



North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program

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Conservation



Origin of the Program

- ◆ Established in 1984
- ◆ Response to nutrient enrichment concerns in two Piedmont lakes – shared responsibility
- ◆ Originally included 16 counties in watersheds of Jordan Lake, Falls Lake, and the Chowan River Basin
- ◆ Expanded in 1990 to include all 100 counties



Key Facts

- ◆ Annual funding (non-reverting):
 - \$5.24 million for financial assistance
 - \$2.45 million for technical assistance
- ◆ Soil and Water Conservation Commission:
 - Sets program requirements
 - Allocates funds to districts
- ◆ Funds only used on agricultural land
- ◆ 75% of predetermined average cost (up to \$75,000/yr)
- ◆ 57 eligible practices



Role of Districts

- ◆ Establish local priorities
- ◆ Solicit and rank applications
- ◆ Prepare and approve conservation plans and contracts and submit for State approval
- ◆ Oversee and assist practice implementation
- ◆ Certify installation according to standard
- ◆ Conduct maintenance spot checks and enforcement of contracts



Role of Other Partners

- ◆ Div. Of Soil & Water Conservation
 - Overall program development/admin
 - Approve contracts and payments
- ◆ NRCS
 - Technical standards
 - Design/Job approval authority
 - Advise Commission on technical aspects
- ◆ Cooperative Extension Service
 - R&D new practices
 - Tools to quantify benefits



2007 Accomplishments

- ◆ \$8.2 million encumbered to 1,412 contracts
- ◆ Prominent BMPs include:
 - Poultry litter storage structures
 - Livestock Exclusion/Alt. Watering systems
 - Cropland Conversion to Grass/Trees
 - Cover crop incentive
 - Mortality management systems



Accomplishments to Date

- ◆ Nearly \$143 million expended through 48,000 contracts
- ◆ Nearly 1,000 miles of livestock exclusion fencing installed
- ◆ Over 2,000 waste management systems installed
- ◆ Over 600,000 acres converted to conservation tillage/long term no till
- ◆ 17,000 acres of riparian buffer installed
- ◆ 128,000 acres of sensitive cropland converted to permanent vegetation or wildlife cover



Water Quality Benefits

- ◆ Water quality benefits must be estimated for each contract
- ◆ Now use NCANAT to assess nutrient benefits
- ◆ Use RUSLE to assess soil savings
- ◆ Since 1998:
 - Over 6.8 million tons of soil saved annually
 - Over 19 million pound reduction in nitrogen loss
 - Over 5 million pound reduction in phosphorus loss



Technical Assistance

- ◆ Provide up to 50% cost share for technical employees in districts
- ◆ Cost share for 116 local employees in 93 districts (Salaries/benefits + operating \$)
- ◆ Districts must match with local funds
- ◆ This is a critical element to the program
 - Technical support for planning/installation
 - Builds district capabilities



Additional benefits

- ◆ Resources for districts to respond to water quality needs
- ◆ Delivery infrastructure can be used for other programs – Nearly 20 different special programs use ACSP infrastructure
- ◆ Ready source of non-federal match for federal grants – More districts applying for grants
- ◆ Ease impact of EQIP change to 50% cost share



Community Conservation Assistance Program (CCAP)

- ◆ New effort to assist clients other than agriculture
 - Residential homeowners (erosion, flooding, irrigation management)
 - County and Municipal Governments (Phase II stormwater, water supply protection, sed/erosion control, land use/open space)
- ◆ Community Conservation Cost Share
 - Grants totaling \$850,000 allocated to 17 districts
 - \$200,000 in State Appropriations for FY-2008



Practices Approved for CCAP

- ◆ **Impervious Surface Removal**
- ◆ **Permeable Pavement**
- ◆ **Grassed Swales**
- ◆ **Critical Area Planting**
- ◆ **Bioretention Areas**
- ◆ **Backyard Rain Gardens**
- ◆ **Stormwater Wetlands**
- ◆ **Backyard Wetlands**
- ◆ **Diversion**
- ◆ **Riparian Buffer**
- ◆ **Streambank and Shoreline Protection**
- ◆ **Stream Restoration**
- ◆ **Cisterns**
- ◆ **Pet Waste Receptacles**
- ◆ **Abandoned Well Closure**



How to get a local cost share program started

- ◆ Identify key water quality/natural resource concern(s) to build case
- ◆ Get specific about the request and unify supporters
- ◆ Include both financial and technical assistance
- ◆ Stress leveraging and local benefits
- ◆ Highlight local decision-making