Increasing Participation of Underserved Landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program in the US South

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USDA Farm Service Agency
Sep 18, 2023
Title: Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to Increase Participation of Underserved Landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program in the Black Belt of the Southern United States

Period: Sep 30, 2022 – Sep 29, 2024 (two years)

Goal: To develop a nuanced understanding of challenges faced by underserved landowners and to formulate solutions for overcoming barriers to increase their participation in CRP.

Objectives
1. Conduct focus groups and ethnographic interviews to ascertain the specific challenges faced by underserved landowners;
2. Use complementary qualitative and quantitative methodologies to identify themes across states and stakeholder groups;
3. Discuss research results with partner organizations to formulate concrete suggestions for increasing CRP enrollment; and
4. Develop a web-based application for streamlining the CRP application process for landowners.
Project Partners (total 10)

1862s Land Grant Universities
   University of Georgia (lead) | NC State University | Auburn University

1890s Land Grant Universities
   Florida A&M | Alabama A&M

Non-Profits
   Roanoke Cooperative Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Program (NC)
   Help for Landowners (SC)
   SW Georgia Project (GA)

Limited Liability Companies (LLCs)
   Land & Ladies (GA, FL, & AL)
   Legacy Land Management (MS)
Team Members (17 people)

NC: Alton Perry & Sherwynn Best | Lincoln Larson, Kayla Stukes* & Erika Rieder**
SC: Sam Cook & Ben Graham
GA: Puneet Dwivedi, Sarah Hitchner** & Parag Kadam** | Danielle Atkins | Felicia Burke
FL: Alejandro Bolques
AL: Wayde Morse & Anna Brown** | Troy Bowman
MS: Alex Harvey

*Student | ** Postdoctoral Research Associate
Achievements: Landowner Workshops

First Round of Workshops (2023, total 8)
FL: Feb 24 (Quincy, FL) | SC: Mar 04 (Summerville, SC) | MS: Mar 11 (Jackson, MS) | NC: Mar 14 (Goldsboro, NC) | GA, AL, and FL: Mar 22 (Bainbridge, GA) | AL: Mar 25 (Gainesville, AL) | NC: Mar 31 (Weldon, NC) | GA: May 12 (Albany, GA)

Second Round of Workshops (2023, total 2)
GA, AL, and FL: Sep 14 (Cordele, GA) | MS: TBA

Second Round of Workshops (2024, total 5)
NC: TBA | SC: TBA | GA: TBA | FL: TBA | AL: TBA
SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND LAND RETENTION PROJECT
Increasing Participation in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program in NC
March 31, 2023
Halifax Community College, Weldon NC

8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.  | Registration/Light Breakfast
8:45 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. | USDA Farm Service Agency, Lisa Furlow
9:45 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. | Natural Resources Conservation Service, Julius George
10:15 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. | Break
10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. | Farmer’s Perspective on CRP, Solomon Family Farm
11:45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. | Lunch/Networking
12:30 p.m. - 1 p.m. | Kelly Barber, Halifax Community College, Small Business Center, Conservation Organization
1 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. | Tree Establishment in Agriculture Fields, Chad Brandon, NC Forest Service
1:30 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. | Conservation Benefits from CRP, Colby Lambert, NC State University
2:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. | Break
2:30 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. | Focus Group Discussions, Lincoln Larson, NC State University
3:15 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. | Summarize
3:30 p.m. - 3:50 p.m. | Survey
3:50 p.m. - 4 p.m. | Future Plans/Close
NC Workshop
(March 31)

GA Workshop
(May 12)
New Workshop Partners

Hinds County Ministerial Alliance (MS)
Prioritizing the Challenges Affecting the Participation of Underserved Landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program

The University of Georgia Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources is conducting a survey to develop a better understanding of the challenges affecting the participation of underserved landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program. The results will directly feed into various federal programs for achieving the broader goal of sustainable development for the United States and beyond. Participation in this survey is voluntary. Your responses will be combined with all other responses for reporting purposes. Individual responses will not be published in any form. Please contact irb@uga.edu for any questions related to this survey.

In this context, we request you to fill the developed questionnaire by following the instructions. First, to the best of your knowledge, please sort down the factors responsible for the low enrollment of underserved landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program. Once done, please rank them appropriately in terms of its importance to you. Second, please list three things that could be done to increase the participation (either for you and/or other underserved landowners in general) in the CRP program. Once done, please give your complete responses to the coordinator.

Note: As an appreciation of your time, we would like to email you a copy of the resulting publication. To do so successfully, please provide your email address at the space given below. We will keep your email until we have emailed you a copy of the publication. If you want to remain anonymous and still know about the resulting publication, please follow Dr. Dwivedi on Twitter, LinkedIn (at@DrDwivedi). Dr. Dwivedi will post the notice of the publication. Then you can request a copy of the publication by emailing Dr. Dwivedi without revealing the status of your participation in the survey.

Your Email Address:

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Prioritizing the Challenges Affecting the Participation of Underserved Landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program

Today's Date: 
Your current profession: 
Gender: 
Rate:
Do you own farmland? (V/N)____ Do you own pasturals? (V/N)____ Do you own farmland? (V/N)____
Are you already enrolled in the CRP program? (V/N)____ Are you currently considering enrolling in the CRP program? (V/N)____
How familiar are you with the CRP Program on a scale of 10 (super knowledgeable) and 1 (never heard about it before this workshop)?_______
Please list up to five challenges which are affecting participation (either for you and/or other underserved landowners) in the CRP. Please also rank the relative importance of each challenge using a scale between 5 (very important challenge) and 1 (it is a challenge, but not so much).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please list three things that could be done to increase participation (either for you and/or other underserved landowners) in the CRP.
1. 
2. 
3. 
Survey

Exploring the Challenges Affecting the Participation of Underserved Landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

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**Increasing Participation of Undererved Landowners in the Conservation Reserve Program in the Black Belt of the Southeastern United States**

**Interview No.**
**Date:**
**Location:**

1. **Introduction of all family members in attendance**
   
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

   Who makes management decisions for your land?

   Where does the primary manager(s) live in regard to the land (on the land, within the county, in state, out of state)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. **Land Ownership Characteristics**
   
   a. Describe land and forest ownership characteristics for each parcel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parcel</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parcel size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land tenure ownership*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arable acres (productive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arable acres (irrizable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural woodland acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managed forest acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acreage land</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other land uses</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Own individually, own with others, heirs' property, LLC, other ownership structure

b. How was the land acquired?

   - Own individually, own with others, heirs' property, LLC, other ownership structure

   - Do you have a heirs' property? If so, please explain what this means to you and how you and your family have addressed it, if at all.
Publication Status

First Paper
Review Paper (R&R)

Second Paper
Workshop Survey (in Review)

Third Paper
Bibliometric Analysis (In preparation)
We found only three articles (Gan et al. 2005; Gyawali et al. 2003; McLean-Meyinsse et al. 1994) specific to landowner involvement in the CRP discussed the relevance of race (being Black versus White), and only one mentioned the differences between the male and female CRP experience (Gan et al. 2005).
Key Research Findings (Literature Review)

“They (Schmidt et al. (2021) further note that the USDA did not even have a category for female farmers until 1978 (see also Hoppe and Korbe 2013), as the physical labor required for farming was associated with men, while women were relegated to the domestic realm of home economics.”

(a) Percentage of Black farmers, (b) Percentage of land owned by Black farmers, (c) Percentage of female farmers, and (d) Percentage of land owned by female farmers.
"What is needed is a more nuanced understanding of how underserved landowners’ decisions about land management are influenced by different factors than those of White and male landowners, as minoritized populations likely calculate the costs and benefits of new land use such as the CRP differently."

Conservation equity is vital for the future of federal conservation programs in the US South

https://capitalbnews.org/
Key Research Findings (Landowner Workshops)

Demographic Distribution
We received 101 survey responses from seven workshops.

Out of all respondents, 48% self-reported as women and 50% as men.

In terms of race/ethnicity, 80% were Black, 17% were White, and only one participant was Native American.

About 68% owned farmlands, 38% owned pasturelands, while 68% owned forestlands. These categories overlapped with each other.

A small proportion of the respondents (13%) were already enrolled in CRP, but 55% expressed that they were considering enrollment in CRP.
Key Research Findings (Landowner Workshops)

CRP-related Responses
About 34% of the respondents reported low familiarity with CRP (rating 0 to 3), while 37% reported it as medium (rating 4 to 7), and 29% reported high familiarity (rating 8 to 10). The average familiarity with CRP for women was overall low (4.2), with Black women averaging 4.4 and White women averaging 3.9. Conversely, the average familiarity of men was 5.7, with Black men averaging 5.4 and White men averaging 7.1.
CRP-related Responses

Workshop participants reported a total of 324 responses for challenges and 202 responses for solutions towards increasing CRP participation, and only 9.7% of respondents did not answer these open-ended questions.
Key Research Findings (Landowner Workshops)
Key message: “Planning Over Programing”
Planned Publications

**Mail Survey**
At least three high quality publications using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods.

**In-person Interviews**
At least three high quality publications using qualitative methods.
Web-based Outreach & Education Tool
National Workshop (Athens, GA)
New Opportunities

New Grants
USDA NRCS GA grant ($100,000) to focus on capacity building of conservation-oriented non-profits in GA

In Review
USDA NIFA SAS (total two, $10 million each)

In Preparation
A $50 million proposal to USDA USFS on connecting underserved forest landowners and emerging markets.
Special thanks...

USDA FSA

USDA NRCS & Various State Agencies

Team Members

Survey and Research Participants

Note: Recording and slides will be available at FSA's Economic and Policy Analysis Webinar page: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/economic-and-policy-analysis/natural-resources-analysis/webinars/index

For questions about the webinar, please contact: fsaoutreach@usda.gov
Thanks

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