



WEBINAR
NRCS 2026
UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGES
AND YOUR OPTIONS

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This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement number NR223A750003C066D



WEBINAR GUIDANCE

- A recording and materials will be shared with registrants.
- Participants will be on mute during the webinar
- You can ask a question during the webinar in the chat or the Q&A feature (found on the bottom of your zoom screen), or save your question until the end.





ABOUT RAFI

- Our name: long story, just call us RAFI (like taffy)
- 35 year old nonprofit organization, based in Pittsboro, North Carolina
- Our service area is primarily the Southeast U.S., including Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands; our crisis hotline and policy advocacy are national
- Our mission is to challenge the root causes of unjust food systems, supporting and advocating for economically, racially, and ecologically just farm communities.
- Our farm service work with small- to mid-scale farmers allows us to see first-hand the kind of support farmers need. This knowledge allows us to advocate for laws and regulations that support farmers and their communities.



RAFI'S WORK

- **Farmer Services** — one-on-one technical assistance, including for NRCS and FSA loan applicants, conservation support, and disaster response
- **Farmer Grants** — infrastructure grants (US Caribbean and Southeast US) and grants for beginning farmers
- **Farmers of Color Network** — technical assistance, capacity building, and events
- **Just Foods** — regionally adapted seeds and pollinator habitat
- **Policy** — advocating for fair agricultural policies on a federal level
- **Come to the Table** — empowering faith communities to help build just food systems through collaboration, capacity building, and advocacy





AGENDA

- Key Considerations
- Changes in 2026
- Applying to NRCS
- Improving your chances



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- We have collected and interpreted the changes that have taken affect so far
- Some information is from NC-based insight that we can apply nationally
- We expect more changes to programs in 2026
- The following is a lot of information
- Some changes make the barriers for small and mid-size farmers increase
- Some changes pose new opportunities and we want you to be informed of your options



The way YOU experience NRCS depends on a lot of factors:

- Statutes (Laws)
- National Rules
- Amount of funding available
- Local costs of goods and services
- Your state or island's NRCS leadership
- Your local office staff's attitude and experience level
- How quickly everyone in the system is adapting to changes since last year
- Who else applies and how you rank competitively

**YOUR experience
on YOUR farm
may differ from
someone else's!**



NRCS CHANGES 2025-2026

- NRCS Staffing levels
- Easier access for largest U.S. farms
- “Socially Disadvantaged” benefits for BIPOC farmers and ranchers
- National Batching Date (deadline to apply)
- “Climate Smart” conservation
- Application Roll-over
- NEW “Regenerative Pilot Program”



CHANGE: STAFFING LEVELS

NRCS lost approximately 20,000 staff in 2025.

- Some field offices were closed and consolidated
- Counties and state/area offices are missing fundamental staff
- Field staff have more limited funds for travel to farms
- Fewer staff serving more farmers
- Staff are still recovering from the gov't shutdown



TIP: Showing sympathy and patience for local NRCS staff will go a long way, AND you can also be a persistent self-advocate and document your communication with staff.

CHANGE: EASY ACCESS FOR LARGEST FARMS

Adjusted Gross Income

- Applicants are now allowed to earn more than \$900,000
- No limit means highest earning farms can be eligible
- But there is no guidance to states yet, so farmers should still complete the AGI form for FSA
 - English form, Spanish form

Increased payment limitations make room for larger contracts

- \$450, 000 for EQIP contracts
- \$300,000 for CSP contracts



CHANGE: PROGRAMS WITH “SOCIALY DISADVANTAGED” BENEFITS

“Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher ” is the way USDA identifies BIPOC producers:

Black, Indigenous, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander identities

Are Women Socially Disadvantaged?

- Not for NRCS programs (Yes for FSA programs)

“Socially Disadvantaged” category was deemed “unconstitutional” as of 7/10/25 for specific USDA programs

Thus, BIPOC/Farmers of Color will not receive extra benefits based on a history of discrimination towards them by USDA



PROGRAMS WITHOUT “SOCIOALLY DISADVANTAGED” BENEFITS

- Pandemic Relief Programs (CFAP, PARP, ERP)
- Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC)
- FSA Operating and Farm Ownership Loans
- Rural Development Programs (REAP, possibly RMAP, RBDG, B&I)
- **Conservation Programs:**
 - Conservation Reserve Program Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP)
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) (but support for Tribes remains)
 - WRP, WHIP, AMA
 - AMA - *now beginning or limited resource only*
 - WHIP - *now beginning, limited resource, veterans, and Tribes*
 - WRP - *now beginning or limited resource only*



MYTH: THE USDA “SOCIALY DISADVANTAGED” DESIGNATION IS GONE FOR ALL USDA PROGRAMS!

FACT: “SOCIALY DISADVANTAGED” DESIGNATION IS GONE FOR SPECIFIC USDA PROGRAMS

- **KEY POINT:** “Socially Disadvantaged” does remain in place for NRCS’ conservation programs EQIP and CSP
- The program benefits for a farmer who is “socially disadvantaged” are protected in Statute (Law) and only Congress should have the authority to change/remove this protection. But the Administration is pushing this boundary and we are remaining vigilant for more attempts to subvert socially disadvantaged benefits.

Source: Federal Register Rule: [Removal of Unconstitutional Preferences Based on Race and Sex in Response to Court Ruling](#)

TIP: Watch out for incorrect information or guidance! Contact RAFl if you need support.

CHANGE: NATIONAL NRCS APPLICATION “DEADLINE”

****January 15****

- This is a national application “Batching Date” for all US States
- Includes Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands
- We do not know if January 15th will be a deadline EVERY YEAR
- It is your deadline to apply and be considered for 2026 funding
 - EQIP
 - CSP
 - ACEP
 - AMA

→ **Regenerative Pilot Program falls under EQIP and CSP**



MYTH:

YOU CANNOT APPLY TO NRCS AFTER JANUARY 15

FACT:

YOU CAN APPLY AFTER JANUARY 15TH BUT YOUR CHANCES AT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ARE SLIM

- Applications are accepted year-round
- BUT...funding can and often does run out after the first batching date of the fiscal year in most states
- Applications submitted after the first batching date cannot be guaranteed they will be considered for funding that fiscal year
 - Example
- Any applications submitted but not considered will automatically “roll-over” to the next fiscal year



CHANGE: APPLICATION ROLL-OVER

- Applications not funded that year used to automatically “roll-over” in the next fiscal year to be considered and re-ranked for funding.
- Applications will no longer roll over and USDA NRCS will send a letter by mail stating that your application was NOT selected for financial assistance and WOULD NOT “roll-over”
 - You have 30 days to request your application to roll over and if you do not, your application is canceled. RAFI recommends you first call your NRCS contact, and if no response, go in person to communicate your desire for your application to roll-over.
 - If it is past 30 days, we recommend you complete and submit a new application for fiscal year 2026.
 - If you think you applied in a prior year but did not get a letter about the results, you should complete a new application form and contact your local NRCS impact center with the completed application.



CHANGE: “CLIMATE-SMART” CONSERVATION

“Climate Smart” as a term is gone from USDA operations and programs.

- Inflation-Reduction Act (IRA) funding has been re-distributed to pre-existing NRCS programs from now until 2032.
- In 2026, programs will have less funding than in 2024
- Is there enough to go around?
 - NO
- But is farmer interest high?
 - VERY!



MYTH: WITH “CLIMATE SMART” FUNDING GONE, THERE ARE NO MORE CLIMATE-SMART CONSERVATION PRACTICES

FACT: PRACTICES THAT HAVE CLIMATE BENEFITS HAVEN'T GONE ANYWHERE

The same practices are still available from NRCS

- But they are not labeled as climate smart
- Now, some are labeled as “regenerative”

TIP: If you want truly climate-benefitting practices that remove carbon from the atmosphere or reduce emissions preventatively, view this “outdated” list:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-10/NRCS-CSAF-Mitigation-Activities-List.pdf>



CHANGE: NEW REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM

Announced December 2025

- Aims to help farmers create a comprehensive, “whole farm” conservation plan
- Allocates funding for EQIP and CSP contracts that include a practice labeled as “regenerative” by the USDA
- “Regenerative” practices are supposed to:
 - regenerate natural resources
 - improve productivity
 - increase biodiversity
- 25% of each state’s funds will be used to fund these Regenerative contracts
- How does NRCS want this to work?



HOW DOES NATIONAL NRCS WANT THIS PILOT PROGRAM TO WORK?

**YOU + NRCS
COMPLETE A
WHOLE-FARM
ASSESSMENT**



**WHOLE-FARM
PLANNING**



**WHOLE FARM
REGENERATIVE
CONSERVATION PLAN**



**IMPLEMENT
“REGENERATIVE”
PRACTICES IN YOUR
PLAN**

MYTH: THIS IS AN INNOVATIVE PILOT PROGRAM THAT SOLVES YEARS OF PROBLEMS

FACT: REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM IS A TOP-DOWN RE-DESIGN THAT BEARS BENEFITS & DRAWBACKS FOR SMALL & MID-SCALE FARMS



HOW CAN STATE NRCS LEADERS MAKE IT WORK?

Your state will be determining:

- When the whole farm assessment should take place
- How to re-orient field staff to an older style of conservation planning
- How applications will rank

NC is looking for insight, and your state might be too:

- Do the Regenerative practices align with their farmers?
- Is whole-farm planning strongly desired?



HOW CAN YOU MAKE IT WORK?

Here is our best step by step approach:

1. Understand NRCS overall
2. Understand the Regenerative Pilot Program
3. Quickly assess is RPP right for you
4. Consider alternatives
5. **Apply by JANUARY 15 deadline**
6. Be communicative with your local NRCS staff
7. Take care of related paperwork ASAP
8. Be patient and start setting priorities



1. UNDERSTAND NRCS OVERALL



NRCS is focused on the repair or improvement of natural resources

EQIP

Environmental Quality Incentives Program is still for first-time conservation adopters and the program that is better for infrastructure and engineering needs

CSP

Conservation Stewardship Program is the program for farmers that have already been improving natural resource conditions, with or without NRCS' help before



NRCS financial assistance is a competitive process and if you're not registered with FSA, you're out of the race.



Cost-share improves each year but you will have out of pocket costs.



Your relationship with your local staff matters a lot



ELIGIBILITY STARTS WITH FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA)

- FSA Farm and Tract Number is required to apply for many USDA programs
 - Customer Data Worksheet has to be completed and turned into FSA ([English / Spanish](#))
- Parts of your Farm Record need to be *updated annually*
- Agencies are often neighboring offices but communication is sometimes limited
- RAFI-USA Blog: How to apply for a Farm Number:
<https://www.rafiusa.org/blog/events/farm-number/>
- RAFI-Blog: Keep Your FSA Farm Record up-to-date:
<https://www.rafiusa.org/blog/fsa-forms-to-have-on-file-and-why/>



DO YOU HAVE A FARM RECORD?

YES

Update your Farm Record ASAP

Program
Eligible

NO

Create a Farm Record with FSA

Forms Approved – OMB No. 0580-0265
OMB Expiration Date: 12/31/2023

AD-2047
(10-28-21)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Rural Development
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Risk Management Agency
Agricultural Marketing Service

CUSTOMER DATA WORKSHEET

NOTE: The following statement is made in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 USC 552a) as amended: The authority for requesting the information identified on this form is the Computer Security Act of 1987 (Pub. L. 100-368), OMB Circular A-133, Federal Managerial Financial Integrity Act of 1982, and Privacy Act of 1974 (5 USC 552a) as amended. The information will be used to document a request by the producer for updating the business partner record. The information collected on this form may be disclosed to other Federal, State, Local government agencies, Third agencies, and foreign countries involved for the business partner record. The information is requested in accordance with the description in applicable Routine Uses identified in the System of Records Notices for AMS-3, Participate Agriculture Communities Act (PACA), USDA FSA-3, Farm Record File (FarmRecord), USDA/AFPC-1, Landowner, Operator, Producer, Cooperative, or Participant File, and USDA/AFPC-1, Applicant, Operator, Cooperative, or Participant File. Providing the requested information is voluntary. However, failure to furnish the requested information will result in a determination of ineligibility to request charges within the business partner record.

Public Burden Statement (Paperwork Reduction Act Statement): According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0580-0265. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3 minutes (25 hours) per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

The collection of information is not a burden, privacy, and other statutes may be applicable to the information provided. RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO YOUR COUNTY FSA OFFICE.

1. Reason for Request (Check appropriate box(es) below)		
☒ New Customer ☐ Update Existing Customer Record		
2A. Customer's Full Name or Business Name and Address (Including Zip Code)		2B. Customer Business Type (Example: Individual, Corporation, LLC, Estate, Trust, etc.)
2C. Home Telephone Number (Area Code)		2D. Business Telephone Number (Area Code)
2E. Mobile Telephone Number (Area Code)		2F. Email Address
2G. Does the customer want to receive sensitive (but non-PII) Producer or farm specific related emails?		2H. Birthdate (Only required if the customer is a minor)
3A. Taxpayer Identification Number (Complete TIN for new customer)		3B. Birthdate (Only required if the customer is a minor)



FARM RECORD EXAMPLE

NORTH CAROLINA
ALAMANCE

Form: FSA-156EZ

See Page 2 for non-discriminatory Statements.



United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Service Agency

Abbreviated 156 Farm Record

FARM : 7058

Prepared : 10/1/22 10:24 AM CST

Crop Year : 2023

Your
Farm
Number

Operator Name : JAIMIE ELIZABETH MCGIRT

CRP Contract Number(s) : None

Recon ID : None

Transferred From : None

ARCPLC G/I/F Eligibility : Eligible

Farm Land Data

Farmland	Cropland	DCP Cropland	WBP	WRP	CRP	GRP	Sugarcane	Farm Status	Number Of Tracts
10.50	1.53	1.53	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	Active	1
State Conservation	Other Conservation	Effective DCP Cropland	Double Cropped		MPL	Acre Election	EWP	DCP Ag.Rel. Activity	Broken From Native Sod
0.00	0.00	1.53	0.00		0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00

Crop Election Choice

ARC Individual	ARC County	Price Loss Coverage
None	None	None

DCP Crop Data

Crop Name	Base Acres	CCC-505 CRP Reduction Acres	PLC Yield	HIP
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NOTES

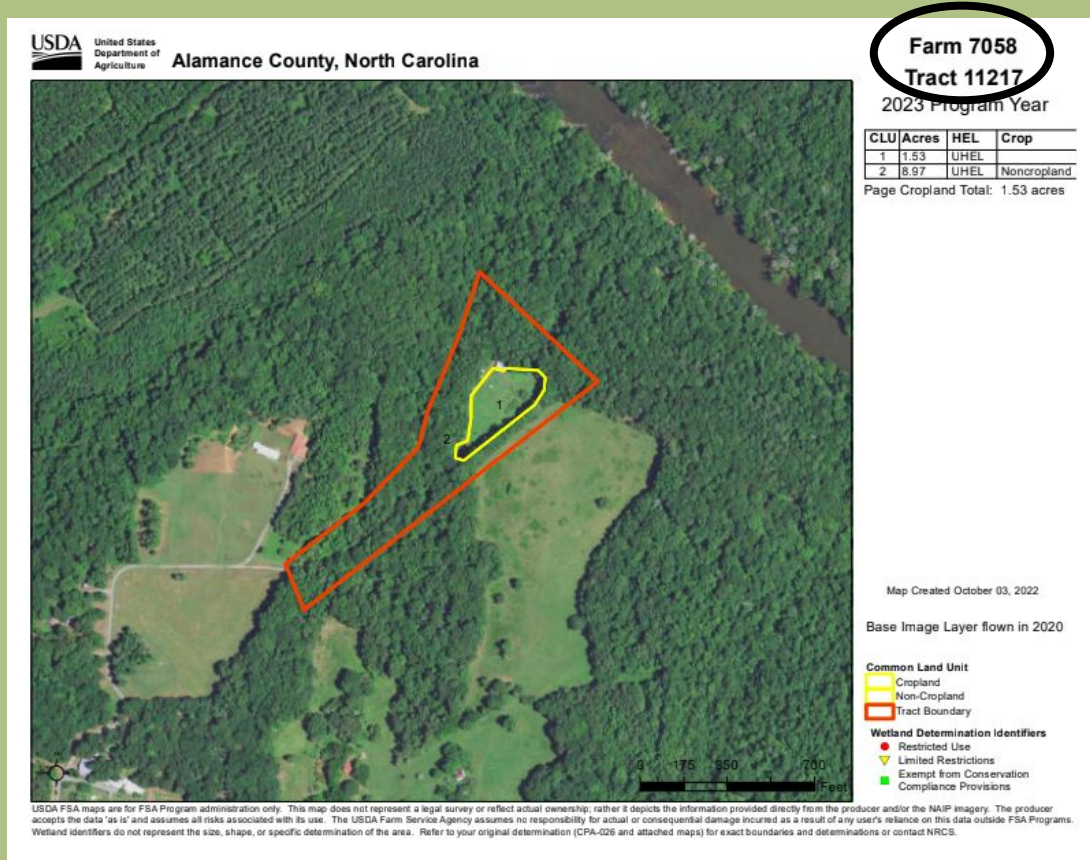
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You should
check that
everything is
accurate!



FARM RECORD: AERIAL AND LAND-USE MAP

You should check that the map of farmland and lines are accurate!



DO YOU HAVE A CONTACT AT YOUR LOCAL NRCS?

- Remember how NRCS Staff are stretched thin and adapting like all of us are?
- They will feel more respected if you reach out in writing or by phone BEFORE you submit an application

TIP: Acknowledge that you are feeling rushed by the January 15 deadline, and express your intent to apply for EQIP or CSP program assistance.



FINDING YOUR USDA FSA/NRCS OFFICES

Local Service Center Locator:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center>

Encuentre el Centro de Servicio más cercano:

<https://www.farmers.gov/spanish/working-with-us/service-center-locator>



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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Find Your Local Service Center

USDA Service Centers are locations where you can connect with Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or Rural Development employees for your business needs. Enter your state and county below to find your local service center and agency offices. If this locator does not work in your browser, please visit offices.usda.gov.

- Please select -

↓

↓

SEARCH



“HIDDEN” PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY: RESOURCE CONCERNS

NRCS Programs require there to be issues with natural resource conditions called Resource Concerns in order to access financial assistance

EQIP

- Evident and assessed resource concerns
- Expected resource concerns
- Resource Concerns can be measurably improved through application of conservation practices

CSP

- At least two resource concerns have been addressed by farmer's efforts and resolved to a “threshold”
- At least one new resource concern will be addressed by the end of the 5 yr contract



MYTHS ABOUT NRCS ELIGIBILITY!

Number of years you have farmed

→ There is no minimum years in production

Minimum income from farming

→ There is no minimum income or profit/loss requirement

Minimum acreage

→ There is no minimum acreage.

Minimum volume in production

→ It's not about volume. Community Gardens, subsistence farms, backyard gardens could qualify, Lands used for foraging, hunting, fishing could qualify. The land just has to have natural resource "concerns" present

History of production

→ Crop records are not required. But for certain conservation practices, you may need to show evidence of production history.

Location

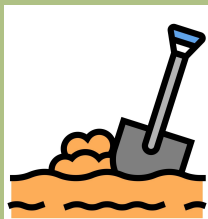
→ Farms in any location are permitted to apply.



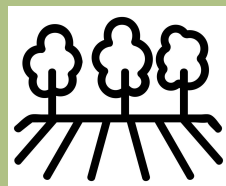
2. UNDERSTAND THE REGENERATIVE PILOT



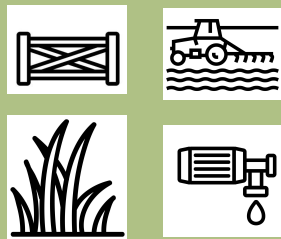
**Whole Farm
Assessment**



**Required
Soil Testing**



**At least one
“Regenerative”
conservation
practice**



**Optional:
Supporting and/or
additional practices**



REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM



Whole Farm Assessment

What we know:

- This is an inventory of conditions of all natural resources on all areas of your farm supporting production of agricultural crops and wildlife habitat
- This is very beneficial and critical for higher impact conservation planning
- This is messy—states are figuring out how and when to do this step



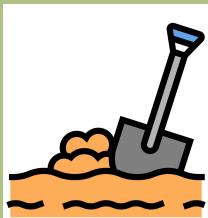
WHOLE FARM ASSESSMENT PREPARATION

- Be prepared for their question *“What are your goals?”*
- Have a list of land use areas + concerns + practice ideas
- Do “Walk and Talk”
 - Walk through each land use area relevant
 - Describe/show practices done to date
 - Show irrigation method
 - Show inadequacies, inefficiencies, etc
- Describe priorities and needed timelines for action
- Write down any discussed practices and where they would apply
- Ask about the details of each practice
- Mention where the food grown is sold/consumed and why your farm matters!
- Determine if there is follow-up needed and who is responsible

“We’re not going to go looking around the whole farm for resource concerns.”
- NRCS Agent, 2022



REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM



**Required
Soil Testing**
at the
beginning and
end of a
contract

What we know:

- This is very beneficial and critical for all in-ground crops, forage production, and pasture management
- NRCS contract will cost-share the cost of testing
- If you have already tested, you will need to re-test at beginning of the contract
- Testing is a conservation practices that must follow standards
- It is unclear who will perform testing and analysis



DO ANY OF THESE “REGENERATIVE” PRIMARY CONSERVATION PRACTICES GENUINELY FIT YOUR FARM?

- Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
- Contour Farming (330)
- Stripcropping (585)
- Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop System (331)
- Cover Crop (340)
- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)
- Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (345)
- Mulching (484)
- Nutrient Management (590)
- Pest Management Conservation
- Crop System (595)
- Irrigation Water Management (449)
- Drainage Water Management (554)
- Prescribed Grazing (528)
- Forage Harvest Management (511)
- Forest Stand Improvement (666)



Conservation Practices

Code	Asset Name	Crop	Forest	Pasture	Range
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	Y	N	N	N
330	Contour Farming	Y	N	N	N
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop	Y	N	N	N
340	Cover Crop	Y	Y	Y	N
554	Drainage Water Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
511	Forage Harvest Management	Y	Y	Y	Y
666	Forest Stand Improvement	N	Y	Y	N
449	Irrigation Water Management	Y	Y	Y	N
484	Mulching	Y	Y	Y	Y
590	Nutrient Management	Y	Y	Y	N
595	Pest Management Conservation System	Y	Y	Y	Y
528	Prescribed Grazing	Y	Y	Y	Y
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	Y	N	N	N
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced	Y	N	N	N
585	Stripcropping	Y	N	N	N

REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM



**OPTIONAL:
SUPPORTING AND/OR
ADDITIONAL PRACTICES**

What we know:

- Any practices needing financial assistance must be written into the Whole Farm Conservation Plan
 - Doesn't obligate you to getting financial assistance
- Supporting practices directly relate to the success of a "Regenerative" practice
- Other practices could be one or more of over 200 available practices
- Practices have to be offered in your state



EX. NRCS PRACTICES

Active Crop fields (Cropland)

- Cover Crop
- Critical Area Planting
- Filter Strip
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Pest Management Conservation System
- Mulching
- Nutrient Management Plan
- Organic Transition or Organic Mgmt
- Soil Carbon Amendment
- Amending Soil Properties with Lime
- Herbaceous Weed Treatment
- Residue-Tillage Mgmt (Reduced Till)
- Residue-Tillage Mgmt (No Till)
- Contour Planting
- Alley cropping
- Contour Buffer Strips
- Irrigation - Microirrigation
- High Tunnel System
- Low Tunnel System

Fallow/resting Crop fields (Cropland)

- Cover Crop
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Conservation Cover
- Critical Area Planting
- Herbaceous Weed Treatment

Crop field-adjacent (Cropland or Farmstead)

- Conservation Cover
- Grassed Waterway
- Field Border
- Windbreak (previously called Shelterbelt Establishment)
- Critical Area Planting
- Hedgerow Planting
- Wildlife Habitat Planting
 - Pollinators (Monarch)
 - Pollinators (general)
 - Forbes for grazing wildlife
- Composting Facility

Hay fields (Pasture)

- Hay cutting for Wildlife escape
- Pasture and Hay Planting

Grazing Land/Livestock (Pasture)

- Prescribed Grazing
- Grazing Mgmt Plan
- Fence
- Access Control
- Water Well
- Watering Facility
- Heavy Use Protection Area
- Pumping Plant
- Irrigation Pipeline
- Troughs
- Silvopasture
- Pasture/Hay Planting
- Range Planting

Forests / Woodlands (Forestland)

- Forest Farming
- Brush Management
- Herbaceous Weed Treatment
- Pre-commercial Thinning
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Restoration of Rare/Declining Natural Communities
- Clearing & Snagging
- Tree & Shrub Establishment
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Silvopasture (not all states)

Along streams, creeks, other water bodies

- Stream Habitat Mgmt and Improvement
- Fence
- Access Control
- Livestock Water Crossing
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- Critical Area Planting
- Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- Tree/Shrub Site Preparation & Establishment

Farmstead

- Wetland Creation, Repair, or Enhancem.
- Energy Efficiency practices
- Roof Runoff Structure
- Gutters
- Irrigation Reservoir
- Roofs and Covers
- Access Road



PRACTICES: WHAT IS CRITICAL TO KNOW?

Each practice has a “lifespan”

Practices have to follow “specifications”

Financial assistance means “cost-share”

- NRCS pays a percentage and you pay the remaining out of pocket
- What NRCS pays is a reimbursement
- Historically Underserved producers may be able to request Advance Payment

Each practice in a contract will have a payment rate



3. ASSESS IF REGENERATIVE PILOT IS FOR YOU

What's Positive

Whole farm assessment is an ecological approach



Your Potential Challenges

Patience - You are ready for this process but NRCS isn't

Too little staff, too little time

You still have to competitively rank against other RPP applicants



What's Positive

Conservation Practices



Your Potential Challenges

Something from this list has to really work for you/the farm in order to qualify

Lots of missing practices that are climate beneficial, so what's available

5 yr contracts give more time and flexibility for implementation



5 year contracts lock you and your land into a financial obligation.



4. CONSIDER ALTERNATIVES TO RPP

NRCS's has regular EQIP and CSP has nearly 200 practices and one or more may be a better fit for your farm than the Regenerative list

- Same deadline but you'll rank differently than RPP applicants

Your county's Soil and Water Conservation District might be a resource

- Different funding and cost-share rates
- "Best Management Practices" similar to Conservation Practices

Non-profit grants that are more flexible

FSA Microloans



5. APPLY TO NRCS BY JANUARY 15

- Applying by the 15th is just getting your foot in the door, NOT committing yourself.
- Complete Form CPA-1200 (and make a copy to keep)
 - [English form](#)
 - [Español form](#)
- Email, mail, or deliver this form to your local NRCS staff and ask for a “Receipt of Service” after you submit this!
- Find RAFI’s instructions on applying to NRCS here:
<https://www.rafiusa.org/nrcs-2026-instructions-to-apply/>
- You can always withdraw, defer, or modify your application after
- At anytime before signing a contract, no harm done.



CPA-1200 APPLICATION

Assistance Requested:

Briefly describe where on the farm you want to make improvements and what you are trying to improve.

Name any conservation practices you are strongly interested in applying for

TIP: If your farm is eligible for RPP, write “Regenerative Pilot Program” on the application form in the blank where it asks “Assistance Requested”

CONSERVATION PROGRAM APPLICATION

Applicant (Decision Maker):	Application Date:
Address:	Location where assistance is requested:
Email:	
Telephone:	Receive text messages(optional):
Assistance Requested:	

Click here for instructions to complete this form or contact the local office for assistance.

1. Do you have a customer record with the Farm Service Agency (FSA)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Interested in participating in the following (select all that apply):

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE) | ☐ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) |
| ☐ Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) | ☐ Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) |
| ☐ Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) | |

a) Program enrollment type, activity type, and/or project name, as applicable:

--

3. Applicant Information:

Select the business structure and enter the legal name, and tax identification number for all applicants who will be participants on the contract or agreement including the decision maker.

Business Structure (Mark with an X)		Applicant Legal Name	Tax Number (last four digits)
Individual	Entity		
☐	☐		
☐	☐		
☐	☐		
☐	☐		
☐	☐		
☐	☐		

To add more applicants, complete [NRCS-CPA-1200 Continuation Page](#), Applicant Information and attach to this form.

a) If applicant is a legal entity or joint operation, do you have appropriate documents including proof to sign for the entity or joint operation?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

- b) Complete the table below for all applicants who meet the requirements for one or more of the historically underserved categories. If none, leave blank. (optional)

Applicant Legal Name	Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher	Beginning Farmer or Rancher	Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher	Veteran Farmer or Rancher	Veteran Discharge Date
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	
	☐	☐	☐	☐	

- c) If awarded an EQIP contract, would you be interested in receiving an advance payment to assist you with implementing the conservation practice(s)? The availability of an advance payment only applies to EQIP contracts where the participant meets the definition for one or more of the historically underserved categories. Refer to the instructions to learn more about advance payments. If not applicable, leave blank. (optional)
☐ Yes ☐ No

4. **Land Information.** The following questions apply to the land being offered for enrollment through this application.

a) **Land Type (check all that apply):**

- ☐ Private Land
☐ Public Land: ☐ Federal Government ☐ State Government ☐ Local Government
☐ Indian Land: ☐ Allotted ☐ Tribal Trust Land ☐ Tribal Non-Trust Land ☐ Other

b) **Control of Land Documentation (check all that apply):**

- ☐ Deed or other evidence of land ownership
☐ Written lease agreement
☐ Other agreement or legal conveyance (describe):

c) **Is the land currently enrolled in other USDA conservation program(s)?**

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Which program(s):

d) **Organic Certification:**

- ☐ Certified Organic by the National Organic Program (NOP)
☐ Transitioning to become Certified Organic by the NOP
☐ Exempt from Organic Certification as defined by the NOP
☐ Not Applicable

e) **What is the primary crop type(s)?**

f) **What is the primary livestock type(s)?**

The applicant agrees not to start any financially assisted conservation practice or activity or engage the reimbursable services of a certified technical service provider before the program contract is executed by NRCS. The applicant understands that if they start a conservation practice or activity prior to NRCS executing the program contract, the applicant will be ineligible to receive payment for the conservation practice or activity. The applicant may request a waiver to begin a conservation practice or activity early by submitting their written request to the applicable NRCS State Conservationist.

Applicants must provide NRCS with written authorization from the landowner to install structural or vegetative practices on leased land included in this application.

The applicant acknowledges that they have or will file all other required eligibility information including highly erodible land conservation/wetland conservation certifications, adjusted gross income certifications, and member information for entities and joint operations with the FSA, as applicable, prior to NRCS approving a program contract based on this application.

The applicant may obtain a copy of the applicable conservation program contract appendix, which defines the full terms and conditions of program participation at the local NRCS office.

☐ Check here if NRCS-CPA-1200 Continuation Page, Applicant Information is attached.

Applicant Signature

Date

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

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

6-7. COMMUNICATE WITH NRCS & COMPLETE FORMS

- Save your local NRCS staff's phone number
- Answer their calls, emails, even try texting. DO NOT DELAY!
- Save all communication with NRCS staff. Record phone conversations in a log
- If any requests were made or decisions made, request documentation of this in a "Receipt for Service."
- Look out for any communication about completing your "FSA eligibility paperwork"
- Find RAFI's instructions updating your FSA paperwork here:
<https://www.rafiusa.org/nrcs-2026-instructions-to-apply/>



FSA FARM RECORD FORMS

Is your FSA Farm Record “*up to date*” or “*active*,” meaning are all of the forms below on record with FSA for the fiscal year you are applying for?

- Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) 941 ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Farm Operation Plan for Individual or Entity
 - CCC-902-I for Individual ([English](#) only)
 - CCC-902-E for Entity ([English](#) only)
- Members Information Form CCC-901 for entities only ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))
- Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation (HELCWC) AD-1026([English](#)/ [Spanish](#))
- Historically Underserved Farmer/Rancher (HUFR) Form CCC-860 ([English](#) / [Spanish](#))

The two last forms do not need to be updated annually, but should be submitted the first time you establish your farm record.

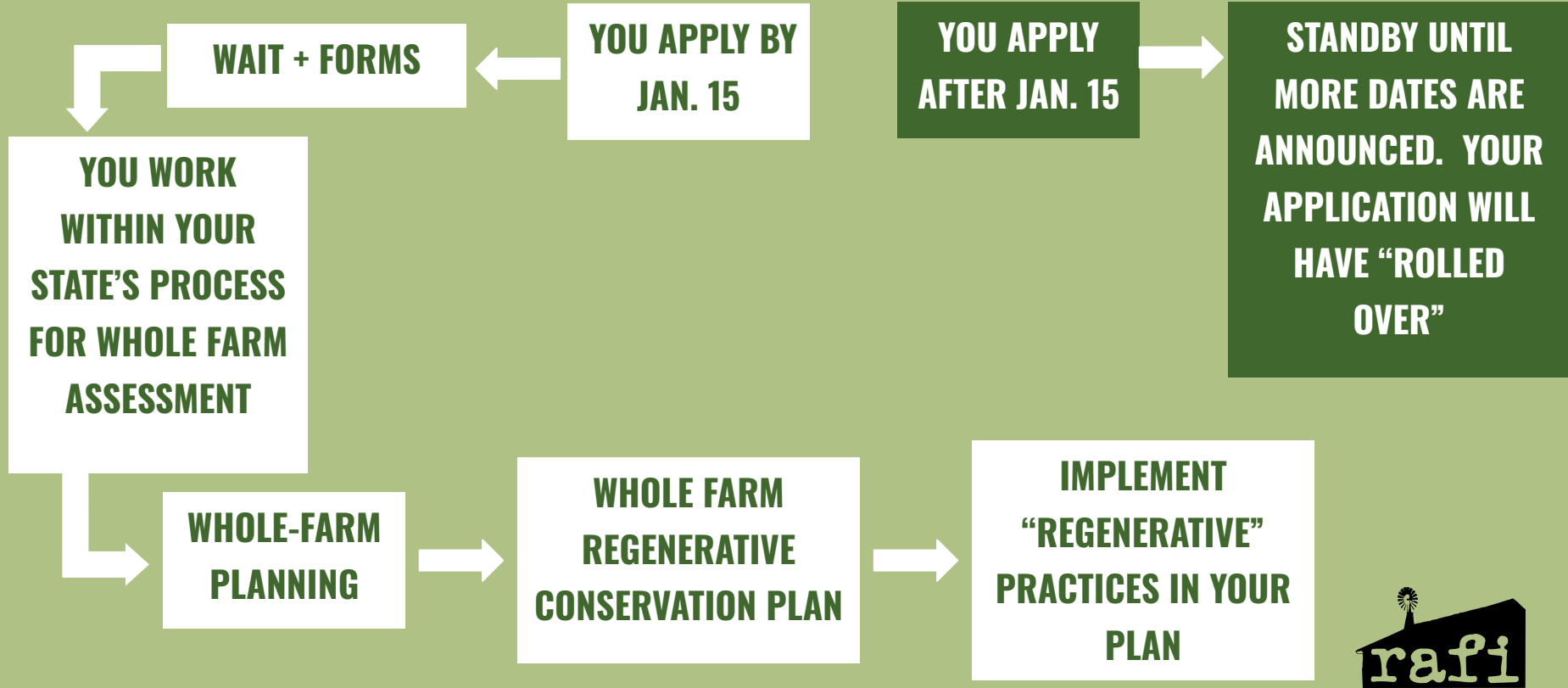


8. WAIT, BE PATIENT, DO YOUR OWN PLANNING

- Expect a quiet period, unless the NRCS staff need to clarify some questions farmer had or they need to confirm which practices farmer is deciding
- Begin looking for cost estimates to understand their total out-of-pocket costs
- Communicate with NRCS about any changes to their operation/needs
- *DO NOT start a conservation practice yet*



YOUR POTENTIAL OUTCOMES



Everything this Pilot Program offers for farmers has the potential to benefit nearly any farm, but the timing and conditions at NRCS surrounding it means staff are stressed and small to midsize farmers could be left out.



WILL YOU RULE REGENERATIVE IN OR OUT?





Q & A

We'll answer questions
from the Q&A and Zoom
chat now

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