



United States Department of Agriculture

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# NRCS: Source Water Protection (SWP)

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# Source Water Protection (SWP) Language in the 2018 Farm Bill

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

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
- 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 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



# NRCS Programs for Source Water Protection

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)  
Financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)  
Provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)  
Promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to resource concerns

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)  
Helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems



# SWP Partnerships at the National Level



NRCS working in collaboration with:

- EPA Office of Groundwater and Drinking Water – Source Water Protection
- Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA)
- American Water Works Association (AWWA)

*Actively participating in the Source Water Collaborative*



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# SWP Partnerships at the State and Local Levels

NRCS working in collaboration with:

- State Drinking Water Agencies
- Drinking Water Utilities
- Tribes
- SWCDs

*Opportunities for stakeholder/partner collaboration include:*

- *NRCS State Technical Advisory Committees (STAC)*
- *Local Working Groups*

## COLLABORATION CAN PROTECT SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER



\*Note: Many groups are involved in protecting the public's sources of drinking water. Depending on your area, source water partners might include water utilities, local watershed groups, technical assistance providers, non-governmental organizations, or local governments, e.g. planning commissions. The Source Water Collaboratives, twenty-nine national entities representing federal, state, and local partners, works together to protect drinking water sources for generations to come.





# State Technical Committee

Advising NRCS on technical guidelines for conservation programs.



## NRCS State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

Composed of individuals who represent a variety of natural resource sciences and occupations. Typical members include other USDA and federal agencies, Extension Service, state agencies, agricultural producers, non-profits with conservation expertise, agribusiness, and Tribes.

The STAC members advise the State Conservationist on a variety of issues.

You can request an invitation to STAC meetings as a member of the public. to STAC meetings.



# Locally-Led Conservation and Local Working Groups



Locally-led conservation is based on the principle that local people make the best decisions for their own communities. Local working groups are convened by the local conservation district.

Local working groups provide recommendations on local natural resource priorities and criteria for USDA conservation activities and programs.

Participation in a local working group, or providing information to a local working group, is another way to offer input for source water protection at the local level, and the state level, depending on each states' process.



# Source Water Practice Incentives

- State Conservationists collaborated with partners to identify practices that are needed to address threats to source water in priority areas
- Practices can receive increased payment rates, up to 90% of practice costs – these increased payments will only apply to state-submitted local priority areas

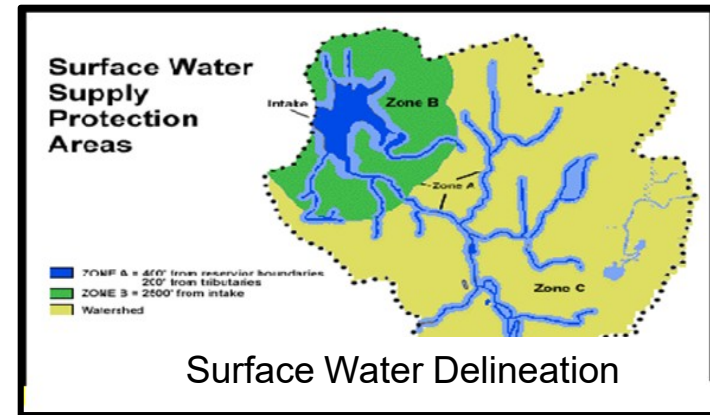
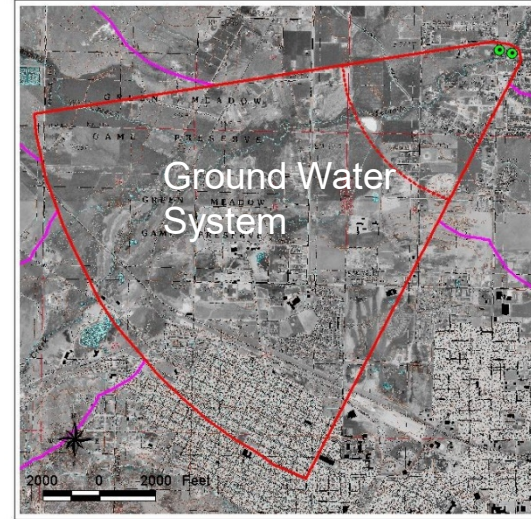






# Identifying State Local Priority Areas

- State Conservationists worked with either the drinking water program or interested utilities/public water systems in their states to identify priority areas for FY20
- Utility/state partners assisted NRCS in providing delineations for the priority areas
- Using SWP area assessments developed for the SDWA
  - Identification of areas of concern
  - Identification of potential threats
  - Description of source water protection goals
  - An action plan for implementation



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# Refinement of Source Water Priorities to Ensure Consistent Targeting



- Local Priorities that were submitted in FY19 should be the basis for refinement
- Work with the same drinking water partners (and new partners as appropriate) to identify “high priority” areas within Local Priorities
- High priority areas should be selected based on the following criteria:
  - Should represent no more than 20 percent of total land area of the state
  - Will be delineated using HUC12 watershed boundaries
  - Will be attributed with data indicating the type of water source addressed (surface, ground) and the potential threats (water quality, aquifer depletion).
  - Will consider for State/utility SWPA delineations and EPA’s density data for location and extent of SWPAs provided in their drinking water database





# Characteristics and Use of the High Priority Areas

- Have elevated risk or greater need to address threats to source water:
  - Reported or likelihood of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)
  - Water system violations
  - Size of population served by SWPAs
  - Ground water systems served by an aquifer designated as “sole source”
  - Known areas of aquifer depletion or ground water management areas
- Need focused outreach and implementation and should receive higher ranking for source water protection.
- **These areas will be the target for the source water high priority practices with increased payment.**
- **25% of EPA modeled wellhead protection areas across the nation were captured in the FY20 state local priorities**
- **Xxx percent of high priority areas for FY21 address ground water**



# Dedication of 10% Funds



## Tracking vs. Targeting

- High priority areas that states selected with partner collaboration represent the **targeted areas** in each state where outreach and implementation funding will be focused.
  - This targeted approach for collaborative efforts is highlighted in the Farm Bill provision.
- NRCS will track compliance with the requirement to dedicate 10% of conservation program funds based on ALL source water protection areas across the US, using a stable database provided by EPA



## Tracking the 10% Funding



- All contracts (EQIP, CSP, RCPP) that address water quality degradation, insufficient water, or surface/ground water depletion each FY will be identified
- Those contracts that intersect protection areas in EPA's SWPA geospatial database will count towards the 10%
- Contract obligations for SWP will be compared to total obligations for each FY for the primary conservation programs
- Annually enrolled easements (WRE, selected ALE) that intersect the EPA SWPAs will count towards the 10%. This will include acquisition costs and other appropriate obligations





# NRCS Investment in Source Water Protection – FY2019



## FY 2019 OBLIGATIONS

	ALL PROGRAMS*
Total Financial Assistance Obligations	\$2,110,366,774
Financial Assistance Obligations within SWPAs	\$269,183,224
% of Program Dollars Obligated in FY19 for Source Water Protection	<b>12.76%</b>
Technical Assistance Dollars for Source Water Protection	\$63,181,849
<b>Total Financial and Technical Assistance Investment for Source Water Protections</b>	<b>\$332,365,073</b>

\*Across all programs, including CSP, EQIP, RCPP, and ACEP

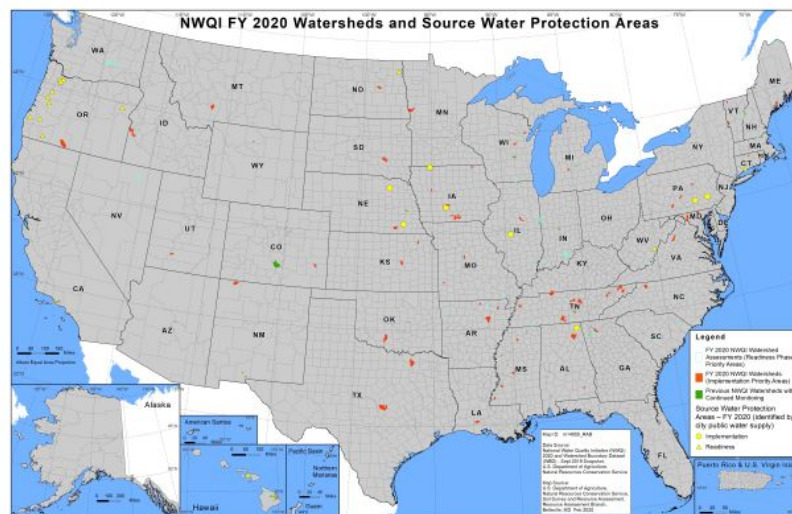
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# NRCS Programs with a Focus on Source Water Protection

## National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)

Partnering with EPA, state water quality agencies and drinking water utilities for water quality improvement  
– **includes a source water protection component**



## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns like source water protection



# NWQI Source Water Protection Projects for Groundwater



NWQI Project Location	Water Quality Concern
Saucony Creek, PA	Elevated nitrates in groundwater
Bazile GWMA, NE	Elevated nitrates and atrazine in groundwater
Pisgah, AL	Nitrates, pathogens
Park River, ND	Nitrates, pesticides, petroleum products





# Questions

