

**Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
**Report To**  
**Papio-Missouri River NRD Board**  
**November 14, 2019**  
**Andy Bohnenkamp, Acting District Conservationist**

**NRCS FARM BILL PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FISCAL**  
**YEAR 2019 WITHIN THE PMRNRD**

As you know the Federal Government is now in FY2020 and I would like to update you on how the past year shaped-up for conservation within the NRD as it pertains to NRCS programs and to bring you up-to-speed with things since the last report in July.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- 11,946 acres of land had conservation practices applied to address Soil Erosion and Soil Quality.
- 12,502 acres of land had conservation practices applied to address Water Quality degradation.
- 1000 acres of land had conservation practices applied to address Livestock Production and Degraded Plant Condition.

93 EQIP contracts were approved and obligated this year in the NRD to the tune of \$1,238,889.55 to improve environmental quality. These contracts consist mostly of terrace systems, cover crops, livestock watering systems, fence, pasture and range seeding, brush management, prescribed burning, grassed waterways and ponds. Most all of which are also cost-shared on through the NRD's Conservation Assistance Program thus the large amount of Federal funds allocated will help the NRD's overall budget outlook for the future. The PMRNRD and NRCS partnership has proven to be a truly invaluable asset to achieve great success in getting conservation on the land, so thank you for what you do to foster that partnership!

Sign-up for the FY 2020 EQIP program is underway and will continue until at least November 15<sup>th</sup>, however that deadline will likely be extended due to a delay in the approval of the interim rules for the new Farm Bill so hopefully we will know more next month.

### Conservation Stewardship Program (CStwP)

22 CStwP contracts were approved and obligated this year in the NRD comprising a total of \$1,413,504 in conservation funds on over 11,751 acres. These contracts will assist farm operators in taking their entire farm operation to a higher level of conservation stewardship by adopting multiple conservation management practices like precision application of all nutrients, pesticides and herbicides, leaving grain standing for wildlife, complex cover cropping, establishing pollinator habitat on existing cropland acres and maintaining a current high level of conservation stewardship throughout their operation for the next 5 years.

### Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

We had a short Continuous CRP sign-up this summer which included only practices to address water quality degradation. Practices such as filter strips along creeks, grassed waterways, wetland buffers and contour buffer strips were only available to landowners during this sign-up period. Our NRD area managed to secure a total of 42 CRP contracts on 346 acres, which I consider a success for wildlife and to surface water quality for the future. We are anticipating a General CRP sign-up in December and we are hoping for a large amount of interest.

### Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA)

CTA can best be described as a catch-all type of program which is tied directly to technical assistance that NRCS provides to landowners and producers that is not financially tied to a federal cost share program, however it is indirectly tied to the NRD's local CAP program. Like much of the work we do in the field office NRD and NRCS staff work together to accomplish the mission. In FY 2019 NRCS in the PMRNRD set a goal for this program to apply conservation to address soil erosion and water quality degradation on around 3900 acres. We ended up exceeding our goal to apply conservation practices to address erosion and water quality on over 5,570 acres of land. This level of success is tied directly back to the NRD's CAP program and those NRD projects that NRCS and the NRD partner with to help people help the land, just another great example of the great work we do together.

### **NRCS EMPLOYEE UPDATES WITHIN THE NRD**

NRCS is working to hire several vacant positions within the state as well as a few within the NRD and it has proven to be a slow process however we have some good news to report...

Jason McCauley, current Resource Conservationist in the Tekamah FO, has accepted the Resource Conservationist position in the Dakota City Field Office and

officially reported for duty there on Monday, October 28, 2019. This is a great opportunity for Jason to move closer to his home in Sioux City and we are certainly excited to keep him in Nebraska but especially within the NRD, congratulations Jason!

Also pleased to welcome Thomas English aboard our team at the Blair Field Office. Tom was hired in August this year as a Farm Bill Programs Assistant through a National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) grant that the NRD applied for and was awarded. Through a cooperative agreement with the NRCS, the NACD provides a limited number of technical assistance grants to further enhance conservation district technical assistance across the nation. The granted funds, good for 3 years, were awarded directly to the PMRNRD to hire staff in the field office where additional capacity is needed to improve customer service and reduce workload pressure. Due to extremely high workload and flood related programs work, Tom couldn't have been hired at a more perfect time and has proven to be a great addition so far!

Finally, as you know Neil Jensen retired as District Conservationist in early August this year and the DC position was just recently advertised by NRCS in late September and officially closed on September 27<sup>th</sup>. Maybe we will get lucky and Santa Claus will bring us a new DC announcement just in time for Christmas! Stay Tuned!

### **NRCS LATEST NEWS RELEASE**



#### **NRCS Offering More Than \$4 Million to Restore Flood-Prone Lands in Nebraska**

**LINCOLN, Neb., Sept. 25, 2019** – In response to flooding in Nebraska, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is announcing the availability of over \$4 million to fund conservation easements in Nebraska counties damaged by flooding and other natural disasters.

Funds are available through the floodplain easement component of the Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements. NRCS field offices are accepting applications through Oct. 31, 2019.

Through the Floodplain Easement Program, eligible applicants voluntarily agree to sell a permanent conservation easement to the United States through NRCS. Compensation is based on the value of the easement as determined by an appraisal or market analysis. These easements may occur on private agricultural land damaged by flooding and natural disasters. NRCS will work to restore the easement to its natural floodplain condition.

“Landowners across Nebraska have faced—and continue to face—significant challenges from flooding and natural disasters,” said Nebraska NRCS State Conservationist Craig Derickson. “To provide relief and assist agricultural landowners during this difficult time, this easement program offers an option that alleviates the stress of operating in a floodplain while still retaining ownership of their property.”

Nebraska landowners are encouraged to contact their local NRCS field offices to apply or learn more about floodplain easement opportunities. Visit the [Floodplain Easement Program](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/landscape/ewp/?cid=nrcs143_008216) website at: [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/landscape/ewp/?cid=nrcs143\\_008216](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/landscape/ewp/?cid=nrcs143_008216) for more information.

# CONSERVATION

Our Purpose.  
Our Passion.

Helping People Help the Land.

## Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.