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A Message from the State Conservationist
Hello Oklahoma! Greetings, I am Jamey Wood and am very honored and humbled to have this chance to serve as the Acting State Conservationist over the next few months in my home state. I was raised in Eastern Oklahoma around Spiro, but have lived and worked in all four quadrants of Oklahoma over my career. It is great to be able to once again work and interact with many of you whom I have had the pleasure to work with for the first 30 years of my career.

We are in an unprecedented time with NRCS. Last year NRCS was given the authority to hire 1,500 staff through the direct hire authority with a request to add even more. If you know of someone who might be interested, let them know now. I anticipate we are still a few months from the specific announcements being released but now is the time to seek the best, brightest and diverse potential candidates.

Our staff have been hard at work across the state with the latest EQIP and ALEP deadlines and the upcoming EQIP-CIC and CSP deadlines. Remember NRCS program signups are year-round. Those include designated cut-off dates in which applications must be submitted to be eligible for the current year’s funding.

Although it may have to be online that we meet and discuss various topics, I hope to get to be able interact with many of you during my few months in this position.

Before I finish, let me say that I am committed to and passionate about building relationships and providing the best customer service, both from me and the Oklahoma NRCS staff. If I can be of any assistance to you, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Take care and be healthy!

Jamey Wood, Acting State Conservationist

Soil Sampling
Soil tests provide a scientific basis for evaluating available plant nutrients in cropland, pastures, lawns, and gardens. Analyses of soil samples can help farmers and homeowners fine-tune nutrient applications from fertilizers, biosolids, and animal manure. Properly managing the amount of nutrients added to the soil can save money and protect the environment.

Soil nutrients vary by location, slope, soil depth, soil texture, organic matter content, and past management practices, so getting a good soil sample stands out as a major factor affecting the accuracy and usefulness of soil testing. This fact sheet outlines some specific considerations which should be taken into account to get the greatest benefit from soil testing.

To learn more about getting a good soil sampling, [click here.](#)

To learn more about soil test interpretations, [click here.](#)

For an index of the soil testing lab publications, [click here.](#)
USDA Offers Expanded Conservation Program Opportunities to Support Climate-Smart Agriculture in 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing several new and expanded opportunities for climate-smart agriculture in 2022. Updates include nationwide availability of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Conservation Incentive Contracts option and added flexibilities for producers to easily re-enroll in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). These improvements to NRCS’ working lands conservation programs, combined with continued program opportunities in Oklahoma, are part of the agency’s broader effort to support climate-smart agriculture.

**EQIP - Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC)**

Conservation Incentive Contracts address priority resource concerns, including sequestering carbon and improving soil health in high-priority areas. Through these contracts, NRCS works with producers to strengthen the quality and condition of natural resources on their operations using management practices, such as irrigation water management, drainage water management, feed management and residue and tillage management that target resource concerns, including degraded soil and water quality, available water and soil erosion.

Conservation Incentive Contracts offer producers annual incentive payments to implement management practices as well as conservation evaluation and monitoring activities to help manage, maintain and improve priority natural resource concerns within state high-priority areas and build on existing conservation efforts. [Click here for a fact sheet](#) for a list of practices.

Conservation Incentive Contracts last five years. The 2018 Farm Bill created the new Conservation Incentive Contract option, and it was piloted in 2021 in four states.

**How to Apply**

NRCS accepts applications for Conservation Incentive Contracts year round however producers and landowners should apply by February 25, 2022 to be considered for this year’s funding. To apply, producers should contact their [local USDA Service Center](#).
• Resource Engineer – GS-0810/0890-12
  o Perry, OK
• Resource Conservationist – GS-0457-9/11
  o Poteau
  o Tahlequah
  o Walters
  o Lawton
• Civil Engineer (Hydrologic Engineer) – GS-0810-12
  o SO Water Resources
• Rangeland Management Specialist – GS-0454-9/11
  o Guymon or Boise City
• Civil Engineering Technician – GS-0802-9
  o Stillwater, OK (Watershed Office)

The best way to stay updated on job postings is to check USA Jobs often and sign up for notifications for job announcements.

All jobs with NRCS are listed on USAJobs.

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**Photo of the Month**
FSA Offers Joint Financing Option on Direct Farm Ownership Loans

The USDA Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Direct Farm Ownership loans can help farmers and ranchers become owner-operators of family farms, improve and expand current operations, increase agricultural productivity, and assist with land tenure to save farmland for future generations.

There are three types of Direct Farm Ownership Loans: regular, down payment and joint financing. FSA also offers a Direct Farm Ownership Microloan option for smaller financial needs up to $50,000.
Joint financing allows FSA to provide more farmers and ranchers with access to capital. FSA lends up to 50 percent of the total amount financed. A commercial lender, a State program or the seller of the property being purchased, provides the balance of loan funds, with or without an FSA guarantee. The maximum loan amount for a joint financing loan is $600,000, and the repayment period for the loan is up to 40 years.

The operation must be an eligible farm enterprise. Farm Ownership loan funds cannot be used to finance nonfarm enterprises and all applicants must be able to meet general eligibility requirements. Loan applicants are also required to have participated in the business operations of a farm or ranch for at least three years out of the 10 years prior to the date the application is submitted. The applicant must show documentation that their participation in the business operation of the farm or ranch was not solely as a laborer.

For more information about farm loans, contact your County USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

USDA Invests $2 Million in Risk Management Education for Historically Underserved and Small-Scale Producers

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to $2 million in cooperative agreements this year for risk management education and training programs that support historically underserved producers, small-scale farmers, and conservation practices. USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) is investing in organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, universities, and county cooperative extension offices, to develop training and education tools to help producers learn how to effectively manage long-term risks and challenges.

RMA works with partners to assist producers, especially historically underserved, farmers and ranchers, in effectively managing long-term risks and challenges. RMA re-established its support of risk management education in 2021, investing nearly $1 million in nine risk management education projects. From 2002 to 2018, RMA provided annual funding for risk management education projects, supporting more than $126 million worth of projects in historically underserved communities.

How Organizations Can Apply

A broad range of risk management training activities are eligible for funding consideration, including training on Federal crop insurance options, record keeping, financial management, non-insurance-based risk management tools, and natural disaster preparedness among
others. Partners can also train farmers at all levels on risk management options that help secure local food systems.

This selection process is competitive, and RMA will prioritize projects focused on underserved, organic, and specialty crop producers. Additionally, organizations providing training related to climate change, wildfire response, local foods, and urban ag will also be given stronger consideration.

Interested organizations must apply by 5:59 pm Eastern Time on March 11 through the Results Verification System at rvs.umn.edu.

Learn more.

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**Dates to Remember**

- **February 25**
  - EQIP - CIC Deadline
- **March 31**
  - CSP Deadline

**NRCS Encourages Sponsors to Submit Requests for Watershed Funding**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging local sponsors to submit project requests for funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers several programs to help communities improve land and water resources within watersheds as well as relieve imminent hazards to life and property created by a natural disaster.

Programs include the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program (WFPO), Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB) and Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP).

Funding is available for new projects as well as those already submitted to NRCS. NRCS will give additional consideration to projects in historically underserved communities that directly
benefit limited resource areas or socially disadvantaged communities. NRCS will continue to review as funding is available.

Eligible project sponsors include state government entities, local municipalities, conservation districts, and federally-recognized tribal organizations. Sponsors are encouraged to reach out to their state’s NRCS Watershed Program Manager with watershed concerns as soon as possible to ensure their project request is in the funding queue for consideration. State contacts can be found on the links below:

- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program Managers
- Watershed Rehabilitation Program Managers
- Emergency Watershed Protection Program Managers

Fact sheets, trainings and other resources are available on the NRCS website.