

New Mexico NRCS Easements

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nm/programs/easements/>





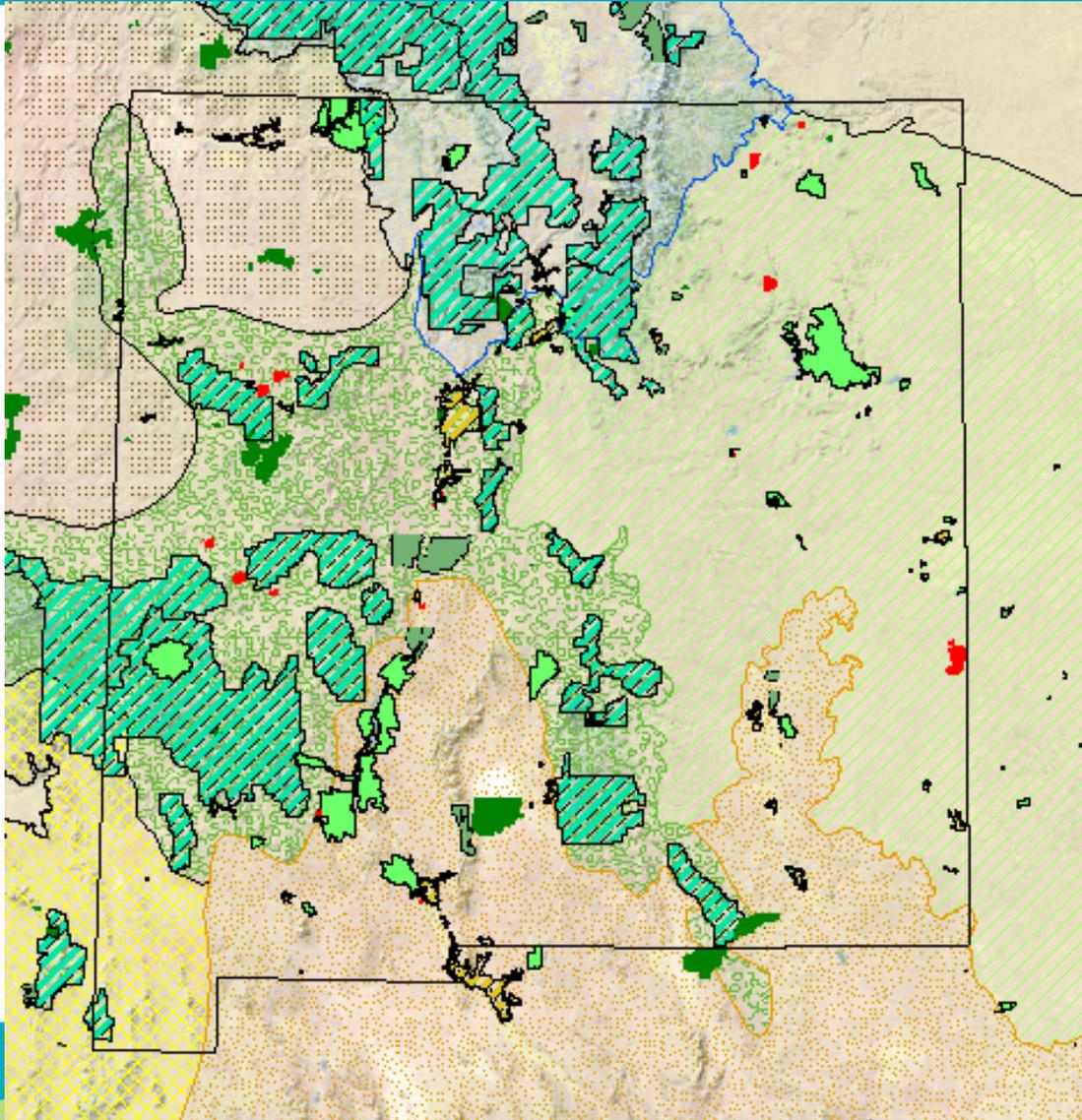
- *ALE*: NRCS payment is 50% of the appraised market value of the easement. This can be raised to 75% for *grasslands of special significance*.
- *WRE*: NRCS payment is 90% of the appraised market value *not to exceed \$5,000 per acre*.
- STC input- *should NRCS change the WRE payment rate?*



# Ranking Priority

- A specific at risk species?
- A specific development risk such as flooding?
- Proximity to urban area?
- Type of food production?
- Protection of water rights?
- Wetland type?
- Connectivity to already protected land?





**Legend**

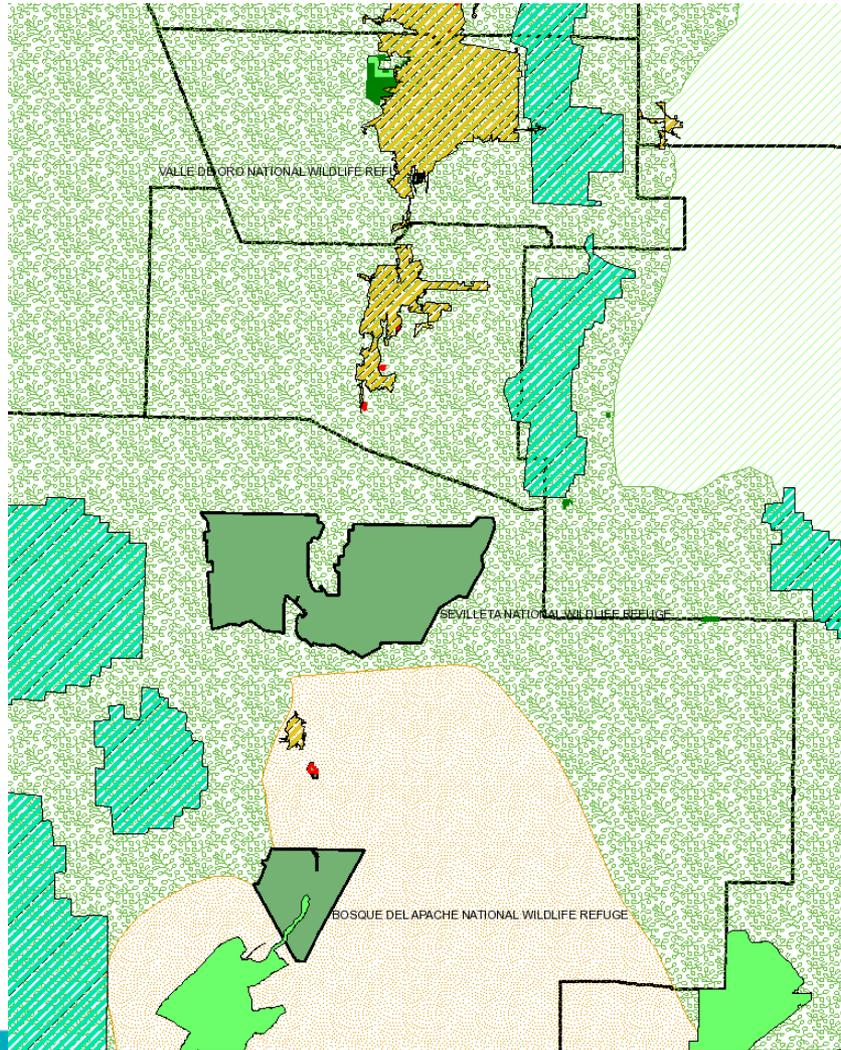
- Natural Corridors
- urban\_a\_nm
- NM\_Easements\_080913
- National Forests
- State Parks
- National Parks
- FWS Refuge Ownership Boundaries

**ECO\_NAME**

- Apache Highlands
- Arizona-New Mexico Mountains
- Chihuahuan Desert
- Colorado Plateau
- Southern Rocky Mountains
- Southern Shortgrass Prairie

USA Topo Maps





<p>Parcel contains Riparian Habitat, Streams or Wetlands as described in the New Mexico State Wildlife Plan (2014-2017).</p> <p>(20 points for Yes, 0 points for No)</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>Parcel is located along the Rio Grande River and includes riparian habitat designated as Working Lands for Wildlife Focal Area for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.</p> <p>(50 points Yes, 0 points No)</p>	<p>50</p>
<p>Parcel is located along the Rio Grande River, includes riparian habitat designated as Working Lands for Wildlife Focal Area for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and is located in Valencia County. This will improve wildlife habitat connectivity between USFWS NAWCA projects in Bernalillo and Socorro counties.</p> <p>(80 points Yes, 0 points No)</p>	<p>80</p>
<p>Parcel is in a geographic region where enrollment achieves landscape, regional, or other agricultural or conservation goals and objectives identified in state plans and is not a WLFW focal area for Southwestern willow flycatcher along the Rio Grande river.</p> <p>(20 points Yes, 0 points No)</p>	<p>20</p>





## Low Priority

- For ALE, a ranking score needs to be set for the minimum needed to be funded.
- Low level of population growth?
- Not close to other protected land?
- Degraded agricultural land?





United States Department of Agriculture

# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM



*Building Better Outcomes*





## Coordination with Other NRCS Programs



<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/>





# Addressing Resource Concerns

**E329101Z**: Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till (CPS 329)

**101 = Soil Erosion, Sheet and Rill**

- If the enhancement name has a **Z** then the Implementation Requirement is developed so that the **Additional Criteria** will be met in addition to maintaining the general criteria of the practice standard.
- For soil erosion the percent of residue, time of year of residue and amount of soil disturbance allowed is determined using the current soil erosion prediction software.





## E528136Z1

Prescribed Grazing  
Food for wildlife

Must follow grazing plan that specifies the needs of the wildlife and rangeland plants that provide food resources

\$0.46 per acre

## E382136Z

Fence  
Food for wildlife  
Modify existing fence to reduce barriers to wildlife.  
\$0.16 per foot

## E595137Z

Integrated Pest Management  
Cover and shelter for wildlife

Eliminate use of insecticides that have a detrimental effect on dung beetles and follow a grazing plan to break pest cycle.

\$6.39 per acre







# Developing the Ranking Questions

State Technical Committee and local work groups have input.

Ranking process evaluates applications and prioritizes them for funding.

NRCS will develop local issue questions based on state, local input.

National and state questions developed for FY19 from partner and stakeholder input at national level.

Questions are based on resource concerns and do not consider the size of an operation.



Resource Concern	Agland	Agland- Irrigated	NIPF (Forest)
Soil Erosion	X	X	X
Soil Quality Degradation	X	X	
Degraded Plant Condition	X	X	X
Fish and Wildlife Inadequate Habitat	X		X
Insufficient Water		X	
Livestock Production Limitation	X		X
Water Quality Degradation		X	X
Air Quality Impacts			
Inefficient Energy Use			
Excess Water			



# CSP Local Ranking Priorities

- Rangeland: Improves habitat for grassland birds.
- Cropland: Increase in the amount of conservation tillage, cover crops and pollinator habitat.
- Forestland: Regeneration of aspens, reduce forest pests and disease, improve habitat for wildlife and reduce soil erosion.





What conservation practices are underutilized?

What locations should be prioritized?

How can communication be improved?





# Conservation Innovations Grants

- Stimulate innovation in agricultural conservation technologies
- NM will budget \$75,000 from EQIP allocation for 2019
- Applicants must provide 50% match, can be cash, in-kind and donations
- Priorities: soil health, grazing management, organic production, others?

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nm/programs/financial/cig/>



## ACEP, CSP and CIG

### Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Low number of ALE applications is due to:

- Entity cash match requirement. This might be reduced in the new Farm Bill.
- The NRCS easements are conservation easements which require management and could have more restrictions than other easements that mainly prohibit development. For grasslands of special significance this means the landowner needs to follow an approved grassland management plan.
- There is usually at least a 50% decline in market value with an easement and even further decline with a conservation easement tied to the government.

**Suggestion:** NRCS should hold a survey of easement entities to find out if there are other issues to address to increase the number of applications.

Low number of WRE applications is due to:

- The wetlands in New Mexico do not usually meet the eligibility requirements.
- The restrictions on the deed discourage landowners from participating.

New Mexico uses a payment rate for WRE of 90% of appraised market value not to exceed \$5,000 per acre. On a case by case basis NRCS can request to exceed the per acre limit for properties with valuable water rights. NRCS needs concurrence from the State Technical Committee each year on this payment rate.

**No concerns were brought up about the payment rate and the current WRE rate was approved by the committee.**

State Technical Committee members are encouraged to look at the current ranking sheets and submit comments. The current priority for ALE is for agricultural land in Valencia county that will increase the connectivity between already protected land along the Rio Grande in Bernalillo and Socorro counties. A minimum cutoff needs to be established for ALE in the state so that funding can be used in other states for higher ranked projects.

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

The reinvention in 2017 has led to changes to better integrate CSP with EQIP and ties the CSP activities to the conservation practice standards. The program now better leads to actual results rather than implementation of activities like moving salts every 30 days that in many cases did not achieve a natural resource benefit. At the last State Technical Committee meeting a question was asked about what NRCS will require for the monitoring of grazing plans. In the past year NRCS has provided training on monitoring for utilization using photo guides and tally sheets for grazed vs ungrazed plants. Training has also been provided on the requirements of a grazing plan.

**Suggestion:** NRCS should work with Extension to provide resources and training to ranchers on monitoring, grazing management and how this is tied to CSP and EQIP requirements.

There has been a large drop in CSP contracts in NM with the reinvention, but the average payment per contract per year has stayed about the same. It actually went up in 2017. Due to the large decline in applications there has not been an issue with the ranking questions.

The 5 targeted resource concerns are based on the Local Working Group input this year. The only change from the past is that for Arland-Irrigated the resource concern of Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife has been replaced with Water Quality Degradation.

The State Technical Committee can recommend fund accounts or priority for specific parts of the state (like eastern NM) or specific habitat types (like pinyon juniper).

Many of the questions used in CSP to evaluate resource concerns will be used in the new evaluation tool called CART. The current evaluation questions are found in CAET which NRCS has posted here: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nm/programs/financial/csp/>

**Suggestion:** NRCS needs to move on the RCPP Rio Chama agreement which has money for CSP. NRCS is not sure what steps can be taken while waiting for Farm Bill authorization for CSP.

#### Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

CIG is for innovative (loosely defined) projects that involve new technologies (also loosely defined) that have been demonstrated to work that involve agricultural producers. This could include development of a poster, outreach events, apps and other technologies.

NM is allocating \$75,000 this year from the EQIP funds for CIG. Once National allows announcements, NM will post an APF which should be similar to last year's APF. The priorities for last year were on grazing management, soil health and organic production.

**Suggestion:** Add as priorities water quantity (in particular for water reuse in southeastern NM) and water quality (across the state).