Farm Bill Timeline

- Singed into law December 20, 2018
- Government shutdown may slow implementation
  - new funding levels and program changes timeline

Rulemaking
- Process of taking the legislative language and putting it into regulations and practice
- Takes time
- Public comments
Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018

Overview of Funding

*Projected 10 Year Farm Bill Spending in Billions*
- Title I: Commodity Programs
- Title XI: Crop Insurance Subsidies
- Title II: Conservation Programs
- Title IV: Nutrition
- Everything Else: $6.7B

Source: National Sustainable Ag Coalition
Farm Bill Conservation Funding

Conservation Funding in the Farm Bill
Projected 10 Year Funding in Billions

Source: National Sustainable Ag Coalition
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- 22.4 million acres nationwide currently
- 1,078,937 acres in Nebraska
  - High of 1.37 million acres in 1994
  - 347,022 acres of grassland CRP

New Farm Bill

- CRP acreage cap will increase 3 million acres to 27 million acres
  - 1 million acres for general and continuous CRP
  - 2 million acres designated for grassland CRP
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- limits rental rates for general CRP contracts to 85% of the county average soil rental rate
- limits rental rates for continuous CRP contracts to 90% of the county average soil rental rate
  - these rates apply for reenrolled CRP as well as previously enrolled acres
  - a producer with less productive soils could still get 100% of their calculated soil rental rate as long as it is equal or less than 85% or 90% of the county average
  - these reductions may be waived through negotiation with a CREP partner
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Retains the Practice Incentive Payment for continuous practices
- Cost share cannot exceed 100% of the cost of establishing the practice
  - Limits cost share for seed to 50% of seed cost
- New continuous practice enrollments will receive a Signing Incentive Payment equal to 32.5% of first annual rental payment
  - Had been a flat rate per acre of $7.50-$15.00/acre/year depending on practice
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- More wildlife habitat
- Opportunities for landowners to enroll
- Migratory Bird SAFE continues

Questions and Discussion
New Farm Bill

- Provides mandatory funding at the following levels:
  - $1.75 billion for FY 2019 and 2020
  - $1.80 billion for FY 2021
  - $1.85 billion for FY 2022
  - $2.025 billion for FY 2023
    - Had been $1.75 billion
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Increases funding for wildlife habitat from 5% to 10%
  - Wildlife Fund Pool
  - Should translate to an increase from about $1 million to +$2 million
- Wildlife practices can be up to 10 years in length
- States can designate 10 high priority practices that offer 90% cost share
- Incorporates elements of CSP
Working Lands for Wildlife

Partnership between USDA and USFWS

Eastern Sandhills Project
- Grassland management - cedar control, grazing systems, habitat management
- RWBJV is a partner

New Farm Bill
- In statute
- Includes CRP as eligible program
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Opportunities

• More flexibility

• More funding for wildlife fund pool:
  • prescribed burning, Eastern redcedar control, WLFW

• New ideas (precision ag)

Questions and Discussion
Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)

Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)

Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)
  • 30 year or permanent easements

New Farm Bill
  • $450 million per year
  • Certified entities
  • Prioritizes management and enhancement of existing easements

Photo credit: Nebraska Land Trust
Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

- More than 78,000 acres enrolled in Nebraska (600+ contracts)
  - 30 year or permanent easements

New Farm Bill

- Reserved Grazing Rights- requires a grazing management plan that is updated at least every 5 years
- Water quality as acquisition priority
- Removes requirement for consultation with USFWS
Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)

New Farm Bill

- Provides any combination of cash, charitable donation, and costs associated with securing the deed as non-federal share of easement
- Removes requirement of 50% cash match when a charitable donation
- Removes requirement for conservation plan, except for highly erodible land
- Land enrolled in ALE may also be enrolled in CRP

Photo credit: Nebraska Land Trust
Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP)

• More funding
• More flexibility for match
• Additional certified entities (Nebraska Land Trust)

Questions and Discussion
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Currently 6.3 million acres enrolled in Nebraska
- $58 million in annual payments

New Farm Bill

- Funding- $700 million, increasing to $1 billion in 2023
- Streamlined and coordinated procedures for CSP and EQIP
- Grassland Conservation Initiative
  - 5 year contracts for protecting grazing use, soil, water, and wildlife
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- Divots in the Pivots
- Cover Crops
- Grassland Bird

New Farm Bill

- $300 million per year
- RCPP becomes a stand alone program
- Enrollment is streamlined
- CRP is included as an eligible program
- More flexibility for projects
Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)

Open Fields and Waters Program (OFW)
- More than 317,000 acres for fishing and hunting access in 2018-19

New Farm Bill
- A total of $50 million in mandatory funding for the 5 year Farm Bill
- Directs $3 million to encourage WRP/WRE enrollment
Conservation Compliance retained

- Highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance is required for producers to receive crop insurance premium assistance.

Sodsaver retained

- Reduces crop insurance premium subsidy (by 50 percentage points) for four years if a landowner breaks native sod.
  - Reduction in base yield to 65% of 10 year avg.
- 6 States: NE, IA, SD, ND, MT, and MN
- Requires USDA to report on sodbusted acres annually
Take Home Messages

Overall, funding for conservation increased

- CRP acreage cap increased **3 million acres**
- EQIP wildlife fund increases from 5% to **10%**
- Working Lands for Wildlife strengthened
- Wetland Reserve Easement funding improved
- RCPP was expanded and opportunities increased

Funding for hunting and fishing access was retained and **increased**

Compliance and Sodsaver **retained**
Questions?

Eric Zach
402-471-5449, Eric.Zach@Nebraska.gov