

# Pennsylvania NRCS Conservation Update

April 2023 North-Central Region



## Conservation, A Family Legacy on BDS Farms

BDS Farms LLC has a long history of family farming and conservation. Lamar Troup has been working with NRCS for decades to improve conservation on his farm in Snyder County, PA. Troup routinely worked with NRCS to update and implement his conservation plan. Over the years, projects have included tile, contour strips, grassed waterways, conversion to a no-till system, a poultry litter storage, and a forest management plan. Mr. Troup continued conservation efforts with the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in 2010 and again in 2015. When it came time to turn things over to the next generation, the newly created BDS Farms LLC was ready to continue the family's conservation legacy. Lamar's children signed on to take over the CSP contract in 2017.

In 2019 another potential renewal for CSP was discussed. Lamar and his son in law, Chris Harvey, stated that they had recently begun to raise some beef feeders. The beef herd was introduced to diversify the operation and, while they only had a small herd, they were already interested in expanding. However, concerns needed to be addressed while feeding the herd. The herd was fed in the pasture, and this, combined with an unimproved run-in shed, had led to an animal concentration area (ACA). Nutrients and sediment from this ACA could reach a spring fed waterway which contributed directly to Middle Creek. NRCS staff suggested that instead of renewing the CSP contract, BDS Farms should instead sign up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

NRCS began working with BDS Farms to develop a conservation plan that would address resource concerns contributed to the beef herd. NRCS staff worked with the operators to develop an engineer's inventory and evaluation (I&E). The I&E identified resource concerns on the farm and conservation practices that would successfully address those concerns. At the same time, other staff worked

with Chris to develop a prescribed grazing plan to protect the pastures from overgrazing and nutrient buildup. The operation also planned to update the current nutrient management plan (NMP) and include the practices identified by the I&E. Together, the I&E, grazing plan, and NMP completed a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP). NRCS considers a CNMP to be required planning for any conservation practice dealing with the handling of manure.

With the CNMP complete, BDS ranked high enough during the 2021 EQIP ranking cycle to be offered funding. The EQIP contract would provide incentive payments to help cover the associated costs with the practices identified in the CNMP. The contract included Heavy Use Area Protection (HUAP) and Waste Storage Facility (WSF). The HUAP and WSF, combining with several associated practices and Prescribed Grazing, would protect the pasture and eliminate the ACA. This would eliminate a source of sediment and nutrients that contributed to the designation of Middle Creek as an Ag-Impaired Watershed.

Since the contract was signed in 2021, the owners of BDS Farms LLC have continued to implement all structural practices. The design was completed in the fall of 2021 allowing for construction to commence. The operation is currently working with NRCS to complete the EQIP contract. The family is thrilled with the resulting HUAP and WSF structure. It not only protects water quality, but also has resulted in cleaner, healthier livestock. The structure was even essential in outreach to a neighboring farmer who had begun to work with NRCS on a similar project. Lamar and his family look to continue the conservation legacy and have signed up for the CSP program once again.

## NRCS Announced Sign Up for New Allegheny Plateau Habitat

In February, NRCS announced sign up for a new project that will focus on improving the health and resiliency of both public and private forest resources across the Allegheny Plateau. NRCS will provide more than \$330,000 in fiscal year 2023 to a partnership effort between Allegheny Forest Health Collaborative, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Woodland Stewardship Innovation Partnership, Ruffed Grouse Society, and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Through the Allegheny Plateau Habitat Restoration project, habitat development treatments will be prioritized through collaborative management for two at-risk species: the ruffed grouse and cerulean warbler. In turn, this project will provide benefits to communities by maintaining healthy, resilient forests through sustainable management while ensuring a consistent supply of ecosystem services. Treatments will benefit rural and urban populations in the 10-county area that includes Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Elk, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Potter, Venango, and Warren counties.

This funding is part of more than \$48.6 million provided this year through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership. It is one of 14 new projects selected across the U.S. bringing together agricultural producers, forest landowners, and National Forest System lands to improve forest health using available Farm Bill conservation programs and other authorities.

Through the new three-year projects, landowners will work with local USDA experts and partners to apply targeted forestry management practices on their land, such as thinning, hazardous fuel treatments, fire breaks, and other systems to meet unique forestry challenges in their area.

Applications were due **April 1, 2023** to be considered for funding.

## NRCS Receives Additional Conservation Funding for Pennsylvania Producers

In February, NRCS announced that additional funding is available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices. The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provided an additional \$19.5 billion over five years for climate smart agriculture through several of the conservation programs that NRCS implements. In Pennsylvania, NRCS is making available \$8.3 million in fiscal year 2023 for its oversubscribed conservation programs: the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

"These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more." Said Denise Coleman, State Conservationist.

The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years. These additional investments are estimated to help farmers apply conservation to millions of acres of land across the U.S.

NRCS accepted applications until March 20, 2023 for the first ranking deadline. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand from producers who have previously sought funding for climate-smart conservation activities.

For more information, please visit us at <http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov>, or contact your local office, which can be found at [www.farmers.gov/service-locator](http://www.farmers.gov/service-locator).

# Farm Bill Programs

## FY 2023 Programs Update

**EQIP/AMA:** Currently making selections and starting to obligate our initial FY23 allocations:

**EQIP-General:** \$24,009,000

**EQIP-Golden Wing Warbler:** \$425,200

**EQIP-NWQI:** \$1,000,000

**AMA:** \$200,000

**RCPP and CSP** applications are currently being evaluated for funding.

## FY2023 Entity Held Easements

<b>FY2023 ALE Applications</b>		
County (Qty)	No. of Acres	Allocation
Adams	301	478,000.00
Armstrong (2)	187	187,320.00
Centre	112.07	224,140.00
Cumberland (3)	351	544,895.00
Franklin	92	35,492.00
Lancaster	39.18	68,565.00
Perry	140	77,000.00
Schuylkill (5)	464	463,820.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1686.25</b>	<b>2,079,232.00</b>

<b>FY2023 ALEs Closings</b>		
County (Qty)	No. of Acres	Allocation
Adams (6)	1460	1,571,520.00
Blair	76.43	60,030.00
Cumberland	109.43	120,810.00
Lackawanna	53	62,358.00
Lancaster (3)	208	281,483.00
Perry	160.32	82,204.08
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2067.18</b>	<b>2,178,405.08</b>

## NRCS Watershed Programs

In the 1950's through the 1980's, NRCS assisted with the design and construction of 80+ flood control dams across Pennsylvania through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program Act (PL83-566). These dams currently protect the homes and public infrastructure below them. Since their construction, the dams have held detained millions of gallons of runoff that would otherwise contribute to downstream flooding. While built to be state-of-the-art at the time, rainfall amounts and dam safety criteria have changed since the construction of the dams. The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention was amended in 2000, to provide NRCS authorization to assist communities with rehabilitation of their aging dams.

NRCS is about 95% complete for two rehabilitation designs for dams in Tioga County: Mill Creek PA-454 Beechwood Dam (owned by the PA Fish and Boat Commission) and Marsh Creek PA-602 Hamilton Dam (owned by Wellsboro). Both dams are slated to enter the permitting process this year.

While not located in the northcentral part of the state, NRCS plans to begin rehabilitation construction Thatcher Run PA-112 Conneautville Dam in Crawford County and Greene-Dreher PA-439 Kintz Creek Dam in 2025. Once complete, there will be five USDA-NRCS dams in Pennsylvania rehabilitated.

NRCS evaluated additional options to address flooding in the Martins Creek Watershed (Wyoming County) through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program. That project should begin its technical review this summer. NRCS-New York is taking the lead on a flooding project in the Bentley Creek Watershed (Bradford County), which has been through its technical review.

To learn more about either the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program or the Watershed Rehabilitation program and how NRCS provides technical and financial assistance in planning, designing, and implementing watershed projects, please contact Heather Smeltz at [heather.smeltz@usda.gov](mailto:heather.smeltz@usda.gov) or (717) 237-2214.



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