Source Water Protection

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Source Water Protection Language in the 2018 Farm Bill

Section 1244(n): Source Water Protection Through Targeting of Agricultural Practices

Provides that the Secretary shall encourage the protection of drinking water sources through the following methods:

- Identify local priority areas for drinking water protection in each state:
  - In collaboration with State Technical Committees and community water systems
  - May address water quality or quantity concerns
- Provide increased incentives for practices that relate to water quality and quantity and protect drinking water sources while also benefitting producers
- Dedicate at least 10% of the total funds available for conservation programs (with the exception of CRP), each year beginning in FY 2019 through FY 2023, to be used for source water protection.
Recommendations for Compliance with Provision

State Priority Areas

• STCs collaborate with utilities/public water systems in their state to identify priority areas

• Utility/state provides delineations for the source water protection areas (SWPA)
  • Size will vary depending on whether it is a surface water or ground water source, and by the size of the population it serves

• Delineated SWPAs should have a protection plan that characterizes the source water. It should:
  • Identify areas of concern
  • Identify potential threats
  • Describe source water protection goals
  • Have an action plan for implementation
Recommendations for Compliance with Provision

Practice Incentives

- STCs identify practices that are needed to support the objectives of the source water protection plans in priority areas
- Practices can receive increased payment rates, up to 90%
- Practices should address water quality and water quantity, as appropriate
Recommendations for Compliance with Provision

Dedication of 10% Funds

• NRCS will track compliance with the requirement to dedicate 10% of conservation program funds based on agency investments **within identified priority areas**

• Prospective Tracking method:
  • Account for the Financial Assistance funding for all practices and enhancements with a water quality or quantity benefit
  • Account for the associated Technical Assistance funding for the above activities
  • Include and account for ACEP-WRE and ACEP-ALE within priority areas
Farm Bill and Conservation Technical Assistance Programs

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
  - Agriculture Lands Easement (ALE)
  - Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA)