

The Farm Bill and West Virginia



The federal Farm Bill provides over \$25 million annually in conservation dollars through cost-share assistance, rental payments, easement payments, and technical assistance provided in West Virginia. That funding helps farmers, ranchers, and woodlot owners be better stewards of the state's land, water, soils, woods and wildlife, and it provides conservation and economic benefits throughout West Virginia.

Working Lands – In 2018, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program provided nearly \$18 million for contracts that included over 33,000 acres of farm and ranch land in West Virginia. EQIP funds help farmers and ranchers adopt conservation practices like planting cover crops and conservation crop rotations, put in place rotational grazing systems for livestock, and plant pollinator habitat. In 2018 the Conservation Stewardship Program committed \$4 million for West Virginia farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forest owners, covering over 19,000 acres of land. CSP contracts helped install wildlife-friendly fencing, improve forestry practices, improve grazing systems, and put in place other conservation practices.



Jeff Vanura, NRCS

Farm Bill conservation programs help farmers improve their grazing systems.

Wetland and Grassland Easements – in 2018 the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program provided \$2.5 million that helped fund conservation easements on 885 acres of land in West Virginia. From 2014 to 2017, \$10.6 million provided funding for conservation easements on nearly 3,400 acres in West Virginia, including easements that protect prime agricultural land from urban development.

Conservation Reserve Program – Over 400 West Virginia farms have Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts, covering 7,701 acres of land. 71% of those acres are Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program contracts, where landowners agreed to take cropland out of production and plant buffer strips or filter strips or conserve wetlands through a state-federal partnership. 28% are CRP Grassland contracts that protect and conserve existing grasslands vulnerable to conversion.



USDA ARS

Conservation programs provide incentives for farmers to plant winter cover crops.

Focused Conservation – the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has helped target USDA conservation dollars where they will do the most good and will leverage state and private funds. West Virginia RCPP projects include a regional project designed to help private landowners improve forestry management to benefit Cerulean Warblers and other wildlife in the Appalachian Mountains, and a project to help farmers improve water quality and provide fish and wildlife habitat in the Chesapeake headwaters.

Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education — the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program funds on-farm research, driven by farmers, to identify, test, and provide educational outreach on farming and ranching methods that reduce the use of off-farm inputs, improve productivity, and address conservation issues. Recent projects in West Virginia have taught skills needed for value-added agriculture projects, tested techniques for battling stink bugs, and taught agriculture service providers and farm leaders about better risk management methods.

Farming Opportunities Training & Outreach — The 2018 Farm Bill combined the Beginning Farmers & Ranchers Development Program and the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers program (Section 2501) into a Farming Opportunities Training & Outreach program. Past grants have funded a new agribusiness initiative designed to address chronic poverty and job security issues

by training minority and veteran farmers to become successful, sustainable producers, and an effort to develop urban agriculture in Charleston, Huntington, Parkersburg and Bluefield.

Local Agriculture Market Program — the 2018 Farm Bill combined several USDA programs that support farmers markets, local and regional food systems, and value-added initiatives by farmers into the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). Past grants have helped train new farmers market managers, expanded the Southern West Virginia Regional Food Hub, and helped local farms expand the supply and selection of produce available in the state.

Other Conservation Programs

Chesapeake Bay Program — The Chesapeake Bay Program is a unique regional partnership of federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit organizations, academics and others leading the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay since 1983. The Program has set milestones, developed science-based plans, supported on-the-land solutions, and tracked and reported progress in the effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

Land & Water Conservation Fund — The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established in 1964 to direct a portion of federal oil and gas lease revenue into conservation projects across the nation. LWCF projects acquire, build, and maintain public parks, ballfields, and swimming pools; improve access to public land through the purchase of inholdings and easements; and support hunting and fishing access on public lands. In West Virginia, over 500 projects have benefited from LWCF funding, from national wildlife refuges and national forests to campgrounds and recreation facilities at West Virginia's state parks.



Brett Billings, US FWS

Izaak Walton League and West Virginia

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 the earliest of America's conservation organizations, setting a course to defend wild America by changing public policy.

The Izaak Walton League has 6 local Chapters in West Virginia, and nearly 2,000 active member families in the state. 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.