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# Overview of 2018 Farm Bill Conservation Programs



Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service



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Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

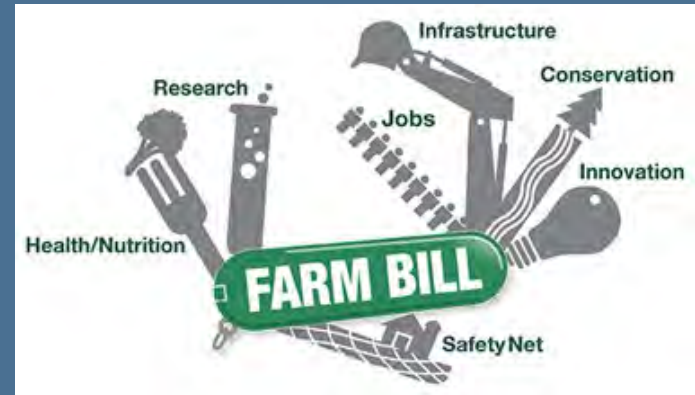
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# Conservation Programs







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**EQIP**





# **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**



**Provide incentives to landowners who face threats to soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land.**



# Statewide Resource Concerns

- Water Quality - Sedimentation
- Water Quality - Animal Waste
- Water Quantity
- Grazing Lands
- Sustainable Forestry
- **Wildlife – must be 10% minimum**

County Work Groups Address Local Needs:

- Prioritize statewide concerns
- Select conservation practices





## Example Forestry Practices

**Prescribed Burning**

**Firebreak**

**Site Prep**

**Mechanical Mulching**

**Forest Stand Improvement**

**Weed and Invasive Species Control**

## Example Wildlife Habitat Practices

**Prescribed Burning and Firebreak**

**Levee and Water Control Structure**

**Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management**

**Native Grass Conversion and Planting**

**Strip Disking**





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# Conservation Stewardship Program

Comprehensive conservation program to address resource concerns by:

- Maintaining and improving existing conservation activities
- Implementing new conservation enhancements
- “Payment for Performance”

Eligible lands include:

- cropland
- grassland
- improved pastureland
- forestland







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A large, bold, yellow text "CRP" is centered over a photograph of a dry, brown field. In the background, there is a line of green trees under a clear blue sky.

# CRP





# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Administered by the Farm Services Agency with technical assistance from NRCS and MFC
- Acreage cap of **27 million** acres – currently 24 million ac
- Eligible land is:
  - Owned for previous 12 months
  - Planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of 6 years from **2012-2017**
  - Some marginal pasturelands





# CRP General Sign-up Practices

Apply only during general sign-up

- **Permanent Grasses and Legumes**
- **Tree Planting, Pine or Hardwood**
- **Permanent Wildlife Habitat**
- **Grass Already Established**
- **Trees Already Established**
- **Wildlife Food Plot**







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# Conservation Reserve Program General



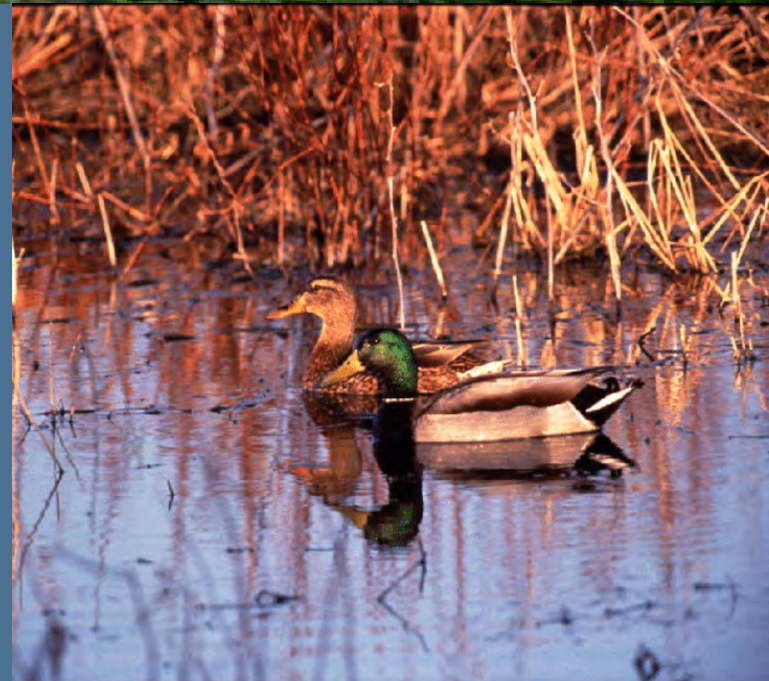
- **Annual Rental Payments** – Based on county rental rates  
Reduced payments to 85% of rental rate
- **Restoration Cost-Share** – 50%
- **Mid Contract Management** – required but not cost-shared



# Continuous CRP Practices

**Automatic acceptance if eligible  
10 – 15 year contracts**

- **Riparian Forest Buffers**
- **Filter Strips**
- **Wetland Restoration**
- **Grass Buffers for Upland Birds**
- **Bottomland Hardwood Restoration**
- **Grassed Waterway**
- **Shallow Water Area for Wildlife**





# Continuous CRP



- Annual Rental Payments – Based on county soil rental rates  
**Reduced payments to 90% of rental rate**
- Sign up Incentive Payment – 32.5% of annual payment rate
- Restoration Cost-Share – 50% + extra 5%
- Mid Contract Management – **required but not cost-shared**



# CRP Permissive and Restrictive Uses

- Must maintain cover
- Invasive species must be controlled
- Harvest of game and fish allowed
- Emergency haying and grazing allowed
- Mowing allowed on 20% of total acres annually
- Wildlife management activities encouraged





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**ACEP has two components –**  
**Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE)**  
**Agricultural Lands Easements (ALE)**





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# Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

An aerial photograph of a rural area. In the center, there is a large, rectangular, light-brown field, likely a fallow or recently harvested agricultural plot. To the right of this field, there is a cluster of greenhouses or covered walk-in cold frames, indicating active agriculture. The surrounding area includes residential houses with grey roofs, parking lots, and a baseball field in the bottom left corner. A road runs horizontally across the middle of the image, and another road runs vertically on the right side. The overall scene depicts a mix of agricultural and residential land use.



# ALE - Overview

## Program Purposes and Objectives

- Protect agricultural uses and related conservation values of eligible land by limiting uses of that land
- OR
- Protecting grazing uses and related conservation values by restoring and conserving eligible land
- BY
- Contributing up to 50% of funds to entities for the purchase of easements to protect natural resources and agricultural use of land subject to conversion





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# WRE - Overview

The objectives of ACEP-WRE are to protect, restore and enhance the functions and values of wetland ecosystems to attain:

- Habitat for migratory birds, T&E species, and other wetland-dependent wildlife
- Protection and improvement of water quality
- Attenuation of floodwater
- Recharge of ground water
- Protection and enhancement of open spaces
- Protection of native flora and fauna
- Contribution to educational and scientific scholarship
- Provide producers a viable option for marginal lands





# Enrollment options:

- Perpetual easement
  - land value payment, 100% restoration cost-share
- 30-year easement
  - 75% land value payment, 75% cost-share







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2020

# Geographical Area Rate Cap (GARCC)

## ACEP-WRE Market Areas Mississippi 2020



### Delta

Cropland - \$3,100/ac  
Aquaculture - \$2,450/ac  
Pasture - \$2,350/ac  
CRP - \$1,750/ac  
Woodland- \$2,100/ac



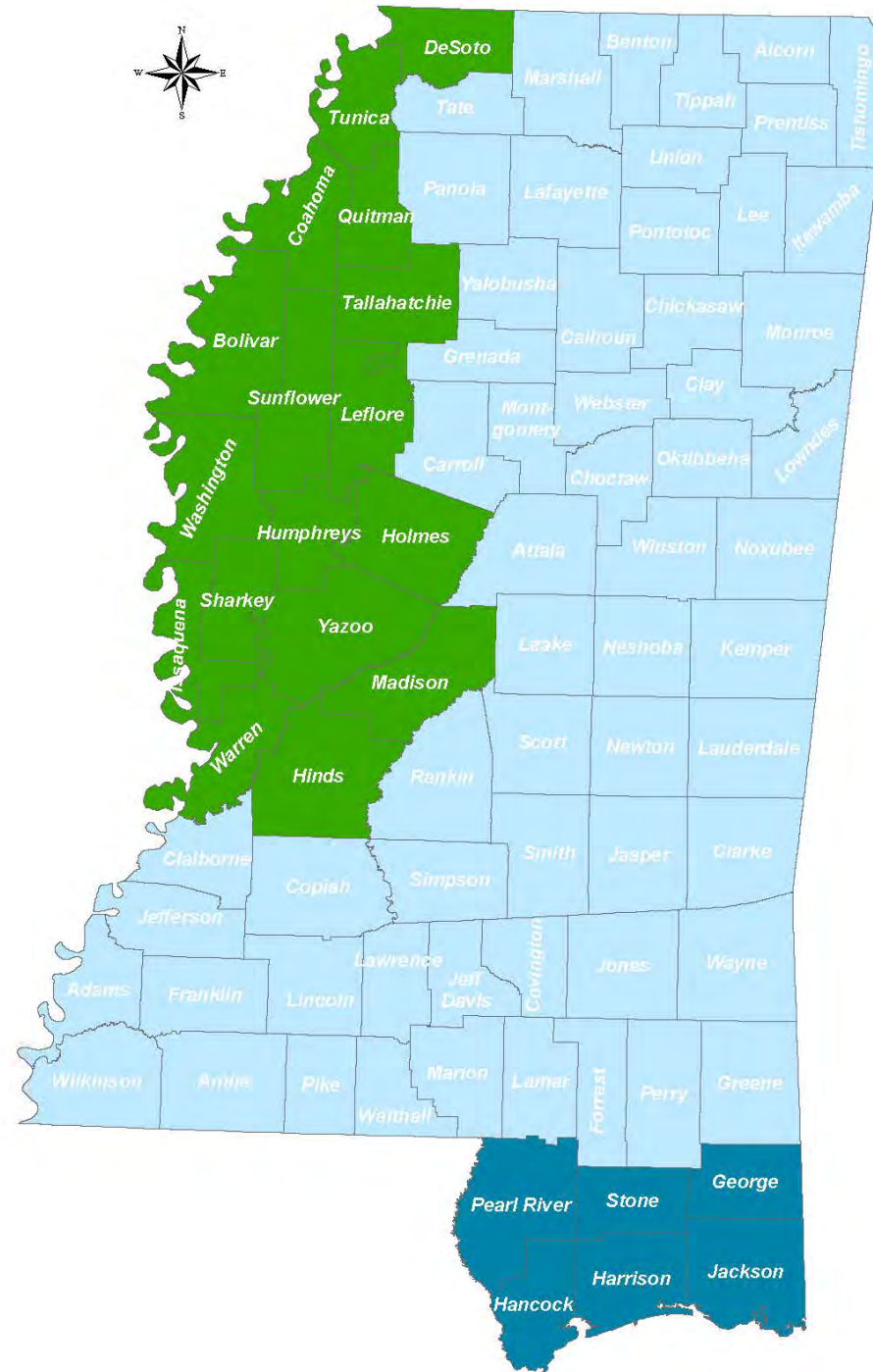
### Rest of State

Cropland - \$2,050/ac  
Aquaculture - \$2,450/ac  
Pasture - \$2,050/ac  
CRP - \$1,700/ac  
Woodland- \$1,700/ac



### Coastal

Appraisals for all  
landcover types.







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# Hydrology Restoration

- not a guarantee
- what topography allows



# Tree Planting

Remainder of  
easement planted to  
bottomland  
hardwoods





# Easement Reservations

- Easement Deed returns six rights to landowner
  - Title
  - Quiet Enjoyment
  - Control of Access
  - Recreational Uses – undeveloped
  - Subsurface Resources
  - Water Rights
- All other activities require Compatible Use Authorization
  - including management activities



# Compatible Use Authorizations

- **Five Basic CUAs**
  - Food Plots – max. 5% of total acreage
  - Hydrology areas management
  - Roads maintenance
  - Irrigation wells
  - Firebreaks
- **Other CUAs considered as requested**





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# HFRP







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# Healthy Forests Reserve Program



**Restore and protect forests to promote recovery of:**

- Threatened and endangered species
- Candidate species **and species of greatest concern in SWAP**
- Only longleaf priority area in MS, admin. w/ USFWS





# Healthy Forests Reserve Program

## Eligibility:

- Privately owned forest land
- High likelihood to restore or enhance habitat for red-cockaded woodpecker, gopher tortoise, or indigo snake

## Enrollment options:

- Perpetual easement - land value payment, 100% restoration cost-share
- 30-year easement - 75% land value payment, 75% cost-share
- 10-year cost-share agreement - no easement, provides 50% restoration cost-share





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# Adjusted Gross Income

for all program eligibility

AGI – 3 year average may not exceed  
\$900,000 for on-farm and off-farm income



# Ranking Program Applications

- Each program has ranking criteria/questions based on environmental benefits
- Ranking questions are developed at the state level (and local for EQIP)
- NRCS ranks applications after the application period deadline
- When funding is received, the highest ranked applications are funded until the money is exhausted
- If an application is not funded, it is eligible for reapplication in subsequent years





# Conservation Technical Assistance





# To maximize benefits with USDA Farm Bill programs, you should:

- 1) Determine your objectives - be as specific as possible
- 2) Seek information about the different programs
- 3) Involve resource personnel
- 4) Make decisions based on objectives and not programs





# How do you apply for a USDA Program?



- **Step 1 – Sign an application at local USDA Service Center**
- **Step 2 – USDA will determine eligibility for program**
- **Step 3 – USDA will complete an environmental ranking**
- **Step 4 – Applications will be selected for funding**





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# Contact your local USDA Service Center:

- For more information
- Sign up for a USDA program
- Technical assistance







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**Vacant**

**Kevin Nelms**

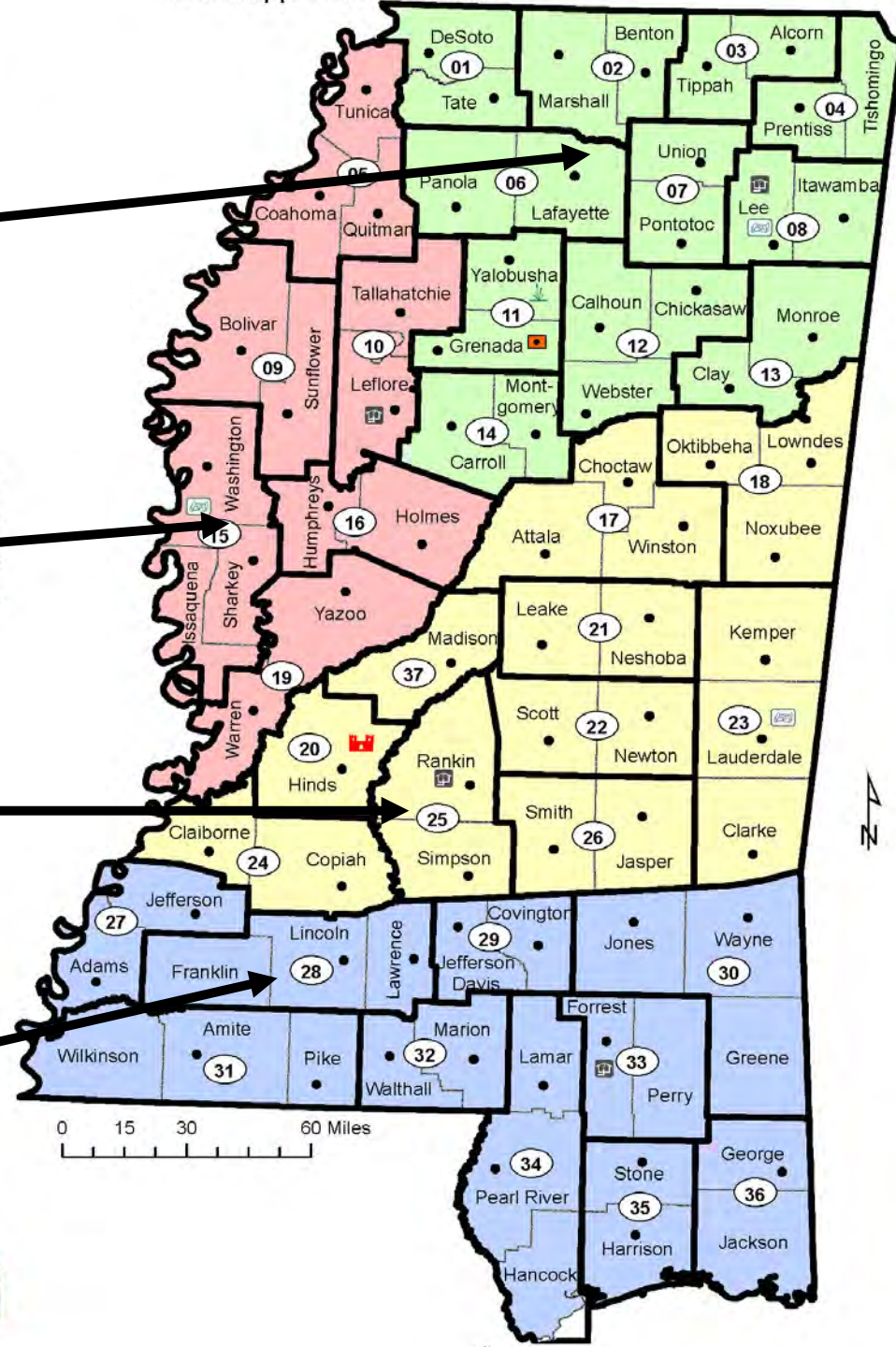
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# Questions??

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More information

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill)