dry fire hydrants. This has resulted in over 5,000 home owners annually saving more than $875,000 on insurance premiums. The increased safety due to quicker response time will be measured in reduced property losses.

2) The Cherokee Hills RC&D in Oklahoma organized a business development program that includes services of a business planner that assists the person with development of a business plan and other needed records. This helps them when they apply to the loan pool that has been established. The loan pool of $236,000 was established by a partnership of the

Cherokee Hills RC&D, Rural Development, BancFirst of Oklahoma, Forest Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service. One hundred, twenty applications for assistance have resulted in 18 loans (16 to Native Americans) from the loan pool and two from conventional sources. This has created 12 new and six expanded businesses resulting in 31 new jobs.

3) The Cocopal RC&D in Arizona has helped the Kaibab-Paiute Reservation improve the quality of the natural resources on the reservation. The council helped develop agreements that made it possible for the reservation and the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to utilize $141,000 of 319(h) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program funds from Arizona's allocation for a demonstration. The project included planting 47,000 trees that control stream bank erosion and will provide resources for weaving baskets. A complete range management plan was developed for 30,000 acres. The needed improvements have created six jobs that will last three years on this project and then move to other ranches as the increased income is shown. The demonstration will keep over 500 tons of sediment from damaging property on the reservation each year.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Proposals for projects are judged on relevance of the project to the individual RC&D's area plan goals and objectives. Criteria for setting priorities are usually published in the RC&D area plan or are available from the local sponsors of the RC&D area.

# Small Farmer Outreach Training and Technical Assistance Program (Outreach and Assistance Grants for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers)

USDA
Natural Resources Conservation Service

**AUTHORIZATION:** Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Section 2501, Public Law 101-624, 7 U.S.C. 2279.

**OBJECTIVES:** To reverse the decline of small, limited resource and economically socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The intended outcome is to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms, participate in agricultural programs, and become an integral part of the agricultural community.

**TYPES OF ASSISTANCE:** Project Grants.

**USES AND USE RESTRICTIONS:** To provide educational, technical assistance, research and counseling services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

Applicant Eligibility: 1890/1862 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Institutions, including Tuskegee University, Indian Tribal Community Colleges and Alaska Native cooperative colleges, Hispanic serving post-secondary educational institutions or other post-secondary educational institutions and community-based organizations that: (1) Has demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related services to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers; (2) provides documentary evidence of its past experience in working with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers during the 2 years preceding its application for assistance; and (3) does not engage in activities prohibited under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Beneficiary Eligibility: A farmer or rancher who is a member of one or more of the following groups whose members have been subject to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of a group without regard to individual qualities: Black, Women, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

Credentials/Documentation: Applicants must have the financial, legal, administrative, and operational capacity to carry out the objectives of the program by having experience in agricultural. Costs will be determined in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-87 “Cost Principles for State and Local Governments” for State and local governments and OMB Circular No. A-122 “Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations” for all other applicants. Applicants should provide a certification of all members of the applicant/applicant entity including name, gender, race and national origin. For applicant entities also include the interests held by each member.

**APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS:**

Preapplication Coordination: None.

Application Procedure: After being invited to submit a proposal through a Notice in the Federal Register. Eligible educational institutions or 1890/1862 Land-Grant Institutions, including Tuskegee University Indian tribal community colleges, and Alaska native community colleges, Hispanic serving post education institutions of community based organization should submit NRCS Cooperative Agreement and Grant Application Package, provided by the NRCS, and a written proposal in an original and two copies to the address reflected in the applicable Notice or publication.

Award Procedure: Award is made by the Chief of NRCS.

Deadlines: Dates governing the acceptance, review, and selection of projects will be published in the Federal Register Notice or other applicable publication announcing the invitation to submit proposals.

Range of Approval/Disapproval Time: Notice of action taken on proposals will generally be within 90 days of final date of submission dateline.

Appeals: Not applicable.

Renewals: Applicants that have previously received a grant, and have achieved the goals established for the previous grant, must reapply for an additional grant under the initial grant procedures.

**ASSISTANCE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Formula and Matching Requirements: None.

Length and Time Phasing of Assistance: Grants are made for a 5-year period with a 12-month option in most instances.

**POST ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Reports: Quarterly financial and project performance reports are to be made to the applicable NRCS State Office.

Audits: Periodic audits should be made as part of the recipient's system of financial management and internal control to meet terms and conditions of grants and other agreements. In accordance with the provisions of 4 OMB Circular Nos. A-128 "Audits of State and Local Governments" and A-133 "Audits of Institutions of Higher Learning and Other Nonprofit Institutions". Entities that receive financial assistance of $100,000 or more within the fiscal year shall have an audit made for that year. Entities that receive between $25,000 and $100,000 within the fiscal year shall have an audit made in accordance with Circulars No. A-128 and A-133, or in accordance with Federal laws and regulations governing the programs in which they participate.

Records: Grantees shall maintain adequate records and accounts to assure that grant funds are used for authorized purposes.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Obligations: (Grants) FY 96 $11,000,000; FY 97 est $7,063,000; and FY 98 est $10,000,000.

Range and Average of Financial Assistance: As of September 30, 1996, 28 recipients of awards participated in the program.

**PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** The 28 recipients service 22 States and 394 counties by providing assistance to over 8,000 (1,800 are FSA borrowers) farmers and ranchers efforts have provided outreach to over 52,000 rural constituents.

**REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND LITERATURE:** 7 CFR 3015, 3016, 3017,3018; OMB Circular Nos. A-87, A-110, A-128, and A-133. FmHA Instruction 1943-C Farm Ownership, Soil, Water and Recreation, available from FmHA State Offices. A General Manual Issuance is being prepared for NRCS.

**INFORMATION CONTACTS:**

Regional or Local Office: Consult the local telephone directory where your land is located for location of the USDA service center.

Headquarters Office: Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency, National Project Manager, NRCS Outreach Division, P.O. Box 2890, Rm. 4929-S, Washington, DC 20013. Telephone: (202) 690-1890, Fax: (202) 720-4995.

**RELATED PROGRAMS:** 10.350, Technical Assistance to Cooperatives; 10.500, Cooperative Extension Service.

**EXAMPLES OF FUNDED PROJECTS:** Under the currently funded projects, the grantees propose to provide a five year plan for outreach and technical assistance to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to own and operate farms and ranches and to participate in agricultural programs.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROPOSALS:** Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made for responsiveness to the solicitation. Proposals that do not fall within the solicitation guidelines will be eliminated from competition. All accepted proposals will be reviewed by a peer review panel. In evaluating the proposal, the following will be taken into account to the degree to which the proposal demonstrates the following: (1) Degree to which the proposal clearly describes its objective and evidences

a high level of feasibility and consistency with USDA policy and NRCS mission. (2) degree to which the institution or organization is committed to the project, as shown by funds, in-kind services, or historical success in meeting the objectives of the program. (3) degree to which the proposal reflects collaborative approaches in meeting with other agencies or organizations to enhance the objectives of the program. Also, the areas and number of farmers who would benefit from the services offered. (4) degree to which the proposal contains efforts to reach persons identified as socially disadvantaged and farmers in designated socially disadvantage counties. (5) degree to which the proposal reflects special innovative features to attract, interest, and improve the economical and social conditions of the limited resource farmer.