



Landowners, Conservation Programs Are Key to Protecting Natural Resources

The fate of Missouri's soils, forests, plants, fish, and wildlife is in your hands. That's because more than 90 percent of the land in Missouri is owned by private citizens. In most cases, however, adequate resource protection comes at a cost. Fortunately, there are a number of state and federal agencies that provide financial assistance to help private landowners conserve and manage natural resources, including private forestland acres.

Here's a look at these cost share assistance programs for private landowners in Missouri.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a variety of financial incentives to producers and landowners interested in conservation treatment on their lands. Some programs offer annual payments for a conservation use. Others offer one-time, up-front payments for long-term easements for a conservation use. Most include funds to share in the cost of installing conservation measures.

USDA programs available to private landowners include the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Security Program (CSP), Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP), and Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).

The conservation provisions of those programs help reduce erosion, guard streams and rivers, restore and establish fish and wildlife habitat, improve air quality, and protect and improve forest land. Local USDA offices have information on these programs and payment options. Participation in all USDA programs is voluntary.

A portion of the revenue generated by Missouri's Parks and Soils Sales Tax is used to help landowners implement soil and water conservation practices. Funds are available through the state Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) cost-share program delivered through local soil and water conservation districts (SWCD).

The state cost-share funds are for practices that conserve soil, which consequently improves water

quality by reducing sedimentation in our rivers and streams. The practices reduce soil erosion by a variety of methods that may include increasing crop residue, improving vegetation, diverting or containing water to facilitate slower release, protecting stream bank and forested areas from livestock, and reducing wind erosion.

A separate state sales tax provides funds for Missouri landowners to implement forestry, fishery, and wildlife practices. These practices are intended to improve forest land, increase wildlife habitat, and protect fishery resources through a variety of measures, including prescribed burning, stream bank restoration, tree and shrub establishment, alternative watering systems, woodland improvement, and fencing. These funds are available by contacting Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) offices.

Article written by Doug Wallace, NRCS Forester. - For more agency specific and program-specific information, contact: NRCS at www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/ (573) 876-0900; MDC www.mdc.mo.gov/ (573)522-4115; FSA at www.fsa.usda.gov/mo/ (573) 876-0925; and DNR at www.dnr.mo.gov/ (573) 751-4932.

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