

**This department includes cooperation between: The Robeson Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS).**

**Robeson Soil and Water Conservation District**

This is an agency of the State of North Carolina organized to exercise public powers conferred under provisions of the Soil and Water Conservation District Laws of 1937, as amended. A five member Board of Supervisors governs the Robeson Soil and Water Conservation District. The public elects three of the members, while the North Carolina Association of Soil and Water Conservation Commission appoints two. The term of office is four years. The District's purpose is to protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of its people by conserving the soil, water and related natural resources within the district.

**Departmental Mission Statement**

To provide technical and educational assistance to the citizens of Robeson County through a sound and balanced program to encourage individuals to conserve, improve and sustain our soil and water for future generations to come.

**Robeson Soil and Water Conservation District Board Members**

- Walter K. Mc Girt -Chairman
- David Hedgpeth, Vice- Chairman
- Lycurous Lowry, Secretary/Treasurer
- Joy Locklear, Member
- Joseph Howell, Member

**Available State and Federal Programs**

**North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program (NCACSP)**

This is a state-funded program that reimburses farmers for the cost of installing conservation practices that improves water quality on their land. Landowners may be reimbursed up to 75% of a set cost for installation of conservation practices. The program also provides incentive payments for a limited number of practices, which are to encourage the adoption of the practice. All of the program practices are considered to be Best Management Practices (BMP's) for controlling erosion, animal waste and protecting water quality. Landowners must have an approved contract and Conservation Plan on the enrolled acres in order to be reimbursed for Best Management Practices (BMP's).

For more information about the NCACSP visit:  
<http://www.ncagr.gov/SWC/costshareprograms/ACSP/index.html>



**Soil and Water Conservation District Education Programs**

The Soil and Water Department provides many educational programs and activities to the public and private schools of Robeson County. Those activities include poster, essay and public speaking contests, the Envirothon Program, soil land judging contests, earth day presentations, soil presentations, and teacher workshops. The staff also sponsors "Environmental Field Days", and "Love a Tree" field days, The Robeson Soil and Water Conservation District sponsors high school students who are chosen to attend the Resource Conservation Workshop in June of each year. The workshop is held on the campus of North Carolina State University.



## USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs

### Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the US Department of Agriculture's principal agency for providing conservation technical assistance to private landowners, conservation districts, tribes, and other organizations. USDA-NRCS delivers conservation technical assistance through its voluntary Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA). CTA is available to any group or individual interested in conserving our natural resources and sustaining agricultural production in this country. This assistance may be in the form of resource assessment, practice design, resource monitoring, or follow-up of installed practices.

Although the CTA program does not include financial assistance, clients may develop conservation plans, which may serve as a springboard for those interested in participating in USDA financial assistance programs. CTA planning can also serve as a door to financial assistance and easement conservation programs provided by other Federal, State, and local programs.

For more information about CTA visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/>

### Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land or Non-Industrial Private Forestland (NIPF).

EQIP offers contracts that provide financial assistance to implement conservation practices on working private lands. Persons who are engaged in livestock, agricultural, or forestland production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program. EQIP provides a flat rate reimbursement rate, ranging from 50%-90%, for the costs associated with certain conservation practices. Financial assistance may also be provided for a short period of time, to encourage producers to carry out management practices they may not otherwise use without the financial assistance. However, historically underserved groups are eligible for cost-share up to 90 percent. Historically Underserved individuals and groups are those who have not participated in or received limited benefits from USDA or NRCS programs. The 2014 Farm Bill offers special payment rates for program participation for landowners/operators who are socially disadvantaged, have limited resources, are veterans, and are beginning farmers/ranchers. These incentives may include increased payment rates and evaluation in special funding pools.

For more information about EQIP visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>





### **EQIP-National Organic Initiative**

The National Organic Initiative is a voluntary conservation initiative that enables the use of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural lands already certified as organic or transitioning to organic. To participate producers must be certified as an organic grower with a Organic System Plan on at least part of their acres, or be in the process of transitioning to an organic system.

For more information about the National Organic Initiative visit:  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ma/home/?cid=nracs144p2\\_013958](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ma/home/?cid=nracs144p2_013958)



### **EQIP Longleaf Pine Initiative (EQIP-LLP)**



The Longleaf Pine Initiative began when an interdepartmental Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among USDA, the Department of Interior and the Department of Defense identified the longleaf pine ecosystem as a priority resource concern.

As part of the initiative, NRCS and its conservation partners in nine states are helping private landowners improve the sustainability and profitability of Longleaf pine forest ecosystems. The following are some essential conservation practices that USDA-NRCS currently supports to improve forests health: forest stand improvement, prescribed burning, restoration and management of rare or declining habitats, and tree/shrub establishment. Approved participants will receive financial assistance for implementing conservation practices including site preparation, planting longleaf pine, installing firebreaks, conducting prescribed burning, and controlling invasive plants.

For more information about EQIP's Longleaf Pine Initiative visit:  
[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/nc/programs/?cid=nracs142p2\\_046681](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/nc/programs/?cid=nracs142p2_046681)



### **EQIP-Conservation Activity Plans (CAPS)**

A Conservation Activity Plan or CAP can be developed for producers to identify conservation practices needed to address a specific natural resource need. Typically, these plans are specific to certain kinds of land use such as transitioning to organic operations, grazing land, forest land, or can also address a specific resource need such a plan for management of nutrients or to address an air quality concern. With a CAP plan, producers can then apply for financial assistance to implement the needed conservation practices. For more information about CAPS, visit

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/?cid=stelprdb1041991>

EQIP payments are made directly to program participants for development of a CAP. These CAP plans may only be developed by a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP). Technical Service Providers (TSPs) are individuals or businesses that have technical expertise in conservation planning and design for a variety of conservation activities. TSPs are hired by farmers, ranchers, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, or public agencies to provide these services on behalf of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Each certified TSP is listed on the NRCS TSP online registry, TechReg.

To find a Technical Service Provider (TSP), please access the TechReg TSP registry by visiting:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?cid=stelprdb1042981>



### **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing or adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land.

Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest lands, agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe, and other private agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the production of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed. The entire agricultural operation must be enrolled and must include all agricultural land that will be under the applicant's control for the term of the proposed contract that is operated substantially separate from other operations. The USDA-NRCS has made CSP available nationwide on a continuous application basis.

For more information about CSP visit:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/>

### **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner. The Conservation Reserve Program reduces soil erosion, protects the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduces sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as native grasses, trees (Longleaf), filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract (10-15 years). Financial assistance is also provided to establish the vegetative cover practices. CRP is administered by the USDA-Farm Service Agency, with USDA-NRCS providing technical land eligibility determinations, and conservation planning with the support of the NC Forest Service.



For more information about CRP visit: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>



### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)**

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water. CREP is an offshoot of the country's largest private-lands environmental improvement program - the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Like CRP, CREP is administered by the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). Through CREP, farmers can receive double annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract (10-15 years).

Individuals interested in a Conservation Easement through CREP may receive a sign up incentive of \$250 (30 year Easement) or \$1,000 (Permanent Easement). A conservation easement is a written agreement between a landowner and the state of North Carolina in which there is an acquired interest in the land to install conservation practices that protect natural resources. The conservation easement exists for 30 years or permanently, depending on the landowner's choice. With CREP, the landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land for activities such as crop farming and development, yet retains private ownership.



For more information about CREP visit: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=cep>

### **Inactive Animal Waste Lagoon Closure Program**

The Robeson SWCD and local USDA-NRCS have made it a priority to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners who are interested in closing Inactive Animal Waste Lagoons on their land. By partnering with the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation, Inc. whose purpose in this initiative is to work with local soil and water conservation districts to close inactive animal waste lagoons across the state (<http://www.ncsoilwater.org/programs/animal-waste-lagoon-closure/>), the Robeson SWCD can pursue grant funds to assist landowners in the closure of Inactive Animal Waste Lagoons.



### **Web Soil Survey (WSS)**

Web Soil Survey (WSS) provides soil data and information produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey. It is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides access to the largest natural resource information system in the world. NRCS has soil maps and data available online for more than 95 percent of the nation's counties and anticipates having 100 percent in the near future. The site is updated and maintained online as the single authoritative source of soil survey information. Soil surveys can be used for general farm, local, and wider area planning. Onsite investigation is needed in some cases, such as soil quality assessments and certain conservation and engineering applications.



To start Web Soil Survey (WSS) visit the following website: <http://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

**Office Hours:**

7:30 am -4:30 pm Monday through Friday  
Closed during Federal Holidays

**Contact Information and Office Staff:**

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