

2008 Farm Bill Conservation Title:

Investing in Conservation Programs That Preserve Natural Resources

- **Increases total spending on conservation programs by \$7.9 billion**
- **Extends the Popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**
 - Authorizes 32 million acres to be enrolled in the program from 2010-2012
 - Includes a new provision to allow retired landowners participating in CRP to modify their contracts if the land is being transferred to a beginning, limited resource, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. This would allow eligible producers to return some of this land to grazing or crop production
- **Expands the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)**
 - Provides funding to reestablish a baseline of \$1.3 billion and extends the program through 2012
 - Increases the maximum enrollment to 3,041,200 acres
 - Creates a Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program and updates the appraisal process
- **Strengthens the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**
 - Increases funding for EQIP by \$3.4 billion.
 - Makes conservation practices related to organic certification and transition eligible for payments
 - Improves the evaluation process for applications
 - Establishes the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) to help producers achieve water quality goals and address water quantity concerns
- **Extends the Conservation Security Program (CSP)**
 - Provides \$1.1 billion in new funding to enroll nearly 13 million acres per year
 - Expands eligible lands to include private forests
 - Restructures the program to provide conservation stewardship payments that encourage producers to implement additional conservation practices
 - Emphasizes attainment of new conservation benefits
- **Provides new resources to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay Region**
 - Provides \$438 million in new funding
 - Helps farmers and ranchers meet stringent regulatory requirements and better contribute to the success of the Bay restoration

Farm Bill Conservation Program Basics:

- CRP removes marginal croplands from production and encourages environmental enhancement on those lands.

- WRP is a voluntary, non-regulatory, incentive-based program that helps private landowners, farmers and ranchers protect and restore wetlands on their property.

- EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist farmers and ranchers install or implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land to protect water, air and soil quality as well as wildlife habitat.

- CSP pays farmers who are implementing conservation practices on their working lands. It provides annual payments and increasing financial incentives to encourage the continuation of farming practices that benefit soil, water, and air resources.

- **Extends and Increases Funding for Farm Protection Program (FPP)**
 - Doubles funding for FPP to \$773 million
 - Establishes a more user-friendly certification process that will determine eligibility for program funds
 - Reduces pressure for development on farmland
- **Continues and Expands the Grassland Reserve Program**
 - Adds an additional 1.22 million acres to the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), which helps landowners protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property
 - Allows for short term contracts and easements, and for cooperative agreements
- **Creates an Open Fields Program to provide incentives to state governments and Indian tribes to provide public access to private land for hunting and fishing**
 - Provides \$50 million in funding for 2009 through 2012
- **Establishes payment limitations for conservation programs**
 - Limits EQIP payments to \$300,000 over 6 years, but allows the Secretary to grant waivers to \$450,000 in particular cases
 - Clarifies the pay-out rate for WRP contracts
 - Easements of less than \$500,000 paid over 1 to 30 years
 - Easements of greater than \$500,000 paid over 5 to 30 years
 - Allows Secretary to grant a waiver and provide lump sum payment on easements over \$500,000
- **Improves cooperation between USDA and outside organizations**
 - Creates the Cooperative Conservation Program Initiative (CCPI) to better provide assistance to producers
 - Allows State/local governments, producer groups, and Indian tribes to help carry out programs
- **Reauthorizes the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)**
 - Increases cost-share assistance on long-term agreements and provides technical assistance and cost-share assistance to establish and improve wildlife habitat
- **Extends the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program through 2012**
 - Reauthorizes the program and includes \$100 million in funding
 - Provides technical and financial assistance for the rehabilitation of existing small watershed projects that may include upgrading or removing the dams

Farm Bill Conservation Program Basics cont'd:

- FPP provides matching funds (up to 50 percent of the fair market easement value) to help State, tribal, or local governments and non-governmental organizations purchase development rights to keep productive farm and rangeland in agricultural uses.

- GRP helps landowners restore and protect grassland, rangeland, pastureland, shrubland and certain other lands and provides assistance for rehabilitation.

- WHIP helps landowners develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land.