



United States Department of Agriculture

# Helping People Help the Land

## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

### What is NRCS?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is a technical agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Agency was established in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service to carry out continuing programs of soil and water conservation.

In partnership with local Conservation Districts, NRCS is charged with promoting and supporting conservation on private lands. Working with NRCS is always a voluntary decision on the part of a landowner. The ultimate goal of NRCS is to ensure that our natural resources will be preserved for future generations.



### How do I get started?

To get started working with NRCS, visit your local NRCS field office or Conservation District. NRCS is listed in your phone book's federal government section under the Department of Agriculture. You can also find a list of NRCS Michigan field offices online at [www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov).

A conservationist will work with you to develop a conservation plan for your operation. The conservation plan will address your conservation goals and environmental risks on your farm.

After developing a conservation plan, you and the conservationist will determine how to meet your conservation goals. In many cases, NRCS can provide financial assistance to help you implement new conservation measures.

### What kind of financial assistance does NRCS provide?

NRCS provides a portion of the cost of installing or implementing conservation measures through program payments. The producer receives payment after the practice has been installed or implemented. In some cases the producer may be able to receive a portion of the payment before the practice is installed.

### What kind of conservation measures are eligible for financial assistance?

NRCS assists with conservation measures for all types of agricultural operations including row crops, livestock and dairy production, forest products and Christmas trees,

organic production and specialty crops. Conservation measures eligible for financial assistance range from animal waste storage facilities, pest management, no-till and conservation tillage practices, windbreak planting and livestock stream crossings to name only a few.

### Is every landowner eligible to receive financial assistance from NRCS?

To participate in any USDA financial assistance program, including commodity price supports and insurance programs, farmers must meet basic USDA eligibility requirements. These include having wetland and highly erodible land determinations on file with USDA and meeting income eligibility requirements. If you do not have HEL and Wetland determinations, NRCS can assist you with this process.

### What other types of assistance does NRCS provide?

#### *Soils Information*

In addition to providing conservation technical and financial assistance, NRCS has extensive soils information. Soil survey maps are available for every Michigan county. You can obtain soils information from your local NRCS field office or by visiting the online Web Soil Survey at: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>.

#### *Easement Programs*

NRCS easement programs help keep agricultural land in production and protect valuable wildlife and fish habitat.

The Agricultural Land Easement Program purchases permanent or long-term development rights from land owners to keep their property in agricultural use. The easements are purchased by local land conservation organizations with match funds from NRCS.

The *Wetlands Reserve Easement Program* purchases long-term or permanent easements on land that was formerly wetlands. These acres are restored to wetlands to protect water quality and preserve valuable wildlife habitat.

NRCS has many other programs to develop and implement better conservation practices and to conserve and protect natural resources on a landowner, watershed and regional scale.