Farm Bill Conservation Programs

Standing Together for Migratory Birds

Ariel Alberti Wiegard
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

May 9, 2017
“The six million farms of the United States...form the basis of all other achievements of the American people.”

–Theodore Roosevelt (1905)
• 70% of U.S. privately owned, 50% of lower 48 in agriculture/forestry

• USDA spends 2x more on conservation on private lands than the USFWS spends on its entire budget

• Residential and stopover habitat, clean water, wetland protection/restoration, groundwater recharge, CO2 sequester...

• Recreational access and opportunity
The Farm Bill

• Approximately every 5 years

• 1933: Agricultural Adjustment Act
  • 1st Conservation Title

• 1985: Food Security Act

• 2014: Agricultural Act (Feb. 7)
  • Title II > Title I

• 2018: 2014 FB Expires (Sept. 30)
  • Now: hearings, briefings, marker bills
2018 Farm Bill Challenges & Opportunities

• Major changes in 2014 Farm Bill
• Tough spending environment

• Focus on Rural America
• Focus on Deregulation
• Farmers/Ranchers/Foresters = Hunters/Anglers/Wildlife Watchers
Farm Bill Conservation: Alphabet Soup

ACEP ALE CCA CCRP CREP CRP CSP CTA EQIP ESA FSA FWS GNA GSS HELC HFRP NRCS RCPP RMA SAFE SGI TSP USDA VPA-HIP WC WLFW WRE
Farm Bill Conservation: Key Program Types

Voluntary, incentive-based conservation
- Working Lands (CSP, EQIP)
- Reserve (CRP)
- Easements (ACEP)
- Partnerships (RCPP, VPA-HIP, WLFW)

Compliance
- Sodbuster, Swampbuster, Sodsaver
Working Lands Conservation
Working Lands Programs

• Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  • 1-10 year contracts

• Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
  • 5 year contracts with renewal option

• Cost-sharing and financial assistance

• Improve bottom line and increase conservation benefits
Conservation Reserve Program
Conservation Reserve Program

• Rental payments to landowners to plant cover instead of crops on environmentally sensitive land
  • 24 million acres enrolled
  • 10-15 year contracts

• Special practices for wildlife habitat and pollinators: SAFE and CREP
Conservation Easements
Conservation Easements

• Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
  • Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)
  • Grasslands of Special Significance (GSS)
  • Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

• Supports voluntary easements on private lands

• Permanent, 30-year, Term options
Conservation Partnerships
Conservation Partnerships

• Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
  • Leverages private funds
  • Targeted, coordinated, landscape-scale voluntary conservation

• Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentives Program (VPA-HIP)
  • Block grants to states
  • Opens public recreation access on private lands
  • Economic return + direct conservation funding
Conservation Partnerships

- **Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)**
  - Shared vision
  - Ag + conservation
  - Strategic approach
  - Target species with highest return
  - Regulatory predictability
  - ESA safe guards

- **Success Story: Greater Sage Grouse**
  - 1300 Landowners
  - 11 Western States
  - Prevented ESA Listing
Conservation Compliance
Conservation Compliance

“Conservation compact”
Key soil and wetland conservation provisions tied to farm program, conservation, and crop insurance payments

• 259 million acres in farm programs
• 283 million in crop insurance programs
• 62 million acres in conservation programs
Conservation Compliance

• **Swampbuster**: maintaining wetlands
  • 1.5-3.3 million acres protected
• **Sodbuster**: farming highly-erodible lands with a conservation plan
  • Reduces soil erosion by 1.5-3.3 million tons/year
• **Sodsaver**: protects remaining native prairies from conversion
  • 6 states: SD, ND, MN, IA, MT, NE
One more thing:
Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)
Conservation Technical Assistance

• $760 million for CTA in FY17
  • Marketing programs to landowners
  • Helping understand program requirements
  • Assisting with paperwork
  • Designing/executing conservation plans

• Without CTA, the rest of these programs wouldn’t work!
Thank You!