

Assessing Farm Bill Conservation Programs in the **Delaware River Watershed:**

Delaware, New Jersey, New York
and Pennsylvania



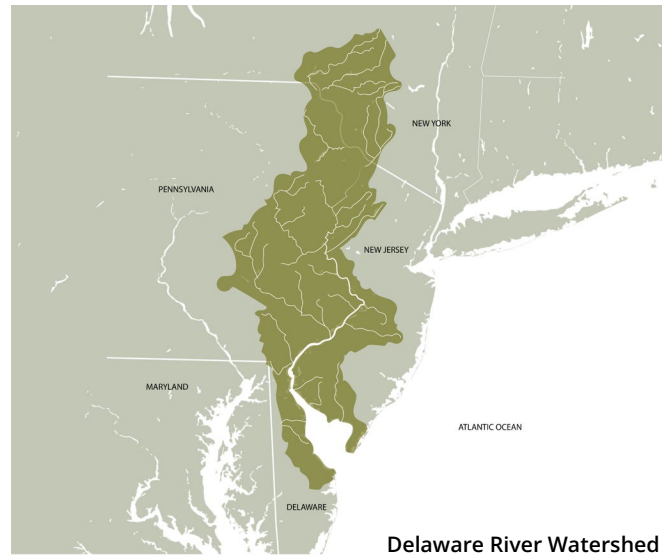
**NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE
AGRICULTURE COALITION**

May 1, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Delaware River Watershed (DRW) covers portions of the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The watershed covers approximately 13,500 square miles and provides drinking water to more than 13 million people. The Audubon Society further estimates it provides critical habitat for 400 bird species. In this report we examine the footprint of Farm Bill conservation programs in the DRW over the life of the 2018 Farm Bill, covering fiscal years (FY) 2019 through 2023.

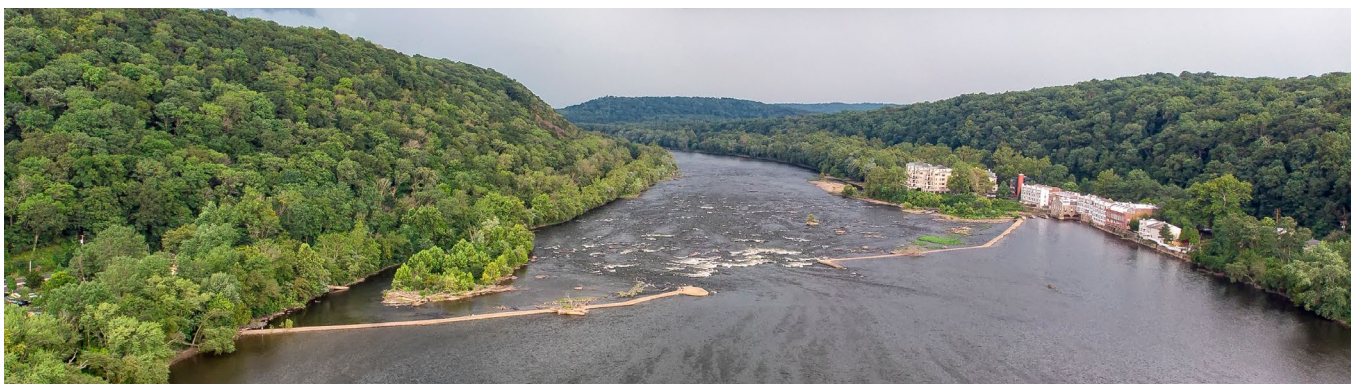
We first provide a brief overview of each of the major farm bill conservation programs and conclude with a detailed analysis of conservation program utilization in the DRW.



FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS 101

The farm bill's conservation programs provide farmers, ranchers, and landowners across the country with a wide range of tools and incentives to conserve and enhance our shared natural resources. These voluntary programs offer both financial and technical assistance that supports participants to adopt practices that can improve water quality, build soil health, enhance wildlife habitat, and increase the resilience of their own operations. Although most farmers understand and value the potential benefits of conservation activities, many do not have the technical skills or financial resources to undertake them. Voluntary federal conservation programs can help bridge that gap.

Federal conservation programs can be organized into several categories – working lands conservation, land protection, and partnership programs. Working lands conservation programs include programs through which participants keep their land in agricultural production while simultaneously adopting and managing conservation activities on their land. Land protection programs often take land out of active production - though not entirely in some cases - through the use of long-term contracts and easements to protect agricultural land, wetlands, grasslands, and highly erodible land. Partnership programs bring farmers together with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and an outside partner so that together they can address targeted resource concerns in a particular region.



FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS 101

NRCS administers most farm bill conservation programs with the exception of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which is administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). However, NRCS assists FSA's administration of CRP by overseeing land eligibility determinations, conservation planning, and implementation on the ground. Key USDA conservation programs and their intended conservation impacts include:

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) – CSP is the nation's largest working lands conservation program with more than 71 million acres currently enrolled nationwide. This program provides financial and technical assistance to help participants comprehensively enhance natural resources across their entire operation. CSP offers farmers the opportunity to earn payments for actively managing, maintaining, and expanding conservation activities like cover crops, rotational grazing, buffer strips, and more.

CSP is unique in that eligibility is based on an applicant's level of stewardship at the time of application, as well as their commitment to address additional resource concerns over the course of a five-year contract. Participants in this program are eligible to renew their contracts for an additional five years, provided they have met the terms of the original contract and agree to maintain and expand their current conservation efforts. After the 2018 Farm Bill, qualified renewals are no longer automatically accepted. Rather, renewal applications go through a competitive process similar to first time applicants.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – EQIP provides cost share assistance for farmers and ranchers to help them implement conservation practices on their working agricultural lands. EQIP reimburses participants for a percentage of the costs of installing conservation practices, including costs associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, training, and income foregone.

Participants can use EQIP to install management, vegetative, and structural practices – like improving irrigation efficiency, restoring pasture, or nutrient and pest management – on eligible agricultural land and nonindustrial private forestland. EQIP may reimburse up to 75% of the costs of conservation practices. Socially disadvantaged, limited resource, beginning, and veteran farmers and ranchers are eligible for cost share rates of up to 90% of project costs and may be eligible for up to 50% advance payment for eligible expenses. Additionally, EQIP includes an Organic Initiative that specifically targets conservation support to certified and transitioning organic producers.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – ACEP is a conservation easement program that was created in the 2014 Farm Bill by combining three previously separate easement programs – the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). ACEP is divided into two tracks: a wetland easement component, which largely mirrors the former WRP, and an agricultural land easement component, which largely retains the purposes and functions of the former GRP and FRPP.

The purpose of the wetland easement component is to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands that have been in production.

The Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) component of ACEP protects farms from non-agricultural development to ensure farm viability for future generations and to conserve grazing land, including rangeland, pasture, and shrubland. The 2018 Farm Bill removed and weakened many of the conservation planning requirements within ACEP, though farmers must still have a conservation plan in place for Highly Erodible (HEL) cropland covered by an ACEP easement.

FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS 101

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – The primary purpose of CRP is to preserve and improve the quality of soil, water, and wildlife habitat by establishing long-term cover (primarily grasses and trees) on highly erodible land or land in need of conservation buffers that has previously been in row crop production. In exchange for cost-share and rental payments, farmers remove environmentally sensitive land from production and plant resource-conserving ground cover.

The 2018 Farm Bill established a new, higher acreage cap for CRP of 27 million acres nationally by 2023. Historically, most of this acreage cap has been met through periodic ‘General Sign-Ups’ where land is bid into CRP on a competitive basis and ranked using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). In recent years, in part due to NSAC’s advocacy, more and more acres are enrolled through alternatives to the General Sign-Up. The Continuous CRP (CCRP) enrollment option provides significant conservation benefits. CCRP pays farmers to install partial field conservation practices, including conservation buffers to protect water quality as well as wildlife habitat. CCRP eligible practices include riparian buffers, wildlife habitat buffers, wetland buffers, filter strips, wetland restoration, grass waterways, shelterbelts, windbreaks, living snow fences, contour grass strips, salt tolerant vegetation, and shallow water areas for wildlife.

FSA is required by law to enroll 8.6 million acres in CCRP as part of its effort to meet the total CRP acreage cap. Within CCRP, the 2018 Farm Bill established the CLEAR Initiative which includes targeted practices to help protect water quality by reducing sediment loadings, nutrient loadings, and harmful algal blooms. USDA is required to devote at least 40 percent of all CCRP acres to CLEAR. Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill established CLEAR30, a pilot program allowing farmers and landowners with expiring CCRP contracts to re-enroll buffers with a new 30-year contract. The Trump Administration implemented the CLEAR30 pilot program in the Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. The Biden Administration has expanded the program nationwide.

Finally, USDA may also enter into a Conservation Reserve Enhancement (CREP) agreement with a state. Under a CREP agreement, the state and USDA together pay farmers to address targeted conservation issues identified by local, state, or tribal governments or non-governmental organizations.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Through RCPP, NRCS and its partners help producers install and maintain conservation activities that address priority natural resource concerns in a state or region. The 2014 Farm Bill created RCPP by consolidating four previously separate programs that had been focused on a specific region or water quality protection. The 2018 Farm Bill made RCPP a standalone program with dedicated funding and added CRP and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention program to the list of programs available through RCPP.

RCPP differs from other programs in that farmers and ranchers do not apply directly for funding, but rather partner entities (e.g., non-profit groups, conservation districts, farmer cooperatives, or other state or local agencies) are awarded RCPP projects covering a specific geography identified in their applications. Then, eligible farmers and ranchers in that area wishing to participate in the RCPP project can apply through NRCS or through the lead partner entity, depending on the type and design of the RCPP award. RCPP projects may focus on a specific resource issue of heightened concern in a given watershed or region or a given set of farmers within a state or area interested in pursuing innovative conservation objectives.

These farm bill conservation programs provide critical support to our nation’s farmers and ranchers, and are a key resource in catalyzing the preservation and enhancement of natural resources.

OVERVIEW: PROGRAM UTILIZATION IN THE DELAWARE RIVER

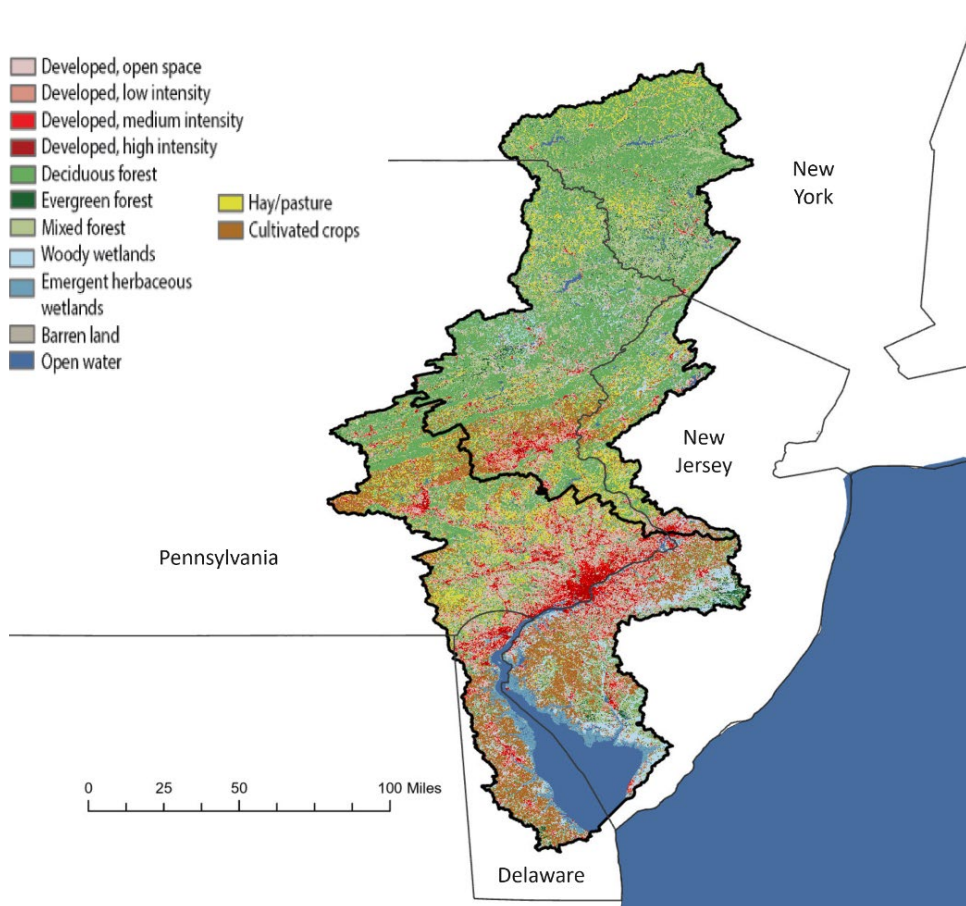
Unlike in our **previous report on the DRW**, NRCS now makes some program data available at the watershed level, allowing us to analyze the participation and practices of farms that lie specifically within the Delaware River Watershed (DRW). The watershed is defined using the Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC), the specific area that drains into the watershed.

When possible, we present data for both the counties within the DRW and for the watershed itself. It is important to note that the totals for the county and the watershed will not be equal because for many counties a very small portion of the county actually falls within the watershed. For example,

Chenango County in New York and Lancaster County in Pennsylvania both have only 0.3% of the county that lies within the watershed and many counties have less than 20% of their county that falls within the watershed.

The DRW is divided into an Upper Delaware River Watershed that spans portions of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and the Lower Delaware River Watershed that spans portions of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The map below shows the Upper and Lower portions of the DRW and the land cover in each watershed. The Lower DRW has a higher proportion of cultivated crops (shown in brown) than the Upper DRW.

Figure 1: Lower DRW (HUC 020402) and Upper DRW (HUC 020401)¹



¹ Land use data from the National Land Cover Database

OVERVIEW: PROGRAM UTILIZATION IN THE DELAWARE RIVER

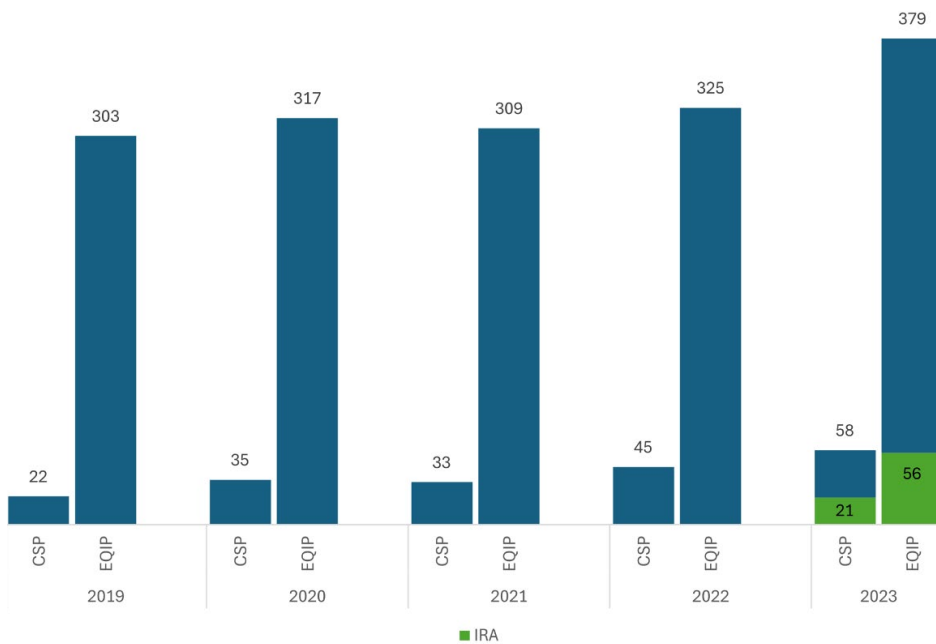
Also new in this analysis is the inclusion of additional funding provided to conservation programs through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA).² For FYs 2023-2026, the IRA provided \$3.25 billion in additional funding for CSP, \$8.45 billion for EQIP, \$4.95 billion for RCPP, and \$1.4 billion for ACEP. This funding must be used for climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices, and increases each year from FY2023 through 2026. For FY2023, CSP, EQIP, and RCPP each received an additional \$250 million for climate-smart practices, and ACEP received an additional \$100 million for climate-smart practices.³

The figures below show the number of new contracts, treated acres, and dollars obligated across the DRW from FYs 2019-2023, inclusive of the increased funding for conservation programs provided by the IRA in 2023.

New contracts were enrolled in the DRW in both CSP and EQIP in all five fiscal years, although in each year there is a much higher number of new EQIP contracts than CSP contracts. This mirrors the national trend of more contracts awarded through EQIP, which has significantly more funding available each year than CSP. However, the DRW is unique in how many more EQIP contracts are awarded than CSP. Between FY2019 and FY2023, 1,633 new EQIP contracts were awarded and only 193 new CSP contracts were awarded. Nationally in FY2023, EQIP awarded about 34,000 contracts to CSP's roughly 11,000. This indicates a potential need for stronger promotion of CSP inside the DRW, as the program is underutilized compared to the rest of the nation.

In FY2023, 36% of the new CSP contracts in the DRW were funded by the IRA and 15% of the new EQIP contracts in the DRW were funded by the IRA. Looking at contract totals in CSP and EQIP from 2022 and 2023, contracts awarded above and beyond 2022 levels can be attributed to IRA funding.

Figure 2: New CSP & EQIP Contracts in the DRW (HUC 0204), Fiscal Years 2019-2023



* This data includes all contracts that fall within the DRW Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 0204.

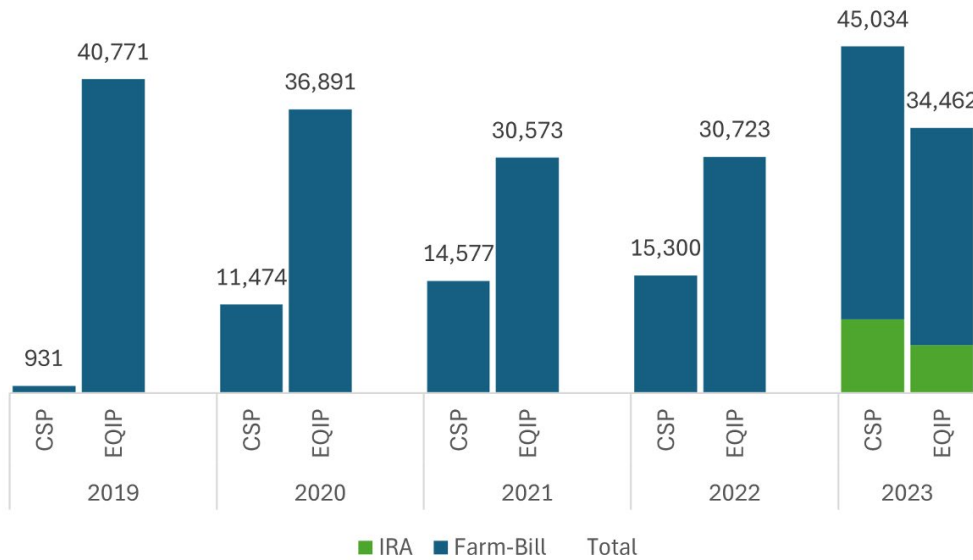
² Inflation Reduction Act, Pub. L. No. 117-169, §§ 21001, 21002 (2022).

³ For more on the IRA, see NSAC's blog: [Inflation Reduction Act of 2022: A Deep Dive on an Historic Investment in Climate and Conservation Agriculture; Inflation Reduction Act Conservation Dollars Are a Vital Bulwark Against Climate Change](#)

OVERVIEW: PROGRAM UTILIZATION IN THE DELAWARE RIVER

New acres were enrolled in the DRW in both CSP and EQIP in all five fiscal years, with new EQIP acreage much higher than new CSP acreage for each fiscal year except FY2023. Again, this is to be expected given the more focused and short-term approach of EQIP. New CSP acreage enrolled increased each fiscal year, with more than three times the new acreage enrolled in FY2023 compared to any other year. In FY2023, 21% of new CSP acreage was part of the IRA expansion. The remainder of the jump in 2023 is likely attributable to a handful of large farms either enrolling for the first time or adding significant acreage to a renewed contract. In 2023, 18% of the new EQIP acreage was part of the IRA expansion.

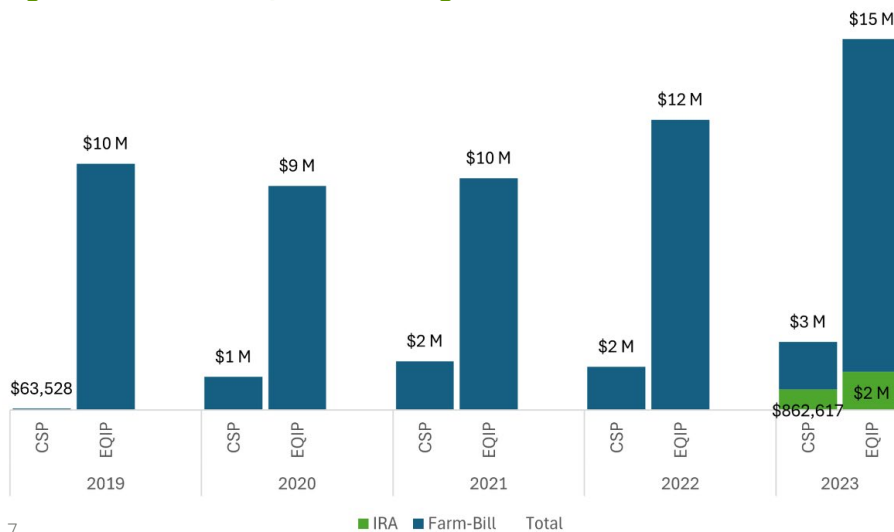
Figure 3: New CSP & EQIP Enrolled Acres in the DRW (HUC 0204). Fiscal Years 2019-2023



* This data includes all contracts that fall within the DRW Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 0204.

New dollars were obligated in the DRW to both CSP and EQIP in all five years, with new EQIP dollars obligated much higher for each fiscal year. Again, this is to be expected given EQIP has significantly more funding available each year than CSP and DRW farmers are underutilizing CSP compared to the rest of the nation.. New CSP dollars obligated increased each fiscal year, with FY2023 adding more than a million dollars obligated over any other year. In FY2023, 31% of new CSP dollars obligated were provided by the IRA. In 2023, 10% of new EQIP dollars obligated were provided by the IRA.

Figure 4: New CSP & EQIP Dollars Obligated in the DRW, Fiscal Years 2019-2023



* This data includes all contracts that fall within the DRW Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 0204.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) continues to be the largest conservation program in the country. At the end of 2023, approximately 71 million acres were enrolled across the nation and more than 1.2 million acres were enrolled in the states of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Table 1: CSP Cumulative and New Enrollment in DRW States, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

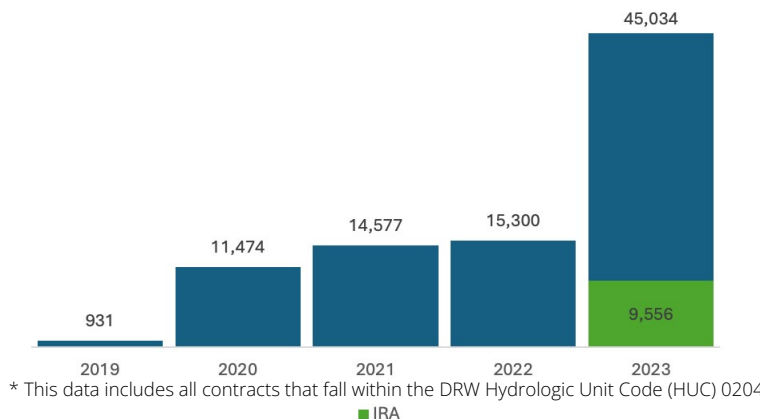
	Cumulative Acres 2023	New Contracts	New Acres	New Dollars Obligated	IRA Acres	IRA Doll. Obligated
Delaware	57,710.7	22	20,981	\$2. M	Suppressed*	Suppressed*
New Jersey	20,136.1	83	16,569	\$1.9 M	55	\$78,672
New York	465,370.7	579	293,240	\$21.3 M	4,899	\$384,919
Pennsylvania	464,390.9	1,062	335,826	\$39.1 M	20,937	\$2,558,790
Total	1,205,639.8	1,746	666,616	\$64.3 M	25,891	\$3,022,381

*NRCs suppressed data for any domain that had four or fewer contracts in that year.

Enrollment in CSP changes each year as new participants enroll and current participants either renew their contracts or let their contracts expire. CSP contracts are for five-year fixed terms. Cumulative acres enrolled exceeds the total new acres enrolled because cumulative acres sum all acres covered by contracts signed or renewed in the previous five years.

Within the DRW (HUC 0204), 87,316 acres were newly enrolled in the CSP between FY2019 and 2023. This represents approximately 13% of the total CSP acres enrolled for Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania during this farm bill. In the previous Farm Bill period, roughly 10% of CSP acres in the states fell within the watershed. This means that during the most recent Farm Bill a larger portion of the CSP acres enrolled in these states were located in the DRW, showing the growing relevance of the CSP as a tool for addressing water quality concerns in the watershed. During the five-year period, approximately \$8.06 million was obligated to the DRW (HUC 0204), or approximately 13% of the new CSP dollars obligated to Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. In the previous Farm Bill period, approximately 13% of CSP dollars obligated to Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania were obligated to the watershed. This means that a substantial portion of CSP dollars in DRW states were obligated within the watershed itself, again showing the relevance of the CSP as a tool to address water quality concerns within the DRW.

Figure 5: New CSP Acres in the DRW (HUC 0204), Fiscal Years 2019-2023



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

9,556 newly enrolled CSP acres in the DRW were part of the IRA expansion in 2023 and \$862,617 new CSP dollars obligated to the DRW were part of the IRA.

Because of NRCS data suppression policies, we are only able to provide estimates of CSP enrollment for the Lower and Upper DRW. The NRCS suppressed data for any geography and year that had four or fewer contracts.

For the Lower DRW, the number of new CSP contracts, acres, and dollars obligated in 2020 is suppressed due to having four or fewer new contracts in that year. For the Upper DRW, the number of new CSP contracts, acres, and dollars obligated in both 2021 and 2022 is suppressed due to having four or fewer new contracts in those years. For those years in which the data was suppressed, we imputed missing data by assuming four new contracts and assigning each new contract the average number of acres per contract and dollars obligated per contract for the years in which data was not suppressed. The table below presents the estimated new CSP contracts, acres, and dollars obligated for the Lower and Upper DRW. The totals for the Lower and Upper DRW are underestimated because of the data suppression, but provide an estimate for the distribution of CSP contracts, acreage, and funding between the Lower and Upper watersheds. IRA acreage and dollars obligated could not be estimated for the sub-watersheds since there are no previous years for comparison.

Slightly more new CSP contracts were enrolled in the Lower DRW (HUC 020402) than the Upper DRW (020401) between 2019 and 2023. The Lower DRW also had slightly more new dollars obligated during the five-year period and more contracts that were part of the IRA expansion. The Upper DRW enrolled more acres, however, indicating that average contract acreage size in the Upper DRW is slightly larger than that of the Lower DRW during the five-year period.

Table 2: Estimated New CSP Enrollment in the Lower and Upper DRW (HUC 6), Fiscal Years 2019-2023

	New Contracts	New Acres	New Dollars Obligated	IRA Contracts	IRA Acres	IRA Dollars Obligated
Lower DRW (HUC 020402)	> 66	> 26,301	> \$2.94 M	10	4,731	\$275,888
Upper DRW (HUC 020401)	> 58	> 38,263	> \$2.38 M	≤ 4	Suppressed	Suppressed

*NRCS suppressed data for any domain that had four or fewer contracts in that year

COUNTY-LEVEL DATA

At the county level, 36 counties within the DRW enrolled new CSP acres between FY2019-2023. Just under half of those counties, 17, were newly added since our most recent report looking at FY2019-2020 data, showing that CSP's reach inside the DRW has grown substantially. Fifteen counties within the DRW enrolled CSP contracts as part of the new IRA expansion in FY2023.

Again, it is important to note that totals at the county level and at the watershed level will be different because for some counties only a small portion of that county falls within the watershed. For example, Schuylkill County in Pennsylvania saw over \$1.35 million new CSP dollars obligated between FY2019-2023, but only 48% of the county lies within the watershed so not all of those contracts would be included in the watershed level data.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Pennsylvania counties had the highest new CSP dollars obligated in DRW counties, totaling more than \$3.27 million between FY2019-2023, meaning that at least 10% of the total CSP dollars obligated to Pennsylvania went to DRW counties. In New Jersey, more than \$1.06 million new CSP dollars were obligated to DRW counties, meaning that at least 56% of the total CSP dollars obligated to New Jersey went to DRW counties.

If a county had four or fewer new contracts during a fiscal year, data for that county and year was suppressed by the NRCS, although we could tell that a county had at least one contract during that fiscal year. If data was suppressed, we present the minimum amount of dollars obligated and acres that were not suppressed by the NRCS and include the information from our previous report before NRCS instituted their new data suppression policies.

Table 3: New CSP Enrollments in DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

	Upper or Lower	Dollars Obligated	Contracts	Acres	IRA	New
Delaware		> \$580,552	3 - 12	> 6,276	1 county	1 county
Kent	Lower	> \$18,863	≤ 4	> 107	Yes	
New Castle	Lower	~ \$186,000 - \$745,000	2-8	~ 1,900 - 7,600		Yes
Sussex	Lower	> \$561,689	≤ 4	> 6,1689		
New Jersey		> \$1.06 M	40 - 68	> 10,119	4 counties	7 counties
Atlantic	Lower	~ \$23,000 - \$91,000	≤4	~ 200 - 799		Yes
Burlington	Lower	\$163,944	6	915		
Cumberland	Lower	~ \$23,000 - \$91,000	≤4	~ 200 - 799		Yes
Gloucester	Lower	~ \$68,000 - \$274,000	3-12	~ 599 - 2,400	Yes	Yes
Hunterdon	Upper	\$778,513	25	8,153	Yes	
Mercer	Upper	> \$7,500	≤ 4	> 13		
Monmouth	Lower	~ \$23,000 - \$91,000	≤4	~ 200 - 799	Yes	Yes
Morris	Upper	~ \$23,000 - \$91,000	≤4	~ 200 - 799		Yes
Salem	Lower	\$108,848	5	672		
Sussex	Upper	~ \$46,000 - \$182,000	2-8	~ 400 - 1,600		Yes
Warren	Upper	~ \$114,000 - \$457,000	5-20	~ 999 - 4,000	Yes	Yes
New York		> \$895,448	33 - 53	> 6,738	2 counties	3 counties
Broome	Upper	> \$71,627	≤ 4	> 508		
Chenango	Upper	> \$59,949	≤ 4	> 243	Yes	
Delaware	Upper	\$691,528	20	5,545		
Greene	Upper	\$59,036	8	322		Yes
Orange	Upper	~ \$ 74,000 - \$294,000	2-8	~ 1,000 - 4,100		Yes
Schoharie	Upper	> \$13,308	≤ 4	> 120	Yes	
Ulster	Upper	~ \$147,000 - \$589,000	4-16	~ 2,000 - 8,000		Yes
Pennsylvania		> \$3.27 M	64 - 108	> 28,810	8 counties	6 counties
Berks	Lower	\$534,522	14	3,989	Yes	
Bucks	Lower	> \$30,813	≤ 4	> 209	Yes	
Chester	Lower	\$453,161	5	3,092		Yes
Lackawanna	Upper	> \$123,116	≤ 4	> 867		
Lancaster	Lower	~ \$110,000 - \$442,000	3-12	~ 949 - 3,800	Yes	Yes
Lebanon	Lower	> \$264,553	≤ 4	> 1,318	Yes	
Lehigh	Upper	~ \$184,000 - \$736,000	5-20	~ 1,600 - 6,300	Yes	Yes
Luzerne	Upper	> \$33,232	≤ 4	> 335		
Monroe	Upper	> \$8,561	≤ 4	> 3,618		
Montgomery	Lower	~ \$110,000 - \$442,000	3-12	~ 949 - 3,800	Yes	Yes
Northampton	Upper	\$335,044	4	3,465	Yes	
Pike	Upper	~ \$37,000 - \$147,000	≤4	~ 316 - 1,300		Yes
Schuylkill	Lower	\$1,358,058	30	11,099	Yes	
Sullivan	Upper	~ \$110,000 - \$442,000	3-12	~ 949 - 3,800		Yes
Wayne	Upper	> \$128,964	≤ 4	> 818		
Grand Total		> 5.81 M	140 - 241	> 51,943	15 counties	17 counties

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

CSP PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS

More than twenty-three specific practices were used in CSP contracts in the DRW (HUC 0204) from FY2019-2023. Of those, 15 (65%) were classified as addressing water quality concerns. This illustrates CSP’s important ability to focus on water quality concerns and its relevance as a tool to address them within the DRW.

Table 4: CSP Practices Utilized in DRW (HUC 0204), Fiscal Years 2019-2023

Water Quality Resource Concern	Dollars Obligated
Grassland Conservation Initiative (E300GCI)	\$82,296
Cover Crop (340)	~ \$5,600 - \$17,000
Pest Management Conservation System (595)	~ \$5,700 - \$17,000
Prescribed Grazing (528)	~ \$11,000 - \$15,000
Pasture and Hay Planting (512)	~ \$3,900 - \$12,000
Nutrient Management (590)	~ \$3,000 - \$8,900
Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)	~ \$2,800 - \$8,400
Forest Stand Improvement (666)	~ \$2,700 - \$8,000
Conservation Cover (327)	~ \$2,600 - \$7,700
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	~ \$1,300 - \$4,000
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)	~ \$1,000 - \$3,000
Brush Management (314)	~ \$670 - \$2,000
Critical Area Planting (342)	~ \$2,400 - \$5,700
Irrigation Water Management (449)	~ \$470 - \$1,400
Other Resource Concern	
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490)	~ \$2,800 - \$8,300
Herbaceous Weed Treatment (315)	~ \$2,100 - \$6,000
Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (643)	~ \$600 - \$1,700
Forest Trails and Landings (655)	~ \$400 - \$1,300
Mulching (484)	~ \$400 - \$1,200
Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt (647)	~ \$200 - \$600
Hedgerow Planting (422)	~ \$200 - \$600
Structures for Wildlife (649)	~ \$70 - \$200
All Other Practices (Other)	\$3,781,649

*NRCS suppressed data for any practice that had three or fewer instances in that year. If data was suppressed for a practice for a specific year, we estimated based on the average dollars obligated/practice count nationally for that specific practice and year.

**The category “all other practices” includes any practice not specifically delineated.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Through CSP, producers can choose from approximately 140 enhancements to address resource concerns on their operation. Enhancements allow a producer to address additional levels of conservation beyond what the minimum conservation practice standard requires. CSP applicants work one-on-one with their NRCS conservation planner to select enhancements that best fit their management goals and will address resource concerns on the enrolled land.

CSP enhancement data is only available at the county level, not the watershed level. In Delaware counties, over \$1.1 million were obligated to CSP enhancements FY2019-2023. The enhancements with the most dollars obligated included reducing risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies, reducing risk of pesticides in water and air by utilizing integrated pest management (IPM), and improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses, all of which are directly relevant to improving water quality.

Table 5: CSP Enhancements in Delaware DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED	
Delaware	Kent	Advanced Automated IWM - Year 2-5, soil moisture monitoring		\$160,595	
		Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality		\$4,170	
		Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles		\$5,114	
		Forage harvest management that helps maintain wildlife habitat cover, shelter or continuity		\$1,510	
		Forage testing for improved harvesting methods and hay quality		\$1,040	
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$179,742	
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses on pasture	\$2,216	\$2,216	
		Reduce risk of pesticides in water and air by utilizing IPM PAMS techniques		\$207,598	
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$82,623	
	New Castle	Advanced Automated IWM - Year 2-5, soil moisture monitoring		\$6,204	
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$60,576	
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$23,004	
	Sussex	Cover crop to reduce soil erosion		\$248	
		Forage testing for improved harvesting methods and hay quality		\$9,255	
		Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife shelter		\$4,143	
		Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife food sources		\$4,319	
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$75,163	
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$280,167	
	Grand Total			\$2,216	\$1,107,687

In New Jersey counties within the DRW, just over \$318,000 were obligated to CSP enhancements between FY2019-2023. No New Jersey counties within the DRW received any IRA-specific enhancements, indicating a clear opportunity to improve outreach and enrollment of climate smart enhancements in New Jersey.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Moreover, in New Jersey, the enhancements that received the greatest dollars obligated were sequential patch burning and managing flood-irrigated landscapes for wildlife, which are not directly relevant to improving water quality in the watershed. This demonstrates the potential need to improve CSP outreach that is specifically targeted to water quality improvements in New Jersey counties.

Table 6: CSP Enhancements in New Jersey DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED
NEW JERSEY	Burlington	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles		\$4,495
		Management Intensive Rotational Grazing		\$3,092
		Managing Flood-Irrigated Landscapes for Wildlife		\$42,130
		Mulching with natural materials in specialty crops for weed control		\$1,272
		No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$1,489
		Reduce forest stand density to create open stand structure		\$26,264
		Sequential patch burning		\$161,208
	Gloucester	Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$1,224
	Hunterdon	Cover crop to minimize soil compaction		\$2,696
		Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients		\$100
		Forage harvest management that helps maintain wildlife habitat cover, shelter or continuity		\$604
		Forest Stand Improvement to rehabilitate degraded hardwood stands		\$12,696
		Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$6,956
		Resource conserving crop rotation		\$28
		Soil health crop rotation		\$8,819
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$249
	Mercer	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles		\$54
	Morris	Reduce risk of pesticides in water and air by utilizing IPM PAMS techniques		\$9,804
	Salem	Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$6,478
	Warren	Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles		\$1,048
		Forage and biomass planting to reduce soil erosion or increase organic matter to build soil health		\$464
		Improved grazing management on pasture for plant productivity and health with monitoring activities		\$6,695
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$19,091
		No till to reduce soil erosion		\$1,500
	Grand Total			\$0

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

In New York counties within the DRW, just under \$500,000 were obligated to CSP enhancements between FY2019-2023. No New York counties within the DRW received any IRA-specific enhancements, so there is room to improve outreach and enrollment of climate smart enhancements in New York. In New York, the practice that received the greatest dollars obligated was reducing risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies, which is directly related to improving water quality.

Table 7: CSP Enhancements in New York DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED	
New York	Broome	Forage harvest management that helps maintain wildlife habitat cover, shelter or continuity		\$974	
		Harvest of crops (hay or small grains) using measures that allow desired species to flush or escape		\$17,626	
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$220,931	
	Chenango	Herbaceous weed treatment to create plant communities consistent with the ecological site		\$80	
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$16,367	
		No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$2,188	
	Delaware	Brush management to improve wildlife habitat		\$49,260	
		Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality		\$6,336	
		Forage Harvest Management to Improve Terrestrial Habitat for Wildlife during Over-Winter Periods		\$62,140	
		Forage testing for improved harvesting methods and hay quality		\$29,000	
		Forest Stand Improvement to rehabilitate degraded hardwood stands		\$5,627	
		Harvest of crops (hay or small grains) using measures that allow desired species to flush or escape		\$6,428	
		Herbaceous weed treatment to create plant communities consistent with the ecological site		\$21,032	
		Implementing Bale or Swath Grazing to increase organic matter and reduce nutrients in surface water		\$42,208	
		Management Intensive Rotational Grazing		\$8,752	
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$1,108	
	Ulster	Harvest of crops (hay or small grains) using measures that allow desired species to flush or escape		\$1,556	
	Grand Total			\$0	\$491,613

In Pennsylvania counties within the DRW, just over \$2.6 million were obligated to CSP enhancements between FY2019-2023, with \$307,000 from the IRA. In Pennsylvania counties, the practice receiving the largest dollars obligated was improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses, which has a direct water quality focus. Significant spending also went to cover crops for addressing a variety of resource concerns, including water quality, as well as to resource conserving crop rotations, a high level practice with water quality benefits.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Table 8: CSP Enhancements in Pennsylvania DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED
PA	Berks	Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects		\$1,288
		Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients-surface water		\$3,582
		Forage harvest to reduce water quality impacts by utilization of excess soil nutrients		\$1,454
		Improved grazing management on pasture for plant productivity and health with monitoring activities		\$3,949
		Improved grazing mgmt for plant productivity/health through monitoring		\$831
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses on pasture		\$11,887
		Increase riparian forest buffer width to enhance wildlife habitat		\$14,106
		Leaving tall crop residue for wildlife		\$5,968
		Multiple crop types to benefit wildlife		\$4,365
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$40,774
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$36,224
		Reduced tillage to reduce soil erosion		\$60
		Tree/shrub planting for wildlife food		\$19,484
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$2,229
		Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter		\$5,608
PA	Bucks	Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality		\$54,220
		Cover crop to reduce soil erosion		\$24
		Eliminate use of chemical treatments to control pests and to increase the presence of dung beetles		\$439
		Intensive orchard/vineyard floor cover cropping to increase soil health		\$28
		Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife		\$1,686
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$1,434
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$2,084
		Resource conserving crop rotation		\$72
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$4,927
		Use of soil health assessment to assist with development of cover crop mix to improve soil health		\$9,218
PA	Chester	Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients		\$156,921
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$305,332
		No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$13,249
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$34,710
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$135

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CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Table 9: CSP Enhancements in Pennsylvania DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023 (cont'd)

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED
Lackawanna		Clipping mature forages to set back vegetative growth for improved forage quality		\$9,711
		Cover crop to minimize soil compaction		\$1,370
		Establishing native grass or legumes in forage base to improve the plant community		\$4,487
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$3,149
		Intensive cover cropping to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$2,027
		No till to reduce soil erosion		\$732
		Reduced tillage to reduce energy use		\$642
		Resource conserving crop rotation		\$25,094
Lancaster		Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles	\$428	\$428
		Forage harvest to reduce water quality impacts by utilization of excess soil nutrients		\$2,513
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses	\$5,368	\$5,368
		Management Intensive Rotational Grazing		\$15,288
		No till to reduce soil erosion		\$283
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$51,540
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$11,414
		Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$1,594
		Use of soil health assessment to assist with development of cover crop mix to improve soil health		\$24,169
Lebanon		Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles	\$1,540	\$1,540
		Crop tree management for mast production		\$36,798
		Forest Stand Improvement to rehabilitate degraded hardwood stands		\$52,859
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses	\$47,620	\$89,605
		Improving Soil Organism Habitat on Agricultural Land		\$15,816
		Increase the size requirement of refuges planted to slow pest resistance to Bt crops		\$27,970
		Management Intensive Rotational Grazing		\$7,899
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$26,630
		Stockpiling cool season forage to improve structure and composition or plant productivity and health	\$4,120	\$4,120
Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter	\$4,080	\$4,080		

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CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Table 10: CSP Enhancements in Pennsylvania DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023 (cont'd)

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED
Lehigh		Cover crop to minimize soil compaction		\$25,090
		Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients		\$50,000
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses	\$25,725	\$64,250
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$75,428
		Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies		\$84,454
		Resource conserving crop rotation		\$120,520
		Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter	\$5,930	\$36,304
Monroe		Cover crop to minimize soil compaction		\$21,917
		Cover crop to suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles		\$28,673
		Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter		\$3,459
		No till to reduce soil erosion		\$7,668
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$18,252
		Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$7,457
Montgomery		Snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris for wildlife habitat		\$71,641
		Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter	\$385	\$385
Northampton		Cover crop to minimize soil compaction	\$3,500	\$3,500
		Cover crop to reduce soil erosion		\$43,769
		Cover crop to reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excess soil nutrients	\$37,120	\$37,120
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses	\$167,845	\$354,994
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$75
		Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter		\$15,243
Pike		Forest management to enhance understory vegetation		\$95,710

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CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Table 11: CSP Enhancements in Pennsylvania DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023 (cont'd)

STATE	COUNTY	ENHANCEMENT	IRA DOLLARS OBLIGATED	TOTAL DOLLARS OBLIGATED
	Schuylkill	Brush management to improve wildlife habitat	\$20	\$6,352
		Cover crop to minimize soil compaction		\$3,211
		Cover crop to reduce water erosion		\$1,439
		Eliminate use of chemical treatments to control pests and to increase the presence of dung beetles		\$1,340
		Forage plantings that help increase organic matter in depleted soils		\$1,459
		Herbaceous weed treatment to create plant communities consistent with the ecological site		\$4,502
		Improved crop rotation to provide benefits to pollinators		\$7,811
		Improved resource conserving crop rotation		\$8,630
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses		\$33,733
		Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses to surface water		\$27,303
		Improving Soil Organism Habitat on Agricultural Land		\$20,908
		Leave standing grain crops unharvested to benefit wildlife	\$3,896	\$25,559
		Leaving tall crop residue for wildlife		\$31,430
		No till to reduce tillage induced particulate matter		\$2,251
		Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques		\$37,654
		Reduced tillage to increase soil health and soil organic matter content		\$7,408
		Resource conserving crop rotation		\$205
		Soil Health Improvements on Pasture		\$304
		Stockpiling cool season forage to improve structure and composition or plant productivity and health		\$328
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$2,068
		Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter		\$2,594
		Use of soil health assessment to assist with development of cover crop mix to improve soil health		\$7,149
	Wayne	Brush management to improve wildlife habitat		\$3,768
		Forage harvest management that helps maintain wildlife habitat cover, shelter or continuity		\$2,739
		Forage plantings that help increase organic matter in depleted soils		\$6,635
		Grassland Conservation Initiative		\$13,928
		Implementing Bale or Swath Grazing to increase organic matter and reduce nutrients in surface water		\$7,278
		Improved resource conserving crop rotation		\$5,674
		Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health		\$359
	Grand Total		\$307,577	\$2,603,342

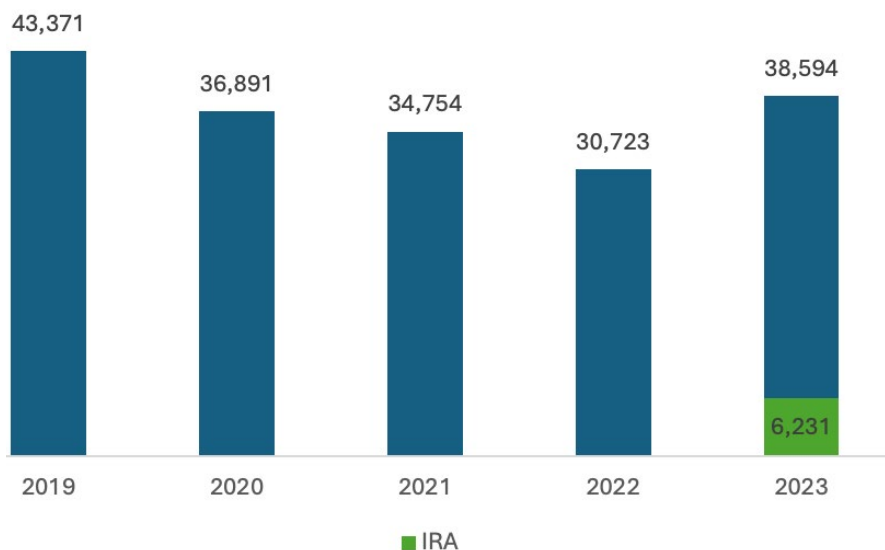
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

EQIP offers producers technical support and one to ten year cost share contracts to implement a wide range of conservation practices on working land, though most contracts last one to three years. EQIP contracts are generally more narrowly focused and shorter-term than CSP contracts.

WATERSHED-LEVEL DATA

Within the DRW (HUC 0204), 184,333 acres were newly enrolled in EQIP between FY2019-2023. This represents approximately 30% of the total EQIP acres enrolled for Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania during this 2018 Farm Bill lifespan, showing the relevance of EQIP as a tool for addressing water quality concerns in the watershed. In 2023, 6,231 EQIP acres in the DRW were funded through the IRA.

Figure 6: New EQIP Acres in the DRW (HUC 0204), Fiscal Years 2019-2023



* This data includes all contracts that fall within the DRW Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 0204

During the five-year period, approximately \$49 million was newly obligated through EQIP contracts in the DRW, or approximately 20% of the new EQIP dollars obligated to Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. There were 1,668 new EQIP contracts between FY2019-2023 in the DRW, accounting for approximately 26% of all new EQIP contracts in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. This substantial portion of EQIP dollars and contracts touching down in DRW states demonstrates EQIP's utility as a tool to address water quality concerns within the DRW.

Slightly more new EQIP contracts were enrolled in the Lower DRW than the Upper DRW between FY2019-2023. The Lower DRW also had more new dollars obligated to EQIP during the five-year period and more contracts that were part of the IRA expansion. The Lower DRW also enrolled more new EQIP acres during the five-year period.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Table 12: New EQIP Enrollment in the Lower and Upper DRW (HUC 6), Fiscal Years 2019-2023

	New Contracts	New Acres	New Dollars Obligated	IRA Contracts	IRA Acres	IRA Dollars Obligated
Lower DRW (HUC 020402)	775	103,763	\$35.05 M	30	4,395	\$1,008,396
Upper DRW (HUC 020401)	660	50,206	\$13.8 M	18	1,645	\$456,896

COUNTY-LEVEL DATA

At the county level, 39 counties within the DRW added new EQIP acres between FY2019- 2023. Delaware counties had the highest amount of new EQIP dollars obligated in the DRW, totaling more than \$35 million between FY2019-2023, followed closely by Pennsylvania with more than \$31.99 million. Twenty counties within the DRW initiated EQIP contracts as part of the new IRA expansion in FY2023.

Again, it is important to note that totals at the county level and at the watershed level will be different because for some counties only a small portion of that county falls within the watershed.

If a county had four or fewer new contracts during a fiscal year, data for that county and year was suppressed by the NRCS, although we could tell that a county had at least one contract during that fiscal year. If data was suppressed, we present the minimum amount of dollars obligated and acres that were not suppressed by the NRCS and include the information from our previous report before NRCS instituted their new data suppression policies. There were few instances where there were less than 4 EQIP contracts awarded in any given year (as opposed to CSP), which is why there are fewer instances of data suppression noted in Tables 11 through 14.



<https://natlands.org/delaware-river-watershed-initiative/>

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Table 13: New EQIP Enrollments in DRW Counties, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

	Upper or Lower	HUC 8 watershed	Dollars Obligated	Contracts	Acres	IRA
Delaware			\$35.22 M	655	92,802	1 county
Kent	Lower	Broadkill-Smyrna	\$11.7 M	182	23,916	Yes
New Castle	Lower	Brandywine-Christina	\$3.04 M	85	15,764	
Sussex	Lower	Broadkill-Smyrna	\$20.49 M	388	53,122	
New Jersey			> \$25.76 M	1,111 - 1,119	> 81,428	12 counties
Atlantic	Lower	Cohansey-Maurice	\$1.28 M	20	593	Yes
Burlington	Lower	Lower Delaware	\$2.81 M	128	19,309	Yes
Camden	Lower	Lower Delaware	> \$14,538	4 - 16	> 29.5	Yes
Cape May	Lower	Cohansey-Maurice	\$.96 M	18	311	
Cumberland	Lower	Cohansey-Maurice	\$2.92 M	48	4,087	
Gloucester	Lower	Lower Delaware	\$2.9 M	68	11,597	Yes
Hunterdon	Upper	Middle Delaware-Musconetcong	\$3.5 M	156	6,349	Yes
Mercer	Upper	Middle Delaware-Musconetcong	\$.59 M	38	1,424	Yes
Monmouth	Lower	Crosswicks-Neshaminy	\$.52 M	60	1,721	Yes
Morris	Upper	Middle Delaware-Musconetcong	\$.61 M	58	3,183	Yes
Ocean	Lower	Lower Delaware	\$.53 M	22	535	Yes
Salem	Lower	Cohansey-Maurice	\$4.64 M	105	13,382	Yes
Sussex	Upper	Middle Delaware-Musconetcong	\$2.17 M	237	11,568	Yes
Warren	Upper	Middle Delaware-Musconetcong	\$2.35 M	149	7,369	Yes
New York			\$13.71 M	372	28,645	3 counties
Broome	Upper	Upper Delaware	\$1. M	28	1,467	
Chenango	Upper	Upper Delaware	\$1.94 M	57	3,751	Yes
Delaware	Upper	Upper Delaware	\$3.97 M	94	14,673	Yes
Greene	Upper	East Branch Delaware	\$.12 M	6	97	
Orange	Upper	Middle Delaware Mongaup-Brodhead	\$1.88 M	64	1,437	
Schoharie	Upper	Upper Delaware	\$2.82 M	31	3,937	
Sullivan	Upper	Middle Delaware Mongaup-Brodhead	\$.83 M	42	2,380	
Ulster	Upper	East Branch Delaware	\$1.15 M	50	903	Yes
Pennsylvania			> \$31.99 M	505 - 543	> 52,521	5 counties
Berks	Lower	Schuylkill	\$5.26 M	70	5,909	
Bucks	Lower	Crosswicks-Neshaminy	\$2.11 M	45	3,585	Yes
Carbon	Upper	Lehigh	\$.18 M	4	415	
Chester	Lower	Brandywine-Christina	\$3.97 M	69	4,781	
Lackawanna	Upper	Lehigh	> \$449,421	5 - 20	> 810.6	Yes
Lancaster	Lower	Brandywine-Christina	\$9.06 M	112	13,133	
Lebanon	Lower	Schuylkill	\$5.05 M	52	6,717	Yes
Lehigh	Upper	Lehigh	\$.08 M	5	640	
Luzerne	Upper	Lehigh	\$.24 M	4	834	
Monroe	Upper	Middle Delaware-Mongaup-Brodhead	\$.23 M	14	1,230	
Montgomery	Lower	Schuylkill	\$.31 M	18	695	Yes
Northampton	Upper	Middle Delaware-Musconetcong	\$1.53 M	37	5,931	
Philadelphia	Lower	Lower Delaware	> \$29,640	4 - 16	> 6.3	
Pike	Upper	Middle Delaware-Mongaup-Brodhead	> \$8,873	5 - 20	> 514.3	Yes
Schuylkill	Lower	Schuylkill	\$1.75 M	34	7,474	
Wayne	Upper	Lackawaxen	\$1.73 M	27	1,177	
Grand Total			> \$92.46 M	2,086 - 2,102	> 217,425	20 counties

*NRCs suppressed data for any domain that had four or fewer contracts in that year.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

EQIP PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS

More than fifty-one specific practices were used in EQIP contracts in the DRW between FY2019-2023. Of those, 30 (59%) were classified as addressing water quality concerns. This shows an important focus on water quality concerns within EQIP and the relevance of EQIP as a tool to address water quality concerns within the DRW. Worth noting is the high level of investment in structural practices likely associated with managing waste from confined animals (CPS’ 367, 313, 561). This mirrors a concerning national trend of high portions of EQIP funding supporting traditional manure management infrastructure, which carries a host of environmental concerns, including extreme risk to water quality if the infrastructure fails. There is a major opportunity to advocate at the state level for NRCS to instead prioritize alternative manure management techniques, such as composting of manure, or supporting the transition of livestock back into management intensive rotational systems.

Table 14: EQIP Practices Utilized in DRW (HUC 0204), Fiscal Years 2019-2023

Water Quality Resource Concern	Dollars Obligated
Roofs and Covers (367)	\$7,774,062
Cover Crop (340)	\$6,955,161
Waste Storage Facility (313)	\$5,134,799
Heavy Use Area Protection (561)	\$5,059,831
Nutrient Management (590)	\$1,241,818
Forest Stand Improvement (666)	\$818,221
Irrigation System, Microirrigation (441)	\$723,044
Brush Management (314)	\$660,610
Animal Mortality Facility (316)	\$506,938
Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)	\$459,996
Amendments for Treatment of Agricultural Waste (591)	\$353,886
Structure for Water Control (587)	\$346,579
Roof Runoff Structure (558)	\$345,363
Obstruction Removal (500)	\$341,392
Waste Transfer (634)	\$230,812
Grassed Waterway (412)	\$162,008
Irrigation Water Management (449)	\$129,424
Pasture and Hay Planting (512)	\$117,814
Conservation Cover (327)	\$112,630
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)	\$89,925
Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (345)	\$69,578
Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$62,314
Terrace (600)	\$60,742
Critical Area Planting (342)	\$56,590
Water and Sediment Control Basin (638)	\$22,094

CONTINUES >

*NRCS suppressed data for any practice that had three or fewer instances in that year. If data was suppressed for a practice for a specific year, we estimated based on the average dollars obligated/practice count nationally for that specific practice and year.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Table 15: EQIP Practices Utilized in DRW (HUC 0204), Fiscal Years 2019-2023 (cont'd)

Other Resource Concern	Dollars Obligated
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	~ \$8,600 - \$26,000
Grade Stabilization Structure (410)	~ \$16,000 - \$48,000
Pest Management Conservation System (595)	~ \$15,000 - \$44,000
Vegetative Barrier (601)	~ \$750 - \$2,000
High Tunnel System (325)	\$3,572,031
Sprinkler System (442)	\$1,504,076
Fence (382)	\$1,006,999
Irrigation Pipeline (430)	\$723,477
Underground Outlet (620)	\$698,363
Herbaceous Weed Treatment (315)	\$667,137
Forest Management Plan (106)	\$464,595
Pumping Plant (533)	\$463,090
Mulching (484)	\$325,512
Livestock Pipeline (516)	\$246,057
Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt (647)	\$187,273
Prescribed Burning (338)	\$177,230
Watering Facility (614)	\$151,049
Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (643)	\$62,886
Hedgerow Planting (422)	\$60,995
Forest Trails and Landings (655)	\$36,612
Energy Efficient Agricultural Operation (374)	\$35,976
Combustion System Improvement (372)	\$15,260
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490)	\$11,469
Firebreak (394)	~ \$5,000 - \$16,000
Woody Residue Treatment (384)	~ \$14,000 - \$41,000
All Other Practices (Other)	\$9,192,912

*NRCS suppressed data for any practice that had three or fewer instances in that year. If data was suppressed for a practice for a specific year, we estimated based on the average dollars obligated/practice count nationally for that specific practice and year.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The Regional Conservation Program (RCPP) is unique because RCPP projects are awarded to eligible regional partners (non-profit groups, conservation districts, farmer cooperative, state and local agencies) and then farmers and ranchers apply to participate in an approved project. RCPP funding comes from two pools: 1) state/multistate pool for projects that are in a single state or multiple states and 2) critical conservation areas (CCA) pool for projects that are in eight geographic areas identified by the Secretary of Agriculture as high priority areas. In the DRW states, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed has been identified as a CCA. Each funding pool receives 50% of the total funding.

RCPP project partners share both financial and technical contributions to projects, including direct cash contributions and one-on-one technical assistance to farmers and ranchers with planning and management activities. RCPP aims to leverage collective resources and collaborate with strong community partners.

Since the 2018 Farm Bill, NRCS has awarded 17 RCPP projects in DRW states. Combined, these RCPP projects represent a \$68.7 million investment in joint conservation efforts in the region. Eight of the RCPP projects in DRW states hold relevance for the DRW and water quality outcomes with more than \$33.6 million allocated for those projects. These eight projects are described in more detail below.

Table 16: RCPP Contracts and Spending in DRW States, Fiscal Years 2019-2023⁵

Lead State	Award Title	Lead Partner	NRCS Funding	Grant Type	Partners	Year Initiated
Pennsylvania	Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture	\$9,928,571	CCA	9	2019
New Jersey	Protecting Source Water in the Raritan System	NJ Water Supply Authority	\$608,572	State	1	2021
New Jersey	Northern NJ Small Farm Food Link Conservation Project	Urban Agriculture Cooperative	\$355,000	State	1	2021
New Jersey	Salem River Bog Turtle Protection and Restoration	New Jersey Audubon	\$710,000	State		2021
New York	Integrated Approach to Small Dairy Management - NY	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$617,700	State	5	2021
Pennsylvania	Lancaster’s Common Agenda for Clean Water	Conservation Foundation of Lancaster County	\$7,400,000	CCA	20	2021
Pennsylvania	Turkey Hill Clean Water Partnership	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	\$4,000,000	CCA	3	2021
Pennsylvania	Implementing a strategy to rapidly restore agriculturally impaired streams in Central PA	Chesapeake Conservancy	\$9,996,006	CCA	14	2022

⁵ Descriptions and maps of all RCPP projects initiated in 2020, 2021, and 2022 can be found [here](#).

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The **Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape** project is an RCPP project initiated in 2019 that includes parts of Schuylkill, Berks, Northumberland, Lebanon, Dauphin, Perry, Cumberland, Franklin and Fulton counties in the high priority area. Those same counties plus Snyder, Huntington, and Juniata county are in the medium priority area. Luzerne, Columbia, Montour, Union, Mifflin, Blair, Bedford, Adams, York, and Lancaster counties are in the low priority area. Although the project targets the Chesapeake Bay watershed, several of these counties also lie within the DRW.

The **Protecting Source Water in the Raritan System** project is an RCPP project in which the New Jersey Water Supply Authority proposes to use RCPP's flexible producer incentives to implement conservation systems and practices on farms in the Raritan Basin Water Supply System. The project will offer additional cost-share via the Authority's source water protection fund and also enroll conservation easements, document pollutant load reductions and/or pollutant loads avoided, and assess the social impact of offering flexible producer incentives. Although the project targets the Raritan Basin, the DRW is likely to receive spillover benefits to its water quality.

The **Northern NJ Small Farm Food Link Conservation Project** is an RCPP project in which the Urban Agriculture Cooperative proposes to deliver technical and financial assistance to new and historically underserved urban farmers in Northern N.J. Implementation of seasonal high tunnels, composting facilities, cover crops and irrigation practices will improve soil health and irrigation water use efficiency, as well as help urban producers realize lower input costs and more production. Participating farms will also see new revenue streams from composting activities. The project will increase opportunities for black, Indigenous, people of color, women, immigrants, and new young farmers to participate in all aspects of the local food economy from production to retail. Historically underserved farmers pursuing land tenure will benefit and strengthen their linkages with rural farmers to bring more food to the urban residents who lack fresh food access.

The **Salem River Bog Turtle Protection and Restoration** project is an RCPP project in which New Jersey Audubon and partners propose to restore, enhance, and protect occupied and potential bog turtle habitat, and improve connectivity between public and private lands through habitat restoration and land acquisition. The bog turtle is the official state reptile of New Jersey and is a Federally Threatened and State endangered species. An innovative ranking system will use various datasets to target specific properties to connect wetland habitat throughout the watershed.

The **Integrated Approach to Small Dairy Management - NY** project is an RCPP project in which the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and partners propose to implement soil health and manure management practices and systems on small-to-medium sized dairies that are part of Danone North America's supply chain. Partner contributions from Danone and other partners will complement RCPP funding to increase the amount of on-the-ground conservation achieved by the partnership. Project partners will execute a strategic outreach plan to small New York dairies, particularly those owned and operated by plain-sect farmers. Project partners will also report on soil health, water quality and greenhouse gas outcomes. The target area is all NY counties, including the DRW counties.

Lancaster's Common Agenda for Clean Water is an RCPP project in which Lancaster Clean Water Partners, formed in 2018, brings together a diverse group of organizations including non-profits, government, and businesses with a goal of delisting impaired waters to make Lancaster County's streams clean and clear by 2040. The partnership intends to use a custom screening tool to identify critical lands for water quality improvement. An innovative incentive structure will be used to reward producers for installing riparian forest or grass buffers, or for adopting regenerative farming practices that improve soil health and protect source water. Portions of Lancaster County are within the DRW.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The **Turkey Hill Clean Water Partnership** is an RCPP project in which the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay in partnership with Turkey Hill Dairy and ten other partners, will rapidly implement land management conservation measures on dairy farms in South Central Pennsylvania. This project has been in the planning stages for some time, with conservation plans drafted that are prepared for financial assistance to help producers implement water quality practices and systems to support local and Chesapeake Bay water quality. Partner contributions will complement NRCS' funding for on-the-ground conservation and will also provide for outcomes reporting activities. The Alliance is in conversations with other good companies with a Chesapeake Bay presence to expand this supply chain-driven model for the benefit of water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. It will bring technical and financial assistance to producers to meet supply-chain sustainability initiative goals of Turkey Hill Corporation by focusing on South Central Pennsylvania. Turkey Hill Clean Water Partnership introduced a requirement

for all farmers supplying milk to Turkey Hill to obtain a heightened level of on-farm conservation through developing conservation plans (including CNMPs). Although the project targets the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the DRW is likely to experience spillover water quality benefits.

Implementing a strategy to rapidly restore agriculturally impaired streams in Central PA is an RCPP project that covers Lycoming, Union, Snyder, Clinton, Centre, and Huntingdon Counties. The project focuses on agricultural producers in six central Pennsylvania counties to implement conservation practices and systems that would help address water quality and wildlife habitat concerns for 18 streams listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act. The Chesapeake Conservancy and thirteen partners will work with NRCS to accelerate conservation improvements to work toward eventual delisting of the streams. Although the project targets the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the DRW is likely to experience spillover water quality benefits.

RCPP SPENDING AND ENROLLMENT

RCPP projects last five years with the possibility of extension or renewals, so many of the projects in DRW states will continue past FY2023. The chart below describes the total contracts, acres, and dollars spent in each DRW state on RCPP projects between FY2019-2023. Importantly, dollars spent and acres added to RCPP reflect the year that they were actually spent/enrolled, rather than the year that the project was awarded. A partner is awarded an RCPP contract in one fiscal year and then may take several fiscal years to actually roll out the project and enroll farmers and ranchers. The eight RCPP projects that were awarded between FY2019-2023 totaled more than \$33.6 million, but only about \$12.5 million was actually spent on contracts with farmers during that time period. The remainder will be spent down in future fiscal years.

Table 17: RCPP Contracts and Spending in DRW States, FY 2019-2023

	Contracts	Acres	Dollars
Delaware	> 45	> 14,444	> \$1,052,067
New Jersey	> 14	> 512	> \$622,020
New York	> 62	> 2,662	> \$4,246,770
Pennsylvania	> 83	> 12,199	> \$6,535,067
Grand total	> 204	> 29,817	> \$12,455,924

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA), rather than the NRCS. Farmers who enroll in CRP receive an annual rental payment for land that they remove from agricultural production and instead plant in species that will improve environmental health and quality. CRP contracts last for 10 to 15 years with the opportunity for renewal.

CRP participants can enroll through the General CRP; Grassland CRP, which emphasizes support for grasslands under the greatest threat of conversion; and Continuous CRP (CCRP), which targets lands specifically deemed environmentally sensitive. The CCRP signup also includes additional options, such as CLEAR30 Clean Lakes, Estuaries, And Rivers initiative, State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), and Farmable Wetlands Program.

CCRP pays farms to install targeted conservation practices on the most environmentally sensitive lands, including conservation buffers such as filter strips, riparian buffers, grass waterways, grass strips, and saturated buffers. CREP leverages both federal and non-federal funding to target specific conservation concerns, including water quality. CREP programs are designed for areas that have been adversely affected by agricultural activities and include approved use of conservation buffers and related practices. The CLEAR30 pilot program was created in the 2018 Farm Bill and offers 30 year extensions to producers in specific target regions, including the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, that installed water quality practices through CREP.

Within DRW states, farmers and ranchers more heavily participate in CCRP than they do in general CRP. Only about 2,590 acres were enrolled in general CRP in December 2023 in DRW states, compared to 91,625 acres enrolled in CCRP (including CREP). The following chart shows cumulative (all possible signups) enrollment in DRW states, including the total for each state and the total that includes only DRW counties. Between FY2019-2023 108,113 cumulative acres were enrolled in CRP in DRW counties, representing approximately 17% of all CRP acreages in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. During those five years, nearly \$21 million was paid in CRP rent in DRW counties, representing approximately 23% of all CRP rent paid in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. This reflects a slightly higher average rent paid per acre in DRW counties (\$193.14/acre) than in all counties in the states (\$142.09).

Table 18: Cumulative CRP Totals for DRW States, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

	Cumulative Acres	Total Annual Rent	Avg. Rent/Acre
Delaware	16,966	\$2.51 M	\$147.99
DRW counties	16,966	\$2.51 M	\$147.99
New Jersey	9,628	\$.85 M	\$88.70
DRW counties	8,749	\$.82 M	\$93.81
New York	94,166	\$9.71 M	\$103.10
DRW counties	29,825	\$4.5 M	\$151.01
Pennsylvania	511,499	\$76.76 M	\$150.07
DRW counties	52,573	\$13.05 M	\$248.14
Grand total	632,259	\$89.84 M	\$142.09
DRW counties	108,113	\$20.88 M	\$193.14

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

The following table shows the number of CREP contracts and acres enrolled in DRW states (CREP data is not available at the county-level). Pennsylvania has a large number of total acres enrolled in CREP and is consistently either the highest or second-highest CREP enrollment in the nation, although very few of these acres fall within the DRW

Table 18: Cumulative CREP Totals for DRW States, Fiscal Years 2019-2023

	Cumulative Contracts	Cumulative Farms	Cumulative Acres	Cumulative Rent (\$1000)	Avg. Rent/Acre
Delaware	1,219	797	15,110	\$2,338	\$155
New Jersey	1,153	698	3,198	\$492	\$154
New York	3,312	2,484	39,804	\$4,975	\$125
Pennsylvania	32	24	360	\$60	\$60

* Totals for Pennsylvania include only CREP agreements in the DRW.



CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

Acres enrolled in CRP are removed from agricultural production and instead have long-term, resource-conserving plant species established. The following chart illustrates the number of acres cumulatively enrolled as of FY2021 in key conservation practices/plantings through CCRP in each of the four states within the DRW:

Table 20: CRP Practices by Acres Enrolled, FY 2019-2023

State	County	Grass Plantings	Tree Plantings	Grass Waterways	Contour Grass Strips	Filter Strips	Riparian Buffers	Flood Plains	Pollinator Habitat
Delaware	Kent		3,792			1,059	67	466	5
	New Castle	190	25	5		743	28		
	Sussex		6,296			177	184	88	3
New Jersey	Atlantic			48					
	Burlington			9					
	Camden								
	Cape May								
	Cumberland			114		229	153		89
	Gloucester			78		124	6		
	Hunterdon	40		5		5	21		
	Mercer						35		
	Middlesex			1					
	Morris			5					
	Ocean								
	Salem			251	3	590	532		
New York	Sussex					16	35		
	Warren			53		32	42		
	Broome	853	38				1,665		59
	Chenango	490	14	9		82	2,868		3
	Delaware	187	2			3	7,552	25	
	Greene	177				12	211		
	Orange	2,640	35	12		15	36	41	2
	Schoharie	41		2		1	92		
	Sullivan	1,970	98			1	69		
	Ulster	77					105		
	Berks	14,927	48	1		98	3,005	147	
	Bucks	898		1			1		
	Carbon	976		12		7	226		
	Chester	2,123		55		29	985		
	Delaware								
	Lackawanna	1,250	4				265	10	
	Lancaster	3,324	105	34	24	87	5,001		
	Lebanon	1,837	16	1		5	680		
	Lehigh	5,560		4	10	63	506	6	5
	Luzerne	5,382	2	4	6	24	503		
Monroe									
Montgomery	3,196	4	6		105	296	1		
Northampton	1,463		4		1	511			
Philadelphia									
Pike									
Schuylkill	8,477	54	72	41	137	1,315	24		
Wayne	1,907		10		55	1,258	1		

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

CRP enrollment remains high, however land continues to expire from the program at a steady rate. A new class of 10-15 year contracts expire each year and participants with expiring land have the option to return their land to production or re-enroll in CRP. The table below shows the expiring acres from the CRP (all signups) within DRW counties for FY2020 onwards.

Table 21: Expiring CRP Acres in DRW States, Fiscal Years 2020+

State/County	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031 +
Delaware	335	313	141	253	105	104	284	105	75	168	89	1,522
Kent	151	201	77	81	38	79	48	48	56	46	74	636
New Castle	42	25	49	133	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	31
Sussex	142	87	15	39	65	25	236	57	19	122	15	855
New Jersey	243	169	257	123	56	183	140	206	72	32	4	249
Atlantic	22	1	2	1	0	8	2	0	0	0	0	0
Burlington	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Cumberland	11	24	85	14	30	6	49	11	4	0	0	10
Gloucester	1	22	6	4	5	11	1	0	1	1	2	18
Hunterdon	0	70	22	22	0	0	0	174	9	3	0	154
Mercer	0	0	16	5	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monmouth												
Morris	0	0	2	0	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salem	201	37	108	41	21	96	82	11	43	24	2	67
Sussex	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Warren	8	13	10	36	0	18	6	10	13	2	0	0
New York	1,345	797	1,043	351	318	329	481	320	137	208	324	1,061
Broome	267	194	150	113	48	18	6	29	0	0	211	549
Chenango	772	404	189	166	139	39	33	27	0	9	0	101
Delaware	151	132	174	57	123	248	411	244	137	199	99	331
Greene	8	0	7	15	8	0	13	0	0	0	14	0
Orange	102	67	517	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schoharie	40	0	6	0	0	24	14	20	0	0	0	0
Sullivan	5	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	80
Pennsylvania	701	1,194	1,700	880	686	822	248	888	1,013	484	628	1,127
Berks	12	89	624	129	264	112	0	116	90	43	287	230
Carbon	10	0	0	0	0	31	0	0	43	53	14	0
Chester	37	62	195	45	4	51	25	39	51	9	59	83
Lackawanna	109	40	34	12	2	158	0	24	0	8	0	0
Lancaster	122	136	247	215	84	222	122	213	113	55	159	478
Lebanon	24	77	31	27	3	3	14	115	1	5	54	54
Lehigh	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	1	61	0	0	0
Luzerne	136	46	75	62	291	175	2	142	184	164	5	14
Northampton	0	27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0
Schuylkill	33	683	380	222	14	60	66	238	454	114	50	268
Wayne	218	27	113	168	24	10	18	0	16	22	0	0
Grand Total	2,624	2,473	3,141	1,607	1,165	1,438	1,153	1,519	1,297	892	1,045	3,959

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

CRP participants with expiring acres have the choice between returning their land to production or renewing their CRP contract. The most recent CRP general sign up was March 4, 2024 through March 29, 2024 and the CCRP sign up was reopened on January 12, 2024 with plans to remain open through July 31, 2024. Nationally, 482,327 CRP acres are set to expire in 2024 and NSAC continues to emphasize the importance of providing proper outreach to encourage producers to re-enroll sensitive areas, particularly through the CCRP.

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) helps protect working farms and ranches by restricting non-agricultural uses; restore and conserve grazing lands; and restore and enhance wetlands through conservation easements. Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements. Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) help restore and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.

The table below shows the agreements and acres enrolled in both ALE and WRE for all DRW counties. More DRW farmers and ranchers participate in ALE than WRE, and the total acreage enrolled in ACEP between FY2019-2023 in DRW counties was 15,022 acres.

Table 22: ACEP Contracts and Acres for DRW Counties, FY 2019-2023

State	County	ACEP-ALE		ACEP-WRE		Totals	
		Contracts	Acres	Contracts	Acres	Contracts	Acres
Delaware	Kent	69	9,470	1	18	70	9,488
	Sussex	14	1,818	1	105	15	1,923
New Jersey	Cumberland	1	29			1	29
	Hunterdon	4	164	1	13	5	177
	Salem	18	1,031	2	39	20	1,070
	Sussex			4	191	4	191
	Warren			1	4	1	4
New York	Orange	3	529			3	529
	Ulster	2	271			2	271
	Washington	1	448			1	448
Pennsylvania	Chester	3	383			3	383
	Lackawanna	1	53			1	53
	Lancaster	6	360			6	360
	Lebanon			1	15	1	15
	Schuylkill	1	83			1	83
Grant Totals		123	14,638	11	385	134	15,022

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

While no single farm bill conservation program is focused specifically on organic agriculture, some of the general conservation programs provide additional targeted support for producers who are transitioning to organic production or those who are already certified organic. Organic and transitioning producers can self-identify when they enroll in either CSP or EQIP.

The table below summarizes the total number of certified and transitioning organic producers who self-identified in CSP signups between FY2019 -2023 for DRW states. Because organic producers must self-identify, it is possible that more organic producers are participating in CSP than indicated here. Organic participation data is not available at the county level. The table also shows the number of CSP organic and transitioning acres that were part of the IRA expansion in FY2023.

Table 23: Certified and Transitioning Organic Producers in CSP Signups, FY 2019-2023

	IRA Acres	Total Acres	Total Fin. Asst.
Certified			
New Jersey		367	\$53,075
New York	30	14,944	\$626,529
Pennsylvania	13	5,939	\$402,384
Transitioning			
New Jersey	3	51	\$22,143
New York		423	\$50,020
Pennsylvania	5	906	\$62,899

Within EQIP, certified organic and transitioning participants can choose to compete within the general pool or the Organic Initiative, a separate funding pool. The Organic Initiative funding pool is less competitive for producers, but does subject them to a stricter payment limitation. Unfortunately, due to NRCS's new data suppression policies, no financial information is available regarding organic or transitioning producers in EQIP.

Table 24: Certified and Transitioning Organic Producers in EQIP Signups, FY 2019-2023

State	Certified		Transitioning	
	Contracts	Acres	Contracts	Acres
Delaware	Suppressed	Suppressed	Suppressed	Suppressed
New Jersey	> 3	> 12	> 3	> 183
New York	> 140	> 13,450	71	> 567
Pennsylvania	70	> 6,023	22	> 965

CRP also offers an organic-specific option through the Organic Buffers Initiative as a result of NSAC's advocacy. This initiative allows organic and transitioning participants to enroll conservation buffers, including any eligible CCRP practice, which provide critical conservation benefits and can also help protect organic farms against pesticide drift or genetic drift. Depending on a particular operation's needs, enrollment in the Organic Buffers Initiative could include the installation of filter strips, riparian buffers, windbreaks, upland buffers, pollinator habitat, and more. Data from the Initiative is only reported at a national level and offers no insight on the use of Organic Buffers in the DRW. NSAC will continue to advocate for better reporting on and promotion of this initiative.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The data provided in this report can help advocates and producers better understand the adoption and utilization of major farm bill conservation programs within the Delaware River Watershed, and use those insights to inform their own advocacy and outreach. Given the still rudimentary levels of data collection on conservation programs at the federal level, however, agencies like NRCS remain unable to quantify the impact of their conservation investments in terms of environmental outcomes. Without this type of data, conservation programs remain vulnerable and subject to attack by critics who claim that their impacts are not worth the funds provided.

NRCS has recently embarked on an ambitious public data initiative to provide a wider range of conservation program data on their public data website, the RCA Data Viewer. This public data provision is to be applauded and can provide producers, advocates, and community members with a better understanding of how farm bill conservation programs are implemented. It is particularly notable that NRCS is now providing at least limited data at the watershed-level itself.


Watershed-level data will enable NSAC and other advocates to more closely examine the footprint of conservation programs in watersheds, particularly watersheds that are threatened or impaired. We encourage NRCS to continue to make data available at the watershed-level and to provide a wider range of that data in the future.

Beginning in 2024, however, NRCS has instituted a more intensive data suppression policy that stipulates that any geographic area with 4 or fewer contracts during a specified time period will have all data suppressed and that FOIA requests must be placed to the national office which will only provide data at the state-level. For smaller programs and smaller states and counties, this means virtually all data is now suppressed. This makes it extremely difficult for NSAC, producers, and others to understand and evaluate participation in farm bill conservation programs and determine if NRCS is meeting the required obligations for program enrollment. We will continue to encourage NRCS to provide a greater level of data transparency that provides essential information to the public while still protecting the privacy of participants.



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