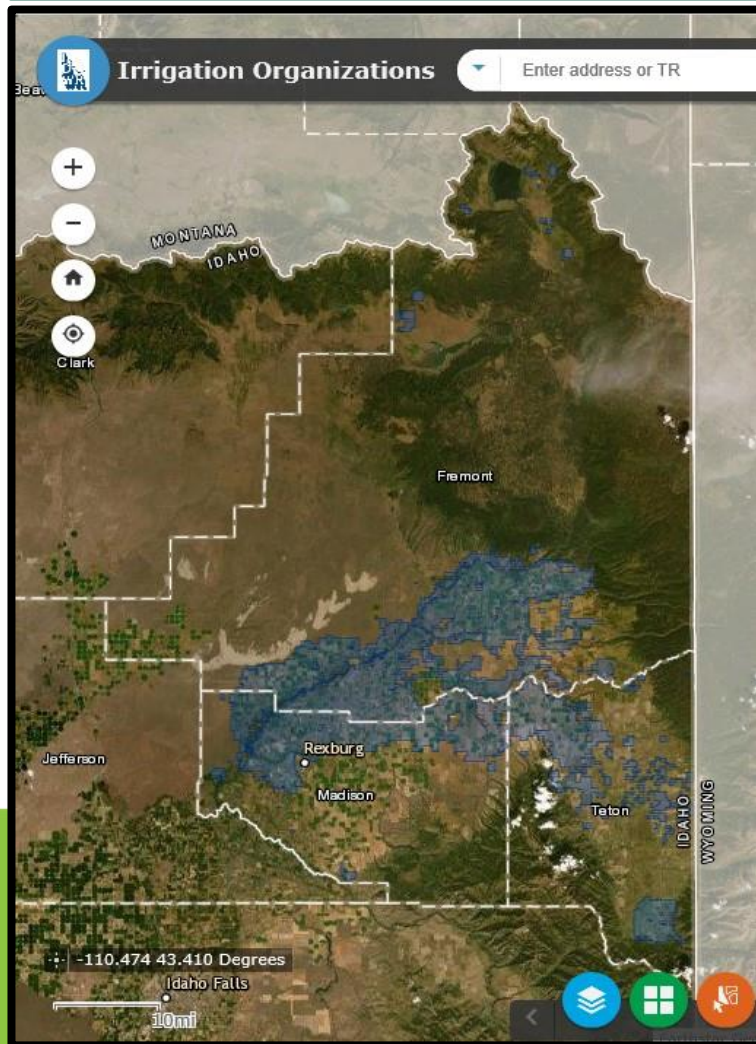
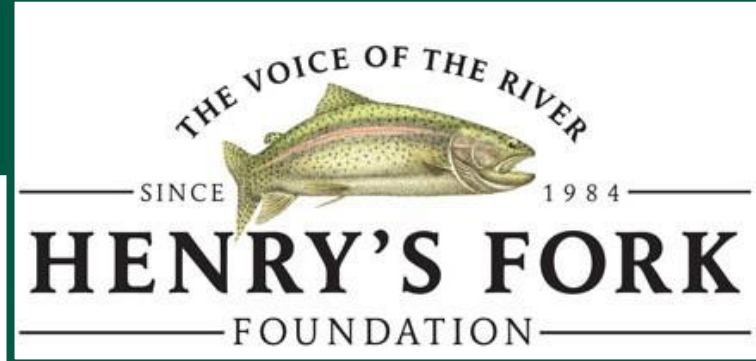


Conservation Opportunities - 2018 Farm Bill & more

Henry's Fork Watershed Council
Rexburg, Idaho
December 12, 2019

Bruce Sandoval – NRCS Idaho



USDA-NRCS Chief Lohr's Priorities

1. Implement and deliver the 2018 Farm Bill to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and private foresters.
2. Streamline our processes and program delivery to best serve our customers.
3. Better understand customer needs and improve overall customer service.
4. Soil Health and working with our customers in helping keep our soils intact, productive and healthy for generations to come



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Improved Processes

- Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)
- Conservation Desktop
- Simplifying the application process for producers
- States can Develop Screening Tool for CSP to align with EQIP
- Removing Burdensome Documentation Requirements for **Control of Land**
- Expand eligible producer to include operators, owners, and other tenants as shown in FSA farm records

Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)

- **Program-neutral, centralized application evaluation tool**
- **1 ranking tool for all programs**
- **Modernize and streamline conservation planning & program delivery**
- **Reduce workload on field staff**
- **Improves customer experience**

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP



Provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.

Changes to EQIP

- Adds resource concerns
- Raises cap for organic producers
- New enrollment option to address resource concerns
- Advance payments for historically underserved producers
- Contracts with entities like Irrigation Districts and Canal Companies

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Conservation Stewardship Program - CSP

A photograph showing two men in a rural field. One man, wearing a plaid shirt and a baseball cap, is holding a blue folder and pointing at it. The other man, wearing a black jacket, is also looking at the folder. They are standing next to a large green tractor. The background shows rolling hills under a cloudy sky.

Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority natural resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

Changes to CSP

- **Increases payment rates for certain activities**
- **Authorizes contract extensions**
- **Provides specific support for organic**
- **Includes special grassland conservation initiative**

Top Ten look at the CSP interim final rule and policy manual update

1. Expands who may be an eligible participant to include the operator, owner, or other tenant as identified in FSA records, which eliminates the need for operator of record waivers.
2. Removes the need for producers to request in writing an exemption for the farmstead.
3. Removes the protocol to request new enhancements from policy. There will still be a process, just not defined in policy. This will allow NRCS to more easily refine and improve the process over time without having to update policy.
4. Removes required NRCS payment deadlines in December and March which reduces States having to submit waivers.
5. Removes the requirement to implement an enhancement by the third year of the contract. This allows more flexibility for our customers and reduces the number of waivers.
6. Removes the annual payment limitation which will eliminate the need for APL waivers when payments are delayed.
7. Expands the higher contract limit to include all business type 2 and 3 participants and not just those with an EIN.
8. Removes the CSP preapproval letter, simplifies the CSP pre-obligation checklist and incorporates the CSP-GCI pre-obligation checklist into policy. Incorporates an EQIP pre-obligation checklist and significantly streamlines the checklist to only include critical items of risk that are not automated.
9. Removes the need for a State bulletin for duplicative payments; however, States must still identify conservation activities that may be duplicative with other programs.
10. Removes the requirement for the annual 10% contract reviews.

In summary, NRCS has streamlined CSP by basing contracts on funds instead of acres, bringing it in line with EQIP. Additionally, NRCS is aligning CSP with EQIP through common applications, contracting operations, conservation planning, conservation practices and related administrative procedures.

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Regional Conservation Partnership Program - RCPP

A woman with dark hair in a braid, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, is shown in profile, looking at a pine tree branch. She is holding the branch with her left hand. The background is a blurred green forest.

Promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. Under partnership agreements, NRCS and its partners leverage and target their respective resources to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners to address priority natural resource concerns.

Changes to RCPP

- **Simplifies funding authorities**
- **Authorizes RCPP contracts**
- **Expands flexibility for funding**
- **Expands availability of watershed program authorities**

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Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - ACEP



Helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.

Changes to ACEP

- Assistance for 'Buy-Protect-Sell' transactions
- New requirements for highly erodible land
- Increases flexibility for partners
- Adds water quality as resource concern
- Expands wetland eligibility

Crop Insurance & Cover Crops

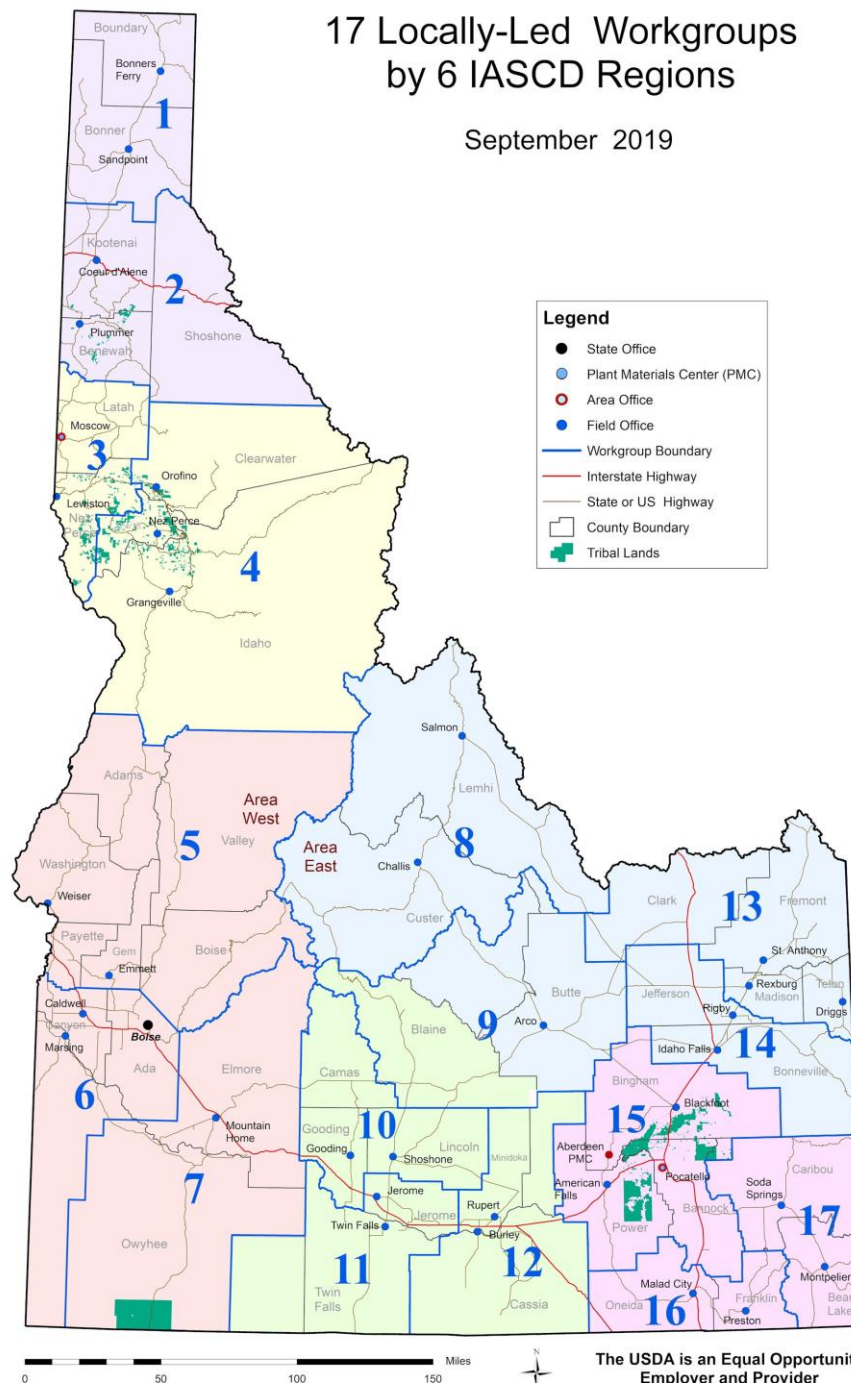
- Interagency workgroup between NRCS, FSA and RMA with input from growers
- Developed consistent cover crop policy across 3 agencies
- NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines
- Insurance options through RMA Good Farming Practice determinations
- Provides additional level of comfort for producers using cover crops

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Locally-Led Workgroups

17 Locally-Led Workgroups by 6 IASCD Regions

September 2019



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Workhorse Programs in Idaho

EQIP

- General
- Initiatives
 - National Water Quality Initiative
 - National On-Farm Energy Initiative
 - Sage Grouse Initiative
 - EQIP-WaterSmart

CSP

ACEP (wetlands, grasslands, etc)

RCPP

*and perhaps moving forward,
Watersheds Programs*

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Watersheds Programs

- Emergency Watershed Protection
- Watershed Rehabilitation
- Watershed & Flood Protection

Overview

- Public Law 83-566, Public Law 78-534
- NRCS cooperates with local Sponsors
- Sponsors carry out, operate, and maintain projects
- NRCS provides technical, financial, and credit assistance
- Authorized Project Purposes include:
 - *Erosion and sediment control*
 - *Watershed protection*
 - *Flood prevention*
 - *Water quality Improvements*
 - *Rural, municipal and industrial water supply*
 - *Water management*
 - *Fish and wildlife habitat enhancement*
 - *Hydropower sources*

Ground Water Recharge!!

Statistics

- Over 2,000 watershed projects
- Over 11,840 watershed dams
- \$2.2 billion in average annual benefits nationwide

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Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

Eligibility

- Public Sponsorship
- Watershed Projects up to 250,000 acres
- Max total capacity of 25,000 acre-feet
- 20% of benefits must be agriculture related
- Authorized NRCS watershed plan EA/EIS
- Congressional approval for federal funding over \$25 million for construction

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Raft River

2018

State	Project Name	Project Type	FA	TA	Planning Funds	FA	TA	Design Funds	FA	TA	Construction Funds
ID	Raft River Watershed (Flood Protection and Groundwater Recharge Proposal)	New	\$ 600,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 700,000			\$ -			\$ -
			\$ 600,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 700,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

QUESTIONS?

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