

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

North Carolina



Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Program Updates

Farm Bill Programs

FY 2024 Farm Bill conservation financial assistance programs, special funding pools and initiatives in North Carolina included:

- \$22,608,633.00 has been allocated for FY2024 to fund EQIP Classic applications received during the current sign up. Total EQIP Classic contracts obligated to date is 401 contracts for a total of \$22,193,363.27. Obligation percentage **98%**
- \$30,209,000.00 has been allocated for FY2024 to fund EQIP IRA applications received during the current sign up. Total EQIP IRA contracts obligated to date is 436 contracts for a total of \$29,233,661.56. Obligation percentage **97%**
- \$13,875,000.00 has been allocated for FY2024 to fund CSP Classic applications received during the current sign up. Total CSP Classic contracts obligated to date is 85 for a total of \$8,880,234.00. Obligation percentage **64%**
- \$8,285,000.00 has been allocated for FY2024 to fund CSP IRA applications received during the current sign up. Total CSP IRA contracts obligated to date is 73 for a total of \$5,833,472.00. Obligation percentage **70%**

As the fiscal year comes to an end, we're focusing on finalizing our CSP contracts. Despite our current obligation percentages for the program, we're on glide path to have final obligation percentages similar to our EQIP numbers.

As we look ahead, N.C.-NRCS is also making preparations for FY2025. Recently the agency held its annual strategic planning meeting to discuss the administrative timeline for our financial assistance programs. It was determined that our application deadlines for CSP and EQIP will be November 1, 2024. A formal announcement will be published in early October.

Hot Topics

Quality Assurance Reviews (QAR)

From the week of September 9 through September 12, the state office will be conducting reviews in select field offices in the western part of the state. The reviews will be focused in the following areas:

- Management & Strategy
- Public Affairs
- Outreach
- Partnerships
- Soils
- Programs
- Ecological Sciences
- Engineering

The 2024 Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) Survey for Cultivated Cropland

Local National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) representatives will visit nearly 12,000 farmers and other operators in August and September 2024 to determine if their operations meet the criteria for the 2024 Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) Survey. Those eligible will be contacted beginning November 2024 and asked to participate.

Survey results will be used by NRCS to deliver the third national CEAP Cropland Assessment report, which will share trends in conservation practices and the environmental and management outcomes of conservation on cultivated cropland across U.S. farms.

The 2024 CEAP Survey questions will focus on topics including farm production practices; chemical, fertilizer, and manure applications; tillage; irrigation use; and installed conservation practices.

The State Off-Site Methods for Food Security Act Wetland Identification

NRCS is responsible for providing certified wetland determinations to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program participants so they may make informed land management decisions and remain compliant with the Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended.

On August 29 the agency implemented a tool that will be used to make off-site wetland determinations in North and South Carolina. The document provides guidance to NRCS agency experts to efficiently conduct wetland determinations using off-site resources, while maximizing accuracy and consistency.

Specifically, this document includes information on the use of off-site data sources utilized by NRCS in applying the following sections of the 1987 United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Wetland Delineation Manual, Technical Report Y-87-1 (Corps Manual); Part IV-Methods, as supplemented by the applicable USACE Regional Supplement to the Corps Manual (Regional Supplement) and the National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM) Part 514.8(A), "Food Security Act Wetland Identification Procedures" (FSA Procedures)

The document will not fully replace in person verification methods but will allow the agency to expedite some of the more obvious determinations.

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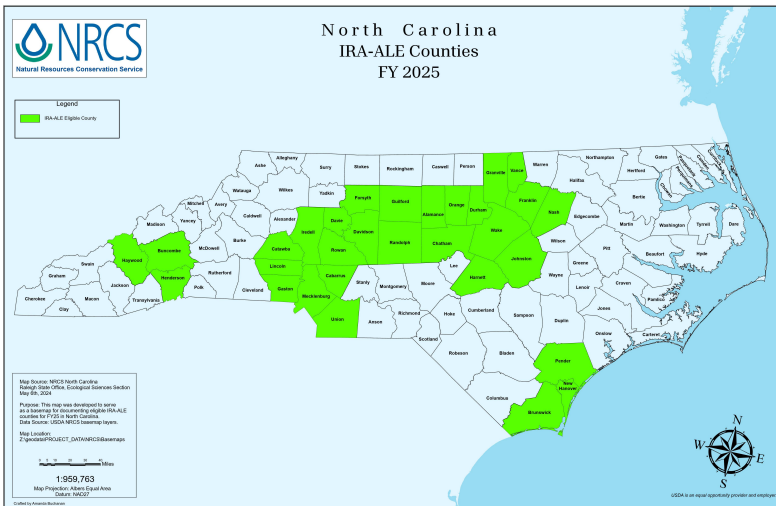
General FY 2024 Updates

Conservation Easements

On August 26, 2024 the agency announced that N.C-NRCS is now accepting applications for the Fiscal Year 2025 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding through the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP). This includes eligible parcels for both Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) for this sign-up period.

While N.C-NRCS accepts applications year-round, producers and entities interested in this funding cycle for IRA-ALE and IRA-WRE must apply by October 4th, 2024. Applicants eligibility documentation must be current for FY 2025 by November 1st, 2024.

The priority counties for North Carolina IRA ACEP-ALE listed below are centered around program eligible cropland or grassland where USDA-NRCS has identified a high threat of conversion to a non-agricultural use Eligible Counties: Alamance, Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Catawba, Lincoln, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Union, Cabarrus, Iredell, Rowan, Davie, Davidson, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph, Chatham, Orange, Durham, Granville, Franklin, Nash, Vance, Wake, Johnston, Harnett, Pender, Brunswick, and New Hanover.



Active Easements

- 23 Active ACEP/RCP ALE Projects
- 7 Active WRE projects, including several ongoing restoration projects

Whats New

The mountain bog is being added to general WRE. The target restoration hydrology is reestablish water levels at/near the surface and the target restoration vegetation is native non-woody plants.

Easements that would be considered under IRA for both the ALE and WRE will now be managed at the state level.

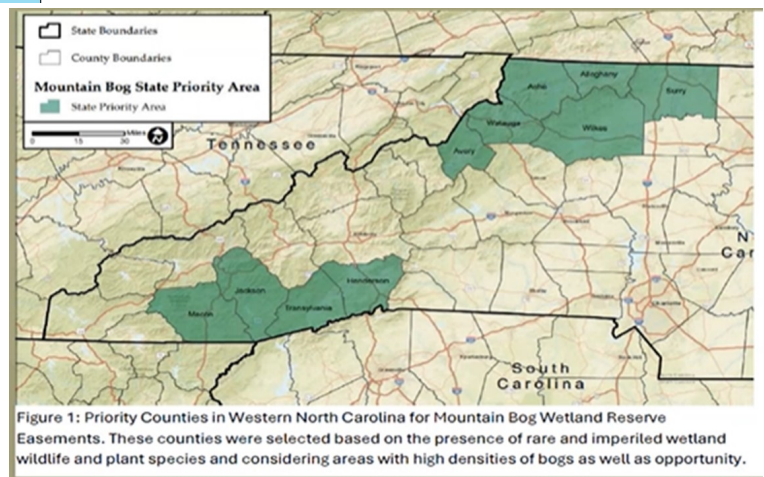


Figure 1: Priority Counties in Western North Carolina for Mountain Bog Wetland Reserve Easements. These counties were selected based on the presence of rare and imperiled wetland wildlife and plant species and considering areas with high densities of bogs as well as opportunity.

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