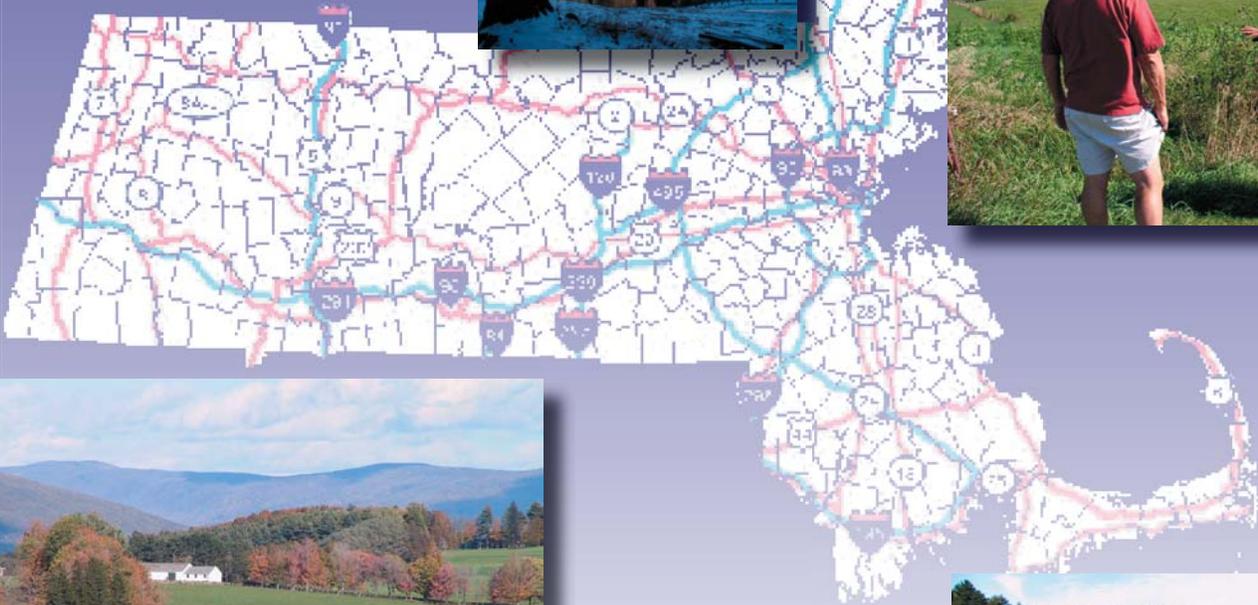


# Massachusetts *Conservation Update*

Issues, Results & Outlook  
Spring 2004



State Commission for the  
Conservation of Soil, Water and  
Related Resources



Massachusetts  
Association of  
Conservation  
Districts

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources  
Conservation Service

# The Massachusetts Conservation Partnership

**When state environmental agencies and local conservation districts work hand-in-hand with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the result is a strong Conservation Partnership for all of Massachusetts.**

## USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the federal agency that shows farmers, landowners and concerned citizens how to improve and protect their natural resources.

Americans have been consulting NRCS for decades; seeking expert advice on issues like erosion, water quality and soil productivity.

NRCS is not a regulatory agency. Rather, its mission is to introduce people to simple conservation practices and federal conservation programs that can improve water quality and maintain healthy and productive lands.

Landowners and NRCS specialists work together on a voluntary basis. They evaluate the condition of the natural resources and develop a conservation plan that leads to wise stewardship.

NRCS provides assistance directly to citizens and communities who request it. The agency is teeming with conservation specialists—biologists, planners, engineers, soil scientists, technicians and geologists—primed to address your natural resource concerns.

## Conservation Districts

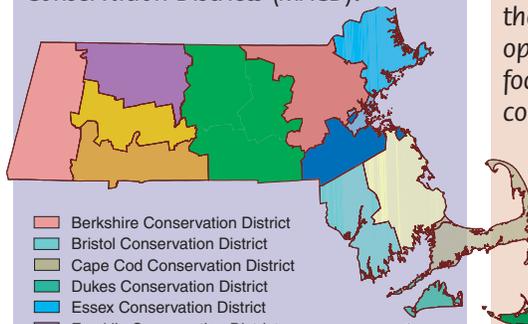


A conservation district is a subdivision of state government, established under state law to carry out programs for the conservation and wise management of soil, water and related resources.

There are 14 conservation districts in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Each district is governed by a board of supervisors—locally elected citizens who volunteer their time and leadership to the conservation effort.

Conservation district supervisors work directly with NRCS to deliver technical assistance to the people of Massachusetts. Each local conservation district is a voice for the community, providing leadership on conservation issues and establishing priorities for conservation activities and programs.

The NRCS role is to provide technical assistance. When all 14 districts collaborate as a statewide organization, they operate as the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts (MACD).



- Berkshire Conservation District
- Bristol Conservation District
- Cape Cod Conservation District
- Dukes Conservation District
- Essex Conservation District
- Franklin Conservation District
- Hampden Conservation District
- Hampshire Conservation District
- Middlesex Conservation District
- Nantucket Conservation District
- Norfolk Conservation District
- Plymouth Conservation District
- Suffolk Conservation District
- Worcester Conservation District

## The State Commission for Conservation of Soil, Water & Related Resources



As part of the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the State Commission for Conservation of Soil, Water & Related Resources serves as a resource for local conservation districts.

Through its representatives of state environmental agencies including Conservation and Recreation, Agricultural Resources, Fish & Game and Environmental Protection, conservation districts have direct access to state resources for targeted delivery at the local level.

The State Commission also provides the mechanisms for regional projects. The Massachusetts Envirothon is an example of pulling together state and local environmental education resources and producing a highly successful environmental education program for high school students from around the state.

Working closely with the USDA-NRCS the state commission provides excellent opportunities to coordinate and focus state and federal programs for conservation work in Massachusetts.

# Current Issues & Projects

## Why is conservation important to all Massachusetts citizens?

Conservation safeguards fresh air, pure water, healthy soils, scenic vistas, productive farms and habitat for wildlife. It is essential to the quality of life that all Massachusetts citizens expect. Conservation is important not only on farms but also in communities and backyards across the Commonwealth.

## How has the 2002 Farm Bill benefitted farmers in Massachusetts?

NRCS is now in position to provide the financial and technical assistance that farmers and landowners have been requesting.

The funding levels for conservation programs, especially the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), dramatically increased the cost-share dollars available to Massachusetts farmers.

These dollars enabled farmers to adopt new conservation practices and enhance their operation. The increase in conservation funding since 2002 mirrors the rising demand for NRCS services.

## How are conservation issues being addressed?

### Fostering Federal-State Partnerships

NRCS provides a valuable service to the community by delivering one-on-one conservation assistance directly to the customer. In addition, several NRCS programs dovetail with state and local programs to leverage even greater conservation results.

Some examples:

- The federal **Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP)** funding bolsters the Commonwealth's resources for the state **Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program**.

## Key conservation issues in Massachusetts

- Open space and farmland protection
  - Water quality and quantity
  - Local food production
  - Farm viability enhancement
  - Cranberry industry sustainability
  - Dairy industry sustainability
- Many dairy and cranberry operations have benefitted by making environmental improvements through the state's **Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP)**, which complements the federal **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**.
  - NRCS supports the work that has been done through Massachusetts' first-in-the-nation **Farm Viability Enhancement Program**, which aims to keep farms economically and environmentally viable.
  - NRCS, conservation districts, and resource conservation and development (RC&D) councils have provided assistance to regional **"Buy Local" campaigns** that encourage consumers to support local farms.

## Working to Keep Cape Cod's Water Resources Clean

NRCS, working in partnership with the Cape Cod Conservation District, is in the early stages of a project assisting Cape Cod towns in developing water quality management plans to address nonpoint sources of pollution affecting water quality.

The Massachusetts coastal area is pressured by urban development and is a popular recreation area with a high influx of tourists during the summer. Stormwater runoff is one source of pollutants.

Water quality is a major concern, particularly to protect salt marshes, shellfish beds fish passages and swimming beaches.

## Helping Towns Organize Agricultural Commissions

The Pilgrim Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council in Southeastern Mass. has developed a unique resource for farmers, residents and town officials statewide who are concerned about maintaining farming in their community.

"A Toolkit for Organizing a Town Agricultural Commission" is a package of materials on CD-ROM that will guide the user through the process of organizing an agricultural commission.

Town agricultural commissions are appointed town standing committees that encourage the pursuit of agriculture and sustain farm businesses and farmlands.

Several southeastern Mass. towns have formed ag. commissions and the concept is spreading to other parts of the state.

The RC&D program is administered by NRCS and promotes the wise use of natural resources to improve economic activity, the environment and the standard of living in communities.

## Sustaining Our Cranberry Industry

The cranberry industry is a vital part of the economy, history and character of the Bay State. This sector has seen hard times in recent years, however, due to low crop prices and high development pressure.

This year, the Plymouth County Conservation District is marking its tenth year of providing farm planning for cranberry growers, a key component of conservation. The FY2004 NRCS budget includes a \$285,000 earmark for cranberry related conservation.

Cranberry growers have benefitted from the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), receiving some \$766,000 last year to take bogs out of commercial production and restore them to natural wetlands.

# Results

## NRCS Cost-Share Programs FY2003

Massachusetts landowners, working in partnership with NRCS, implemented some **\$6.5 million** worth of conservation projects in 2003 that will safeguard water quality, preserve farmland, improve wildlife habitat and protect wetlands across the Bay State. NRCS programs provided cost-share assistance for the projects.

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

Massachusetts ranks and approves applications for funding based on one statewide process, developed in accordance with national guidance and in conjunction with priorities identified by the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups.

NRCS received a total of **484 applications** from farmers to make agricultural improvements through the EQIP program in FY 2003. The application proposals totaled more than **\$14 million** in federal cost share.

The associated projects mostly focused on water quality protection and water use savings. Massachusetts received a total cost share allocation of **\$2.7 million** that supported **154 contracts**.

Here's the breakdown of contracts by commodity:

- Dairy and other livestock  
37 contracts  
\$1,498,420 in cost share
- Cranberry  
96 contracts  
\$800,957 in cost share
- Vegetable and orchard  
21 contracts  
\$358,981 in cost share.

Areas of the Commonwealth that received significant EQIP funding were:

- Plymouth County – \$744,000
- Worcester County – \$489,000
- Franklin County – \$454,000
- Hampshire County – \$327,000

### Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)



WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve fish and wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems on their land.

In FY 2003 Massachusetts received **117 applications** totaling **\$2.6 million**. The applications targeted a variety of natural communities including freshwater wetlands, aquatic habitat/fish passages, salt marshes, grasslands, old fields, early woodlands, and forests. The majority of the applications targeted early successional habitats.

In FY 2003 Massachusetts received **\$582,500**, which funded **43 projects** that protected or restored:

- 368 acres of early successional habitat
- 72 acres of freshwater wetlands and riparian habitat
- 118 acres of salt marsh
- 6 fish passage projects

**Barnstable County** received more than half of Massachusetts' WHIP funding allocation at **\$304,000** for projects such as coastal grassland and salt marsh restoration. Some \$185,000 funded the 40 acre Bridge Creek salt marsh restoration project in the Town of Barnstable.

### Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)



WRP offers an opportunity for landowners to voluntarily protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property.

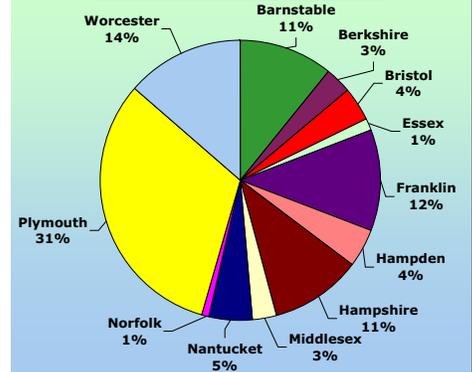
In FY 2003 Massachusetts received **\$822,000** in WRP funding and **16 applications** to restore cranberry bogs to natural wetlands under permanent easements.

Ten applicants withdrew or were ineligible. The six remaining contracts totaled:

- 122.8 acres
- \$448,000 in purchase offers

Cranberry growers in **Plymouth** and **Nantucket** counties received more than **\$766,000** through WRP.

### Massachusetts FY 2003 Funding All Cost-share Programs by County



### Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.

In FY 2003 Massachusetts received **five applications** under GRP: one easement application and four rental applications. The state was allocated **\$154,000**, which was used to fund one permanent easement and four rental agreements totalling 118 acres.



- Franklin County – 25 acres under rental agreement
- Hampshire County – 2 acres under permanent easement
- Worcester County – 91 acres under rental agreement

### Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)

FRPP provides funds to purchase the development rights to farmland, preserving productive farmland for agricultural use.

In FY 2003 Massachusetts received **\$2.9 million** for the acquisition of farmland conservation easements. A cooperative agreement was entered into with the state Department of Agricultural Resources.

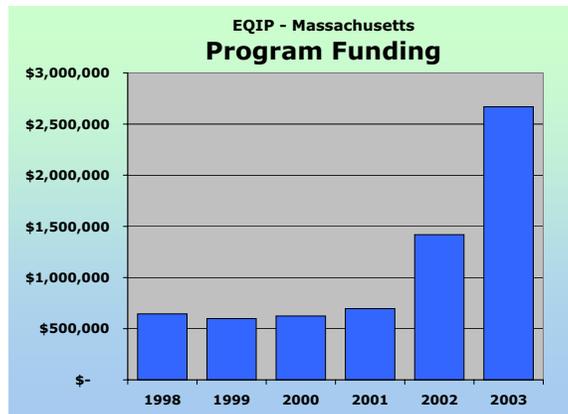
The agreement will result in the preservation of:

- 1,600 acres on
- 13 farms

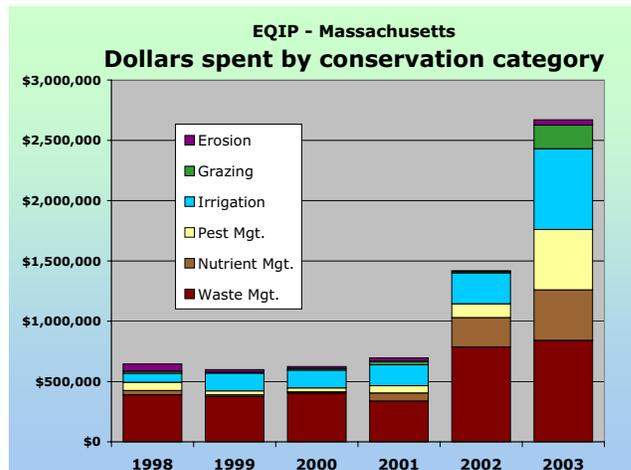
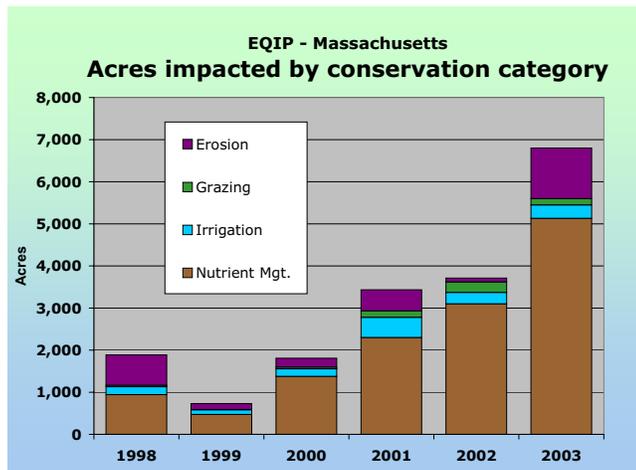
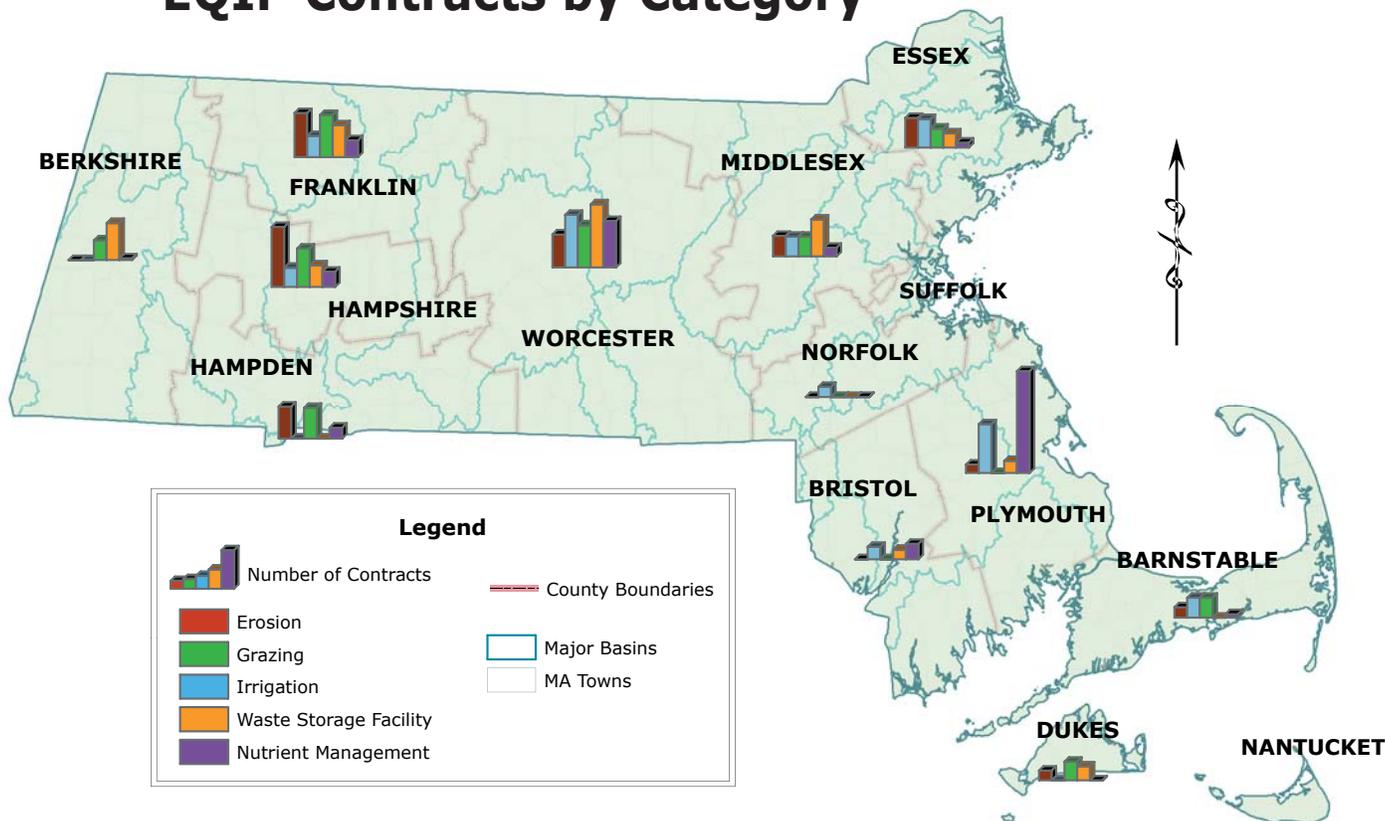
# Results

## Program Spotlight:

# EQIP 1998-2003



## EQIP Contracts by Category



# 2004 Outlook

## Massachusetts conservation cost-share funding increases to record \$12.9 million

Massachusetts has received nearly \$12.9 million in federal cost-share funding for NRCS conservation programs on Bay State working lands this fiscal year, a 65 percent increase over last year and an all-time high level of conservation funding.

With financial and technical assistance from NRCS, farmers and other landowners will continue to address resource concerns on farmland, promote environmental quality, address challenges in water quality and quantity, protect prime farmland, and protect valuable ecosystems and wildlife habitat.

This year, Massachusetts has been allocated just over \$377,000 for the Agricultural Management Assistance program. AMA provides cost-share assistance to farmers to address risk management concerns linked to water management, water quality and erosion control issues.

Some \$14 million was released nationally for AMA for FY2004. The AMA helps producers adopt conservation practices and investment strategies that will reduce or mitigate risks to their agricultural enterprises.

AMA is a voluntary conservation program available in 15 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low.

Nationally, the FY 2004 allocations to states include \$1.2 billion in financial assistance and \$305 million for technical assistance for all NRCS Farm Bill programs and other activities.

Massachusetts received an additional \$5.5 million this year because of a national effort to ensure "regional equity." USDA provided an additional \$55.7 million to 13 states and the Caribbean Area because the 2002 Farm Bill authorized "priority funding" for states whose annual conservation allocation for approved applications falls below \$12 million.

### FY 2004 - Massachusetts

DISCRETIONARY FUNDS	FY2004	FY2003
<b>Conservation Operations</b>		
Technical Assistance	\$3,432,439	\$3,381,993
Soil Survey	\$855,000	\$911,000
<b>Watershed Surveys and Planning</b>	\$128,500	\$170,000
<b>Watershed and Flood Prevention</b>		
Watershed Operations	\$243,000	\$490,000
<b>Watershed Rehabilitation</b>	\$135,000	\$126,200
<b>Resource Conservation &amp; Development</b>	\$391,500	\$365,200
<b>TOTAL - Discretionary Funds</b>	<b>\$5,185,439</b>	<b>\$5,444,393</b>

MANDATORY FUNDS (Financial assistance for cost-share programs)	FY2004	FY2003
<b>Agricultural Management Assistance</b> AMA is a voluntary program available in 15 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low. AMA provides cost-share assistance to agricultural producers to address risk management concerns linked to water management, water quality and erosion control issues.	\$377,114	\$0
<b>Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)</b> Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.	\$6,453,000	\$3,295,418
<b>Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)</b> FRPP provides funds to purchase the development rights to farmland, preserving productive farmland for agricultural use.	\$3,926,200	\$2,932,471
<b>Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)</b> GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands, and provides assistance for rehabilitating grasslands.	\$705,000	\$190,500
<b>Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)</b> WRP offers an opportunity for landowners to voluntarily protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property.	\$535,000	\$890,000
<b>Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)</b> WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to improve fish and wildlife habitat or restore natural ecosystems on their land.	\$875,000	\$907,955
<b>TOTAL - Mandatory Funds</b>	<b>\$12,871,314</b>	<b>\$8,216,344</b>

# Fingertip Facts

## Massachusetts Agriculture

- Number of farms..... 6,000
- Farmland ..... 560,000 acres
- Agricultural cash receipts ..... \$367 million
- Sales of farm products sold directly to consumers ..... \$20 million
- New England rank for direct sales to consumers ..... #1
- Percentage of N.E. total ..... 35 percent
- National rank for direct sales to consumers ..... #7
- National rank for average value of direct sales to consumers per farm ..... #2
- Average direct sales per farm ..... \$16,000
- National rank for value of fruit production ..... #8
- Value of fruit production ..... \$148 million.
- Percentage of family-owned farms ..... 80 percent
- Percentage defined as "small farms" by USDA..... 93 percent
- Annual expenses for farm inputs ... \$212 million
- National rank for farmland value ... #4
- Average per acre value of farmland ..... \$6,450
- National rank for net farm income per acre..... #4
- Net farm income per acre..... \$327
- Year-round farm workers ..... 5,000
- Seasonal farm workers ..... 9,000
- Wages paid by farms ..... \$81.6 million
- Agricultural exports ..... \$300 million
- Agricultural export-related jobs .... 3,600
- Income tax revenue generated ..... \$21 million

Sources: New England Agricultural Statistics, 2002 and U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997 published by USDA.

## Conservation in Massachusetts

- Farmland protected through agricultural restrictions since 1977 ..... 51,000 acres
- Farmland lost since 1977 ..... 57,359 acres
- Agricultural land converted to developed uses 1992-1997..... 27,200 acres
- State rank by percentage of agricultural land converted to developed uses..... 2
- Average annual rate of agricultural land converted to developed uses..... 5,440 acres
- State dollars spent on agricultural restrictions since 1977..... \$126 million
- Farmland protected with federal funds for agricultural restrictions..... 5,882 acres
- Federal dollars spent on agricultural restrictions since 2002 ..... \$8 million
- Towns with protected farmland..... 148
- Early successional wildlife habitat protected in 2003..... 368 acres
- Wetland and riparian habitat restored since 2002 ..... 405 acres
- Salt marsh restored in 2003 ..... 78 acres
- Grassland protected in 2003 ..... 118 acres
- Cropland protected from erosion since 2001 ..... 3,767 acres
- Land protected from flooding since 2001 ..... 4,762 acres
- Land benefitting from water conservation practices since 2002 ..... 10,712 acres
- Land protected through nutrient management since 2002 ..... 13,440 acres

Sources: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Massachusetts state office and National Resources Inventory; Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources

# Contact Us

## Conservation District Offices

**Berkshire Conservation District**  
78 Center Street, Suite 206, Pittsfield, MA 01201  
413-443-6867 Ext. 4

**Bristol Conservation District**  
P.O. Box 475, 84 Center Street, Dighton, MA 02715  
508-669-6558

**Cape Cod Conservation District**  
P.O. Box 678, Barnstable, MA 02630  
508-771-8757

**Dukes Conservation District**  
P.O. Box 111, West Tisbury, MA 02575  
508-645-9734

**Essex Conservation District**  
562 Maple Street, Hawthorne, MA 01937  
978-774-5578

**Franklin Conservation District**  
55 Federal Street, Room 290, Greenfield, MA 01301  
413-773-0286

**Hampden and Hampshire Conservation Districts**  
195 Russell Street, Suite B6, Hadley, MA 01035  
413-585-1000 Ext. 5

**Middlesex Conservation District**  
319 Littleton Road, Suite 205, Westford, MA 01886  
978-692-9395

**Nantucket Conservation District**  
P.O. Box 1146, Nantucket, MA 02554  
508-228-7244

**Norfolk Conservation District**  
400 Main Street, Walpole, MA 02018  
508-668-0995

**Plymouth County Conservation District**  
15 Cranberry Highway, West Wareham, MA 02576  
508-295-5151, Ext. 4

**Suffolk Conservation District**  
P.O. Box 245, Boston, MA 02121  
617-451-9141

**Worcester County Conservation District**  
52 Boyden Road, Room 100, Holden, MA 01520  
508-829-4477 Ext. 5

## State Commission for the Conservation of Soil, Water and Related Resources

Tom Anderson, Executive Secretary  
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[thomas.anderson@state.ma.us](mailto:thomas.anderson@state.ma.us)

## Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts

President - **Ken Taylor**, Westfield, 413-562-4947  
Vice President - **Lee Davis**, Barnstable, 508-362-3197  
Secretary - **Bob Lear**, Pittsfield, 413-448-8940

## NRCS Offices

**Massachusetts State Office, Amherst**..... 413-253-4350  
451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002

- Cecil Currin, State Conservationist, [cecil.currin@ma.usda.gov](mailto:cecil.currin@ma.usda.gov)

**Barnstable Field Office** ..... 508-771-6476  
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270 Communications Way, Unit 1G, Hyannis, MA 02601

- Donald Liptack, District Conservationist, [donald.liptack@ma.usda.gov](mailto:donald.liptack@ma.usda.gov)

**Greenfield Field Office** ..... 413-772-0384 ext 3  
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55 Federal Street, Room 290, Greenfield, MA 01301

- Rita Thibodeau, District Conservationist, [rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov](mailto:rita.thibodeau@ma.usda.gov)

**Hadley Field Office**..... 413-585-1000 ext 3  
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**Pittsfield Field Office** ..... 413-443-1776 ext 3  
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**West Wareham Field Office**..... 508-295-5151 ext 2  
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15 Cranberry Highway, West Wareham, MA 02576

- Leonard Reno, District Conservationist, [leonard.reno@ma.usda.gov](mailto:leonard.reno@ma.usda.gov)

[www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov)

## Services for Massachusetts landowners:

- ✓ Technical assistance
- ✓ Demonstration projects
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Farm planning

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