



Point Blue
Conservation
Science



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Cost-Share, Conservation Incentive Programs, & Support for Ranchers

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Outline

- USDA NRCS Background
- NRCS Programs and Assistance
 - EQIP, CSP, and Technical Assistance
- EQIP Conservation Practices:
 - Cropland
 - Pasture and Rangeland
 - Water Conservation
- CDFA Programs
 - Healthy Soils Program
 - State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP)
- Zero Foodprint
 - Restore Grants and compost cost-share
- Point Blue Conservation Science Roots Program
- Xerces Habitat Kits



NRCS California

- During the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, Congress recognized that "the wastage of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands...is a menace to the national welfare" and established the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as a permanent agency in the USDA.
- SCS's name was changed in '94, to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to better reflect the broad scope of the agency.
- NRCS provides America's farmers, ranchers and landowners with financial and technical assistance to put conservation on the ground and protect natural resources.
- Practices enhance sustainability on crop, grazing, and forest lands.

Our Mission: We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.



Our Vision: A world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation.



NRCS helps private landowners improve the health of their operations while protecting our natural resources for the future.

NRCS Programs & Assistance

► **Financial Assistance:**

► Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.

► Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Helps build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation.

► **Technical Assistance:**

- NRCS offers technical assistance at no cost. Producers can use our personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to make informed decisions about their land.
- Technical Service Providers (TSP) can also help producers plan, design and implement conservation practices or develop conservation activity plans to improve their agricultural operations. For more information on the Technical Service Provider program, visit the TSP page.
- Technical assistance is also offered through our Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program.

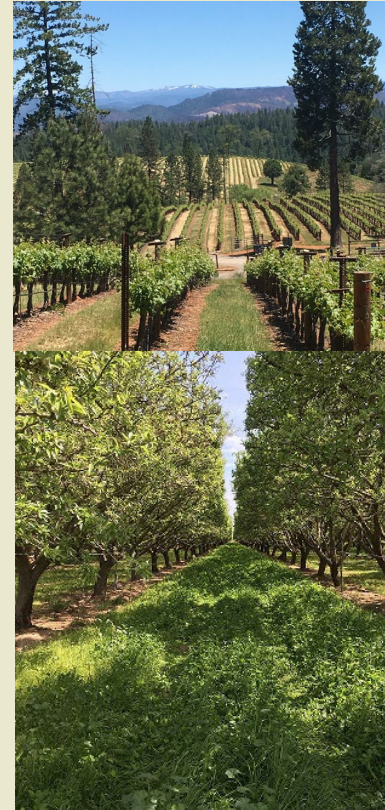
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns:

- ▶ Water Quality
- ▶ Air Quality
- ▶ Soil health
- ▶ Soil Erosion
- ▶ Wildlife Habitat

How It Works

We work one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to **help solve on-farm resource issues**.



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



Pasture & Rangeland Potential Conservation Practices:

- Brush Management (woody plant removal)
- Herbaceous Weed Treatment
- Fence (cross-fencing only)
- Pasture and Hay Planting
- Range Planting
- Prescribed Grazing (managing animal movement)
- Livestock Pipeline
- Watering Facility (troughs for livestock and wildlife)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Water Conservation Potential Conservation Practices :

- Irrigation Pipeline
- Irrigation Reservoir (not including ponds)
- Microirrigation
- Sprinkler System
- Irrigation Water Management (manage soil moisture & promote plant growth)



Other NRCS Programs:

► Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

CSP is designed to reward agricultural producers and forest landowners for being good stewards of the land by incentivizing them to maintain and/or improve the quality of natural resources.

How It Works

We work one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines and **enhances existing efforts**, based on management objectives for your operation.

► National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI)

Helps agricultural producers meet air quality compliance requirements by providing technical and financial assistance for improving agricultural operations. Mostly replacement of older diesel-powered tractors



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Pasture & Rangeland Potential Conservation Enhancements:

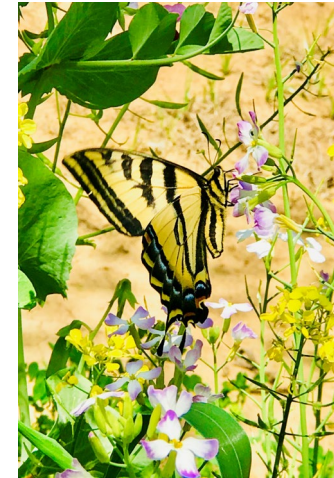
- Access Control: reducing nutrients/pathogens in surface water.
- Brush management: improve wildlife habitat.
- Fuel Break: grazing to reduce fire risk.
- Fence: wildlife friendly fencing.
- Herbaceous weed treatment: create desired plant communities.
- Prescribed Grazing: monitor grazing to improve forage quantity/quality, plant productivity/health, riparian and watershed function, and use body condition scoring for herd health.
- Pasture and Hay Planting: increase organic matter, pasture quality & composition, reduce erosion, enhance wildlife/pollinator habitat.



Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Wildlife Habitat Potential Conservation Enhancements:

- Riparian Herbaceous Cover: increase for sediment and nutrient reduction & wildlife habitat.
- Riparian Forest Buffer: increase stream shading for temperature reduction & wildlife habitat.
- Forest Stand Improvement: provide snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris for wildlife habitat, summer roosting habitat for native forest-dwelling bat species.
- Tree/Shrub Establishment: planting for wildlife food.
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management: manage upland landscapes for wildlife benefit.



Helping People Help the Land

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**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Natural Resources Conservation Service

California Department of Food and Agriculture



► Healthy Soils Incentive Program

- “Stems from the California Healthy Soils Initiative, a collaboration of state agencies and departments that promotes the development of healthy soils on California's farmlands and ranchlands.”
- Financial incentives directly to California growers and ranchers to implement conservation management practices that sequester carbon, reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHGs), and improve soil health.
- <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/IncentivesProgram.html>

► State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET)

- “Provides financial assistance in the form of grants to implement irrigation systems that reduce greenhouse gases and save water on California agricultural operations. Eligible system components include (among others) soil moisture monitoring, drip systems, switching to low pressure irrigation systems, pump retrofits, variable frequency drives and installation of renewable energy to reduce on-farm water use and energy.”
- <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/sweep/>





CDFA – Healthy Soils Program

- ▶ Three-year agreements, max of \$100,000 per project
- ▶ \$11 million expected to be awarded in 2024 (down from \$25 million in 2021-2022 cycle)
- ▶ For implementation of NEW practices
- ▶ Three categories of agricultural operations: Orchard or Vineyard, Cropland, and Grazing Land

Example practices:

- Compost application
- Hedgerow planting
- Mulching
- Range planting
- Tree / shrub establishment
- Residue and tillage management
- Alley Cropping
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Cover Crop
- Field Border
- Riparian Forest Buffer

CDFA SWEEP

- ▶ The proposed SWEEP project must be on a California agricultural operation.
 - ▶ For the purposes of this program, CDFA defines an agricultural operation as row, vineyard, field and tree crops, commercial nurseries, nursery stock production, and greenhouse operations producing food crops or flowers as defined in Food and Agricultural Code section 77911
- ▶ \$21 million expected to be awarded from 2023 / 2024
- ▶ Max requests – up to \$200,000 per project
- ▶ CDFA prohibits SWEEP recipients from using grant funds to:
 - ▶ Expand existing agricultural operations (producers must not use funding to convert additional new acreage to farmland).
 - ▶ Install new groundwater wells or increase well depth.
 - ▶ Test new technology or perform research.

Examples of allowable costs include: • Installation of photovoltaic panels to power irrigation systems • All components of irrigation systems • Sensor hardware and telemetry • Software associated with sensors and weather stations • Flow meters • Permits



Zero Foodprint

- ▶ Bay Area based non-profit investing in regenerative agriculture and carbon offsets
- ▶ Restore Grants
 - ▶ <https://www.zerofoodprint.org/restore-ca-apply>
 - ▶ Awarding up to \$125,000 in CA, up to \$25,000 per project
 - ▶ Project selection based on the cost per ton of carbon sequestered
 - ▶ Example practices: no till, reduced till, conservation cover, forage & biomass planting, silvopasture, compost, mulching, nutrient management, alley cropping



Zero Foodprint



- ▶ Compost Connector
 - ▶ Compost cost “offset” – discount for compost purchased!
 - ▶ <https://www.zerofoodprint.org/compost>
 - ▶ Year-round!
 - ▶ Minimum of 20 tons of compost
 - ▶ Simple application and reimbursement process
 - ▶ <https://www.zerofoodprint.org/cc-apply>



Point Blue Conservation Science



**Roots Program – Wildlife
Habitat and Community
Resilience on Working
Lands**



**Projects developed with
Point Blue ecologist /
Partner Biologist (me!)**



**Traditional style grant
with direct
reimbursement for
actual expenses
- requests up to
~\$100,000**



**Funding provided by
the Wildlife
Conservation Board
(State) - Practices must
benefit wildlife**



Examples:

Hedgerow planting
Oak woodland restoration
Riparian restoration
Invasive species removal
Wildlife piles / structures



**Point Blue
Conservation
Science**

*Request for Proposals – Round 2 coming soon!

Keep an eye out & learn more: <https://www.pointblue.org/our-work/restoration-grants/>



XERCES
SOCIETY
for Invertebrate Conservation

Xerces

- ▶ <https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/habitat-kits/california>
- ▶ “California Monarch and Habitat Kits”
- ▶ Simple project proposal form to request plants for improving pollinator habitat, lots of milkweed!





Xerces Pollinator Kits

- ▶ Types of kits:
 - ▶ Wildflower Grassland Kits – 600 herbaceous plugs adapted for upland soils / conditions, 5400 sq. ft. coverage on 3ft spacing
 - ▶ Riparian Wildflower Kits – 600 herbaceous plugs adapted for riparian conditions, 5400 sq. ft. coverage on 3ft spacing
 - ▶ Hedgerow Kits – 90 woody and herbaceous transplants , estimated linear coverage of 540 feet, or 5400 sq. ft. at maturity with 6 ft spacing
 - ▶ Riparian Hedgerow Kits – 90 woody and herbaceous transplants adapted to riparian conditions, estimated linear coverage of 540 feet, or 5400 sq. ft. at maturity with 6 ft spacing
 - ▶ Garden Kits – 36 herbaceous transplants (estimated coverage of 576 sq. ft.)





CDFA – Healthy Soils Program Regional Block Grants

- Regional implementation of CDFA Healthy Soils Program
- Administered by regional producer organizations and/or RCDs
- Three-year agreements, max of \$200,000 per project
- Benefit – not competing within statewide grant program, funding is already designated to regions and grant program management occurs on a local scale
- [Central Sierra Healthy Soils Program](#)
- [Butte County Farm Bureau CDFA Healthy Soils Program Incentive Grant](#)
- [Solano Farm Bureau Healthy Soils Program](#)
- [Zero Foodprint Healthy Soils Program](#)



Western
Sustainable Agriculture
Research and Education

“SARE is a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute for Food and Agriculture that provides competitive grants and educational materials.

Western SARE believes that our programs must include the involvement of agricultural producers from inception to finish, and therefore we require producer involvement in the planning, design, implementation, and educational outreach of any funded project.”

➤ Farmer/Rancher Grant

- “Funds innovative producer-driven research and outreach...involves agricultural producers (main applicants) and technical advisor(s) implementing projects to address identified needs in sustainable agriculture.”
 - Project will conduct both research and outreach on a sustainable agriculture topic
 - 1-3 years in scope
- 1-2 producer – up to \$25,000
- 3+ producer – up to \$29,900

➤ Professional + Producer Grant

- “Agricultural technical advisor (main applicant) and producers implementing projects to address identified needs in sustainable agriculture.”
- “Projects integrate research and education to advance the three components of sustainable agriculture- environmental, economic, and social- and use innovative educational outreach to disseminate new knowledge to producers and other agricultural stakeholders.”
- Minimum 3 producers
- \$85,000 limit/one-three years in scope

Learn more at: <https://western.sare.org/grants/>

A rancher self-assessment, designed *by* ranchers *for* ranchers.

- 5 Modules
 - Forage Management
 - Soil Health
 - Drought Management
 - Wildlife Management
 - Generational Succession
- Each module contains a set of multiple-choice or short-answer questions.
- Based on responses, the CRSA defines areas where the rancher is meeting best practices, where doing even better, and where improvements could be made.
 - Responses direct rancher to a Library of relevant information.
- Ranchers are encouraged to complete the assessment with family and ranch associates.
- Can track progress over time.



Questions??



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*Thank you for attending the Healthy Soils for
Grazing Lands: Range Seeding Field Day*

Event Resources:

**Healthy Soils for Grazing Lands Field Day: Range Seeding -
Financial and Technical Resources - Amador Resource
Conservation District (amadorrcd.org)**

PLEASE COMPLETE OUR SURVEY ON YOUR WAY OUT.

