

Sources for Land Stewardship

This section discusses sources which may assist landowners in improving land and habitat, but which are not acquisition or easement programs. The following table summarizes each source, its purpose, eligible parties and areas in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) where the program is applicable. Each program is then described in more detail, including program purpose, applicability of each source as a tool in the GYA and the application process.

Federal Sources	Purpose and Eligible Parties	Area	Page
NRCS Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns.	GYA	8-3
NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Up to 75% federal cost share to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals.	MT, ID WY 2009	8-5
NRCS Conservation Security Program (CSP)	Financial and technical assistance to conserve and improve soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes.	GYA	8-7
NRSC Conservation of Private Grazing Land Initiative (CPGL)	Technical, educational, and related assistance to owners of private grazing lands. Not a cost share program.	GYA	8-8
NRSC Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)	Up to 75% federal cost share to address water management, water quality, and erosion control in farming operations.	WY	8-9
USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife	Technical/financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes to improve Federal Trust Species habitat.	GYA	8-10
USFWS Private Stewardship Program (PSGP)	Assistance to private landowners for on-the ground at-risk species conservation.	GYA	8-11
USFS Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)	Technical assistance for comprehensive, multi-resource management plans on private forest lands.	GYA	8-12
USFS Forest Resource Management Program (FRMP)	Technical assistance for improving natural resources management on non-industrial private forest (NIPF) lands.	GYA	8-12
USFS Forestland Enhancement Program (FLEP).	Educational, technical, and up to 75% cost-share assistance for sustainable forestry on private lands.	GYA	8-12

State and Local Sources	Purpose and Eligible Parties	Area	Page
Montana Wetlands Legacy Program	Technical and financial assistance to private landowners to create and protect wetlands.	Montana State	8-14
Montana Future Fisheries Improvement Program	Technical and financial assistance to private landowners to improve habitat for wild and native fish.	Montana State	8-14
Montana Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program	Increase upland game bird habitat and hunting access on private land.	Montana State	8-15
Private Programs	Purpose and Eligible Parties	Area	Page
Yellowstone Business Partnership	A LEED modeled program to encourage new developments in GYA to preserve biodiversity and respect the region's cultural and historic heritage.	GYA	8-16

Federal Program Summaries

NRSC Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Purpose: The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their lands in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.

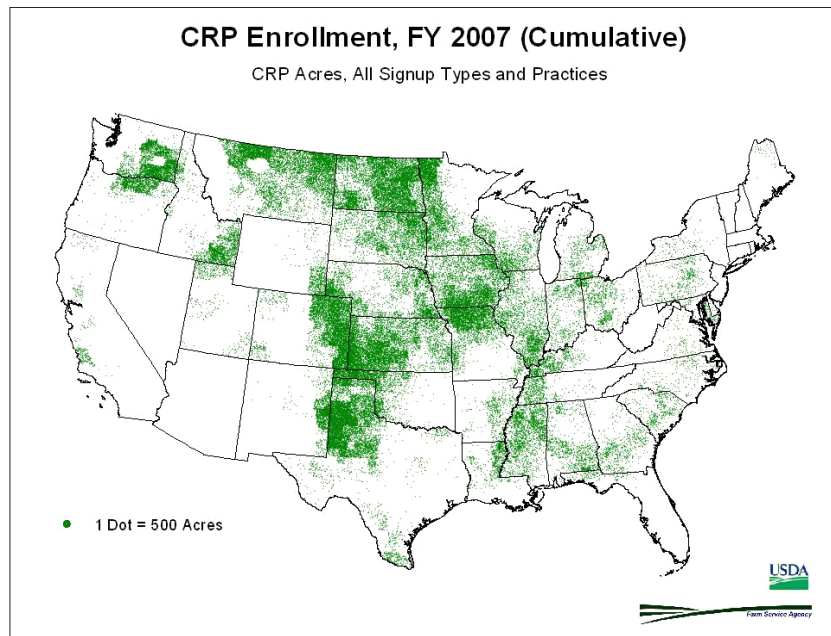
The Conservation Reserve Program reduces soil erosion, protects the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduces sedimentation in streams and lakes, improves water quality, establishes wildlife habitat, and enhances forest and wetland resources. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices. Criteria include:

- Wildlife habitat benefits resulting from covers on contract acreage,
- Water quality benefits from reduced erosion, runoff, and leaching,
- On-farm benefits from reduced erosion,
- Benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period,
- Air quality benefits from reduced wind erosion, and
- Cost.

Applicability for GYA: In FY 2007, CRP payments of \$1.8 billion were approved. As of 2007, cumulatively some 3.5 million acres in Montana were enrolled, some 825,000 acres in Idaho and some 285,000 acres in Wyoming. The map below displays CRP enrolled across the country.

Process: CRP is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), with NRCS providing technical land eligibility determinations, conservation planning and practice implementation.

- The General Sign-up allows sign-up enrollment only during designated sign-up periods.
- Continuous (Non-CREP) sign-up allows environmentally desirable land devoted to high priority conservation practices, such as filter strips and riparian buffers to be enrolled at any time.
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) allows continuous sign up for projects designed to address specific environmental objectives through targeted CRP enrollments.
- Farmable Wetland Program (FWP) allows landowners and operators to enroll small non-flood plain wetlands on a continuous sign-up basis.



Source: Conservation Reserve Program Summary and Enrollment Statistics FY2007 at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/annual_consv_2007.pdf

Figure 8.1: CRP Enrollment, FY007 (Cumulative)

Sources/Contacts:

NRCS Conservation Reserve Program Webpage: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/crp/>

Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program Webpage:
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>

Farm Service Agency. 2008. *Conservation Reserve Program Summary and Enrollment Statistics FY2007*. Available at:
http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/annual_consv_2007.pdf

NRSC Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Purpose: The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP may pay up to 75% of eligible conservation practice costs. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a farmer to adopt land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, pasture management and wildlife habitat management. Incentive payments are limited to three years in order to encourage land owners to adopt better management.

National EQIP priorities are:

- Reductions of nonpoint source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity in impaired watersheds consistent with TMDLs, reduction of groundwater contamination and reduction of point sources such as contamination from confined animal feeding operations;
- Conservation of ground and surface water resources;
- Reduction of emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards;
- Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land;
- Promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation.

Applicability for GYA: In recent years, EQIP has been a billion dollar a year program, with allocations for financial and technical assistance in recent years running about \$19 million for Idaho, \$31 million for Montana, and \$17 million for Wyoming.

In addition to the *Idaho* State EQIP priorities below, each Idaho county has local priorities.

- Resource Management System level of treatment on all the planned treatment units,
- Part of a previously developed progressive or RMS level Conservation Plan,
- Benefit to fields or treatment units that have resource problems due to livestock operation,
- Practice(s) within the buffer zone and beneficial to 303d listed streams,
- Benefit to the objectives of an approved TMDL Implementation Watershed plan,
- Benefit to an approved (certified) drinking water protection plan recognized by the DEQ,
- New irrigation sprinkler systems that operate on 100% gravity pressure,
- Benefit to the purpose of an initiated or completed Ground Water Management Area,
- Compliance with Federal, State, Local or Tribal regulations or requirements, and
- Direct benefit to a listed T&E species or species of concern.

In *Montana* many potential ranking criteria are used, including EQIP's ground and surface water provision, funds earmarked for American Indians, and five different county criteria for the five national priority natural resource areas. In addition, special initiatives target specific objectives in different areas of the state.

Wyoming's top EQIO priority concerns are:

- Water quality through livestock waste management,
- Drought mitigation and wildfire recovery,
- Forest health, and
- Wildlife habitat; conservation of wetland, riparian and upland habitat projects.

In addition, each Wyoming County has established priorities, which can be found at the bottom of the webpage at: <http://www.wy.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip.html>

Process: EQIP sign-up information is available online. Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. See sources below.

Sources/Contacts:

NRCS EQIP Program Webpage: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>

Idaho NRCS EQIP Webpage: <http://www.id.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/index.html>

Montana NRCS EQIP Webpage: <http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqipworks.html>

Wyoming NRCS EQIP Webpage: <http://www.wy.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip.html>

NRSC Conservation Security Program (CSP)

Purpose: The Conservation Security Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to conserve and improve soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on Tribal and private working lands. Working lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pasture, and range land, as well as forested land that is an incidental part of an agriculture operation.

Applicability for GYA: Beginning in 2004, the CSP is offered only in selected watersheds nation-wide. Only a few watersheds are identified each year per state. GYA watersheds identified include Idaho's Henry's Fork and Montana's Shield's River in 2005, and Montana's Gallatin watershed and Wyoming's Lower Wind in 2006. In 2008, no GYA watersheds were selected.

In 2005, almost \$500,000 was allocated to the Gallatin watershed and about \$175,000 to the Shields River. In 2006, over \$600,000 was allocated to the Henry's Fork and about \$700,000 to the Lower Wind.

Process: The CSP sign-up is offered in selected watersheds nation-wide. Selected watersheds are listed on the Internet at the NRCS CSP webpage listed below, and in NRCS offices nationwide.

Source/Contact:

NRCS Conservation Security Program Webpage: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>

NRCS Conservation of Private Grazing Land Initiative (CPGL)

Purpose: The Conservation of Private Grazing Land Initiative (CPGL) provides technical, educational, and related assistance to owners of private grazing lands. It is not a cost share program. The technical assistance offers opportunities for:

- Maintaining and improving private grazing land and its management,
- Implementing grazing land management technologies,
- Protecting and improving the quality and quantity of water,
- Maintaining and improving wildlife and fish habitat,
- Enhancing recreational opportunities;
- Maintaining and improving the aesthetic character of private grazing land,
- Identifying opportunities and encouraging diversification,
- Encouraging the use of sustainable grazing systems,
- Protecting soil from erosive wind and water,
- Using more energy-efficient ways to produce food and fiber,
- Conserving water,
- Sustaining forage and grazing plants,
- Using plants to sequester greenhouse gases and increase soil organic matter, and
- Using grazing lands as a source of biomass energy and raw materials for industrial products.

Applicability for GYA: The program is available in all 50 states.

Process: Requests for technical assistance through CPGL are prioritized by NRCS and the local conservation district to ensure that assistance is provided in a fair and equitable manner.

Source/Contact:

NRCS Conservation of Private Grazing Land Initiative Webpage:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cpgl/>

NRCS Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)

Purpose: The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program provides cost share assistance to agricultural producers to voluntarily address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into their farming operations. Producers may construct or improve water management structures or irrigation structures; plant trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality; and mitigate risk through production diversification or resource conservation practices, including soil erosion control, integrated pest management, or transition to organic farming. The Federal cost-share rate is 75 % of the cost of an eligible practice.

Applicability for GYA: The AMA is available in 15 states; Wyoming is the only GYA state. The AMA is budgeted at \$20 million per year.

Process: Applications may be obtained and filed at any time local USDA Service Center or conservation district offices. Applications also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS. A conservation plan is required for the area covered. Landowners must agree to maintain cost-shared practices for the life of the practice. Contracts are for three to ten years.

Source/Contact:

NRCS Agricultural Management Assistance Webpage:
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/AMA/index.html>

USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife

Purpose: The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners and Tribes to help meet the habitat needs of Federal Trust Species. Projects may occur in all habitat types which conserve or restore native vegetation, hydrology, and soils associated with imperiled ecosystems such as bottomland hardwoods, native prairies, marshes, rivers and streams, or otherwise provide an important habitat requisite for a rare, declining or protected species.

National priority ranking criteria are projects that:

- Improve habitat for Federal Trust Species, including migratory birds; threatened and endangered species; inter-jurisdictional fish; marine mammals; and, other declining species;
- Complement activities on National Wildlife Refuge System lands, or contribute to the resolution of problems on refuges that are caused by off-refuge practices;
- Address species and habitat priorities identified through Service planning teams or in collaboration with state fish and wildlife agencies;
- Reduce habitat fragmentation or serve as buffers for other important Federal or state conservation lands; and
- Result in self-sustaining systems that are not dependent on artificial structures.

Applicability for GYA: The program is available in the GYA states. The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act of 2006 authorized up to \$75 million for each year from 2006-2011.

Process: Any privately-owned land is potentially eligible. A landowner may contact a local USFWS biologist at any time. The USFWS will help develop a project plan addressing the landowner goals and objectives, as well as those of the USFWS, to benefit fish and wildlife species on the private land. The landowner must sign a cooperative agreement with a minimum 10 years duration. The landowner is reimbursed after project completion, based on the cost-sharing formula in the agreement.

Sources/Contacts:

USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Webpage:

<http://www.fws.gov/partners/?viewPage=home>

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program Contacts for each State:

<http://www.fws.gov/partners/contactUs.html>

USFWS Private Stewardship Grants

Purpose: The USFWS Private Stewardship Grants Program (PSGP) provides grants and other assistance on a competitive basis to individuals and groups engaged in local, private, and voluntary conservation efforts on private land that benefit federally listed, proposed, or candidate species, or other at-risk species.

The PSGP supports on-the-ground conservation actions such as managing nonnative competitors, reintroducing imperiled species, implementing measures to minimize risk from disease, restoring streams that support imperiled species, fencing to exclude animals from sensitive habitats, or planting native vegetation to restore a rare plant community. The program does not fund education and outreach, planning, research activities, or acquisition of real property either through fee title or easements.

A ten percent (10%) match of cash or through in-kind contributions is required. The program is available to private landowners and their partners.

Applicability for GYA: Since the program's inception in 2002, eleven projects have been awarded in the GYA, in all three GYA states. Project awards ranged from about \$17,000 to \$170,000, with a total of over \$817,000 awarded for all eleven projects. All of the awarded projects either aided native fisheries or trumpeter swans.

Process: The USFWS releases a call for proposals when they solicit projects. The most recent information on the program website was for 2007 projects. Private landowners, individually or as a group, may apply for funding. In addition, individuals or groups such as land conservancies, community organizations, or conservation organizations working with private landowners may apply for funding with private landowner consent. A panel with state and federal government, conservation organizations, agriculture and development interests, and science community representation assesses the applications and recommend projects to the Secretary of the Interior, who awards the grants.

The USFWS may be able to help landowners plan or implement projects and encourages applicants to contact the regional Private Stewardship Grants Program coordinator.

Sources/Contacts:

USFWS Private Stewardship Grants Program Webpage:

http://www.fws.gov/endangered/grants/private_stewardship/FY2007/index.html

US Forest Service Programs

The USDA Forest Service provides three technical assistance programs for private forest landowners to encourage sustainable forestry and resource conservation.

Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)

Purpose: The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) provides technical assistance to non-industrial private forestland owners to encourage and enable active long-term forest management. A primary program focus is helping private forest owners develop comprehensive, multi-resource management plans to help manage, enhance, and protect the productivity of timber, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, wetlands, recreational value, and aesthetics. The FSP is not a cost share program. Participation is open to any non-industrial private forest landowner willing to actively manage/steward their forested properties for at least ten years.

The Forest Stewardship Program also assists State forestry agencies with programs such as tree improvement and seedling production and landowner education programs. The Rural Forestry Assistance component of the Forest Stewardship Program provides for tree planting and timber stand improvement projects on non-federal forest land.

Forest Resource Management Program (FRMP)

Purpose: The Forest Resource Management Program (FRMP) provides technical assistance for improving natural resources management on non-industrial private forest (NIPF) lands. It provides more specific services to landowners than the Forest Stewardship Program, including sample timber marking and non-cost/share thinning selection, sample timber sale contracts, insect and disease identification and management, wildlife habitat improvement, and referrals to consultants for more intense management assistance.

Forestland Enhancement Program (FLEP)

Purpose: The Forestland Enhancement Program (FLEP) provides educational, technical, and up to 75% cost-share assistance to help private forest landowners implement sustainable forestry management objectives. FLEP's objective is to help landowners establish, restore, protect, manage, maintain, and enhance the health and productivity of the non-industrial private forest lands for timber, flora and fauna habitat, soil, water, air quality, wetlands, and riparian buffers.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized the Forest Service to launch the FLEP program and made \$100 million available, most of which has been spent, or transferred to fire fighting costs. The cost-share practices are limited to the treatment of 1,000 acres per year with an aggregate payment not to exceed \$100,000 for the life of the Farm Bill. A waiver for the treatment of up to 5,000 acres is available if significant public benefit is shown.

Process: All three of these programs are administered through the State Foresters. Contact the State Forester office for more information.

Sources/Contacts:

USFS FSP Program Webpage <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/fsp.shtml>

USFS Region 1 and 4 FSP Program Webpage: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/stewardship.html>

USFS Forestland Enhancement Program Webpage: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/flep.html>

USDA Forest Service. 2006. *State & Private Forestry 2006 Directory of Programs & Services*. Available at: http://www.fs.fed.us/r1-r4/spf/2006_directory.pdf

State and Local Program Summaries

Montana Wetlands Legacy Program

Purpose: The purpose of the Montana Wetlands Legacy program is to create and protect wetlands. Landowners may develop projects to protect, conserve and develop wetlands on their property, with the technical assistance of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) and the Wetlands Legacy Program. The projects can increase the lands value, while creating healthy, functional wetlands. Landowners may also receive direct funding for the project, materials or construction work, or technical assistance in identifying funding sources, depending on the situation.

Applicability for GYA: The Montana Wetlands Legacy aimed to protect or restore 250,000 acres of wetlands and riparian areas by 2005.

Process: Contact Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Montana Wetlands Legacy Coordinator at 406-994-7889 or contact local FWP office.

Source/Contact

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Landowner's Guide to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Landowner Programs Webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/habitat/landowner.asp>

Montana Future Fisheries Improvement Program

Purpose: The purpose of Montana's Future Fisheries Improvement program is to improve habitat for wild and native fish. Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) biologists, landowners and other partners develop project proposals and usually share in the project costs. Project examples include restoring stream banks and natural stream channels, improving stream flow, preventing loss of fish into diversions, improving fish passage, or enhancing fish spawning. Landowners and other project partners usually share in the project costs.

Applicability for GYA: About \$1 million is available annually to fund these projects.

Process: A 13-member citizen panel recommends project proposals to the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission for final approval twice a year. Contact Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Fisheries Division at 406-444-2449 or contact local FWP office.

Source/Contact

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Landowner's Guide to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Landowner Programs Webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/habitat/landowner.asp>

Montana Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program

Purpose: The purpose of Montana's Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program is to increase upland game bird habitat and hunting access. Landowners work with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) biologists to develop upland game bird habitat projects, for which FWP will share up to 75% of the project costs. Project examples include establishing and maintaining shelterbelts, planting nesting cover and food plots and implementing improved grazing management systems. Projects must be open to some free public game bird hunting and usually involve at least 160 contiguous acres of land.

Process: Contact Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Upland Game Bird Habitat Enhancement Program at 406-444-2612 or contact local FWP office.

Source/Contact

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Landowner's Guide to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Landowner Programs Webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/habitat/landowner.asp>

Yellowstone Business Partnership Greater Yellowstone Framework for Sustainable Development

Purpose: The Yellowstone Business Partnership (YBP) created a rating system modeled after the LEED program (the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) to encourage new developments to preserve biodiversity in Greater Yellowstone and to respect the region's cultural and historic heritage. YBP's regional rating system includes and goes beyond the application of LEED green building standards to address the nationally significant natural and cultural values of the Greater Yellowstone (GY) ecosystem. The GY-Framework encourages healthy and efficient rural subdivisions, vital downtowns, minimum-impact infrastructure and sustainable recreation facilities. The summary scorecard for the GY-Framework lists seven prerequisites and 57 credits that cover categories such as Land Use and Conservation, Biodiversity, Recreation Resources, and Public Service and Infrastructure.

Applicability to the GYA: The program is specifically focused on the Greater Yellowstone area.

Process: Over the next three years, YBP and eleven pilot sponsors in three states will demonstrate how each prerequisite and credit can be practically achieved on the ground.

Source/Contact

Yellowstone Business Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development Webpage:
http://www.yellowstonebusiness.org/our_programs/growth_challenges/