

Conservation Programs

soil water air plants animals people

Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA)

Provides natural resource inventories and assessments, planning assistance, and technical assistance in applying conservation systems and practices to protect and enhance natural resources. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has the responsibility to provide conservation technical assistance to individuals, groups, communities, Tribes, state and local government and other federal agencies. A close partnership between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, 88 local conservation districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts provides the vehicle for delivery of conservation technical assistance in the state.

Small Watershed Program (PL-566)

Helps urban and rural communities improve and develop water and land resources in watersheds up to 250,000 acres. Projects can address flood prevention, erosion and sediment control, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, wetland creation and restoration, irrigation, public recreation, water quality, and land treatment.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)

The purpose of the Resource Conservation and Development program is to encourage and improve the capability of volunteer local elected and civic leaders in designated RC&D areas to plan and carry out projects for resource conservation and community development. Program objectives focus on “quality of life” improvements achieved through natural resources conservation and community development. Such activities lead to sustainable communities, prudent land use, and the sound management and conservation of natural resources.

Technical 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.

Soil Survey Program

Publishes scientific inventories that name and classify soils according to a national system and provides information on the potential and limitations of the soil for various uses. Oklahoma is currently digitizing soil survey data, and hopes to have all 77 counties available in electronic format by 2007.

National Resources Inventory (NRI)

Provides a national comprehensive survey which assesses the use, treatment, conditions, and trends of natural resources on nonfederal rural lands at five-year intervals.

Plant Materials

At Plant Materials Centers across the country, scientists evaluate the growth and use of plant materials and cultural and management technologies for solving soil and water conservation problems. Plant materials and technologies are needed for range and pastureland, cropland, stream bank and shoreline stabilization, wildlife habitat improvement, wetland enhancement, and revegetation and stabilization of human-caused environmental disturbances, such as construction on urban lands, transportation, transmission, and utility corridors, timber harvest, and strip mining of mineral resources.

Conservation of Private Grazing Land

A program to ensure that technical, educational, and related assistance is provided to those who own and manage private grazing lands.

USDA Cost-Share Programs

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

A voluntary program that results in the planting of sensitive cropland to permanent vegetative cover for 10 to 15 years. The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides the technical assistance for the Conservation Reserve Program. CRP contract holders receive annual rental payments from the Farm Service Agency.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

A voluntary program that helps farmers, ranchers and Tribes keep their land in agriculture, and prevents conversion of agricultural land to nonagricultural uses. The program provides matching funds to state, Tribal, local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farmland protection programs, to purchase conservation easements.

Participants agree not to convert the land for nonagricultural uses, and to develop and implement an NRCS conservation plan. Landowners retain all rights to use the property for agriculture. A minimum of 30 years is required for conservation easements. These entities purchase easements from landowners in exchange for a lump sum payment.

Proposals are received from federally recognized Tribes, states, units of local government, and non-governmental organizations to cooperate in the acquisition of conservation easements or other interests on farms and ranches.

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

A voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance for the conservation, protection and improvement of soil, water and related resources on private and Tribal lands. The program provides payments for producers who historically have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands, and incentives for those who want to do more.

Producers may choose from one of three tiers of conservation practices and systems, with the more complex and comprehensive tiers receiving higher incentive payments. CSP contracts are from 5 to 10 years. Contract payments will be based on 5, 10 and 15 percent of a national rental rate per acre.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

A voluntary conservation program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. Through 1 to 10 year EQIP contracts, farmers, ranchers and Tribes may receive financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

Surface and Groundwater Conservation

A special section of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program allows for additional funding for water conservation measures in the High Plains Aquifer region of Oklahoma.

The purpose is specifically to promote ground and surface water conservation activities to improve irrigation systems, convert to the production of less water intensive agricultural commodities, or institute other measures that improve groundwater conservation.

Financial and technical assistance to a producer may be provided only to facilitate a conservation measure that results in a net savings in groundwater or surface water resources in the agricultural operation of the producer.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

A voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private and Tribal lands. The program provides financial incentives to enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring marginal land from agriculture. The program offers options of permanent easement, 30-year easement, and restoration cost-share agreement.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

A voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of national, state, Tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to landowners to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property.

Cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements are usually 5 to 10 years in duration.

State and Other Cost-Share Programs

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance and program information support to state, conservation districts, and nonprofit organizations, cost-share programs and projects. Landowners or others interested in the details of these programs, can visit their local Natural Resources Conservation Service or conservation district office. An office is assigned to assist every conservation district, and is found in the government section of your phone book.

For More Information

For more information on the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service programs, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office or USDA Service Center, or check out the website: www.ok.usda.gov.