



CONSERVATION TITLE ISSUE BRIEF

The conservation title of the farm bill represents a tremendous opportunity to continue protecting and enhancing the natural resources upon which we depend. Conservation programs must be fully funded for the most benefit, yet many programs are chronically underfunded and some programs will end in 2012 if Congress does not extend them.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

The AMA program helps producers to manage risk and voluntarily address conservation issues including water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation practices into their farming operations. Producers can implement conservation practices such as water management or irrigation structures, and planting trees for windbreaks or water quality improvement. AMA can also help producers mitigate risk by diversifying production or resource conservation practices including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized funding for AMA at \$15 million for each fiscal year through 2012. Congress has fully funded AMA, but \$5 million is proposed to be cut in Fiscal Year 2012.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP encourages agricultural landowners to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. Multiple natural resource benefits are realized from CRP land, including reduced soil erosion, natural habitat for wildlife, and the removal of millions of tons of carbon dioxide from the air. Landowners receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term conservation practices on eligible farmland. As of April 2011, national CRP enrollment stands at 31.2 million acres enrolled in over 749,000 contracts, just under the 32 million acre cap set in the 2008 Farm Bill. Congress has fully funded CRP, however market pressure continues to reduce the program as producers choose to let acres expire.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP was created in the 2008 Farm Bill and encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by undertaking additional conservation activities while improving and maintaining existing conservation systems. The program provides producers financial and technical assistance to provide high levels of conservation to enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized an acreage enrollment in CSP of 12.7 million acres per fiscal year. More than 25 million acres of working land have had conservation treatments applied under CSP. CSP continues to be a target for cuts. Congress reduced the program by \$39 million in FY 2011 and has proposed a cut of \$171 million for FY 2012.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to install and maintain conservation practices that sustain food and fiber production while enhancing soil, water, and related natural resources. Contracts are developed with producers to cost-share conservation practices that address a variety of natural resource issues related to livestock, crop production and non-industrial private forestlands. Payments are made once conservation practices are completed. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized steady funding increases for EQIP from \$1.2 billion



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in FY 2008 to \$1.75 billion in FY 2012. In FY 2010 alone, producers enrolled more than 36,000 contracts on over 13 million acres in EQIP. The program also remains among the most popular for producers. In FY 2009, the program enrolled nearly 32,000 contracts, yet there were more than 110,000 contracts that were unfunded. EQIP has been the target of some of the largest cuts, being reduced by \$270 million in both FY 2009 and FY 2010. Congress has proposed a \$350 million reduction in FY 2012.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)

FRPP helps farmers and ranchers keep land in production agriculture. The program provides matching funds to state, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farm and ranch land protection programs for the purchase of conservation easements. Over 300,000 acres have been enrolled in the program since 2008. The 2008 Farm Bill authorized funding increases for FRPP from \$97 million in FY 2008 to \$200 million in FY 2012. Funding has been stable for FRPP, with Congress providing full appropriations every fiscal year. However, the program is proposed to be cut by \$50 million in FY 2012.

Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP)

GRP helps producers to protect grazing uses and related conservation values by conserving grassland, including rangeland, pastureland, and shrubland. The program emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under threat of conversion. The 2008 Farm Bill provided for an additional 1.22 million acres that can be enrolled in GRP during FY 2009 through FY 2012. Acres enrolled in GRP during FY 2009 and FY 2010 total almost 400,000. GRP does not have baseline funding beyond FY 2012.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands in exchange for retiring eligible land from production. The program provides benefits for water quality, floodwater mitigation and wildlife habitat. WRP offers producers three enrollment options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements. The 2008 Farm Bill placed an acreage cap on WRP of 3 million acres. Nearly 2.5 million acres are currently enrolled in WRP. WRP does not have baseline funding beyond FY 2012.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP helps producers develop or improve high quality habitat that supports fish and wildlife populations of national, state, tribal, and local significance. WHIP provides technical and financial assistance to landowners through cost-share agreements to develop upland, wetland, aquatic, and other types of wildlife habitat on their property. WHIP was authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill at \$85 million per fiscal year. More than 1 million acres were enrolled in WHIP during FY 2010 alone. Funding has been stable for WHIP, with Congress providing full appropriations every fiscal year. The program is proposed to be cut by \$35 million in FY 2012.