



United States Department of Agriculture



# USDA NRCS Vermont

Travis L. Thomason – State Conservationist

Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

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## *Mission*

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*We deliver  
conservation solutions  
so  
agricultural producers can  
conserve natural resources  
and  
feed a growing world.*

## *Vision*

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*Resilient lands  
with  
clean and abundant water,  
healthy soils,  
and  
thriving agricultural  
communities.*



# Conservation Business Model

1. NRCS works **one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan** that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm natural resource issues.
2. Once a producer has a conservation plan, NRCS **helps producers make investments in their operations and local communities** through our several financial assistance programs.
3. NRCS **generates, manages, and share science-based data, technology, and standards** to help professionals and policy-makers make informed decisions.



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# Key Conservation Partners

- Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDD) and the Natural Resources Conservation Commission (NRCC)
- Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership (VAWQP)
  - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
  - USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA)
  - Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD)
  - VT Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFMM)
  - VT Agency of Natural Resources (VANR)
  - Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP)
  - University of Vermont's Extension Service (UVM Extension)
  - US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
  - VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)
- Other federal, state, local conservation organizations.



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# FY23 Agency Priorities



1. Ensure equity in the delivery and implementation of all NRCS programs and services.
2. Increase assistance for climate-smart agriculture and forestry to support producers in mitigating climate change and building resiliency across their operations.
3. Expand conservation tools and support to address the unique needs of urban farmers and communities nationwide.
4. Cultivate a complete and diverse workforce that has the right tools, technologies, and training to uphold the scientific integrity of NRCS.
5. Leverage innovative partnerships to expand NRCS's ability to get conservation on the ground effectively and efficiently.



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# 2018 Farm Bill Key Programs

- Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program
  - Provides the authority for the agency to work one-on-one with producers to develop a farm-specific conservation plan.
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  - Provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns.
  - ~ \$11 million a year in financial assistance to 350 producers in Vermont.
  - FY22 Top Conservation Practices
    - Waste Storage Facility – 24 no. (\$1,949,206)
    - Heavy Use Area Protection – 44 ac. (\$510,152)
    - Cover Crop – 10,894 ac. (261,409)
    - No-till – 342 ac. (\$21,461)
    - Reduced Till – 1,722 ac. (\$15,893)



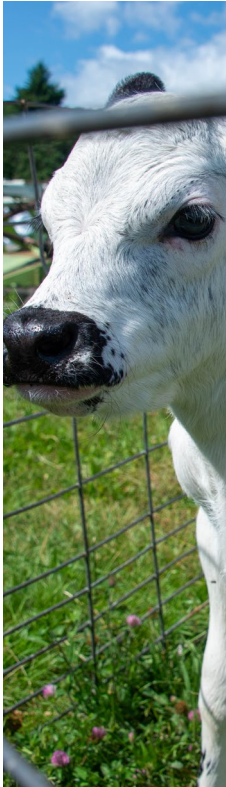
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# 2018 Farm Bill Key Programs

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
  - Helps a producer build on their existing conservation efforts while strengthening the operation. This program is typically for a producer who has an existing conservation plan and wants to focus on enhancing the conservation efforts that are already in place.
  - ~\$300k in CSP contracts with around 25 producers annually. Both agricultural lands and forest land.
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
  - Helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands or protect working farms and ranches through conservation easements.
  - Total Number of Vermont easements as of December 31, 2022 - 566 easements on 91,236 acres
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
  - Partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land.



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# Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

## Brief Overview of Provisions

- Signed into law August 18, 2022
- Single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history
- Will help producers stay on the farm and increase access to conservation assistance.
- Promotes climate-smart agriculture and forestry
- Protects communities from climate impacts
- Provides approximately \$20 billion to support conservation programs that yield climate-related benefits



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# Key IRA vs. Farm Bill Differences

- Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Focus
  - Practices need to focus on GHG emissions reduction and soil carbon storage
  - Climate mitigation practice examples
    - Agroforestry (multiple)
    - Anaerobic Digester
    - Cover crops
    - Energy Efficient Ag. Systems
    - Forest Stand Improvement
    - Grazing Management
    - Nutrient Management
    - Tillage Management
    - Vegetation planting and management (multiple)

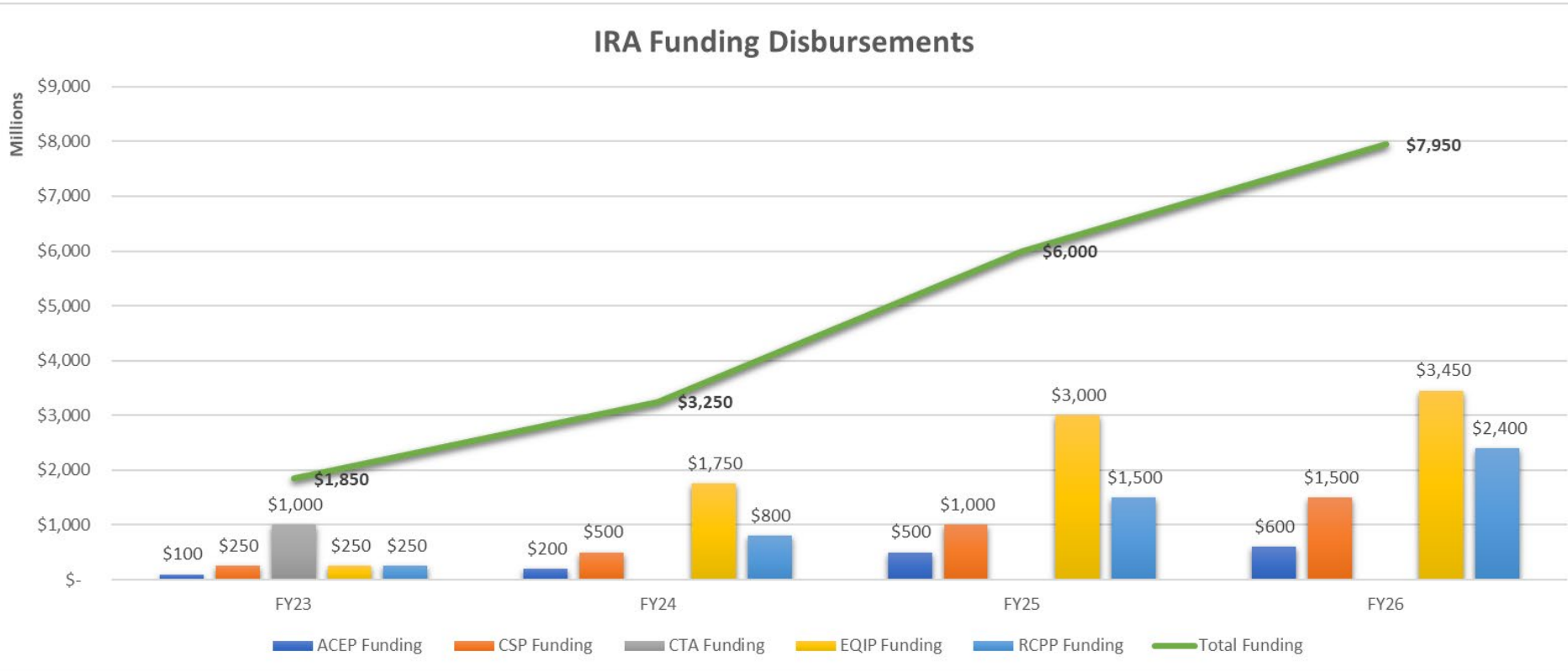


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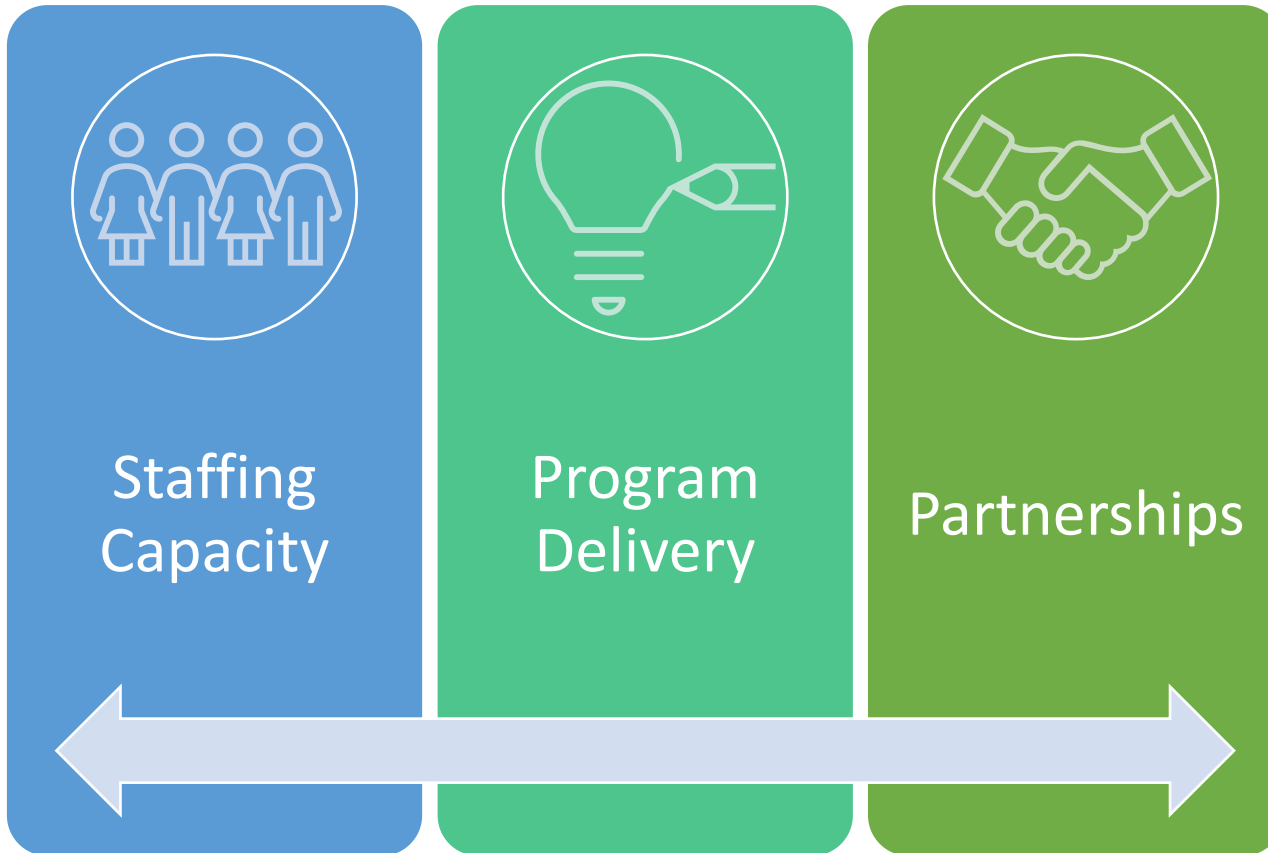
# IRA Funding Disbursements



\*CTA Funds Not Given Disbursement Schedule—Assume FY23 Full Amount

\*Funds Expire  
Sept 30, 2031

# IRA Major Focus Areas for Success





# Soil Amendments

- Mulching (484)
- Amending Soil Properties with Lime (805)
- Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum (333)
- Soil Carbon Amendment (808)
- EQIP Payment Rates for FY23



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