

About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works to protect and conserve natural resources on our nation's private lands.

A part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS administers conservation programs funded primarily through the 2008 Farm Bill.

The conservation provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill will affect farmers for years to come. New provisions continue to build on the conservation gains made by U.S. citizens over the past decade. Existing programs have been simplified and new programs created to address high priority environmental protection goals.

In addition to addressing a broad range of environmental goals, the 2008 Farm Bill includes increased financial assistance for new, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers.



Contact your local NRCS field office for more information and assistance.

Contact NRCS:

Massachusetts USDA Service Centers

Barnstable: 508-771-6476

Greenfield: 413-772-0384

Hadley: 413-585-1000

Holden: 508-829-4477

Pittsfield: 413-443-1776

West Wareham: 508-295-5151

Westford: 978-692-1904

The 2008 Farm Bill emphasizes the importance of forest land by promoting healthy, sustainable forests and protecting rare ecosystems and rare species habitat. NRCS offers Farm Bill conservation programs to help forest land owners protect and manage their natural resources.

NRCS is now offering technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices that are part of your forest management plan through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

Massachusetts NRCS is working with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and MassWildlife to provide technical assistance for enhancing the health and diversity of forest land and wildlife habitat in forests.

Conservation practices eligible for financial assistance

Below is a partial list of forestry-related conservation practices eligible for financial compensation through EQIP and WHIP.

To be eligible for financial assistance, conservation practices need to be part of your forestry management plan.

For a complete list of eligible practices and payment rates, please visit us online or call your local NRCS field office.

- Erosion control on existing access roads
- Early successional habitat (including clearing trees when harvesting timber)
- Firebreaks
- Forest stand improvement
- Oak stand regeneration
- Riparian forest buffers
- Tree and shrub planting, pruning and site preparation

Conservation programs require installing and maintaining practices according to approved NRCS practice standards.





NRCS Conservation Programs for Forest Land

Why are healthy forests important?

Healthy forests are a critical part of our nation's landscape. Forest lands provide clean air, carbon sequestration, climate change buffering, flood protection, wildlife habitat, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment.

Our forests work to keep us healthy by storing and filtering the water that we need to drink and live. Forests and forest products also provide important economic and energy benefits to individuals and communities.

Privately owned forests make up a substantial share of our forest resource base, but these forests are increasingly being divided into smaller parcels and are facing increasing threats from changes in climate, population and land use.

Wildfires, bark beetle outbreaks and other invasive species can damage the ability of forests to do their important work.

NRCS and partner organizations will assist you to develop and implement sustainable forest management plans that will protect our forest lands.



Both the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) offer compensation for a range of conservation practices designed to benefit forest land.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.
Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)	WHIP helps improve fish and wildlife habitat and restore natural ecosystems.

Who can apply?

- Private forest land owners who have forest management plans can apply for NRCS forestry assistance.
 - In Massachusetts, forest stewardship plans as well as most forest management, Chapter 61 and 61A plans will fulfill this requirement.
 - All forest management plans will be reviewed individually by NRCS to ensure that conservation principles have been addressed to NRCS standards.
 - If you need a forest management plan, NRCS funding may be available to help you develop a plan.
- There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP or WHIP, however, projects that address significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding.

How do I apply?

- Contact your local USDA Service Center to speak to one of our conservation professionals to begin the program application process.
- Information and application forms are available on our website. You will need to file several forms to ensure that you are eligible for federal programs, including:
 - CCC-1200: Conservation Program Application
 - CCC-926: Adjusted Gross Income Certification
 - CCC-901: Entity & Joint Operation Membership (if applicable)
 - AD-1026: Highly Erodible Land & Wetland Conservation Certification

When should I apply?

- Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria for each program is available on our website.

Please call your local NRCS field office or visit us online for more information.