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**NRCS Tops $100 Million in Conservation Funding to Iowa Farmers**

**DES MOINES, IA, DEC. 9, 2024 —** USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) obligated a record $112.1 million in conservation practice funding to Iowa farmers in fiscal year 2024 (FY24), through 1,960 conservation program contracts that will help treat natural resource concerns such as soil erosion and water quality on nearly 400,000 acres.

Conservation program contracts typically run three to five years, depending on the program. The obligated funds are about $26 million more than the prior record of $85.8 million in 2023, and nearly $40 million more than the prior five-year average.

**IRA vs Farm Bill Funding**
Iowa NRCS staff obligated about 42 percent ($47.2 million) of the FY24 conservation funding through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The IRA, signed into law in 2022, addresses clean energy and climate change. IRA conservation funding targets climate-smart agriculture mitigation and helps farmers build resilience in their operations.

Iowa NRCS State Conservationist Jon Hubbert said many of the conservation practices Iowa producers are adopting through the IRA offer stacked benefits. “Not only are practices like cover crops, no-till farming, and tree planting good for air quality, but they can also benefit the soil, water quality, and provide wildlife habitat,” he said.

NRCS staff obligated the other 58 percent of its Iowa financial assistance program funding through the 2018 Farm Bill, which was extended another year. “We are thankful for the support from Congress that allows us to implement record amounts of conservation on Iowa’s private lands,” said Hubbert. “With the importance of agriculture in Iowa, there is a strong need for a variety of conservation practices to help treat our natural resources and sustain agriculture for future generations.”

**Program Breakdown**
NRCS provides conservation funding through four primary programs authorized through the Farm Bill: Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

**Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**: CSP helps farmers build a customized plan to meet their conservation goals and needs. Iowa NRCS obligated $29.2 million through new and renewed CSP contracts during the past year to 594 Iowa landowners who signed five-year CSP contracts. The CSP contracts will cover 204,743 acres.

Statewide leaders in CSP:

* **Jackson County** led the state for the second consecutive year with 41 new and renewed CSP contracts, totaling 7,056 acres, with an obligation of $1.5 million.
* **Winneshiek County** was next with 30 contracts, covering 2,844 acres and an obligation of $790,928.
* **Cerro Gordo County** had the third most contracts with 25, covering 17,330 acres, obligating nearly $1.2 million.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** NRCS contracted about 58 percent of new federal conservation funding in Iowa through EQIP – a voluntary program that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality, where farmers can choose from a conservation practice list developed at the county level to treat local resource issues.

Through EQIP, NRCS obligated $65.5 million covering 164,073 acres through 1,212 contracts. Cover crops, brush management, and practices to support livestock grazing such as prescribed grazing, watering facility, pipeline, heavy use protection area and fence were the most adopted practices in Iowa in 2024.

Statewide leaders in EQIP:

* **Van Buren County** led the state with 64 new EQIP contracts that will help treat resource concerns on 5,953 acres at an obligation of more than $1.6 million.
* **Wayne County** was second in Iowa with 41 EQIP contracts that will cover 4,817 acres for a total obligation of nearly $1.4 million**.**
* **Jefferson County** had the third most EQIP contracts with 34, covering 3,231 acres, obligating $2.8 million.

Statewide EQIP highlights:

* Through the **IRA Soil Health Initiative**, Iowa NRCS obligated $14.8 million for cover crops on 44,918 acres through 140 contracts.
* Through **Source Water Protection (SWP)**, Iowa NRCS staff obligated nearly $6.4 million for select practices that address groundwater and surface water source protection. The 90 new contracts will help protect source water on about 21,000 acres.
* Iowa NRCS obligated 29 percent of EQIP funds ($19.1 million) to **historically underserved producers** – which includes beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged, veterans, and limited resource producers.

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):** Iowa NRCS provided nearly $9 million to Iowa farmers in 2024 through RCPP projects that will help treat natural resource concerns on about 20,000 acres. NRCS assisted producers through nine RCPP partnership agreements and 144 contracts.

RCPP promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners through agreements and program contracts. The nine RCPP projects in Iowa focus primarily on improving water quality and soil health.

**Easements:** Through ACEP, NRCS helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms through conservation easements. Overall, there are 1,724 conservation easements in Iowa covering 197,627 acres.

During fiscal year 2024, Iowa NRCS obligated $8.4 million by helping landowners place agricultural land into 10 new conservation easements. They include:

* **IRA-Wetland Reserve Easements:** Four landowners contracted with NRCS to place 277 acres into new wetland easements through IRA. NRCS paid $2.1 million for land acquisition and restoration on the four easements.
* **ACEP-Wetland Reserve Easements:** Two landowners contracted with NRCS to place 181 acres into new wetland easements through ACEP. NRCS paid $1.4 million for land acquisition and restoration for the two easements.
* **ACEP-Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnerships:** Four conservation partners entered into agreements with NRCS to carry out high priority wetland protection, restoration, or enhancement to improve wildlife on private lands. Through the four agreements, NRCS obligated about $4.4 million covering 469 acres for future wetlands.

NRCS staff also wrote 23,020 conservation plans during fiscal year 2024, which covers more than two million acres. Conservation plans help producers target and address natural resource concerns such as soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat, in addition to addressing climate change and improving soil health.

For more detailed Iowa NRCS program results and information, go to: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/2024At-A-Glance.pdf>.

**Photo Caption:**

Rooney\_1263 – (<https://flic.kr/p/2pNwRvW>) Iowa farmers like the Rooneys in Sheffield are adopting conservation practices with planning and financial assistance through NRCS to take their operation to the next level of sustainable agriculture.

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*\*Individual county conservation program results are available upon request.*