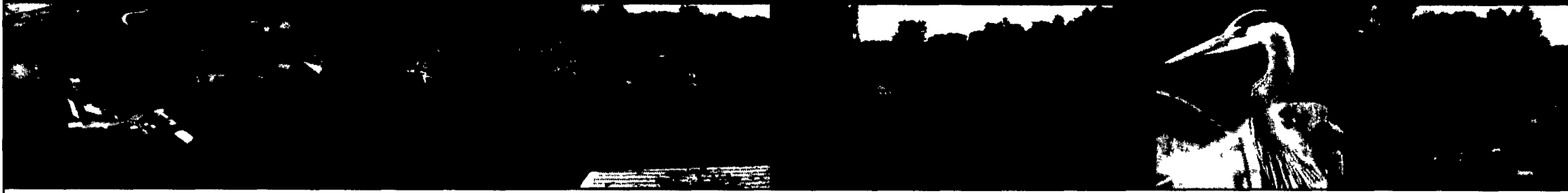


CONSERVATION PROGRAMS



Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program slows the loss of prime farmland through the purchase of permanent conservation easements (or development rights) from owners of quality farmland by state, county and local government. The program compensates landowners for the development value, in return for maintaining the land as open space. Farmers may choose to receive the proceeds from easement sales in a lump sum payment or installments. For more information, contact your county's agricultural land preservation board or the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Farmland Preservation at **717-783-3167**.

Agriculture-Linked Investment Program (AgriLink) provides low interest loans to implement management practices that are part of an approved nutrient management plan. It is a cooperative effort of the Pennsylvania Treasury Department, the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission, local commercial banks and offices of the Farm Credit Service. The costs of manure storage facilities, barnyard management facilities, terraces, waterways and diversions are some of the practices that may be funded by the program. After the county conservation district approves a nutrient management plan, the farmer should request an estimate of the construction costs for the desired practices, and then seek a loan. For more information or an application, contact your county's conservation district office, bank, Farm Credit Service office, local conservation district office, or the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission at **717-772-8821**.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) provides cost-share assistance to establish rotational grazing, construct or improve water management structures, plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality and mitigate risk through diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or a transition to organic farming. There is a 5- to 10-year contract period, with payments up to \$50,000 for any fiscal year. Sign-up is on a first-come, first-served basis with periodic ranking cutoff dates as determined by the state conservationist. AMA may be combined with other programs, providing even greater benefits in some cases. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Conservation District, or <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ama/>.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Farm Stewardship Program (FSP) provides financial and technical assistance to create wooded stream buffers and fence cattle out of wetlands in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Watershed (land within the Susquehanna or Potomac Rivers and eventually the Bay) with 15-year contracts. CBF typically pays the full cost of the fence system and plantings, and the landowner is responsible for costs of stabilized crossings and/or watering adjacent fields. For each acre of buffers wider than 15 feet or each acre of fenced wetlands, farmers earn up to \$1,000 in "BMP credits" to pay for their portion of costs for stabilized stream crossings and/or other practices. FSP is designed to fill gaps in funding which both pay more. Buffer specialists for your area and more information are available by calling CBF's Harrisburg office at **717-234-5550**.

Chesapeake Bay Program Financial Assistance Program provides cost-share funds for best management practices included in nutrient management plans, primarily for manure management in the Susquehanna and Potomac River watersheds with a 10-year agreement. The included practices will help manage nutrients from animal manure produced on commercial livestock and poultry operations and other nutrients (sludge, septage, chemical fertilizers, organic wastes, etc.) used in crop production. The cost-share program currently supports up to 80% (up to \$30,000) of the costs of practices for barnyard runoff management, composting, permanent vegetative cover, animal waste management, stripcropping, terraces, drainage, riparian land protection, critical area protection, waterways, cropland protection, conservation tillage, stream protection, sediment and erosion control, soil and manure analysis, excess manure management, and fertilizer management. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection manages this program. For more information or an application, contact your county's Conservation District office, or <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgmt/wc/subjects/cdnm/FACTS.htm>.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) provides cost-share and adds the bonus of annual rental payments for a wide variety of conservation practices. Buffers and selected other practices with highest benefits to water quality are eligible for payments, making them particularly attractive. CREP was originally available only in the 20 southern counties in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay watershed, but will expand to include the entire watershed in Pennsylvania by Summer 2003. Producers can sign up for a 10- to 15-year contract available at any time. CREP is typically the best paying option for the many practices it supports. Contact your county's USDA Farm Service Agency or Conservation District, or see <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafo/crep/>.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Enrollment provides annual rental payments and up to 50% of the cost to establish long-term, resource-conserving covers on fields previously planted to an agricultural commodity, that are eroding, cropped wetlands, or dedicated to highly beneficial environmental practices such as filter strips, riparian buffers, grass waterways, shelter belts, wellhead protection areas, and other similar practices in 10- to 15-year contracts. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Farm Service Agency or Conservation District, or see <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafo/cepd/crp.htm>.

Continuous Enrollment Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) is similar to the CRP General Enrollment except that it focuses on smaller parcels of land that provide especially high environmental benefits, and allows enrollment in 10- to 15-year contracts at any time, without a competitive bidding process. Offers are automatically accepted, provided the acreage and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Enrolled land may be used for riparian buffers, contour grass strips, waterways, shelter belts, field windbreaks, living snow fences, wellhead protection areas, or shallow water areas for wildlife. CCRP is a strong alternative where CREP is unavailable. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Farm Service Agency or Conservation District, or see <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/crcpcont.pdf>.

Ducks Unlimited Habitat Stewardship Program provides financial and technical assistance to create and restore wetlands, fence streambanks and create wooded stream buffers with 15-year contracts. It pays the full cost of wetlands restoration and also supports streambank fencing and riparian buffers at 80%. Ducks Unlimited works both inside and outside the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For more information, call Scott Reinhart at **570-727-2537** in eastern Pennsylvania or **814-832-4676** in western Pennsylvania.

Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) provides funding for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by wind erosion, drought, floods, hurricanes, or other natural disasters, and for carrying out water conservation measures during severe drought. The program may support debris removal, providing water for livestock, fence restoration, grading and shaping of farmland, restoring conservation structures, and water conservation measures. County Farm Services Agency committees set eligibility for ECP assistance and cost-share levels up to 64 percent. For more information, contact the USDA Farm Service Agency, or see: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/ecp00.htm>.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices, such as animal waste management facilities, barnyard lane stabilization, streambank fencing, terrace construction, tree planting, permanent wildlife habitat, nutrient management, pest management, and grazing land management. The payment limitation is \$450,000 per producer between 2002 and 2007, regardless of the number of contracts ranging from 1 to 10. The maximum cost-share rate is 75%, except in the case of beginning farmers or other limited resource farmers, for whom the rate is 90%. Additional Farm Bill funding may strengthen EQIP's ability to fund projects. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Conservation District, or see: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) was established in the 2002 Farm Bill to provide landowners with about 65% of the cost to develop and implement for at least 10 years a forest management plan that has been approved by a professional forester. The program will support riparian forest buffers, forest regeneration, invasive plant control and other forestry projects. For more information, contact your district office of the Bureau of Forestry, or call **717-787-2703**.

Grassland Reserve Program, a new program in the 2002 Farm Bill, will fund restoration and preservation of rangeland, pastureland, and grassland with easements, rental agreements, and cost-share payments. A GRP participant usually requires a minimum of 40 contiguous acres in a 10-, 15-, 20-, or 30-year rental agreement or in a 30-year or permanent easement. Eligible GRP land includes private grassland, shrubland, land containing forbs, or land located in an area historically used as grassland, shrubland, or forbs with the potential to serve as animal or plant habitat. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or Conservation District.

Nutrient Management Plan Development Incentives Program (PDIP) provides cost-share grants to livestock or poultry operations to develop a nutrient management plan according to Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Act. For more information or an application, contact your county's conservation district office, or the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission, at **717-772-4187**.

Nutrient Management Grant Program provides cost-share grants to financially stressed livestock and poultry producers who are required to install Best Management Practices as part of their approved nutrient management plan. For more information or an application, contact your county's Conservation District office, or the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission, at **717-772-4187**.

Project Grass provides technical assistance to establish rotational grazing systems, and a network among farmers using rotational grazing through pasture walks and other activities. It has some of its own funds but accesses other programs (AMA, CREP, and CBF's Farm Stewardship Program) to install rotational grazing systems. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or conservation district.

Stream Bank Fencing Program pays all costs for installation of high tensile fence and one crossing or ramp for landowners with livestock operations along streams in the Susquehanna and Potomac River watersheds. The landowner must maintain the fence for 10 years. For more information, contact your county's conservation district, or Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Watershed Management at **717-783-7577**, or <http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgmt/wc/subjects/cdnm/facts/fs1971.pdf>.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) funds restoration and protection of wetlands and buffer areas near wetlands with a cost-share agreement, or a 30-year or permanent conservation easement. For permanent easements, the landowner receives the agricultural value of the land, an established payment cap, or the amount offered by the landowner, plus 100% of restoration costs. For 30-year easements, NRCS pays 75% of what would have been paid for the permanent easement. For restoration cost-share agreements, the landowner receives 75% of the restoration costs and agrees to re-establish degraded or lost wetlands, usually for 10 years, with no easement on the property. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or conservation district, or see: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/>.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) encourages creation of high-quality wildlife upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas. Priorities are habitats for wildlife species experiencing declining or significantly reduced populations, and beneficial to fish and wildlife that may not otherwise be funded, especially streambank fencing and livestock crossings to improve riparian habitat, and conversion of cool season hayfields to warm season grasses to provide winter cover and nesting habitat for 5 to 10 years. For more information or an application, contact your county's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or conservation district, or see: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/>.

Any of the programs described here may change and new programs may become available, due to changes in funding and/or policies. Contact your local conservation district or organization providing the program for the latest information and that would be most appropriate for your farm. Conservation district staff will also be aware of local or watershed-specific programs not included here.