



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



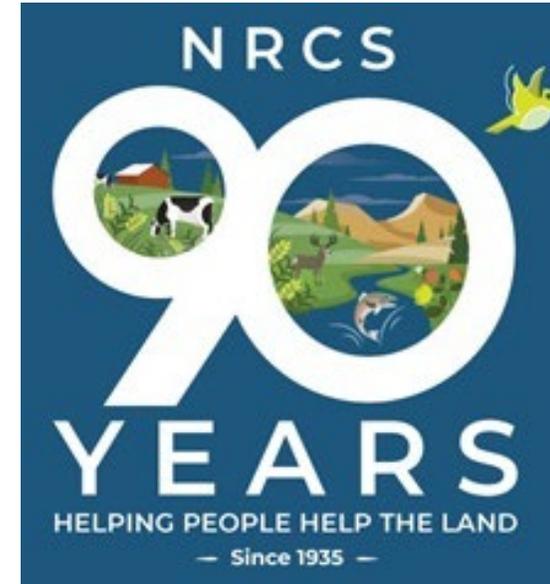
# Nebraska NRCS

January 2026

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

# A look back at NRCS (Nationally) in 2025

- **NRCS turned 90 years old in 2025**
  - Soil Erosion Service to Soil Conservation Service, and now Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **NRCS Chief Aubrey Bettencourt**
  - March 2025
- **NRCS/ Chief's Priorities**



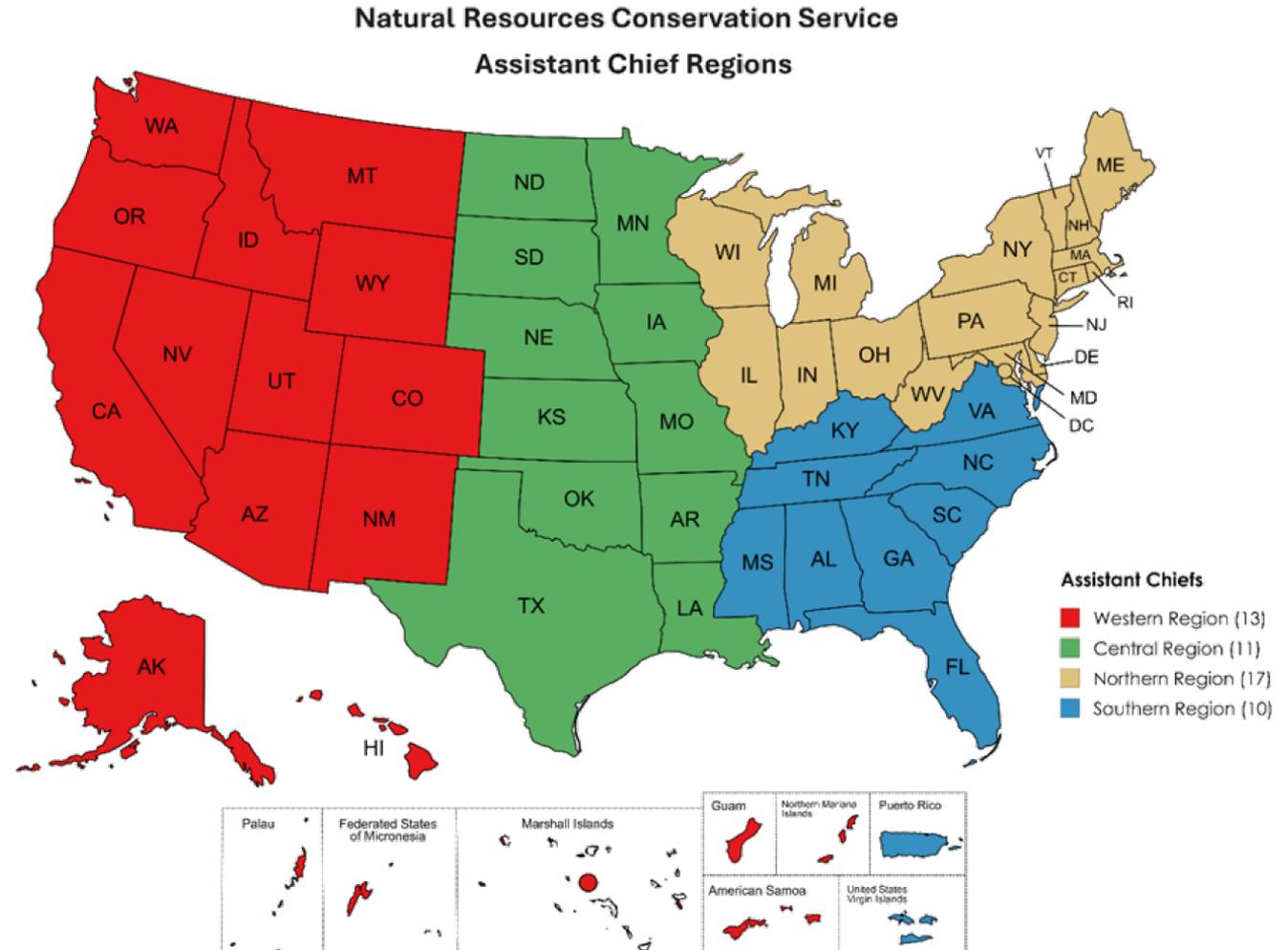
# NRCS Priorities

- 1. Preserve and Protect Agricultural Farmland**
- 2. Modernize NRCS Infrastructure and Technology**
- 3. Recenter Field Engagement and Technical Assistance**
- 4. Strengthen Partnerships by Streamline Processes and Accountability**
- 5. Shift to Outcome-Based Conservation and Farmer Empowerment**



# Office of Regional Conservationist (ORC)

- Four regional headquarters :
  - Central Region  
Headquarters: Lincoln, NE
- Bring leadership closer to producers.
- Streamline operations, improve accountability, and provide more direct support for conservation efforts for farmers and ranchers across different regions



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# Nebraska NRCS in 2025

- Helping people help the land
- “Farmers First” priority
- Farm Bill Programs
- Soil Health
- Partnerships
- Innovative Technology



...and more to come in 2026

# Review of Fiscal Year **2025** Program Accomplishments

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program – EQIP**
  - Obligated **\$36 million** across General, NWQI, and Organic Transition fund pools.
  - Approving **567 contracts** and treating over **240,000 acres**
- **Conservation Stewardship Program – CSP**
  - Obligated **\$32 million**
  - Approved **259 contracts** covering more than **550,000 acres**

# 2025 EQIP and CSP

- **Top Practices:**

- Brush management, cover crops, grazing and irrigation water management, and nutrient/ pest management

- **Special Initiatives:**

- Source Water Protection, Wildlife, Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, EQIP-CIC, and Livestock

- **State Initiatives:**

- Small Scale and Urban Ag, Tribal, Organic, Energy, and Conservation Activity Plans

- **National Efforts:**

- Joint Chiefs, Water Smart, and NWQI in key watersheds

## Review of Fiscal Year 2025 Program Accomplishments – cont'd

- **NRCS Watersheds Programs - Rehabilitation and Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO)**
  - **\$3.3** million in watershed planning payments
  - **26** active projects statewide
  - Rehabilitating aging watershed dams, new flood reduction projects, new watershed protection projects, and new irrigation water management projects.

## Review of Fiscal Year 2025 Program Accomplishments – cont'd

- **Agriculture Conservation Easement Program – ACEP**
  - **\$4 million** in wetland restoration and grassland easements
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program – RCPP**
  - Through collaborative efforts and leveraging public-private partnerships, RCPP expands funding opportunities across agricultural lands, watersheds, and natural resources—combining NRCS and partner resources for greater impact
  - **4 active projects with \$1.29 million** obligated, led by partners like The Nature Conservancy and Game and Parks
  - **NEW 2026 RCPP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) coming soon!**



# Conservation Reserve Program

## ■ Grassland CRP

- Nebraska ranked second nationally in Grassland CRP
- 594 accepted offers totaling over **151,000 acres**

## ■ General and Continuous CRP

- Sign-ups remained strong
- Over **48,000 acres** enrolled

# 2026 Program Allocations ..... as of January 2026

## ■ Environmental Quality Incentives Program – EQIP

- NRCS – Nebraska has been allocated approx. **\$44 million** in funding
- This is nearly double the initial allocation we started with in FY25
- A major portion of this \$44 million will be directed toward regenerative agriculture initiatives and associated regenerative ag practices
- **Regenerative Pilot Program** (next slide)

## ■ Conservation Stewardship Program – CSP

- NRCS – Nebraska has been allocated approx. **\$19 million** in funding
- This is a slight decrease in comparison to FY25

# NEW Regenerative Pilot Program (RPP)

- Launched in December 2025
- One application for CSP and EQIP
- Part of the “Make America Healthy Again” solution
- \$700 million initiative aimed at supporting American farmers in adopting regenerative agricultural practices to improve soil health, water quality, and overall farm productivity.
- As part of participating in Regenerative Pilot Program there are 4 requirements that must be met.

A graphic featuring a dark green background with a thin horizontal line. The text "Regenerative Pilot Program" is written in white, sans-serif font. The background of the graphic shows a close-up of green leaves.

Regenerative Pilot Program

# Regenerative Pilot Program Requirements

1. **Whole-farm assessment**
2. **One primary regenerative management practice** (see next slide).
3. **Soil health testing** in the first and last year of the contract - **CEMA 216**.
4. **The whole-farm assessment includes all resource concerns, and it must meet NRCS planning criteria in the soil and water resource categories.**

# Primary Practices eligible for RPP:

- Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
- Contour Farming (330)
- Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop (331)
- Cover Crop (340)
- Drainage Water Management (554)
- Forage Harvest Management (511)
- Forest Stand Improvement (666)
- Irrigation Water Management (449)
- Mulching (484)
- Nutrient Management (590)
- Pest Management Conservation System (595)
- Grazing Management (528)
- Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)
- Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced (345)
- Strip cropping (585)

# CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing

**\*\*\* CEMA = Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity \*\*\***

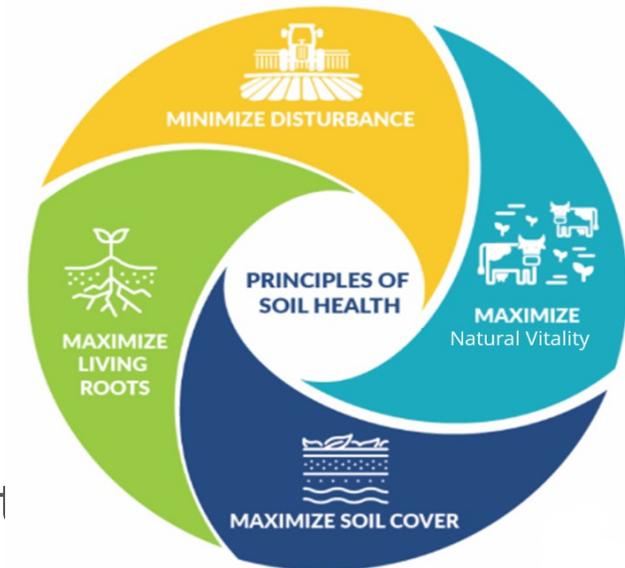
Through the planning process customers should be encouraged to plan Soil Health Testing to provide a sampling protocol that provides comprehensive results of their whole farm. At a minimum Soil Health Testing must be planned on one planning land unit.

Extent will depend on the client's operation in combination with the client's objective.

- Crop Rotation
- Soil variability
- Livestock vs no livestock
- Nutrient sources
- Client's desired extent of testing
- Etc...

When does Soil Health Testing need to be planned?

- Minimally at beginning and end of the conservation plan / contract



# Soil Health Testing CEMA 216

## Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMAs)

CEMA are provided by Qualified Individuals (QIs). QIs self-certify they meet qualification criteria stated in a CEMA document. Professional licenses, accreditations, certifications, and experience typify qualification criteria for CEMA QIs. A QI may, or may not also hold TSP certification.

A QI for Soil Health Testing CEMA 216 meets one of the following:

- 1) Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) or Certified Professional Agronomist (CPAg) through the American Society of Agronomy or a Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS) or Associate Professional Soil Scientist (APSS) through the Soil Science Society of America.
- 2) Technical Service Providers (TSP) certified for Soil Health Management Plan Conservation Practice Activity (116) or Soil Health Management Design and Implementation Activity (162).
- 3) An associate degree or higher in an agricultural or soil science field with at least 2 years of experience collecting soil for laboratory analysis.
- 4) Individuals working under the guidance or management of a QI are allowed to collect soil samples for this CEMA.

*Excerpt from CEMA 216 Soil Health Testing document*



# Thank You!

## Questions?

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