



United States Department of Agriculture



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service



Conservation Connections:

A Beginning Wisconsin Farmers Guide to Conservation Support,
Funding & Resources

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Agenda



- **Conservation Connections: Project overview**
- **Introductions: NRCS staff & Farmer Connectors**
- **NRCS overview**
- **Program & resource basics**
- **Farmers share NRCS experiences**
- **Upcoming Events & Projects**
- **Questions and Conversations with NRCS Staff**



Conservation Connections



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Historically Underserved Farmers

- **Beginning Farmer and Rancher**

- Not operated a farm/ranch for more than 10 years

- **Limited Resource Farmer**

- With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
- Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.

- **Socially Disadvantaged**

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics



- **Veteran**

Introductions: NRCS Agency Staff & Farmer Connectors

A series of seven stylized water drop icons in shades of orange and yellow, arranged in a slightly overlapping horizontal line.

Wisconsin NRCS:

- **NRCS Angela Biggs, State Conservationist**
- **Eric Allness, Assistant State Conservationist – Partnerships**
- **Melissa Bartz, Assistant State Conservationist – Programs**



Introductions: NRCS Agency Staff & Farmer Connectors



Kirsten Jurcek
Brattset Family Farm
(Jefferson)



Robert Pierce
Half the 40 Acres
(Madison)



Mariann Holm
Holm Girls Dairy
(Elk Mound)

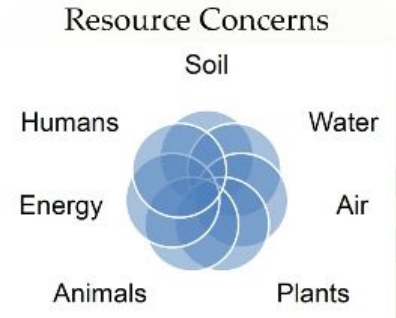




What is the Natural Resources Conservation Service?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency authorized to work on private lands to help landowners protect their soil, water and other natural resources.

- Technical agency of USDA
- Voluntary technical and financial assistance for farmers and landowners



An Agency Established in 1933

In 1933, the Soil Erosion Service (which was later named the Natural Resources Conservation Service), was established.

To fight soil and wind erosion, dust storms, and loss of cropland.



Wind and water-caused erosion.



NRCS and USDA



In 1935, the Soil Conservation Service became an agency of USDA to work with farmers on new ways to farm that would save the soil.

Civilian Conservation Corps camp in
Coon Valley, Wisconsin



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Coon Creek Watershed



Coon Creek Watershed Erosion Control
Demonstration - 1934



Voluntary Conservation on Private Lands



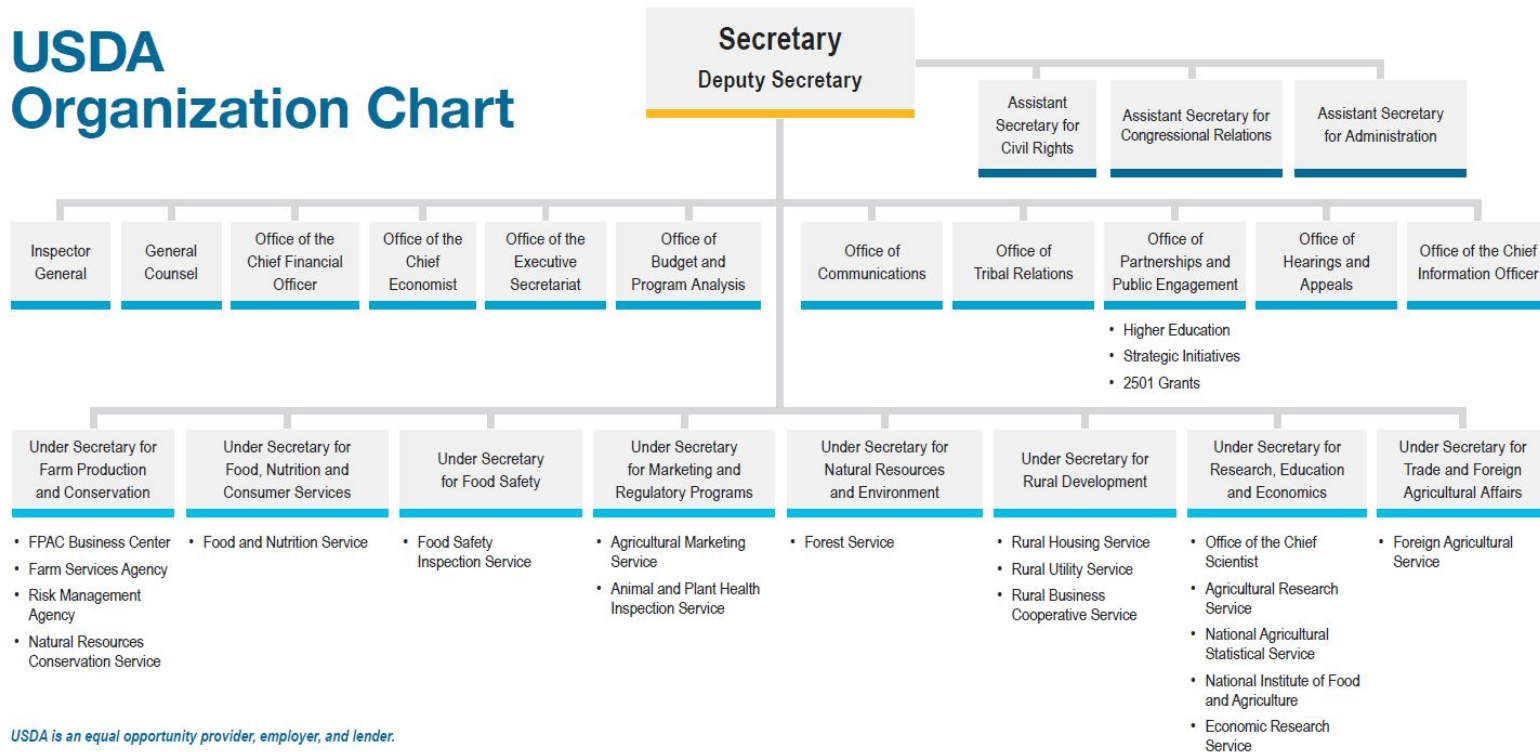
Private lands account for 70 percent of the total land in the United States, 80 percent in Wisconsin.



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USDA Organization Chart



USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

UPDATED 10/01/20 This organization chart displays the names of USDA offices, agencies, and mission areas. Each office, agency, and mission area is placed within a cell connected by lines to show the structure and hierarchy (Under Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Secretary) for which they fall under. An HTML version that lists [USDA Agencies and Offices](#) and [USDA Mission Areas](#) is also available on [usda.gov](#). The [Secretary's Memorandum 1076-031](#) was signed August 12, 2019 effectuating a change to Rural Development.



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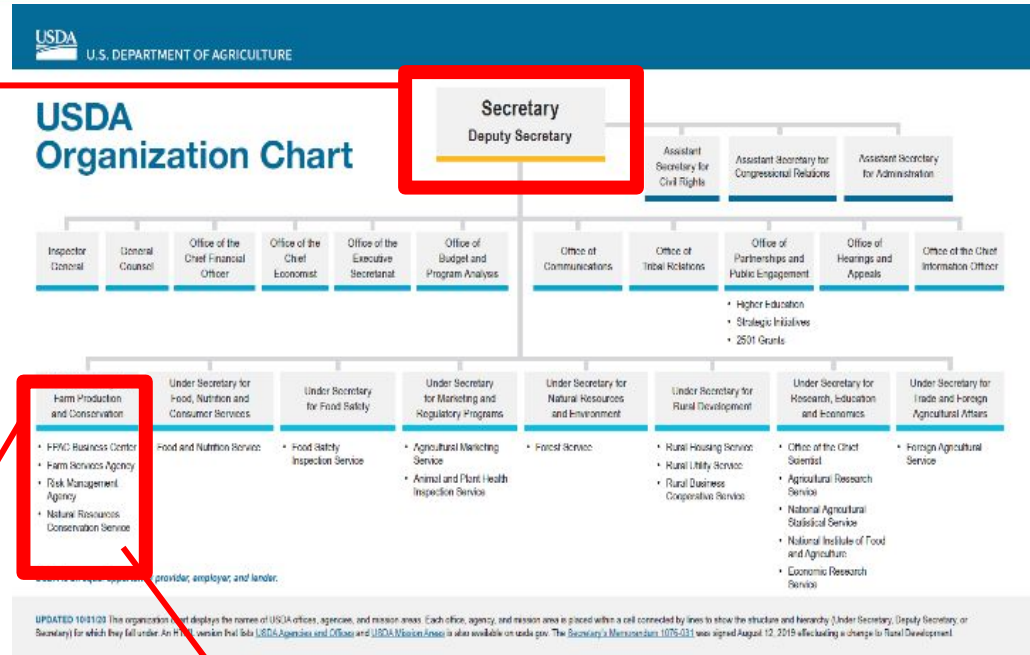
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Secretary
Sonny
Perdue



President-Elect
Biden Nomination
Tom
Vilsack



Under Secretary
for Farm Production and
Conservation (FPAC)
Bill Northey



NRCS
Chief (acting)
Kevin
Norton

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USDA
“Department Level”

NRCS
“Agency Level”; “National
Headquarters”



Washington, D.C.

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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Chief (acting)
Kevin Norton



**Associate Chief
(acting)**
Ron Alvarado



**Regional
Conservationist
(Central)**
Salvador Salinas



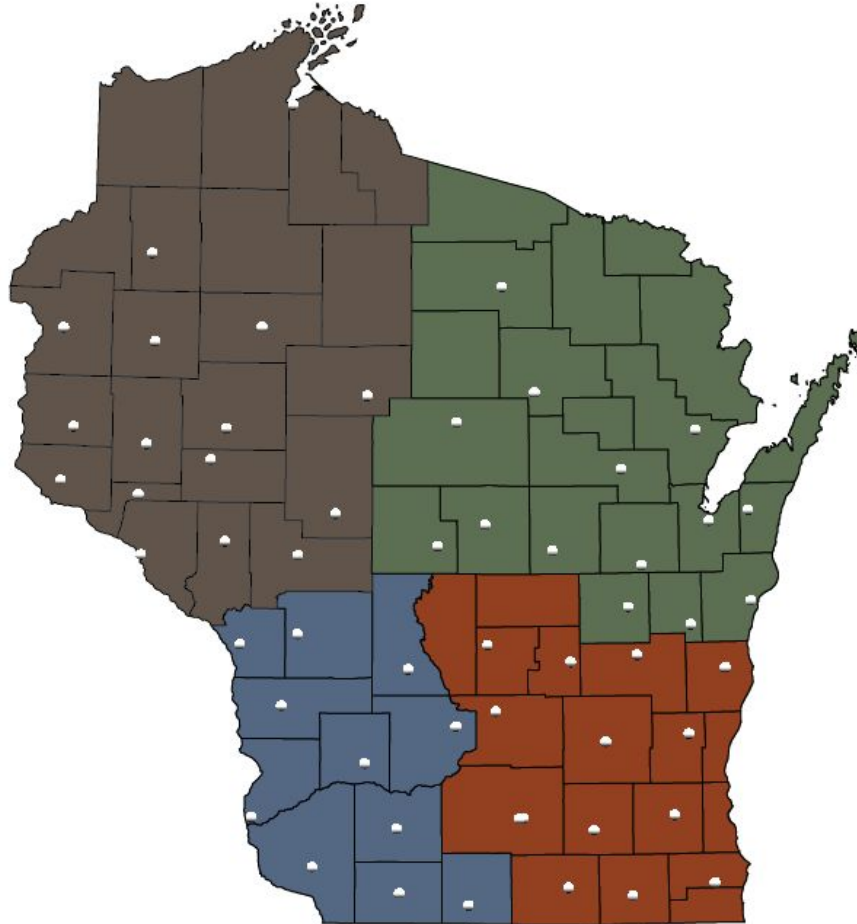
**State Conservationist
Wisconsin**
Angela Biggs



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State Office: Madison

Area Offices:

- Area 1 (NW) – Altoona
- Area 2 (NE) – Appleton
- Area 3 (SW) – Richland Center
- Area 4 (SE) – Juneau

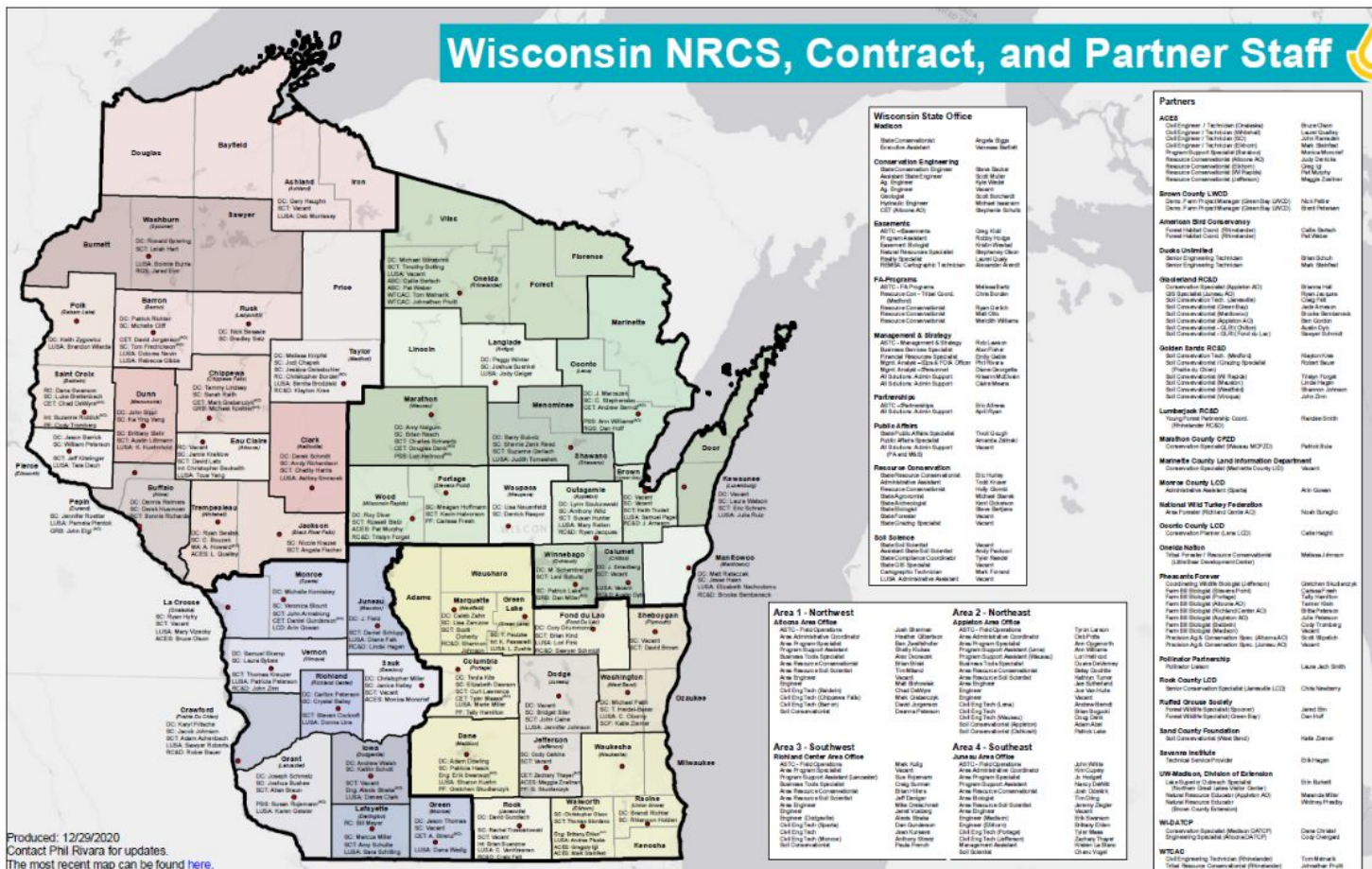
Field Offices: 54

Tribal Office: 1

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Produced: 12/29/2020
Contact Phil Rivara for updates.
The most recent map can be found [here](#).
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Area 4
Area & Field
Staff



State Conservationist

Assistant State
Conservationist –
Field Operations

District
Conservationist

Soil
Conservationis
t

Soil
Conservation
Technician

MADISON STATE OFFICE

ANGELA BIGGS
State Conservationist

PHONE:
608.261.4747 ext. 219

EMAIL:
angela.biggs@usda.gov

JUNEAU AREA OFFICE

JOHN WHITE
ASTC, Field Operations

PHONE: (920) 336-9899 ext. 8128
COUNTY: JUNEAU

EMAIL: john.white@usda.gov

WALUKESHA SERVICE CENTER

BRANDI RICHTER
District Conservationist

PHONE: (715) 875-1245
COUNTY: Washburn

EMAIL: brandi.richter@usda.gov





Farm Bill Legislation

Basis for most USDA and NRCS conservation programs and policies.



Current Farm Bill
Enacted on December 20, 2018



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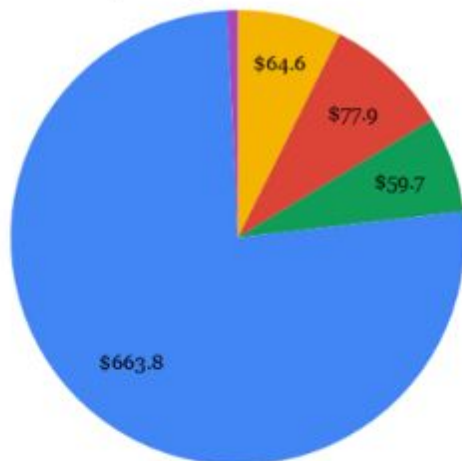
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2018 Farm Bill

Projected 10 Year Farm Bill Spending in Billions

- Title I: Commodity Programs
- Title XI: Crop Insurance Subsidies
- Title II: Conservation Programs
- Title IV: Nutrition
- Everything Else: \$6.7B



NRCS Wisconsin (FY 2020)

Funding Impact

\$13.6 MIL.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM

\$19.3 MIL.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

\$31 MIL.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM



\$63.9 MILLION

PROVIDED THROUGH CONSERVATION PROGRAMS TO PRIVATE LANDS.

Conservation Results



660,472

ACRES OF CONSERVATION APPLIED TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY.



463,551

ACRES WITH CONSERVATION APPLIED TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY.



399,841

ACRES OF CROPLAND WITH CONSERVATION APPLIED TO IMPROVE SOIL QUALITY.



NRCS Mission & Vision Statement

Our Mission: We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.



Our Vision: A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.



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Priorities

- Implement and deliver the 2018 Farm Bill to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and private forests landowners.
- Streamline our processes and program delivery to best serve our customers.
- Better understand our customer needs and improve overall customer service.
- Increase internal mentoring, training opportunities, and experiences that collectively involve staff, customers and partners.
- Expand focused outreach efforts to increase agency awareness among populations of Young, Beginning, Small, Veteran and Historically Underserved Farmers and Ranchers.
- Elevate the importance of soil health across our agency's outreach and communication efforts to further enhance and promote the delivery of soil health principles to staff, customers and partners.





Soil health matters because:

1. Healthy soils are high-performing, productive soils.
2. Healthy soils can reduce production costs and improve profits.
3. Healthy soils protect natural resources on **and** off the farm.
4. Franklin Roosevelt's statement, "The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself," is as true today as it was 75 years ago.
5. Healthy soils can reduce nutrient loading and sediment runoff, increase efficiencies, and improve pollinator and wildlife habitat.



The Five Principles Of Soil Health



1.

SOIL COVER: *Keep plant residues on the soil surface.* Look down, what percentage of your soil is protected by residue? Erosion needs to be minimized before you can start building soil health.



2.

LIMITED DISTURBANCE: *Minimize tillage as much as possible.* You will start building soil aggregates, pore spaces, soil biology, and organic matter.



3.

LIVING ROOTS: *Keep plants growing throughout the year to feed the soil.* Cover crops can add carbon to the soil, providing a great food source for micro-organisms. Start small to find the best fit for your operation.



4.

DIVERSITY: *Try to mimic nature.* Use cool and warm season grasses and broad leaf plants as much as possible, with three or more crops and cover crops in rotation. Grassland and cropland plant diversity increases soil and animal health.



5.

INTEGRATING LIVESTOCK: Fall/winter grazing of cover crops and crop residue increases livestock's plane of nutrition at a time when pasture forage quality can be low, increases the soil biological activity on cropland, and improves nutrient cycling. Proper grassland management improves soil health.



FOR MORE INFORMATION



NRCS GovDelivery <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDANRCS/subscriber/new>

- NRCS Wisconsin Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=172ZFUYBZ8U>
- NRCS Wisconsin YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCU4UrilTF4RVUZPzHRZx5CQ>
- NRCS Wisconsin Publications & Factsheets <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wi/newsroom/factsheets/>
 - NRCS Wisconsin Annual Report
 - NRCS Wisconsin Success Story Publications
 - Fact Sheets
- NRCS Wisconsin Webpage <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wi/home/>
- Farmers Guide to Farm Bill Programs <https://www.rma.usda.gov/-/media/RMAweb/Publications/2018-Farm-Bill/2018-FarmBill-Brochure.ashx?la=en>



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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service



Wisconsin

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The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Wisconsin

Meet the NRCS in Wisconsin, who we are, what we do, and how we help private landowners put conservation on the ground. Join us in the effort.



Meet the NRCS in Wisconsin

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Popular Topics

- > [Field Office Technical Guide](#)
- > [Conservation Planning](#)
- > [Engineering](#)
- > [Wisconsin Publications](#)
- > [Volunteer! Join Earth Team](#)



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In the News

Events & Deadlines


- [USDA Seeks Members for Advisory Committee on Urban Agriculture](#)

Highlights

[Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#)
[Conservation Stewardship Program](#)
[Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#)



Web Soil Survey

A photograph of two men in a field of tall grass. The man on the left is wearing a blue cap and a plaid shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a dark cap and a maroon shirt. They are both looking at a tablet held by the man on the right. The background shows a body of water and trees.

NRCS provides
one-on-one, personalized
advice

NRCS helps people make
investments in their
operations and local
communities

NRCS generates, manages
and shares the data,
technology and standards
to help make informed
decisions

Programs



Primarily Working Land

Practices must have a conservation benefit, not just for increased Production



Program and Resource Basics

- Financial and Technical Assistance
- Voluntary
- Competitive
- Program “contracts”= method for implementing



First Step: Connect with your local NRCS office

A row of seven stylized water droplets in shades of orange and yellow, arranged horizontally across the top right of the slide.

- Phone call or email to office
- Anyone can help you
- Site visit and walk your land



EQIP: Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Provides voluntary conservation to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality to help install or implement, structural, agronomic, or management conservation practices to protect soil and water quality.
- Special initiative opportunities include honey bee pollinator, soil health, organics, energy, and high tunnel.
- Special rates are available for socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers.





EQIP

- **Addresses resource concerns on private lands through implementation of conservation practices**
 - Technical assistance key
- **Program involving the most conservation partners**
- **Average 1,300-1,500 new contracts annually with an average of \$30 M over the last 3 yr.**



EQIP: Common Activities related to:

- **Energy**

Energy Efficient Lighting System, Farmstead Energy Improvement & MORE

- **Pollinator & Wildlife Plantings**

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, Conservation Cover & MORE

- **Livestock & Grazing**

Watering Facilities, Prescribed Grazing, Fence, Forage Harvest Management, Forage and Biomass Planting & MORE



EQIP: Common Activities related to:

- **Conservation Activity Plans (CAP)**

Energy, Nutrient, Pest, Pollinator, Organic Transition, Grazing, Prescribed Burning & MORE

- **Soil Erosion**

Reduced Tillage, Cover Crops, Contour Farming, Structural Erosion Control & MORE

- **Water Quality**

Field borders, Filter Strips, Tree Plantings, & MORE

- **Soil Health & Plant Health**

Cover Crops, Crop Rotations, Nutrient and Pest Management & MORE



Conservation Stewardship Program



- **Rewards existing conservation on and requires additional conservation activities be adopted**
 - Includes cropland, pasture, farmstead and forestland
- **5-year contracts with payments for benchmark conditions and practices and enhancements contracted**
- **541 contracts covering 238,000 acres enrolled during FY2020**



Conservation Stewardship Program

- Program builds upon conservation practices available in EQIP
- Offers practices, enhancements and bundles of enhancements

Example

- Practice: Cover Crop
 - Enhancement: Planting deep-rooted cover crop for soil health
 - Bundle: Multiple Enhancements that complement each other.
- Entire Operation Included



Farmer Share: Kirsten Jurcek



NRCS EQIP Practices Utilized at Brattset Family Farm, LLC



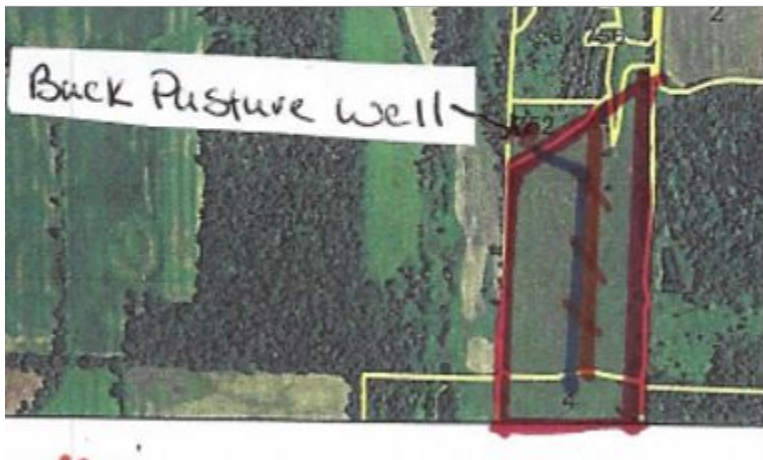
- We work closely with local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Staff applying for conservation cost share funds.
- NRCS EQIP Practices:
 - Forage & Biomass Planting
 - Fencing (perimeter & interior)
 - Water Well
 - Water Lines & Watering Facilities
 - Grazing



Farmer Share: Kirsten Jurcek



NRCS EQIP Water Systems

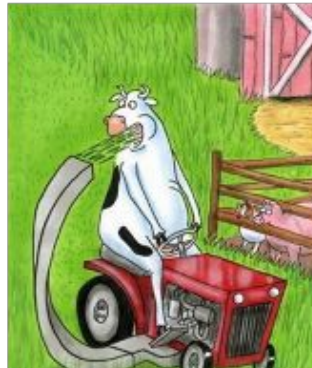


Farmer Share: Kirsten Jurcek



NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program

- Once graziers have met their grazing conservation goals through assistance of the NRCS EQIP cost share or on their own, they may be eligible for the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program.
- Brattset Family Farm CSP Enhancements
 - Bat Houses
 - Grazing
 - Hay cutting



Farmer Share: Kirsten Jurcek

EQIP Grazing Plans



- Work with existing graziers to enhance grazing infrastructure and methods.
- Plan grazing systems for beginning farmers and farmers wishing to transition to managed intensive grazing.

- Prepare pasture seed mixtures
- Calculate livestock stocking rates
- Layout perimeter & interior fencing
- Layout waterlines & winter watering facilities
- Illustrate grazing paddocks and sacrifice areas

☐ Grazing plans prepared to make producers eligible for NRCS EQIP cost share

Farmer Share: Mariann Holm



**Mariann Holm
Holm Girls Dairy
(Elk Mound)**





New Program: Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WWIC)

Wisconsin Women in Conservation

A project of NRCS



- Focus on women landowners in Wisconsin
- Led by MFAI, WFU, MOSES, RTC
- Variety of workshops, field days, mentoring
- Sign up for more info

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Questions?

An aerial photograph of a misty, rolling landscape. The land is covered in green fields and dense forests. A small farm with a red roof is visible in the center. The mist is thick and white, filling the valleys and surrounding the hills. The sky is a pale blue with soft white clouds.

NRCS - Helping People Help the Land

Productive Lands, Healthy
Environment

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and
lender



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