



Conservation Programs & Practices for: **Forest Land**

About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with agricultural and forest producers to protect and conserve natural resources on our nation's private lands.

NRCS administers conservation programs funded primarily through the current Farm Bill (Agricultural Act of 2014), and offers financial and technical assistance to landowners to address high priority resource concerns through the implementation of conservation practices. Contact your local NRCS field office for assistance.

The 2014 Farm Bill

The 2014 Farm Bill, enacted on February 7, 2014, offers voluntary conservation programs that benefit both agricultural and forest producers and the environment.

The conservation provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill continue to build on the conservation gains made by U.S. citizens over the past decades and previous farm bills.

Contact NRCS:

Massachusetts USDA Service Centers

- Greenfield: 413-772-0384 ext.3
- Hadley: 413-585-1000 ext. 3
- Holden: 508-829-4477 ext. 3
- Pittsfield: 413-443-1776 ext. 3
- Westford: 978-692-1904 ext. 3
- West Wareham: 508-295-5151 ext. 2
- West Yarmouth: 508-771-6476

The 2014 Farm Bill recognizes the importance of forest land with provisions that promote healthy, sustainable forests and protect rare ecosystems and rare species habitat. Through the Farm Bill, NRCS offers conservation programs to help forest land owners protect and manage their natural resources.

We offer technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices that are part of your forest management plan through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Massachusetts NRCS is working with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and MassWildlife to provide technical assistance for enhancing the health and diversity of forest land and wildlife habitat in forests.

Conservation practices eligible for financial assistance

Below is a partial list of forestry-related conservation practices eligible for financial compensation through EQIP. To be eligible for financial assistance, conservation practices need to be part of your forestry management plan.

For a complete list of eligible practices and payment rates, please visit us online or call your local NRCS field office.



Erosion control on existing forest roads



Early successional habitat



Firebreaks



Forest stand improvement

Invasive species control

Mast/apple tree release

Riparian forest buffers

Tree and shrub planting, pruning and site preparation

NRCS Conservation Programs & Practices for Forest Land

Why are healthy forests important?

Healthy forests are a critical part of our nation's landscape. Forest lands provide clean air, carbon sequestration, climate change buffering, flood protection, wildlife habitat, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment.

Our forests work to keep us healthy by storing and filtering the water that we need to drink and live. Forests and forest products also provide important economic and energy benefits to individuals and communities.

Privately owned forests make up a substantial share of our forest resource base, but these forests are increasingly being divided into smaller parcels and are facing increasing threats from changes in climate, population and land use.

Wildfires, bark beetle outbreaks and other invasive species can damage the ability of forests to do their important work.

NRCS and partner organizations will assist you to develop and implement sustainable forest management plans that will protect our forest lands.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP helps farm and forest land owners maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt new conservation activities.

Who can apply?

- Private forest land owners who have forest management plans can apply for NRCS forestry assistance.
 - In Massachusetts, forest stewardship plans as well as most forest management, Chapter 61 and 61A plans will fulfill this requirement.
 - All forest management plans will be reviewed individually by NRCS to ensure that conservation principles have been addressed to NRCS standards.
 - If you need a forest management plan, NRCS funding may be available to help.
- There is no minimum acreage requirement to apply for EQIP or CSP, however, projects with more significant resource concerns are more likely to receive funding.

How and when do I apply?

- Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria is available on our website.
- To apply, you will need to file the following forms (also on our website):
 - Conservation Program Application (CCC-1200)
 - Adjusted Gross Income Certification (CCC-926)
 - Highly Erodible Land & Wetland Conservation Certification (AD-1026)
- A DUNS number, and registration and yearly renewal in the System for Award Management (SAM) will be required before contracts can be obligated and for payment eligibility determination.
- If your application is funded, you will be required to install and maintain your conservation practices according to NRCS standards.

Conservation Plans & Conservation Activity Plans

Your program application must be supported by an NRCS approved conservation plan, which provides documentation of the practices that could be used to address your natural resource concerns. We will work with you to develop an approved conservation plan.

You may also apply for financial assistance to hire Technical Service Providers (TSP) to develop a specialty plans called Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) to address certain land use activities or specific resource needs on your land.

Call your local NRCS field office or visit us online for more information.