

The Farm Bill and Illinois



Five major Farm Bill conservation programs provided over \$243 million in 2019 in conservation assistance to Illinois farmers through cost-share, rental payments, easement payments, or technical assistance. The funds helped farmers be better stewards of the state's land, water, woods, soil and wildlife, providing conservation and economic benefits throughout the state.

Working Lands – in 2019, the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provided \$49 million in assistance to Illinois farmers, and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provided \$19 million in assistance in Illinois. 206 CSP contracts helped farmers address water natural resource problems through measures like putting in place nutrient management strategies, reducing the impact of pesticides on waterways, or planting cover crops, on nearly 122,000 acres. 420 EQIP contracts put conservation measures in place on another 44,322 acres of land in Illinois.

Wetland and Grassland Easements – in 2019 the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provided \$7.5 million that funded 18 conservation easements protecting 3,381 acres of land, almost all of it wetlands, in Illinois. Over the last five years, \$34 million in ACEP funds have provided protection for 59 properties totaling 7,873 acres in Illinois, most of it wetlands that were protected and restored.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program – some of the working lands and easement funds have been allocated through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which leverages state and other funds to target conservation practices in watersheds or other geographic areas. In Illinois, that includes RCPP projects addressing trout stream habitat in the Driftless Area, restoring pollinator plants for monarch butterflies, protecting water quality in several watersheds, improving woodland health, and helping farmers understand the economic impacts of conservation systems. The 2018 Farm Bill provided dedicated funding for RCPP, and future projects will have more flexibility to target practices to meet an area's conservation needs.

Conservation Reserve Program – over 42,000 Illinois farms have Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, covering over 842,000 acres of land. They provide over \$166 million in annual rental payments to farmers. Over 594,000 acres of Illinois CRP are high-value 'continuous signup' contracts, and Illinois ranks sixth nationally in CRP continuous signup contracts. Those special initiatives are targeted to regional and local solutions, including upland bird habitat buffers, pollinator habitat, restoring grass on very highly erodible soil, wetland restoration, and wetland buffers. **Nation-wide, about one-third of CRP acres are in special initiatives, and with 70% of CRP acres in special initiatives, Illinois is doing much more to target CRP acres where they will do the most good.**

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program -- About 65,000 acres are currently enrolled in CRP contracts through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, including filter strips, forested buffers along streams, restored wetlands, and wildlife habitat. The program leverages CRP contracts to take vulnerable cropland out of production, plant grasses or trees, and maintain the land for conservation purposes. In many cases the conservation is made permanent through an easement funded by the state. The program has been a great success, and the Illinois legislature restored \$37.5 million in funding for the state's share in June, 2018, **but enrollment in the program has not yet been restored and is awaiting completion of a new CREP agreement between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the USDA Farm Service Agency.**

Izaak Walton League and Illinois

The Izaak Walton League of America was founded in 1922 to conserve outdoor America for future generations. The League's 54 founders, all avid anglers, named the organization after Izaak Walton, 17th century author of *The Compleat Angler*, a classic book about the art and spirit of fishing. We are one of America's oldest conservation organizations, defending wild America by changing public policy.

The Izaak Walton League has 12 local Chapters throughout Illinois, and over 1,000 active member families in Illinois. Our organization has been involved in agricultural policy since 1937, when a League resolution called for a national program to retire fragile fields in mountainous areas from agricultural use.