

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
February 13, 2014
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



President Barack Obama Signs 2014 Farm Bill

The President Signs the Farm Bill: "A Jobs Bill, an Innovation Bill, a Research Bill, and a Conservation Bill". The new farm bill is called the Agricultural Act of 2014.

Here are a few noted highlights from the 2014 Farm Bill:

Title II: Conservation

- Incorporates Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).
- Continues the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) at 10 million acres per year.
- Establishes a new Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) consolidating farm/ranch land easement and wetland easement programs.
- Creates Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to leverage USDA funding and resources by partnering with third parties or working directly with producers in watersheds and other critical conservation areas.
- Provides \$250 million in mandatory funding for the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program.
- Provides \$5 million in mandatory funding for the Grassroots Source Water Protection Program to help ensure safe drinking water supplies in rural areas.
- Provides \$10 million in mandatory funding for wetland mitigation banking.

- Requires conservation compliance to receive crop insurance premium assistance.
- Provides for a \$900,000 adjusted gross income limitation for conservation program eligibility with no waiver.
- Grants priority treatment to conservation program applicants who commit to providing pollinator habitat and encourages the Secretary to ensure that conservation programs are resulting in sufficient high-quality pollinator habitat for managed honey bees.
- Gradually reduces maximum Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrollment to 24 million acres; adds flexibility for haying and grazing; continues the Transition Incentive Program; provides funding for thinning of trees; and allows for one-time early out of contracts.
- Provides \$40 million for the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.

Join the Cover Crops and Soil Health Forum February 18

Statewide Cover Crops Forums to Explore Soil-Health-Building Opportunities.



Farmers, ranchers, researchers, agricultural business operators and conservationists are invited to participate in forums about cover crops and soil health from 8:45 a.m. until 12:15 p.m. Tuesday, February 18, at nine different locations in Nebraska.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is partnering with University of Nebraska Extension to sponsor the nine Nebraska forums. The forums will be conducted simultaneously along with more than 200 other forums throughout the country. They will be in concert with the National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health in Omaha, Nebraska, sponsored by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation.

The broadcast will feature:

- Howard G. Buffett, Howard G. Buffett Foundation
- Jason Willer, NRCS Chief
- Ray Gaesser, Iowa farmer and president of the American Soybean Association
- A panel of farmers applying soil health and cover crop practices on their operations:
 - Dave Brandt, Ohio
 - Gabe Brown, North Dakota
 - Dan DeSutter, Indian
 - Clay Mitchell, Iowa

The nine Nebraska forum locations are Sidney, North Platte, Alma, Grand Island, Norfolk, O'Neill, Lincoln, Wilber and Syracuse.

This event is free and open to the public, but because seating is limited, reservations are required. To participate, contact Colleen James at (402) 437-4039 or colleen.james@ne.usda.gov to preregister. For more information about the Cover Crops and Soil Health Forum, visit <http://www.sare.org/Events/Forum-on-Cover-Crops-and-Soil-Health>.



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