

# Conservation Incentives

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ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

finding the ways that work

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## Bog turtles make new friends: Landowners and livestock

As eastern pastureland vanishes, so does bog turtle habitat. Some farms are sold for development, others revert to forest and some pastures are converted to cropland. Any of these changes are bad news for bog turtles, which lose ideal homes when sunny meadows with waterlogged soils disappear. The good news is that prime opportunities for bog turtle conservation remain on surviving farms. In fact, the bog turtle's new friends may be goats, sheep and cows—and the farmers that raise them—all of whom can help restore the tiny turtle's habitat with a regimen of moderate grazing. And with over 90% of remaining bog turtle habitat on private lands, landowner management and incentives to encourage it are crucial for this species.

With its top shell measuring just 3 to 4½ inches in length, the bog turtle (*Glyptemys (=Clemmys) mublenbergii*) is the tiniest turtle in the U.S. It is also one of the rarest. Habitat loss was cited as the primary cause of decline in 1997, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

concurrently listed as “threatened by similarity of appearance.” Although bog turtles in Virginia, Tennessee and the Carolinas south into Georgia are also declining, they are considered less imperiled. Since the two populations cannot easily be distinguished, the dual listing aims to discourage another serious threat to the species: the lucrative, worldwide black market for collectors. In Tokyo's pet shops, bog turtles have fetched as much as \$2,500.

Although a bog turtle nestled into a muddy hoofprint in a wet pasture might appear as imperiled as one for sale in a pet shop, the turtle is likely to thrive in the pasture. Goats, sheep and cows prune encroaching vegetation before it can render habitat unusable by the bog turtle, which is an early successional species. Possibly today's livestock fill an ecological niche left vacant when yesterday's grazers—bison, elk and mastodon—vanished. And the livestock that devours woody vegetation may be

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The tiny bog turtle needs plenty of sunshine and soggy soils.

Andrea M. Teit

# Bog turtles

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replacing the wildfires that swept the east before fire suppression or the beaver activity that declined after the fur trade attracted hunters.

One of the first observers to note the bog turtle-livestock association was Dennis Herman, curator of living collections at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences. For over two decades he surveyed spring-fed wetlands for bog turtles, finding dozens of new populations and hundreds of the elusive turtles. Herman found that areas with cattle had fewer alders and maples than areas without cattle, and that habitats with fewer trees tended to have turtles. Cattle also spared Herman and other regional bog turtle experts the laborious work of controlling vegetation to maintain turtle habitat.

Herman's work led directly to the formation of Project Bog Turtle, an initiative of the North Carolina Herpetological Society. Project Bog Turtle secures voluntary "conservation lease agreements" with landowners in which they agree to allow access to sites by Herman and others for research and management and not to do knowingly anything likely to harm turtles.

Working at the opposite end of the bog turtle's range, Jason Tesauro, then biologist and bog turtle expert at the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, began experiments in 1999 to determine the potential of grazing animals to restore bog turtle habitat. He hoped to find a benign alternative to

herbicides, which harm non-target species, and the labor-intensive hand removal of invasive plants. After recruiting willing landowners, Tesauro established four experimental sites where he turned goats, sheep or cows loose on such notoriously invasive plants as purple loosestrife, reed canary grass, *Phragmites* and Japanese stilt grass. The grazers reduced unwanted vegetation on all sites, sometimes dramatically. Sheep specialized in reducing grass density and height, cows cleared brush and non-invasive woody plants and the horned goats, which Tesauro calls "living brush hogs," demolished encroaching brush and even large trees. Although other tools, such as targeted (rather than broadcast) herbicide use, remain in the bog turtle conservation toolkit, Tesauro's research clearly demonstrates grazing's potential for restoration. Expanded habitat restoration work followed in New Jersey, using state resources and U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funding.

In January 2004, Tesauro began work as a consultant at the Environmental Defense Center for Conservation Incentives (CCI), helping launch an initiative to restore bog turtle habitat in New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland. This effort involves close collaboration among state and federal agency staff and conservation groups to help direct incentive funding and technical assistance to landowners willing to restore habitat through moderate grazing,

mechanical cutting or controlled burns.

CCI's partners in Pennsylvania include two land trusts, Brandywine Conservancy and Natural Land Trust; The Nature Conservancy; Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission; and two federal agencies, FWS and U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In New York, CCI's partners are two state agencies, the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Natural Heritage Program; three non-governmental organizations, The Nature Conservancy, Hudsonia Ltd. and Friends of the Great Swamp; and again the two federal agencies, NRCS and FWS.

Up to six restoration projects are scheduled to start in New York this summer, with funding from the New York NRCS's Wetlands Reserve Program, FWS's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and CCI. These projects will feature ten-year restoration agreements between landowners and NRCS, which landowners can later convert to permanent conservation easements and receive additional NRCS compensation.

In Maryland, the Department of Natural Resources is in the process of amending its Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program agreement to include targeted enrollments of bog turtle habitat under a new practice standard for conservation of rare and declining habitats. If approved, enrollment could include up to 2,000 acres, a significant portion of Maryland's rare bog turtle habitat. The state is also teaming with



Left: Bog turtle site overgrown by vegetation before restoration. Right: Bog turtle site restored by prescribed grazing.

CCI to expand restoration work.

Other bog turtle funding opportunities include Farm Bill programs such as WHIP and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, as well as FWS's Private Stewardship Grants and Landowner Incentives Programs. To direct Farm Bill monies into bog turtle conservation, CCI is working with NRCS state offices to develop practice standards that outline habitat management techniques to guide landowners in restoring habitat. Regulatory incentives such as Safe Harbor Agreements may also further bog turtle conservation.

Despite their name, bog turtles are most likely to occupy sunny meadows with soft, wet soils and low-growing vegetation. They thrive in a mosaic of microhabitats that suits various turtle activities. For nesting, they seek the sunlight of an open canopy and hummocks, where *Carex stricta* or other sedge species and sphagnum moss offer slightly raised, drier habitat. These higher areas are crit-

ical because bog turtles nest within their core habitat, rather than travelling upland like most other turtle species. On these hummocks, years of plant growth decompose, generating the warmth needed to incubate turtle eggs.

Restored habitat must also include soggy soils. Here the turtles spend most of their time, half-buried in muck. The same near-steady water temperatures that cool turtles on hot days keep them warm on colder days. Diving into the soft soils offers a quick escape if a turtle is disturbed. And when it's time to hibernate in late September, a bog turtle moves to the base of a shrub or other sheltered area, where seeping groundwater ensures a constant temperature until it emerges into the warmth of May.

Other rare and declining wetland meadow species are also likely to benefit from bog turtle habitat restoration. Box turtles, spotted turtles, wood turtles, Baltimore checkerspot butterflies, bog buckmoths, sedge wrens and several rare

sedges and orchids are a few of the species sharing similar habitat requirements. Yet other beneficiaries are landowners themselves, who enjoy the visual appeal of the sunny meadow that replaces a dense, overgrown thicket. One is New Jersey horse farmer Tina Bachmann, who restored bog turtle habitat with the help of a few goats and sheep (see sidebar below).

-Margaret McMillan  
*endangered species specialist*  
*Environmental Defense*

This month Environmental Defense launched its multi-year Back from the Brink campaign aimed at moving 15 endangered or threatened species significantly nearer recovery with incentive programs that encourage landowners to restore and conserve habitat. The bog turtle is one of the species. More information about the campaign is at [www.backfromthebrink.org](http://www.backfromthebrink.org).

## Tina Bachmann: Horse farmer and turtle farmer

Tina Bachmann was looking for good land for horses, not federally-threatened bog turtles, when she, her husband and two sons settled on an eight-acre farm in the heart of northern New Jersey's Walkkill Valley.

Nonetheless, she soon learned about bog turtles while chatting about horse feed with a neighbor, and, as an avowed animal lover who once raised box turtles and now works for a veterinarian, she was immediately interested. After state biologist Jason Tesauro visited and explained the importance of sunlight for bog turtles and how grazing animals could restore habitat on her land, she enrolled in the state bog turtle project. With funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Tesauro brought goats to graze her land. Before long "it was as if they were my pets." The goats tackled the woody plants, brush and *Phragmites*, and last year, Bachmann acquired sheep, which specialize in pruning grasses, though neither grazer dines exclusively on its specialty.

Bachmann's animal expertise has come in handy when the project takes unexpected turns. She adopted an orphaned baby goat, and now feels a little like its foster mother. And when another goat trapped itself in a tree, she



Tina Bachmann

was the one-woman rescue squad. "It was 7 a.m.," she says with a sigh, "No one else was home. What else could I do when I heard it cry?" She counted 1-2-3, slid a knee under the 200-pound animal and hoisted it to safety.

Although she doesn't often see the secretive bog turtles, she doesn't expect to. "They're part of nature. You protect them and leave them alone." Meanwhile, she enjoys the transformation wrought by the goats and sheep, which have turned a tangled thicket, "a bunch of weeds," into "a really nice meadow," for her horses. "And," she says with another sigh, "I've become interested in goats. I own three now."

Courtesy Tina Bachmann

# Special project Farm Bill funding will go to at-risk North Carolina species

**F**ragmentation of the landscape, diminished air and water quality and habitat alteration have significantly reduced the natural diversity of North Carolina, one of the biologically richest states in the country. Virtually every grouping of animal species, from mammals to birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates, has declined dramatically in diversity and sheer numbers. As it is with the state's fauna, so it is with its flora. Today, 700 of the state's more than 4,000 plant species are considered rare or extremely rare.

Two highly imperiled North Carolina natural communities, freshwater aquatic systems and Piedmont prairies, will receive much-needed Farm Bill funding and priority attention following an ad hoc working group's successful effort. The group first identified these natural communities as having a high potential to benefit from private lands stewardship, then worked with U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state staff to establish funding and prac-

tice standards for landowners willing to restore and protect these habitats.

In 2003, the protection of at-risk species was established as a national priority for the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and other Farm Bill programs. Many members of the North Carolina State Technical Committee (STC), the group that advises the NRCS State Conservationist on Farm Bill program implementation, immediately realized that improving Farm Bill incentive programs could significantly advance at-risk species conservation.

In May 2003, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) and North Carolina Environmental Defense began meeting with an ad hoc group,

including NRCS technical staff, and representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the state's Natural Heritage Program, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and The North

Carolina Nature Conservancy. (SELC also formally partnered with the Environmental Defense Center for Conservation Incentives (CCI) last summer to enable closer collaboration on this working group and related activities.)

After meeting regularly for four months, the group determined Piedmont prairie and freshwater aquatic species were the most likely of the state's declining species to benefit from improved stewardship on active farm and forestlands.

*More than one-quarter of freshwater fishes, and three out of four freshwater mussels in North Carolina are designated as rare and in need of special protection. Several of the best remaining sections of the state's aquatic habitat—like the Upper Tar, Dan and Little Tennessee Rivers—are being degraded by runoff from farms and forests. Harvesting crops and timber at the water's edge and permitting livestock in streams threatens the viability of these globally significant watersheds.*

The ad hoc group identified several conservation practices for which NRCS could offer landowners cost-sharing or incentive payments to improve aquatic habitat. Among the proposed practices were excluding cattle from streams, using alternative livestock watering systems and employing forested riparian buffers and grassed filter strips.

*Once common as open pockets in the typical upland mixed forests, North*

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**The ultimate goal is not only to contribute significantly to freshwater aquatic and Piedmont prairie restoration, but also to demonstrate the value of private lands stewardship incentives.**

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Courtesy John Suther

Suther Prairie is a remnant Piedmont prairie site where Farm Bill funding has helped protect native plants.

# Forest landowner funding diverted and cut

More than ever, landowners need financial assistance for forest stewardship. The future of America's forest resources rests largely in the hands of the 10 million private landowners who collectively manage more forest acres than the U.S. government and the forest industry combined. Yet the nation's largest rural lands funding legislation, the 2002 Farm Bill, created only one program (with \$20 million in average annual funding) targeting forest landowners. By contrast, the same legislation authorized at least five separate programs (with a combined \$3 billion in average annual funding) for the 2 million U.S. agricultural producers.

Privately owned forest land, especially in the southern and eastern United States, is uniquely valuable for wildlife, water quality and other non-market benefits. More than 86% of the forest area in these two regions is privately owned and serves as the primary source of hunting and fishing opportunities and biodiversity hotspots, while also helping ensure water and air quality. Maintaining and enhancing these non-market public benefits of private lands will require increased financial assistance to landowners for forest stewardship activities.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is the successor program to two earlier programs, the Forest Incentives Program and Stewardship Incentives Program, and offers the opportunity for increased funding of forest stewardship practices. Indeed, when authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill, FLEP was the first forest incentive program to offer the prospect of mandatory funding at levels previously reserved for agricultural programs. FLEP's significance for forest stewardship depends in large part on how state foresters implement the new program. The program created de facto block grants for a range of forest activities and gives every state wide discretion to create its own priority plan.

But before any state-level track record for the program could be devel-



Randy Browning/US Fish and Wildlife Service

Forest stewardship funding could help landowners conduct prescribed burns to restore longleaf forests.

oped, its federal funding was diverted. Of the promised \$100 million, only \$20 million has been allocated to the states. Much of the remaining money was raided for fighting forest fires. And even worse for forest landowners, the President's FY2005 budget eliminates all funding for the program.

As funding evaporates, landowner demand for FLEP funding continues to grow. For example, in North Carolina, available cost-share funds were obligated to landowners in less than four months. Today, landowners can only hope for a spot on the waiting list, where as of March, 150 landowners awaited \$370,000 to implement practices on more than 10,000 acres. These forest owners have been left wondering what happened to the promised \$100 million and where they should now turn for financial assistance.

Frustrated with the lack of funding for FLEP, some forest landowners may seek assistance from better-funded Farm Bill programs, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Under the 2002 Farm Bill, many non-industrial forest landowners qualify as

agricultural producers and thus are potentially eligible for EQIP funding. The Environmental Defense Center for Conservation Incentives is working with the American Forest Foundation, which houses the American Tree Farm System, to make EQIP funding available for forest stewardship activities. Other landowners may be eligible for other Farm Bill programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which is available for afforestation (planting of forest) on certain agricultural lands. In addition, the newly created Healthy Forest Reserve Program could, if funded, provide funding for restoration and conservation of privately owned forests with at-risk species.

The debate over how best to assist landowners with their forest stewardship objectives will undoubtedly continue in the months and years to come. The nation's forest landowners deserve a well-funded program for forest stewardship practices. FLEP is one such program that merits support, assuming appropriate emphasis is placed on wildlife, water quality and other non-market benefits.

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# New Conservation Security Program has great potential but faces significant challenges

In early January, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) proposed regulations to implement the Conservation Security Program (CSP), a new program created by the 2002 Farm Bill to reward farmers and ranchers who conserve and enhance natural resources on working agricultural lands. Intended to differ significantly from other agricultural conservation programs, CSP has great potential for environmental progress. Precisely because of its ambitious goals and potential, however, CSP presents major implementation challenges for NRCS.

Unlike other agricultural conservation programs, CSP was designed as an entitlement program without a specific budget limit. Thus, any farmer or rancher meeting CSP's eligibility criteria should be able to enroll, avoiding the application backlogs that have plagued other programs. Also, CSP can reward existing good stewardship as well as create incentives for producers to make new improvements. As a result, for the first time, farmers and ranchers who have already established their own high standards for environmental performance can receive payments. In addition, CSP can address nearly any environmental issue related to land management on any type of farm or ranch in any state.

These innovations make it challenging for NRCS to develop workable regulations to get CSP up and running. NRCS has no experience administering a conservation program that lacks dollar or acreage limits. Concerns with cost and how to administer a program for which all producers in every state are potentially eligible contributed to delays in issuing the regulations. Congress has further complicated CSP's rollout by twice modifying the program's entitlement status, first placing a ten-year, \$3.77 billion budget cap on the program, then replacing that cap with a one-year \$41 million cap.

Moreover, because CSP is the only conservation program to reward existing good stewardship, NRCS must develop an effective way to measure how well a farmer or rancher is currently protecting and enhancing natural resources, measured against some baseline. The agency has not had to evaluate existing environmental performance for other conservation programs.

In this context, NRCS developed the proposed regulations for CSP. To address cost and administrative concerns, the agency proposed to target CSP to specific high-priority watersheds. Only farmers and ranchers in these 18 watersheds will be eligible to enroll. NRCS also proposed to reduce payments significantly below the levels suggested in the 2002 Farm Bill and to impose more rigorous eligibility criteria than many observers expected based on the statute's language.

The Environmental Defense Center for Conservation Incentives submitted comments on the proposed regulations urging NRCS to implement CSP as an entitlement program, as intended by Congress, when this year's \$41 million spending cap expires. Although an approach based on targeted watersheds may be reasonable for this year, in the final regulations NRCS should clarify that all farmers and ranchers in all watersheds in every state will be eligible to participate in future years, as long as they are willing to meet CSP's environmental performance standards.

It is critical that these standards be sufficiently rigorous to ensure that CSP provides the greatest possible environmental bang for the buck.



CSP will reward landowners already engaged in good stewardship practices, such as stripcropping, which protects soil against erosion and helps keep sediment and farm chemicals out of watersheds.

Environmental Defense supports the agency's efforts to set minimum eligibility criteria that require farmers and ranchers to achieve a high level of environmental performance. In working with NRCS, Environmental Defense has emphasized the importance of developing a new, performance-based approach that provides greater rewards to participants the better they do. Payments for performance, rather than specific practices, will give farmers and ranchers the flexibility to decide how to achieve specific environmental outcomes.

NRCS faces a significant technical challenge in developing substantive criteria to recognize and reward different levels of environmental performance. NRCS also must ensure that the program that ultimately emerges from the rulemaking process is not so complicated or bureaucratic—particularly given the agency's proposal to lower payments to participants—that it discourages participation. The notice NRCS issued recently describing the process by which it selects watersheds and the "enrollment categories" in which it will place applicants to determine whether they will receive funding has increased concerns that CSP will not be effective in helping significant numbers of producers improve environmental performance. (See

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## North Carolina species

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*Carolina's Piedmont prairie survives only in isolated remnants. The plow, bulldozer and chainsaw have all taken a toll, but fire suppression in a landscape once shaped by wildfires is the major cause for the decline of these prairies.*

The ad hoc group recognized that Piedmont prairie restoration could benefit not only the plant community, but also several at-risk bird species and both game and non-game wildlife. Some key practices the group recommended to restore the prairies on working lands were prescribed burning, firebreaks, prescribed grazing and control of invasive plants.

Mapping experts from CCI and SELC helped the group develop preliminary GIS data on element occurrences, soils, water quality and land use to target the programs. The group also produced fact sheets and cultivated the support of the STC's Wetlands and Wildlife Subcommittee, which then recommended to the full committee that freshwater aquatic and Piedmont prairie communities be made a special priority for state Farm Bill programs.



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

The declining northern bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginicus*) stands to benefit from Piedmont prairie restoration.

In September, at the STC's request, State Conservationist Mary Combs and program managers designated the two habitats a special priority. For several programs, ranking processes have already begun to reflect these priorities, and the ad hoc group has created educational displays for outreach to NRCS district supervisors and interested landowners.

In an even more direct action to ensure EQIP and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program funding, State Conservationist Combs authorized a set-aside of funds for special projects to restore or protect freshwater aquatic or Piedmont prairie habitat. Because the prioritization of these habitats is a multi-year commitment by NRCS, the targeted funding is expected to be significant over time.

With formal STC support, the ad hoc group is now working closely with District Conservationists in key locations across North Carolina, grassroots partners and technical experts to facilitate special project development. The ultimate goal for the special projects is not only to contribute significantly to freshwater aquatic and Piedmont prairie restoration, but also to demonstrate the value of private lands stewardship incentives in advancing at-risk species recovery. Because this effort is a collaborative one involving NRCS, state and federal natural resource agencies, conservation groups and landowners, it may also serve as a model for similar initiatives in other states.

For more information on these special projects, log on to [www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov).

*-David McNaught  
senior policy analyst  
Environmental Defense*

*-Lark Hayes  
senior attorney  
Southern Environmental Law Center*

## Forest landowners

Continued from page 5

Consideration must also be given to providing additional support for these desired forest practices through other more generously funded programs, such as EQIP and CRP. As a third option, design and full funding of additional programs for forest conservation should be considered in future rural lands legislation.

The stewardship of our private forests remains underfunded. Yet with concerted action on behalf of the 10 million U.S. forest landowners, we can alleviate the threats facing our forests and retain the many public benefits these private lands provide.

*-Will McDow  
forestry specialist  
Environmental Defense*

*-Lark Hayes  
senior attorney  
Southern Environmental Law Center*

## New NRCS program

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[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farm-bill/2002/pdf/csp\\_noticemay404.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farm-bill/2002/pdf/csp_noticemay404.pdf) for this notice and <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/watersheds04.html> for the eligible watersheds.)

Persons interested in making CSP succeed should work with the agency to develop substantive criteria and improve the proposed enrollment processes. Program supporters should also work with Environmental Defense and others to prevent Congress from placing additional budget caps on CSP. Any cap would severely limit the number of participants and diminish the program's environmental benefits. The FY2005 appropriations process is underway, and all those interested in preserving CSP's status as an uncapped program for next year should make their views known to their members of Congress.

*-Sara Hopper  
attorney  
Environmental Defense*

# Budget cuts threaten USDA conservation programs

The 2002 Farm Bill significantly increased funding for voluntary, incentive-based agricultural conservation programs. Unfortunately, in the past two years funding for several programs has been cut below Farm Bill levels during the annual appropriations process, and funding for all programs has been reduced to pay for the technical assistance farmers and ranchers require in order to participate.

In the 2003 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congress reduced Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding by \$5 million from the level the Farm Bill provided, lowered the number of acres that could be enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) by almost 5,000 and imposed a ten-year cap of \$3.77 billion on the new Conservation Security Program (CSP), which was included in the Farm Bill as an uncapped entitlement program. The latter move was estimated at the time to save over \$3 billion, which Congress redirected to disaster assistance for agricultural producers impacted by drought or flooding.

In the 2004 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congress removed the ten-year cap on CSP, but retained a \$41 million cap for this fiscal year. Although all conservation programs saw funding increases from the year before, these increases were

reduced significantly from Farm Bill levels. EQIP's funding was reduced from its Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 Farm Bill level by \$25 million, WRP by more than 60,000 acres, the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program by \$13 million, the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) by \$18 million and the Ground and Surface Water Conservation Program by \$9 million.

As the appropriations process for FY2005 begins, concern in Congress over rising deficits and the likelihood of a tight cap on discretionary spending make it likely that appropriators will again seek to cap mandatory spending for Farm Bill conservation programs and use the savings for discretionary items. In the President's FY2005 budget, the Administration assumed a number of savings from these kinds of caps. For example, the Administration proposed reducing EQIP by \$200 million, WRP by 50,000 acres, WHIP by \$15 million and capping CSP at \$209 million.

Environmental Defense is lobbying Congress to protect Farm Bill conservation program funding. Given these programs' popularity and their potential to help agricultural producers conserve and improve natural resources and enhance biodiversity on privately owned land, it is short-sighted for both Congress and the Administration to reduce program funding. Even with the



Jeff Vanuga/NRCS

Budget cuts in USDA conservation programs mean fewer dollars for beneficial stewardship such as this wetland restoration project in Virginia funded by WRP.

new funding provided by the 2002 Farm Bill, producer demand for voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs outstrips available funding. For example, in FY2003, EQIP had a \$3.1 billion application backlog for \$627 million in funding. Clearly, cutting back on funding will only make the long lines of farmers and ranchers awaiting assistance even longer.

Readers interested in helping to protect conservation funding are encouraged to contact their senators and representatives via the internet at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) or [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or by writing or calling members' offices.

-Sara Hopper  
attorney

*Environmental Defense*



## ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE

finding the ways that work

### The Environmental Defense Center for Conservation Incentives

The Environmental Defense Center for Conservation Incentives was launched in 2003 with major support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to further the conservation of biodiversity on U.S. private lands through the use of incentives. The Center works with landowners, conservation organizations and government agencies to develop place-based projects that demonstrate the utility of incentives in conserving habitats on private lands. The Center also works to influence the development and implementation of national and state incentive programs and policies. Headquartered in the Washington, DC office of Environmental Defense, the Center also has staff in all of the regional offices. We thank the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and Robert Wilson for their generosity in funding this work.

[www.environmentaldefense.org/go/conservationincentives](http://www.environmentaldefense.org/go/conservationincentives)

### Conservation Incentives

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