



NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
REFUGE SYSTEM



Private Lands Conservation and the Farm Bill

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What is the Farm Bill?

- Primary ag policy tool for govt
- Package of laws (12 titles) that govern production of food and fiber, nutrition assistance, conservation, energy, etc.
- Initiated in 1933 in response to depression and dust bowl
- First conservation provisions in the Food Security Act of 1985
- Reauthorized by Congress every 5 years (approximately)



APPROACHING DUST STORM IN MIDDLE WEST.

#525
CONRAD

Why Focus on the Farm Bill?

- 70% of US land base is private
- 50% of the 1.9 billion acres in the US is crop, pasture, or rangeland
- 2/3 of listed species use habitat on private lands
- Private land is critical to sustaining bird populations



2018 Farm Bill

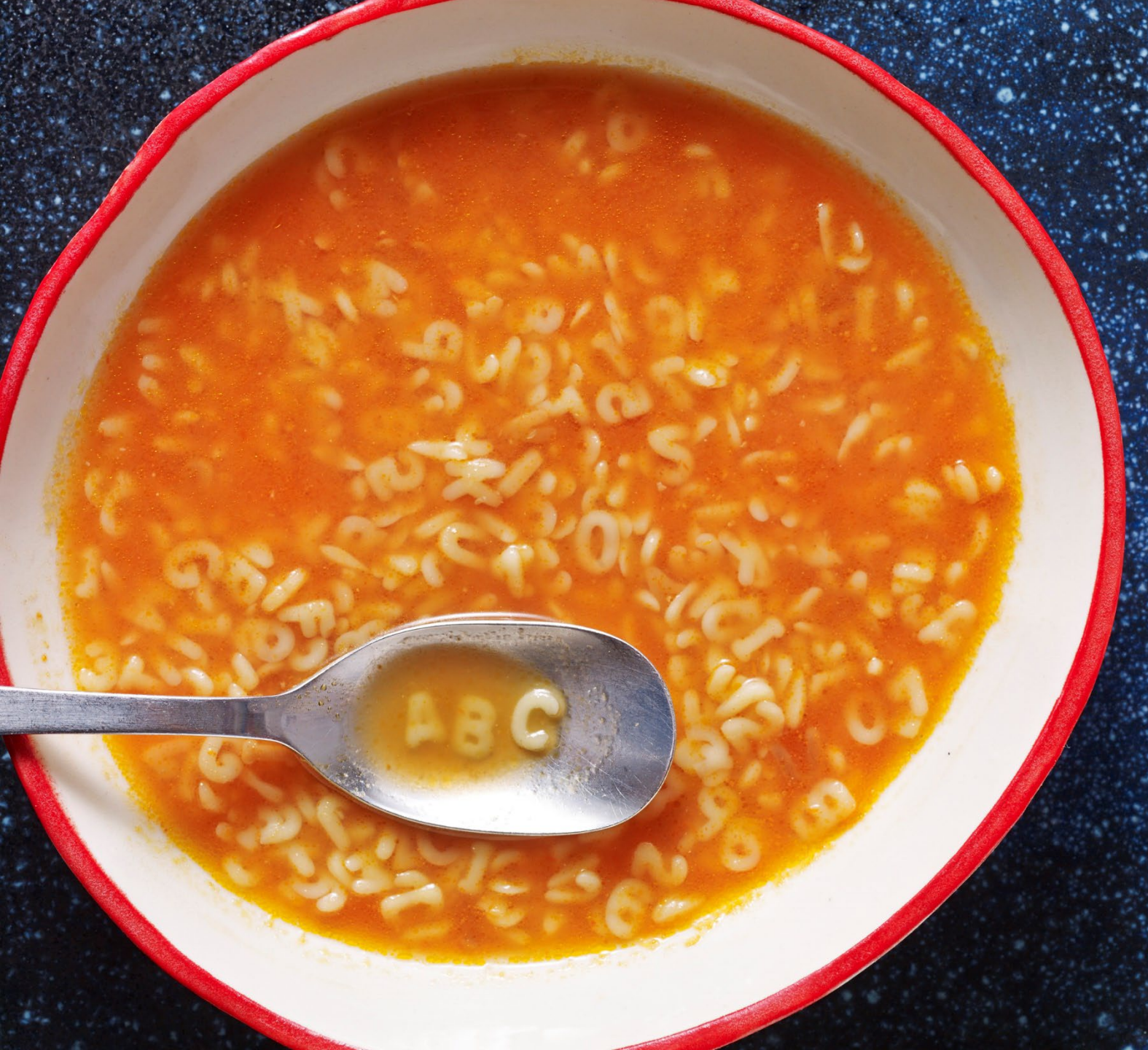
- **The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 was signed into law on December 20, 2018**
- **Authorizes over \$5 billion annually for conservation over 5 years (FY18-23) for voluntary incentive-based conservation programs**
- **The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provides an additional \$19.5 billion over 4 years (FY23-26)**



Why The Farm Bill Matters

FY 2024 funding levels (\$ millions)





CRP
EQIP
CSP
ACEP
HFRP
CREP
RCPP
AFA
FWP
SAFE
HELC
WC
VPA-HIP
WLFW
WHIP
CIG
AMA
WRE
ALE
WRP
WREP

CTA
TA
FA
TSP
CART
CAP
NRCS
FSA
CCC
USDA
IRA
CSAF
SGI
LPCI
CEAP
STC
MCM
WASRR
SIP
PIP
EBI

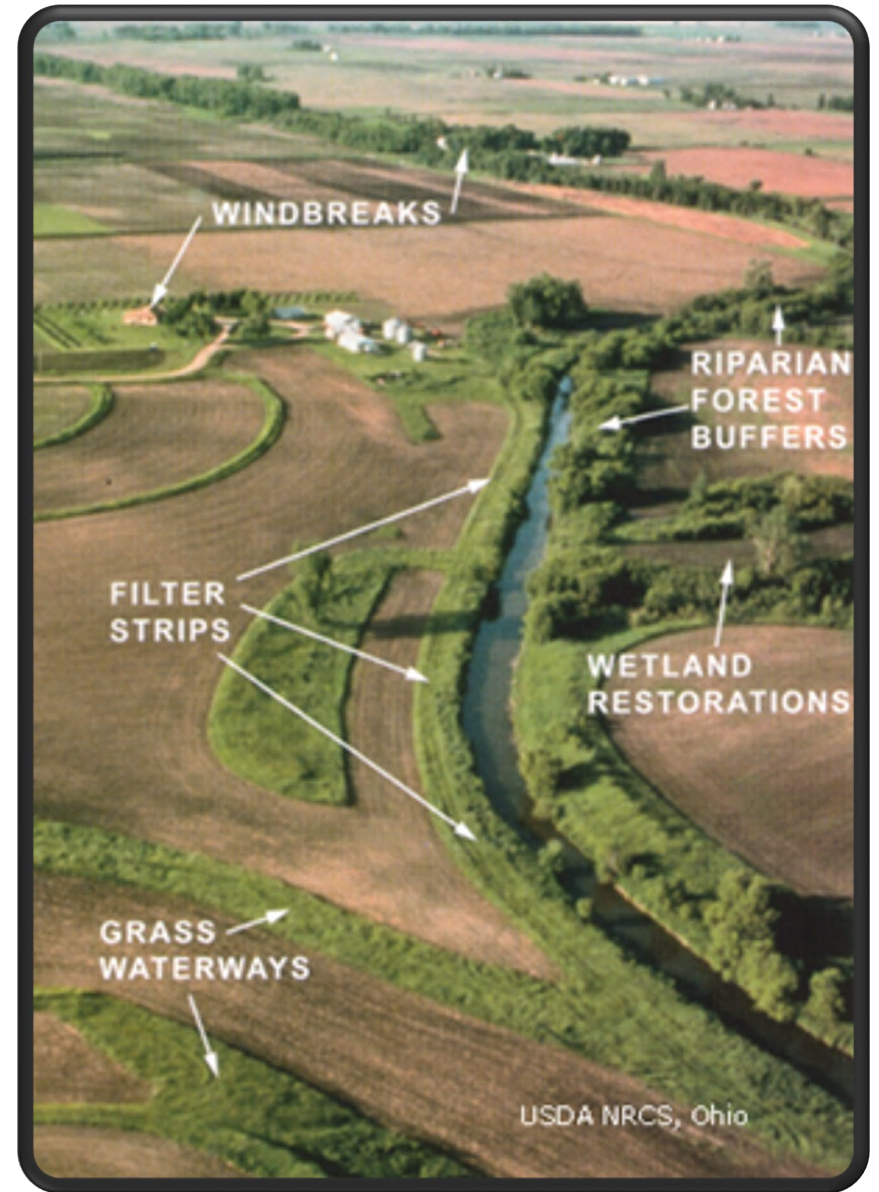
Major Conservation Programs

- Farm Service Agency
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) – 10% of total EQIP funding is for wildlife practices (totaling \$378 million in FY 2024)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Partner led and flexible



Conservation Program Elements

- All programs are voluntary
- Conservation of soil, water, and habitat as a program purpose or benefit
- Programs provide TA and FA to landowners who implement conservation practices
- Most programs are competitive with ranking criteria prioritizing environmental benefit



Farm Bill Delivery to Landowners

Financial Assistance (FA)

- Practice and Incentive Payments
- Rental and Easement Payments

Technical Assistance (TA)

- NRCS staff
- TSP (non-NRCS)
- Inter-Agency and cooperative Agreements (shared positions)
- Can include monitoring and effects analysis

Field Guide to Fish and Wildlife Conservation in the Farm Bill 2018-2023 Edition



<https://nabci-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2018-2023-Farm-Bill-Guide-FINAL-LOW-RES-FULL-SPREADS-052621.pdf>

On-the-Ground Delivery

- Voluntary programs require effective outreach to target landowners
- The right people in the right places!
- Importance of partnerships



ASSOCIATION of FISH & WILDLIFE AGENCIES

Targeting the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- **Current Enrollment – 24.7 million acres**
- **General CRP**
 - Target via Environmental Benefits Index (EBI)
- **Continuous CRP**
 - Duck nesting habitat – 456,795 acres
 - Non floodplain & playa wetlands – 796,831 acres
 - Upland bird habitat buffers – 191,680 acres
 - Pollinator habitat – 507,719 acres
 - SAFE – 2,684,021 acres
- **Grassland CRP**
 - Two grassland priority zones: receive 15 ranking pts and additional \$5/ac



Targeting NRCS Programs – Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)

Conservation of at-risk species while supporting sustainable farming, ranching, and forestry operations

7 National and 15 state-identified WLFW priorities

Landscape Conservation Frameworks:

3 existing:

- Sagebrush Biome
- Great Plains Grasslands
- Northern Bobwhite Grasslands and Savannas

Developing 4 new conservation frameworks:

- Eastern Aquatic Connectivity
- Eastern Deciduous Forest
- Southeastern Pine Ecosystems
- Western Migratory Big Game

Multi-species benefits

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



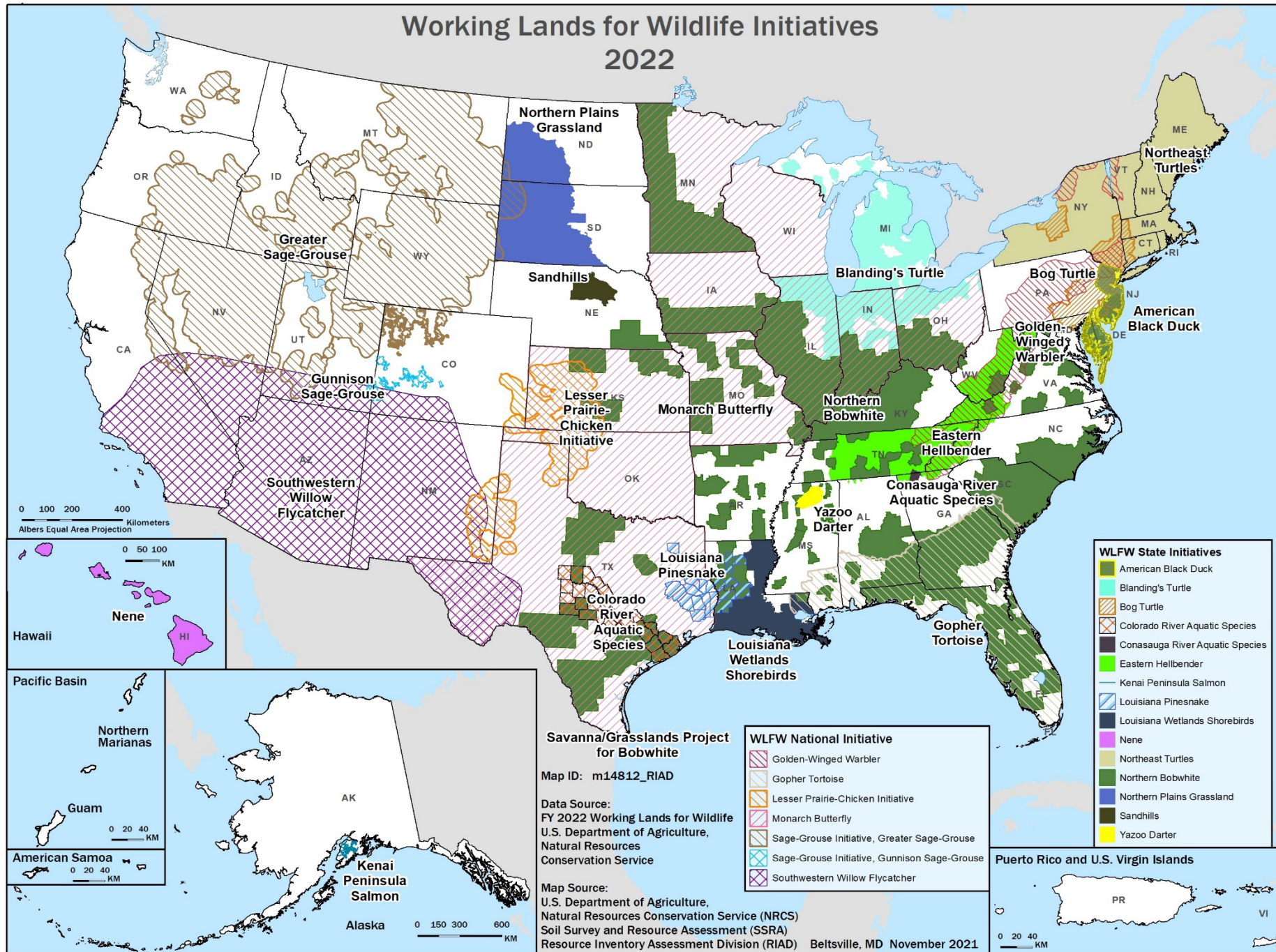
A Partnership for
Conserving Landscapes,
Communities & Wildlife



Partnerships



Working Lands for Wildlife Initiatives 2022



All FARM BILL DOLLARS WILL BE SPENT!

But on what?

**Opportunities to influence USDA's
decision-making process**



Implementation of Farm Bill Programs

- **National**
 - Legislation, Rulemaking, Practice Standards, Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)
- **State**
 - State Tech Committee, Ranking and Funding Pools, Field Office Technical Guide
- **Local**
 - Local Working Groups and Conservation Districts

Conservation partners have opportunities to influence USDA decisions at the national, state and local levels to benefit fish and wildlife resources



Monitoring and Evaluation

FSA-Monitoring Assessment and Evaluation (MAE): Quantifying CRP outcomes to inform policy (e.g., impact of CRP on grassland bird communities)

NRCS-Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP): Quantifying the effects of voluntary conservation to inform and improve conservation delivery for priority species and communities (e.g., effects of cover crops on grassland birds)





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More Information/Resources

NRCS: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives>

FSA: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/index>

CEAP (Conservation Effects Assessment Project): <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ceap>

MAE (Monitoring Assessment and Evaluation) <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/economic-and-policy-analysis/natural-resources-analysis/mae-reports-and-articles/index>

Contact Us!

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