



## DEFINE WHAT YOUR SOURCE WATER PROGRAM CAN OFFER

Consider reaching out to NRCS or FSA staff in your locality or state to help your source water protection efforts. In Step 1, you read a brief overview to help orient you to NRCS and FSA. Now, you'll need to consider what you (or your source water program) can offer. Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- Understand NRCS/FSA programs and specific state information through a quick check of these websites: [nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov) (browse by location – NRCS State Offices) and [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov) (State Offices tab).
- Note that NRCS and FSA staff (and the private landowners and operators they work with) may be most aware of the regulatory nature of state and federal environmental programs, so it is important to convey that your focus is on opportunities to work collaboratively and voluntarily.
- Identify a specific geographic area or project to propose for collaboration, where systems of conservation practices could help protect and improve drinking water sources.
- Share source water data, particularly GIS maps and source water assessment results, with NRCS and FSA to identify opportunities to protect and improve water quality, and sources of drinking water. Link source water data to geographic areas where NRCS/FSA programs could protect water quality. Be aware that USDA does not share locational, ownership, or other specific information about farms, ranches or other properties – this is covered by Farm Bill Section 1619 (confidentiality of producer information). However, NRCS and FSA can share aggregated information on systems of conservation practices or acres with conservation practices.
- Consider how source water protection partners could help promote private landowner and operator participation or document progress by monitoring water quality.

**The following infographic highlights what source water programs and NRCS State Conservationists can bring to a collaborative effort to protect sources of drinking water.**

# COLLABORATION CAN PROTECT SOURCES OF DRINKING WATER

## TOGETHER

- Help NRCS direct 10 percent of conservation program spending to source water protection (2018 Farm Bill)
- Leverage funding
- Include multiple partners
- Measure progress
- Help producers and private landowners, agencies, and partners create a more sustainable future

## STATE SOURCE WATER PROGRAM

- Share data and information on delineated source water protection areas, priority contaminants, sources of contamination, and water quality monitoring results
- Provide information and leverage potential funding sources
- Assist with implementation and help target USDA initiatives (e.g., identifying priority areas, potential benefits of conservation practices to drinking water)
- Partner in conducting outreach to private landowners and operators
- Help engage drinking water utilities and other source water protection stakeholders
- Contact: [asdwa.org/sourcewatercontacts](http://asdwa.org/sourcewatercontacts)

## STATE CONSERVATIONIST

- Implement NRCS conservation programs – technical assistance and funding to private landowners and operators for conservation plans, and financial assistance for conservation practices
  - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  - National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Source Water Pilot
  - Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
  - Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership
  - Conservation practice standards
- Funding capacity, and discretion about what to fund
- Agreements with partners (e.g., conservation districts)
- Discretionary technical assistance (e.g. signup workshops for private landowners and operators)
- Contact: [nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contact/states/](http://nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/contact/states/)

## OUR COMMON GROUND

- Voluntary (non-regulatory) programs for private landowners and operators
- Focus on protecting soil, water quality, and health
- Achieve and demonstrate water quality results in priority areas
- Help assure overall health of communities

Note: It's a good idea to find out who USDA NRCS work with in your state. We are using "private landowners and operators" as a general term in this infographic. NRCS may work with a variety of producers - farmers, ranchers, poultry and livestock producers, dairymen, forest landowners, including those who rent land.

# 2018 FARM BILL EMPHASIZES PROTECTION OF DRINKING WATER SOURCES

## H.R. 2 – 92

(d) SOURCE WATER PROTECTION THROUGH TARGETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES - Section 1244 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3844) (as amended by subsection (b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(n) SOURCE WATER PROTECTION THROUGH TARGETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES.

“(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out any conservation program administered by the Secretary, the Secretary shall encourage practices that relate to water quality and water quantity that protect source water for drinking water (including protecting against public health threats) while also benefitting agricultural producers.

“(2) COLLABORATION WITH WATER SYSTEMS AND INCREASED INCENTIVES.

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In encouraging practices under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall

“(i) work collaboratively with community water systems and State technical committees established under section 1261(a) to identify, in each State, local priority areas for the protection of source waters for drinking water; and

“(ii) subject to subparagraph (B), for practices described in paragraph (1), offer to producers increased incentives and higher payment rates than are otherwise statutorily authorized by the applicable conservation program administered by the Secretary.

“(B) LIMITATION.—An increased payment under subparagraph (A)(ii) shall not exceed 90 percent of practice costs associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, or training.

“(3) RESERVATION OF FUNDS.

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023, the Secretary shall use to carry out this subsection not less than 10 percent of any funds available for conservation programs administered by the Secretary under this title (other than the conservation reserve program established under subchapter B of chapter 1 of subtitle D).

“(B) LIMITATION.—Funds available for a specific conservation program shall not be transferred to fund a different conservation program under this title.”.