



## Landowners, Conservation Agencies Are Key to Protecting Natural Resources

The following column is the seventh in a series intended to benefit woodland owners.

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. Fortunately, there are a number of agencies that help private landowners conserve and manage natural resources. Another article in this series will focus on assistance that state agencies offer. Here's a look at some federal agencies.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the primary federal agency that works with landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources. NRCS employees provide technical assistance in such areas as animal husbandry, clean water, wildlife, forestry, engineering, resource economics, and social sciences. The technical assistance is suited to a customer's specific needs. NRCS also provides financial assistance through programs that offer environmental, societal, financial, and technical benefits. Participation in all NRCS programs is voluntary.

The USDA Forest Service (FS) administers programs for applying sound conservation in national forests and on national grasslands. It promotes these practices on all forest lands through cooperation with states and private landowners. The State and Private Forestry (S&PF) organization of the Forest Service reaches across the boundaries of national forests to states, tribes, communities and non-industrial private landowners. S&PF is the federal leader in providing technical and financial assistance to landowners and resource managers to help sustain the nation's forests and to protect communities and the environment from wildfires.

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) administers farm commodity, crop insurance, credit, environmental, conservation, and emergency assistance programs for farmers through a network of state and county offices.

Producers can participate in conservation programs through these local offices, and they may receive annual rental payments for planting permanent vegetation on idle, highly erodible farmland or sensitive environmental areas through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) offers innovative opportunities to enhance the nation's fish and wildlife resources on private lands through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. The program assists landowners with projects in all habitat types which conserve or restore native vegetation, hydrology, and soils associated with imperiled ecosystems. Those ecosystems include bottomland hardwoods, native prairies, marshes, rivers, streams, and others that provide essential habitat for rare, declining or protected wildlife species.

Rural Development (RD), another USDA agency, forges partnerships that bring housing, community facilities, utilities and other services to rural communities. RD also provides technical assistance and financial backing for rural businesses and cooperatives to create quality jobs in rural areas.

For more agency specific information, contact: NRCS at [www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/) (573) 876-0900; FS at [www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/marktwain/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/marktwain/) (573) 364-4621; FSA at [www.fsa.usda.gov/mo/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mo/) (573) 876-0925; RD at [www.rurdev.usda.gov/MO/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/MO/) (573) 876-0976; FWS at [www.fws.gov/midwest/ColumbiaES/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/ColumbiaES/) (573) 234-2132.

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