



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE)

Ken Kriese, ACEP-WRE National Program Manager

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Voluntary Conservation Easements

- NRCS conservation easements are acquired through the voluntary sale of a property right that restricts what a landowner may do on their land.
- Easements run with the land: The restrictions attach to a parcel and apply to all subsequent landowners.
- Some easements are perpetual, meaning the restrictions placed on the land can last forever.

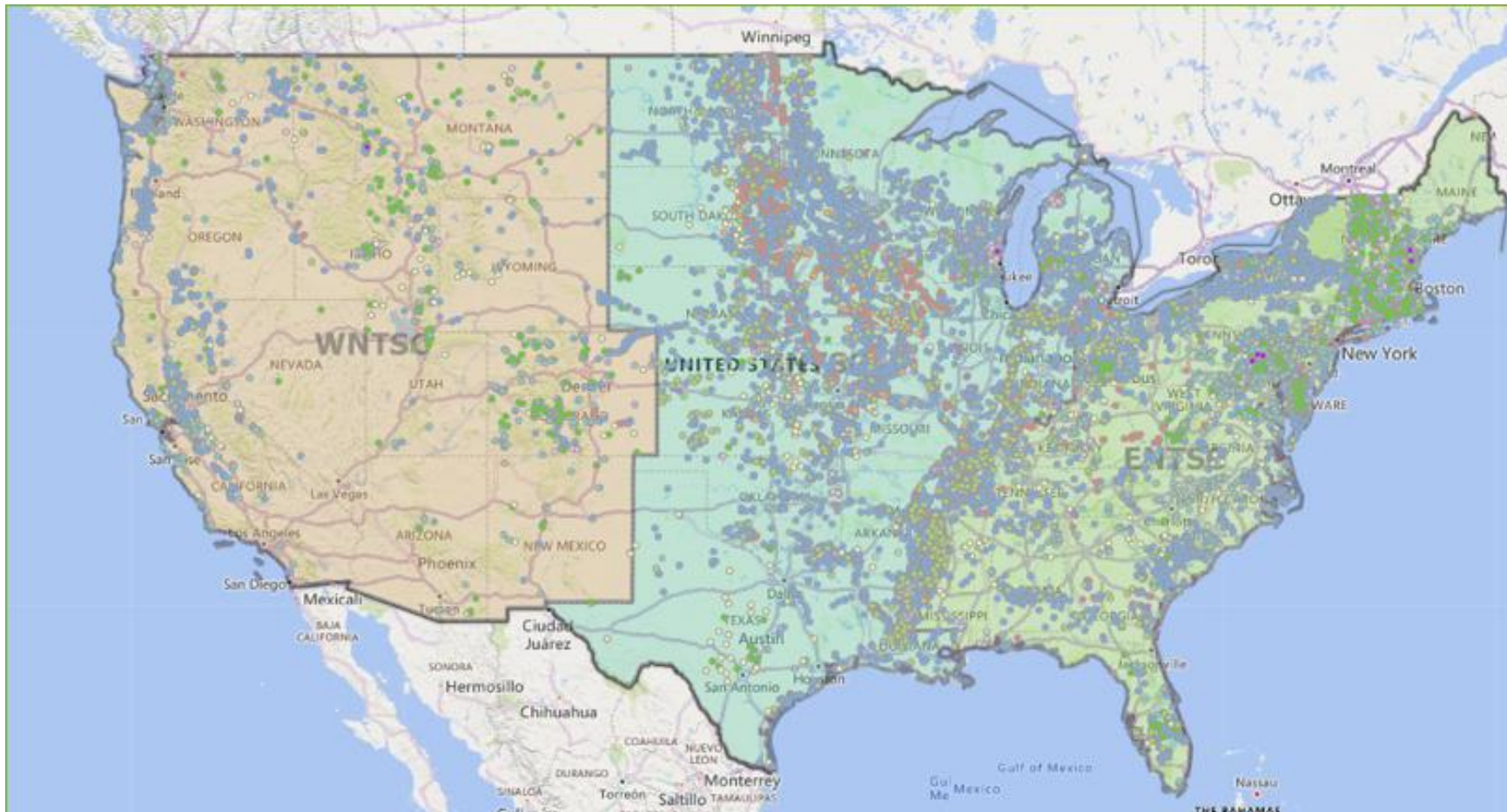


Model for Voluntary Private Land Conservation

- Easements provide, protect and preserve:
- Open Space
- Wildlife
- Prime Soils
- Sporting Pursuits
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Air Quality
- Rural Jobs
- Working Lands and Agricultural Traditions



NRCS Current Easement Portfolio



Easement acres are cumulative and increase each year

NRCS Current Easement Portfolio

	NUMBER OF EASEMENTS	ACRES
TOTAL	>25,000	>6,200,000



NRCS manages nearly 50,000 miles of boundaries – if added together they would stretch around the earth TWICE!



Repealed Easement Programs

Since
1992

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

Since
1993

Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP)

Since
2002

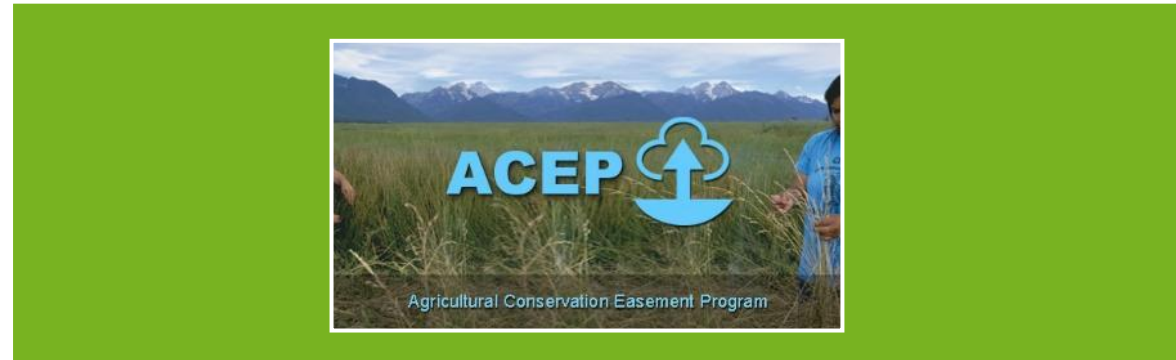
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

Since
1996

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)



Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs



**Agricultural Conservation
Easement Program – Agricultural
Land Easements
(ACEP-ALE)**



**Agricultural Conservation
Easement Program – Wetland
Reserve Easements
(ACEP-WRE)**

Wetland Easements (ACEP-WRE)

- ACEP-WRE easements protect, restore and enhance the functions and values of wetland ecosystems
- NRCS holds title to the easement and the landowner holds the fee title
- NRCS restores these areas to the maximum extent practicable



ACEP-WRE : Landowner Eligibility

Eligible	Enrollment Option	Duration	Eligible Applicant
	30-Year Contract	30 years	Acreage owned by Indian Tribes only
	30-Year Easement	30 years or the maximum duration authorized under State law if less than perpetual	Private landowners or Indian Tribes (including Native Corporations)
	Permanent Easement	Perpetuity	Private landowners or Indian Tribes (including Native Corporations)
Ineligible	Landowners that are units of Federal, State, or local governments		

ACEP – WRE : Land Eligibility

- Land eligible for wetland reserve easements includes:
 - ✓ farmed or converted wetlands;
 - ✓ former or degraded wetlands that have been or are being used for food or fiber production (including grazing);
 - ✓ agricultural lands substantially altered by flooding; and
 - ✓ that can be successfully and cost-effectively restored.
- Eligible Adjacent land can be enrolled in combination with the degraded wetlands.



ACEP-WRE : Easement Details

- NRCS provides financial assistance to purchase the easement and complete restoration activities.
- Three enrollment options
 - ✓ Perpetual
 - ✓ 30 – year term (or maximum allowable by state law)
 - ✓ 30 – year contract with Indian Tribes
- Easement restricts development and agricultural use.



ACEP-WRE : Role of NRCS

- Landowners apply directly to NRCS to participate in the program.
- NRCS determines ranking criteria, evaluates the land for eligibility & selects eligible land (and landowners) for projects for funding at the State Level.
- NRCS pays up to 100% of the easement purchase price and restoration cost for permanent easements.
- NRCS sets the deed terms that identify what is and is not allowed on the easement. The deed template cannot be modified.



ACEP-WRE : Role of the Landowner

- Completes the federal application
- Agrees to the terms of the easement
 - ✓ No Development
 - ✓ No Agricultural activities except those allowed via a Cooperative Use Agreement (e.g., haying, grazing)
 - ✓ Control noxious weeds
- Assists in development of restoration and management plan
- Pays 25% of restoration cost if 30-year easement or 30-year contract
- Maintains ability to control access
- Can still lease land for hunting, fishing, or other recreational activities.





Before Restoration

After Restoration



Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP)

- The purpose of ACEP-WRE-WREP is to target and leverage partner resources to address high-priority wetland protection, restoration and enhancement objectives through agreements.
- Under ACEP-WRE-WREP enrollment, State conservationists enter into agreements with eligible partners to provide services to NRCS to assist with implementing ACEP-WRE in the project area.



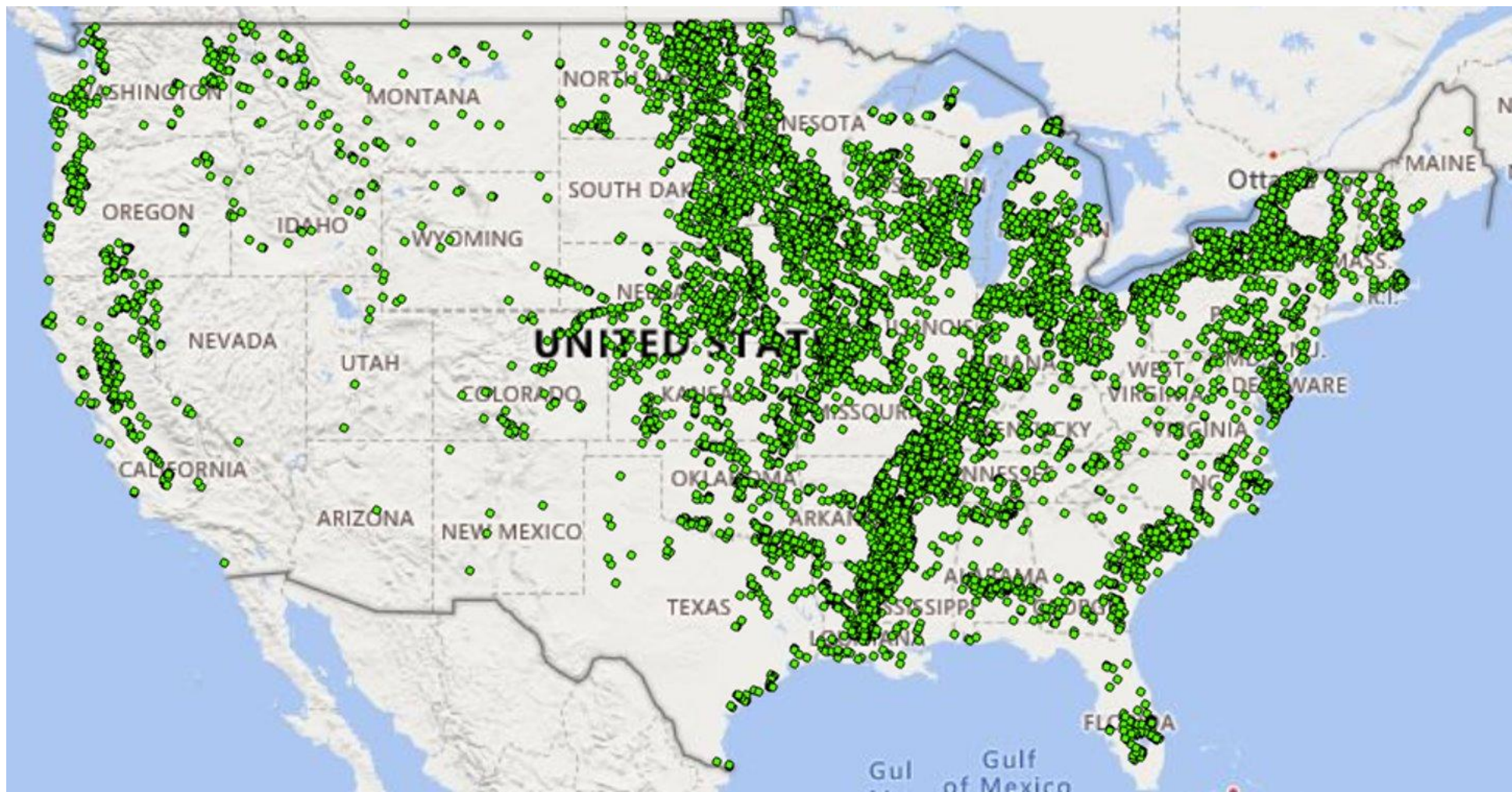
Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP)

Partner responsibilities include—

- Identifying a project area and developing a proposal to submit to NRCS.
- Upon selection partner agrees to performing activities as outlined in a program agreement.
- Ensuring availability of resources to be contributed to WREP projects, including all matching funds.
- Providing outreach to potential participants.



ACEP-WRE / WRP Map



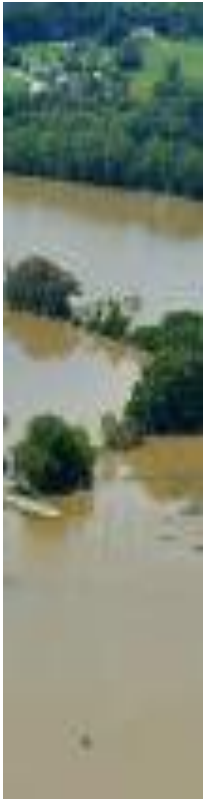
Emergency Watershed Protection Program

- Recent severe weather events have pushed agricultural and non-agricultural landowners beyond their ability to farm, ranch, or reside on lands, that in some cases have been in their families for generations.



EWPP – Floodplain Easements

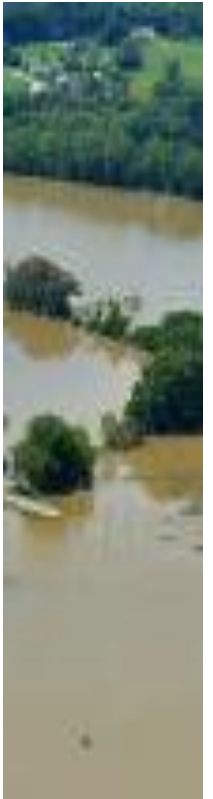
- The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) Floodplain Easements (FPE) provides an alternative measure to traditional EWPP – Recovery, which provides recovery assistance consisting of emergency measures for repairs and restoration of eligible sites.
- EWPP-FPE's can be administered in locations where:
 - ✓ where a Stafford Act Disaster Declaration has been made; or
 - ✓ identified and funded through Congressional legislation.



Lands eligible for EWPP-FPE

NRCS may determine land is eligible for EWPP-FPE if any of the following apply:

- The floodplain lands were damaged by flooding at least once within the previous calendar year or have been subject to flood damage at least twice within the previous 10 years.
- Other lands within the floodplain are eligible, provided the lands would contribute to the restoration of the flood storage and flow, provide for control of erosion, or that would improve the practical management of the floodplain easement.
- Lands would be inundated or adversely impacted as a result of a dam breach.

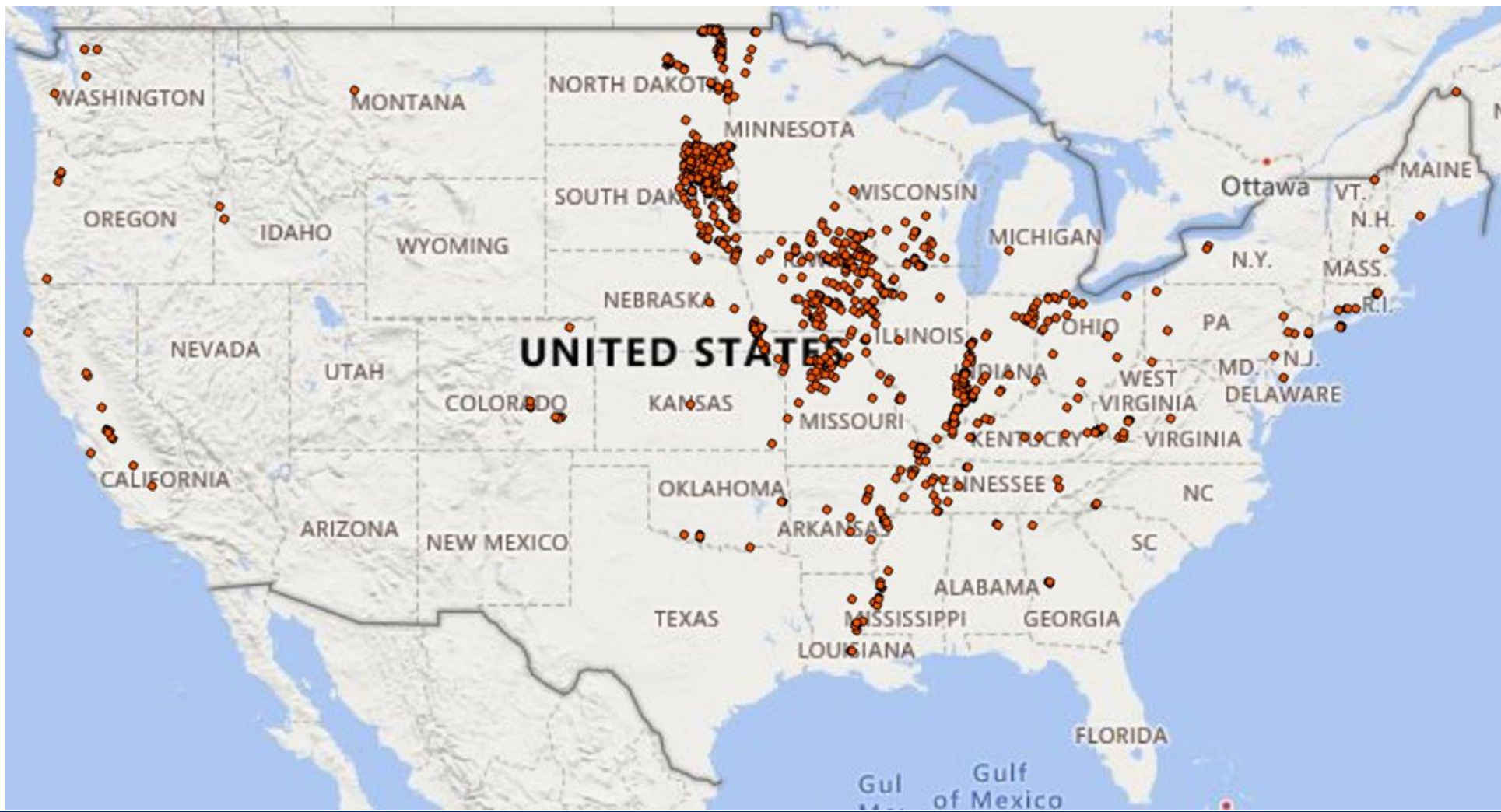


Types of EWPP-FPE projects

1. Agricultural lands and other lands without residences or other structures
2. Residential properties with structures present



EWPP-FPE Map



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

What

Carry out **eligible activities** to further the conservation, protection, restoration, and sustainable use of **soil, water, wildlife, agricultural land, and related natural resources** on eligible land on a regional or watershed scale.

Where

On **eligible land**, which is Private or Tribal agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, or associated land on which an eligible activity would help achieve the **conservation benefits** defined for an approved project.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

How

NRCS and partners co-invest in conservation activities to achieve conservation benefits and address natural resource concerns.

For More Information

Grants.gov for webinar recording on RCPP overview

NRCS Webpage: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/regional-conservation-partnership-program>

2018 Farm Bill RCPP Easements

Other NRCS Easement Programs

Conservation Purpose

- Program-specific

Entity-held

- Agricultural Lands
- Grasslands

US-held

- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Forest Lands

2018 Farm Bill RCPP Easements

Conservation Purpose

- Program + Project-specific

Entity-held

- Minimally Restrictive
- Moderately Restrictive
- Highly Restrictive

US-held

- Minimally Restrictive
- Moderately Restrictive
- Highly Restrictive



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

QUESTIONS?

**Ken Kriese, ACEP-WRE National
Program Manager**

kenneth.kriese@usda.gov



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center