

The Farm Bill and New York



The federal Farm Bill provided over \$31 million in 2017 to help New York farmers through cost-share assistance, rental payments, easement payments, or technical assistance. That funding helped farmers be better stewards of New York's land, water, soils, and woodlands, and it provided conservation and economic benefits throughout the Empire State.

Working Lands – in 2017, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program committed \$17 million for farmers in New York, and the Conservation Stewardship Program provided \$7 million. The funds help farmers and private woodlot owners put in place nutrient management strategies, adopt conservation practices like cover crops and conservation crop rotations, put in place rotational grazing for livestock, and better manage wood lots. The 2017 funds touched over 120,000 acres of farmland in New York.

Farmland Easements – Thousands of acres of critically important New York wetlands and other farm lands are now protected thanks to USDA conservation easement programs now included in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. Because of budget cuts for easements included in the 2014 Farm Bill, the number of wetland easements protected nationwide has dropped dramatically. In the past four years, nearly \$15 million in Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funds helped New York farmers enroll 3,817 acres in conservation easements to protect farmland from development.

Forestry – Forests cover about 19 million acres of New York, about 63% of the state. Three-quarters of New York's forest land is privately owned. The Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and Healthy Forests Reserve Program can be used to for conservation or protection of nonindustrial private forest lands.

Conservation Reserve Program – over 1,500 New York farms have Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, covering over 34,000 acres of land and providing almost \$3 million in annual rental payments to farmers. Over 53% of CRP acres in New York are high-value ('continuous signup') contracts, including over 14,000 acres of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) acres that protect water quality by providing filter strips, buffer strips along streams, and wildlife plantings. The goal of the New York CREP is to enroll 40,000 acres, and the state provides 20% of the cost through tax credits, technical assistance and administration. Nation-wide, about one-third of CRP acres are in special initiatives, so New York is doing more to target CRP acres where they will do the most good.

Crop Insurance – federally subsidized crop insurance provides many benefits to farmers, but current premiums don't recognize that farmers who build the health of their soil through conservation practices also reduce their risk of a crop loss. These low risk farmers deserve a 'good driver discount' that would recognize their reduced risk to the crop insurance system and encourage conservation practices.

The Izaak Walton League of America

The Izaak Walton League of America was founded in 1922 to conserve outdoor America for future generations. The League has 230 local chapters around the country, and over 44,000 member households. The League's 54 founders, who were 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 the earliest of America's conservation organizations, setting a course to defend wild America by changing public policy.