United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation
Service

November 2004

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Accomplishments Report FY 2004

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

Conservation Leadership

Conservation of natural resources on private lands depends on the efforts of many individuals, groups, and government entities working together on common goals. Local leadership and local action—neighbors working together—form the foundation for effective land stewardship. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) supports local, State, and national conservation goals through working partnerships with State conservation agencies, local conservation and development councils, tribal governments and community groups.

NRCS employees provide information and technical assistance to private landowners and land users. Because natural resource issues are best addressed on a watershed scale, NRCS also helps community leaders make sound natural resource decisions that enhance the local environment and improve their standard of living and quality of life.

What We Achieved

The Nation's conservation efforts on private land ensure a healthy and productive land that sustains food and fiber production, protects watersheds and ecosystems, enhances the environment, and improves urban and rural landscapes.

To effectively achieve these benefits, NRCS focuses on four strategic goals:

- **Enhance the productive capacity of soil and water resources** to enable a strong agricultural and natural resource sector.
- **Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use** to ensure a high-quality environment.
- **Reduce risks from drought and flooding** to protect individual and community health and safety.
- **Deliver high-quality services to the public** to enable natural resource stewardship.

Goal 1: Enhance the productive capacity of soil and water resources.

NRCS helped producers—

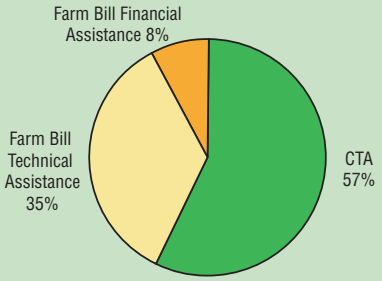
- Develop conservation system plans on 12.7 million acres of cropland.
- Apply conservation system plans on 7.9 million acres of cropland.
- Apply erosion control measures on 5.9 million acres of cultivated cropland resulting in reducing soil loss by 53.1 million tons.
- Develop conservation system plans on 25.1 million acres of grazing land.
- Apply conservation system plans on 19.4 million acres of grazing land.
- Apply forest stand improvement and tree and shrub establishment on nearly 620,000 acres.

Goals

Science-based assistance provided through Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) is the basis for all conservation efforts yet conservation goals are achieved through a comprehensive portfolio of NRCS programs. Incentive-based programs authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill are tools available to producers to accelerate application of conservation. Data reflect each program's percentage of the agency's total expenditures devoted to that particular strategic goal.

Source: *FY 2004 Budget and Performance Integration Data from NRCS FY 2006 Agency Estimate.*

Goal 1



Goal 2: Reduce unintended adverse effects of natural resource development and use.

NRCS helped land managers—

- Apply conservation buffers on 281,295 acres.
- Create or restore nearly 228,000 acres of wetlands.
- Apply upland and wetland wildlife habitat management as a primary or secondary purpose on nearly 6.3 million acres.
- Develop 6,287 comprehensive nutrient management plans and apply 3,582 plans.
- Apply nutrient management on 2.9 million acres.
- Apply pest management on nearly 3.5 million acres.

NRCS helped communities—

- Protect an estimated 135,000 acres of farmland from conversion to nonagricultural uses through the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.
- Complete 3,358 resource conservation and development (RC&D) projects that improve the quality of life—including social, economic, and environmental concerns.

Goal 3: Reduce risks from drought and flooding.

NRCS helped local sponsors—

- Complete construction of 155 flood protection structures.
- Complete 241 risk assessments, authorize 9 watershed rehabilitation plans, and rehabilitate 20 dams.

NRCS helped land managers—

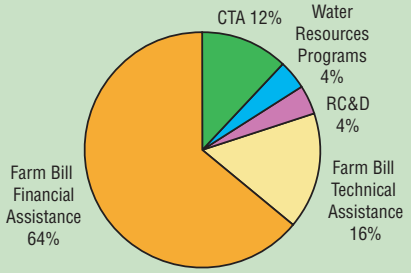
- Apply conservation systems to address flooding concerns on 4.5 million acres.
- Apply conservation systems to address water supply concerns on 8 million acres.
- Improve irrigation water management on 686,000 million acres and conserve 2.1 million acre-inches of water.
- Manage limited western water supplies effectively. NRCS issued 11,281 water supply forecasts for Federal, state, and local water resource planning purposes. Water users and managers requested snow survey, water supply forecasts, and soil moisture data and products 4.7 million times through the National Water and Climate Center website.

Goal 4: Deliver high quality services to the public.

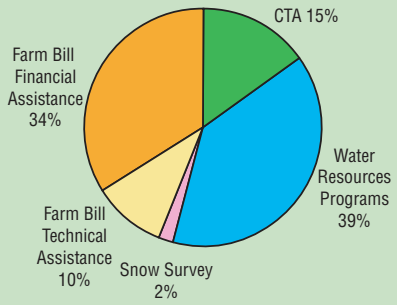
NRCS employees—

- Provided technical assistance in planning nearly 145,000 conservation plans and in applying 110,000 conservation plans.
- Mapped soils or updated soils maps on 28 million acres.
- Provided 339 new soil surveys in digital format and revised 1,394 additional surveys in digital format (SSURGO).
- Released 14 new conservation plants for commercial or private use and evaluated 359 plant materials studies.
- Provided data to 2.6 million customers through the PLANTS database website.
- Distributed more than 1 million publications from the NRCS National Publication Distribution Center/888-LANDCARE.
- Achieved an impressive year for the Earth Team volunteer program with more than 40,600 volunteers donating nearly 1 million hours in over two-thirds of NRCS offices across the country.

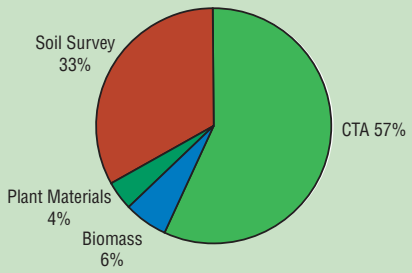
Goal 2



Goal 3



Goal 4



NRCS Programs and Activities

The four Conservation Operations programs (Conservation Technical Assistance [CTA], Soil Survey, Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting, and Plant Materials) are the core support for all NRCS programs and activities. CTA provides the infrastructure through which NRCS provides assistance to conservation districts, develops technical standards and technical guides, conducts resource inventories, and provides assistance to individuals and communities to plan and manage their natural resources.

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program provides assistance to RC&D councils to plan, develop, and carry out projects that address land conservation, water management, community development, and land management.

NRCS water resources programs focus on restoring the health of watersheds through a comprehensive planning approach. These programs help communities protect their watersheds from damage caused by erosion, floodwater, and sediment, and to conserve and develop water and land resources.

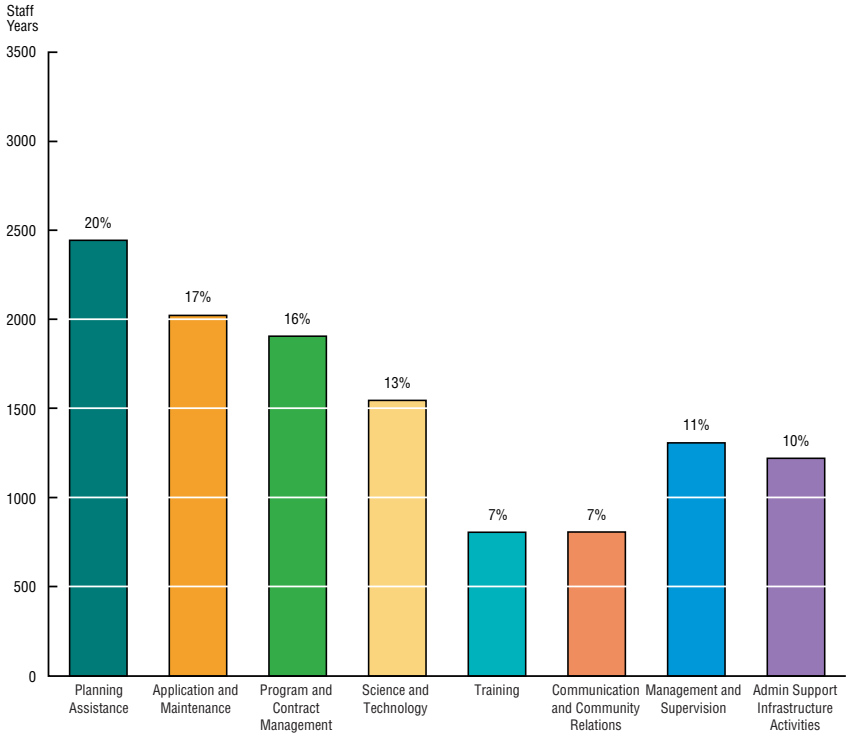
NRCS also is responsible for various Farm Bill voluntary conservation programs, including the Conservation Security Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Grassland Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and Wetlands Reserve Program. These programs provide technical, financial, and educational assistance to address single or multiple natural resource concerns identified at the local level. These programs are used to help participants plan and apply conservation to their land.

More Information

Additional information on NRCS programs and services can be found on the Web at **www.nrcs.usda.gov** or by calling your local USDA service center. Specific information on the NRCS Integrated Accountability System can be found at **www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/spa/accountabilityindex.html**

Activities

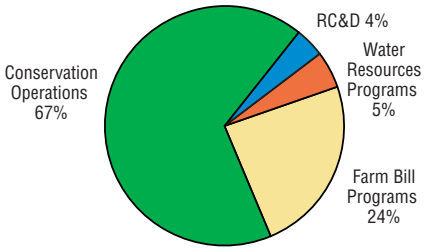
The primary services provided by NRCS field office staffs are assistance in developing conservation plans and in applying and maintaining the conservation practices called for in those plans. NRCS also is responsible for providing science-based resource data, technical tools, and information needed for good stewardship. Data reflect the percentage of total NRCS staff years devoted to each activity.



Source: *NRCS Conservation Information System, Report 1.3*

Staff Years by Program

Data reflect the percentage of total NRCS staff years devoted to each major program category.



Source: *NRCS Conservation Information System, Report 1.1*

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