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**Environmental Quality
Incentives Program (EQIP)
and
Conservation Stewardship
Program (CSP)**



**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**



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October 13, 2022 – Melissa Bartz, WI NRCS ASTC-FA

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Today's Topics



NRCS Financial Assistance Programs: EQIP and CSP

Navigating through the process

Soil Health

How to find local NRCS Point of Contact



Typical Process - OVERVIEW

- **Planning - *ongoing***
- **Application - *continuous with cutoff dates for each program***
- **Evaluation – *includes assessment and ranking***
- **Contracting - *pre-approval, approve, obligate***
- **Implementation**
- **Certification and Payment**
- **Operation & Maintenance (O&M) –*practice lifespans***



What is a Conservation Practice Standard?

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

TERRACE (Ft.)

CODE 600

Establishes the minimum acceptable level of quality for the:

- Design
- Implementation
- Operation and maintenance of a conservation technology.

DEFINITION

An earth embankment, or a combination ridge and channel, constructed across the field slope.

PURPOSE

This practice is applied as part of a resource management system for one or more of the following purposes:

- Reduce erosion and or trap sediment.
- Retain runoff for moisture conservation

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies where:

- Soil erosion caused by water and excessive slope length is a problem
- Excess runoff is a problem
- There is a need to conserve water
- The soils and topography are such that terraces can be constructed and reasonably farmed
- A suitable outlet can be provided

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

when checking soil loss for a proposed terrace spacing is the distance from the terrace ridge to the next lower terrace channel measured along the natural flow direction. Maximum spacing for erosion control based on soil loss tolerance may be increased by as much as 10 percent to provide better location, alignment to accommodate farm machinery or to reach a satisfactory outlet.

The methods that may be used to determine terrace spacing include the current NRCS accepted erosion prediction technology or the Vertical Interval Equation. Refer to the current NRCS accepted erosion prediction software and user guide to determine soil loss. Refer to the Engineering Field Handbook, Chapter 8, Terraces for use of the Vertical Interval Equation.

Alignment. To accommodate farm machinery and farming operations, design cropland terraces with long gentle curves. When multiple terraces are used in a field, design the terraces to be as parallel to one another as practicable.

Capacity. Design terraces to have enough capacity to control the runoff from a 10-year frequency, 24-hour storm without overtopping. For terrace systems designed to control excess runoff or to function with other structures, choose a larger design storm that is appropriate to the risk associated with the



Eligibility



Participant Eligibility

- Deed or Lease
- Farm & Tract Number
- Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)
- Highly Erodible Land & Wetland Compliant (AD-1026)

Land Eligibility

- Improving Working Lands



Eligibility



What is a Resource Concern?

NRCS planners inventory the resources on the land to evaluate their condition.

Soil, Water, Air, Plant, Animal Resource bases

Examples include erosion, degraded water quality, plant health



What is EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- **Helping People Help the Land.**
- **Provides financial incentives to producers to adopt conservation practices to resolve resource concerns on their operation.**
- **Provides technical assistance to producers to effectively adopt conservation practices and resolve resource concerns.**
- **Available for land uses Non-Industrial Private Forest (NIPF), Crop, Pasture, Farmsteads**
- **Available in all Counties and States.**



EQIP Funding

- **EQIP is the main funding program**
 - Has targeted fund pools and initiatives within it (Local Work Group, Beginning Farmer)
- **Other Programs related to EQIP**
 - RCPP - Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - GLRI - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- **Some Fund Pools are available statewide, and others are limited to certain geographic areas.**
- **Average 1,300-1,500 new contracts annually with an average of \$30 M over the last 3 yr**



Ephemeral gully erosion

Soil erosion that results in small gullies in the same flow area that can be obscured by tillage.



Objective: Control the formation of ephemeral gullies.

When land use is: Crop

Tools	Planning Criteria
Client input and/or planner observation	No ephemeral gullies observed.



Grassed Waterway



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Connection to Soil Health



- **EQIP contains over 100 conservation practices, including soil health management practices**

Payment Rates

Cover crops \$33/ac (no term) \$64/ac (multiple species)

No Till \$20/ac

Nutrient Management \$15/ac (with manure)

Prescribed Grazing \$25/ac - \$60/ac

Conservation Crop Rotation \$10/ac





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CSP – Conservation Stewardship Program



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What is CSP? (Conservation Stewardship Program)

- **Rewards participants for current conservation occurring on operation and provides incentive to adopt new conservation activities.**
- **5-year contracts (must enroll entire NIPF or Ag operation)**
 - Has opportunity to renew for another contract
- **Eligible land uses - Non-Industrial Private Forest (NIPF), Crop, Pasture, Farmsteads, Associated Agland**
- **Available in all Counties and States.**



Conservation Stewardship Program

- **Program builds upon conservation practices available in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**
- **Offers practices, enhancements and bundles of enhancements**

Example

- Practice: Forage & Biomass Planting (512)
- Enhancement: Forage plantings that help increase organic matter in depleted soils (E512B)
- Bundle: Multiple Enhancements that complement each other.

- **Entire Operation Included**



Conservation Stewardship Program

Land Use	Payment Rate / acre
Farmstead	\$7.50
Cropland	\$7.50
Pasture	\$3.00
Non-Industrial Private Forest (NIPF)	\$0.50
Associated Ag Land	\$0.50



Conservation Stewardship Program

- **Opportunity for Renewal contracts**
- **No Minimum Acreage Requirement**
- **\$1500 minimum payment per year per contract**
- **490 contracts covering 162,960 acres totaling \$15.5 M enrolled during FY2022**



CSP Enhancements for Soil Health

(This is not an exhaustive list.)

Natural Resources, Biodiversity & Buffers

- Conservation Cover
- Critical Area Planting
- Field Border
- Hedgerow Planting
- Herbaceous Weed Control
- Riparian Buffer
- Wildlife Habitat

Pest Management

- Conservation Cover
- Cover Crops
- Crop Rotation
- Pollinator Habitat
- Integrated Pest Management
- Upland Habitat Management

Crops, Soil & Water

- Conservation Cover
- Cover Crop
- Residue and Tillage Management
- Reduced Till
- Irrigation Water Management
- Mulching
- Nutrient Management
- Riparian Buffer
- Filter Strip
- Forage and Biomass Planting

Livestock & Wildlife

- Brush Management
- Manage Livestock Access to Water Sources
- Wildlife Corridor Development
- Grazing Management to Improve Wildlife & Soil Health
- Forage Harvest Management
- Bird Habitat Development
- Pollinator and/or Beneficial Insect Habitat Development

When to Apply for Programs

When: NOW!!

- NRCS Accepts program applications on a continuous basis but evaluates applications based on application deadlines

Do I fill out an application now or wait for NRCS to come to my farm?

- Either one, we always accept applications



Find your Local Service Center

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wi/home/>

The image shows a screenshot of the USDA Wisconsin NRCS website. The top navigation bar includes 'About Us', 'National Centers', and 'State Websites'. A search bar is present. Below the navigation, there are tabs for 'Topics', 'Programs', 'Newsroom', and 'Contact Us'. The 'Contact Us' tab is highlighted with a yellow circle, and a blue arrow points to the 'Local Service Centers' link within its dropdown menu. Below the navigation, there is a 'Caring for Wetlands Video Series' section with a video thumbnail. To the right, there is a 'Popular Topics' section. The main content area features a 'Local Service Centers' heading, a 'CONTACT US LOCAL SERVICE CENTERS' banner with a water drop icon, and a list of links: 'Local Service Centers', 'State Office', and 'Feedback Forms'. Below this, there are sections for 'Wisconsin NRCS Directories' and 'National NRCS Directories'. The 'National NRCS Directories' section has a blue arrow pointing to the link '> Locate a Local Service Center near you ☞'. The bottom right corner of the page features the text 'Natural Resources Conservation Service' and the URL 'nrcs.usda.gov/'.



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i We are committed to delivering USDA services to America's farmers and ranchers while taking safety measures in response to the pandemic. Many USDA Service Centers are open for visitors, but some may remain open by appointment only. Contact your local Service Center to determine their open status or make an appointment. Service Center staff continues to work with agricultural producers via phone, email, and other digital tools. Learn more at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

[USDA Service Centers](#) are locations where you can connect with Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, or Rural Development employees for your business needs. Enter your state and county below to find your local service center and agency offices. If this locator does not work in your browser, please visit offices.usda.gov

Visit the Risk Management Agency website to find a [regional or compliance office](#) or to find an [insurance agent](#) near you.

State

County



Application Process

- **Applications are accepted continuously**
- **Batching occurs at least once a year**
- **Applicants apply with their local NRCS office. NRCS staff will assist with applicant and land eligibility.**
- **After application is submitted, NRCS staff will complete a site visit and work on planning documents.**



Application Process

- **Applications will be prioritized and ranked.**
- **Highest ranked applications will be funded first until funds run out. Possible that additional funds may be available later in the year.**
- **NRCS staff works with applicant to complete contract paperwork.**
 - Practices applied for cannot be started prior to the applicant receiving an approved contract.



Expectations of Participants

- Be a decision maker in the planning process – planning process is participant driven. Participant must be actively engaged in making decisions on best alternative and timeline for implementation.
- These are contracts, non-compliance can result in termination of contract and a need for participant to pay back funds.
- Realistic Expectations – Entering a contract requires a time commitment and financial commitment.
- Communicate with Local Service Center Staff!!!



How can Partners help NRCS?

Education and Outreach

Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)

Field Days

Pasture Walks

Producer or Partner Led Efforts

Demonstration Farms



How can Partners help NRCS?



Connect with state Public Affairs specialist

Local field office staff

Discuss upcoming deadlines for Programs

Have a basic understanding of Programs

State Technical Advisory Committee



Soil Health Principles



**Carbon sequestration
Nutrient cycling
Infiltration**

Maximize Continuous Living Roots



**Compaction
Fuel + fertilizer inputs**

Minimize Disturbance



**FOUR SOIL
HEALTH
PRINCIPLES**

**Pest pressure
Pollinator habitat**

Maximize Biodiversity



**Erosion
Weather resilience**

Maximize Soil Cover



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Soil Health Practices



Cover Crops
Planting green

Maximize Continuous Living Roots



Minimize Disturbance



No-till
Reduced tillage
Pest management

Goal: Mimic nature and provide sustainably for future generations

FOUR SOIL HEALTH PRINCIPLES

Maximize Biodiversity



Maximize Soil Cover



Residue management
Conversion to perennials

Crop rotation
Integrating livestock



Interseeding

Maximize Roots, Cover, Biodiversity



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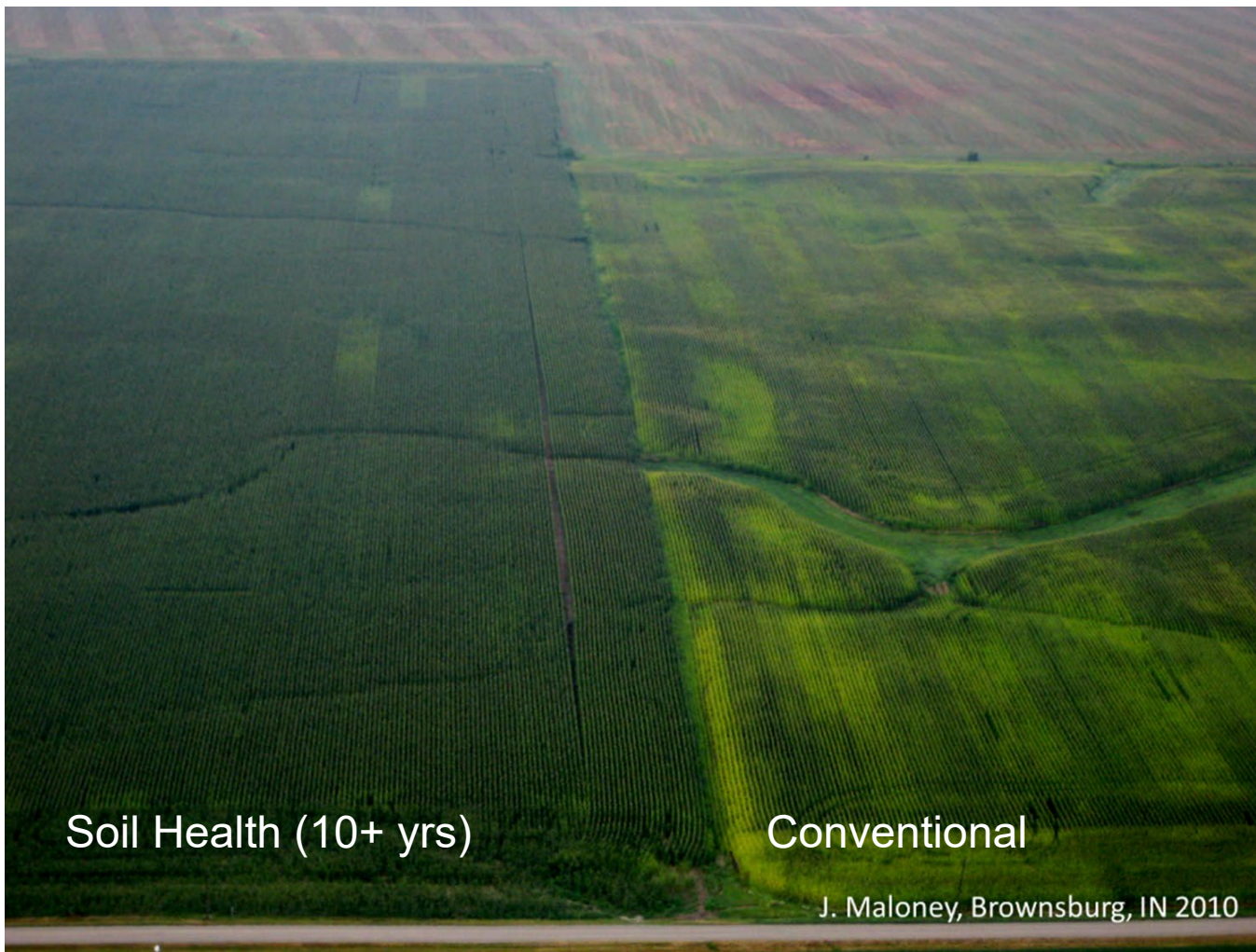
Planting Green

Maximize Roots + Cover + Minimize Disturbance



Benefits of Soil Health

Weather Resilience



Soil Health (10+ yrs)

Conventional

J. Maloney, Brownsburg, IN 2010

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WI Soil Health Success Stories



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The Proof is in the Soil

Fox Demo Farm Thrives Through Use of Cover Crops and No-Till

Above: (L to R) Barry Bubolz, NRCS District Conservationist and GLRI Coordinator, with Derek Van De Hey, New Horizon's Dairy, viewing giant cover crop radishes in a mixed cover crop field with sunflowers, peas, tillage radishes, clovers and turnips.

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Cultivating Plum Pride Holsteins' Future

Host of Conservation Practices Regenerates Dairy

Above: (L to R) Jeremy Freund, Outagamie County Project Coordinator; Marv Biese, Plum Pride Holsteins; Adam Abel, NRCS Soil Conservationist; and Wes Kotila, Outagamie County Engineering Technician; at Plum Pride Holsteins checking on heifers while they graze.

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Leaving a Conservation Legacy

Fifth-Generation Farmers Revitalize Dairy Operation

Above: (L to R) Bill and Tom Vande Wattering, Vande Wattering Farms; Barry Bubolz, NRCS District Conservationist and GLRI Coordinator, next to the water quality monitoring station on a Vande Wattering farm field.

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Conservation Collaboration

Glacierland RC&D Partners to Implement Farm Bill Programs

Above: (L to R) Nick Myers (Glacierland RC&D), Matt Rataczak (NRCS Manitowoc County District Conservationist), Betsy Doolittle (NRCS Area Resource Conservationist) and Ryan Jacques (Glacierland RC&D), by the rainfall simulator at the Sunset on the Farm field day in Brown County. Staff operated the simulator to demonstrate to participants the importance of soil health.



Contact Info



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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
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(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

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