

2018 Farm Bill Reauthorization



Washington Department of
FISH and WILDLIFE

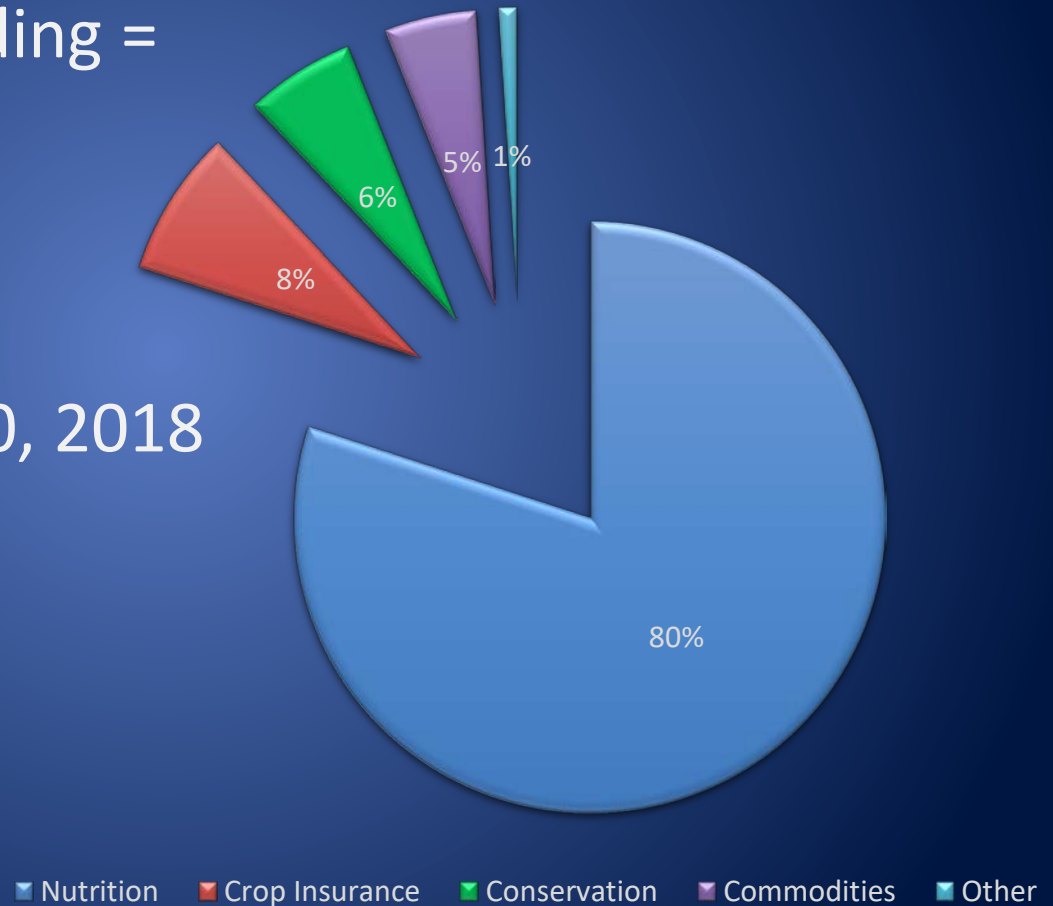
Mike Kuttel Jr.
Farm Bill Coordinator, Diversity Division
Wildlife Program

Farm Bill History & Importance

- Started in 1933 in response to the Dust Bowl
- 1985 marked the beginning of the Conservation Title with advent of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Largest source of funding for conservation on private lands – nearly \$28 billion overall, including habitat in the 2014 Farm Bill
- Focus on conservation of soil, water, air, plant, animal, and human resources

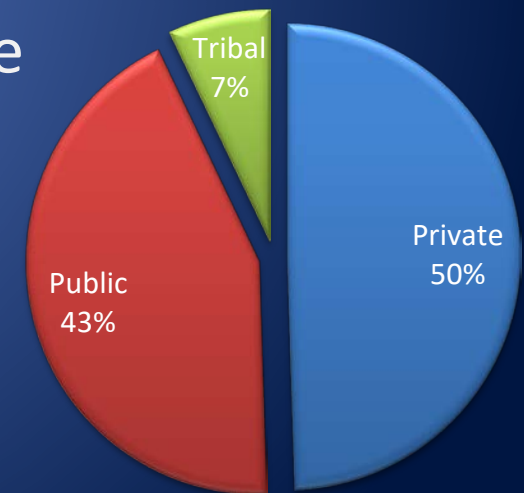
2014 Farm Bill

- Total projected spending = \$489 billion
- Funds wide array of programs
- Expires September 30, 2018



Farm Bill Conservation Programs

- Voluntary and incentive-based
- Farmers, ranchers, small forest landowners, tribes eligible for assistance – restrictions vary by program
- Washington land ownership is about 43% public, **50% private, and 7% tribal**
- Can reduce regulatory burdens on private landowners
- Can provide regulatory predictability



■ Private ■ Public ■ Tribal

Farm Bill = Partnerships

- NRCS is understaffed in the field
 - Partners can help deliver Farm Bill programs
 - Partnerships leverage funding and expertise
 - Relationships are the key
- Partners:
 - Private & tribal landowners
 - NGOs
 - Land Trusts
 - Conservation Districts
 - State Agencies
 - Federal Agencies

2018 Farm Bill Priorities

- Producer Groups, NGOs, Other Platforms
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Platform
- WDFW Efforts (Meagan West- Federal Coordinator)
 - Direct outreach to congressional delegation
 - Working on webpage for agency website
 - Farm Bill Priorities folio + condensed version
 - Infographics for 5 Farm Bill Programs
 - Videos to post on social media

WDFW Outreach Materials

Farm Bill Priorities

| | |
|--|---|
| Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) | 2 |
| Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentives Program (VPA-HIP) | 3 |
| Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) | 4 |
| Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) | 5 |
| Landscape Scale Initiatives: | |
| Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) & Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) | 6 |
| Forestry | 7 |
| Conservation Compliance | 8 |

OVERVIEW OF IMPORTANCE OF FARM BILL TO WASHINGTON

The farm bill in Washington delivers multiple benefits to agricultural communities and improves conservation practices. Improving conservation enhances fishing and hunting opportunities, which in turn provide critical economic benefits to small rural communities. Many farm bill programs in Washington also include tribal partnerships to bridge salmon- agriculture divides through ensuring clean and adequate water for agriculture and fish while simultaneously maintaining critical habitat and agricultural viability. Examples of these partnerships include the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and fish passage through Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Washington is also unique in that the state has developed a non-regulatory approach to ensure protection of environmentally critical areas on agricultural lands. Washington recently passed state legislation – the Voluntary Stewardship Program for agricultural lands – which serves as an alternative to typical regulatory land use programs. This program relies on voluntary actions by farmers, ranchers and producers to meet the goal of protecting environmental sensitive areas like wetlands, riparian areas, and critical habitat. The federal farm bill is a core part of this program and provides the incentives necessary to maintain this non-regulatory approach. The state legislation provides that if counties are not able to meet their conservation goals through voluntary measures, then those counties must revert to regulatory measures on agricultural lands. Reducing funds for farm bill conservation programs puts farmers at risk throughout the state for additional regulatory actions, which would likely increase the cost of farming.

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August 2017

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Why increase the funding for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program?

\$16.4 million in financial assistance to landowners in 2016-17

Provides resources to producers impacted by wildfires for rangeland and forest restoration

Funds contribute to a wide spectrum of conservation practices

Improves habitat for game and non-game species

INVESTS in fish passage and screening

ENHANCES instream and riparian habitat

Used for Olympia Oyster Restoration

Working lands Conservation

Conservation Reserve Program

Why does the CRP acreage cap need to be raised?

20% drop in total CRP acres in Washington from 2007 due to reductions to the enrollment cap

2:1 sign-up success rate

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) **105,000 acres**

\$70+ million annually to Washington Producers

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) - 14,000 acres dedicated to restoring and protecting riparian habitat for salmon recovery.

Benefiting **219,000 Hunters**

Pheasant Focus Area Objective: Enhance 5,000+ acres of CRP in SE Washington

Increase pheasant hunter numbers in the pheasant focus area to 9,000 by 2021

Farm Bill Landscape Scale Initiatives

Why is landscape scale conservation important?

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

\$48.5M for 10 Washington programs

Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative

\$4.2M to improve 73,000 acres of working lands for the Sage Grouse Initiative

- Partner-led solutions
- Working lands conservation
- Clean air and clean water
- Quality soil
- Wildlife habitat
- Address water quantity issues

Farm, Ranch & Forest Lands

Protection & Restoration \$\$\$ to Social enterprises

Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Incentives Program

Why fund the Voluntary Public Access - Habitat Incentives Program?

#1 priority for hunters is increased access

Users spend **\$4** for every **\$1** of VPA-HIP

1,158,000 hunters and anglers in Washington

22,000 jobs supported by hunting and recreational fishing

Public Access: **1,487,718 private acres** open for public hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing access in agreement with WDFW

71,431 acres enrolled since 2016

2,392 acres dedicated specifically for the improvement of habitat for game and non-game species

Annual economic benefit of hunting and fishing in Washington: **\$2.75 billion**

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

Why increase the funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program?

27,000 acres total enrolled in Wetland Reserve Easements

5,000 acres Agricultural Land Easements

Protects **AGRICULTURAL USE**

Enhances **WETLANDS**

HABITAT for fish and wildlife

Wildlife viewing in Washington generates **+\$2.5 M**

+400,000 waterfowl WATCHERS

Duck and goose hunters SPEND an average **\$1,324 annually**

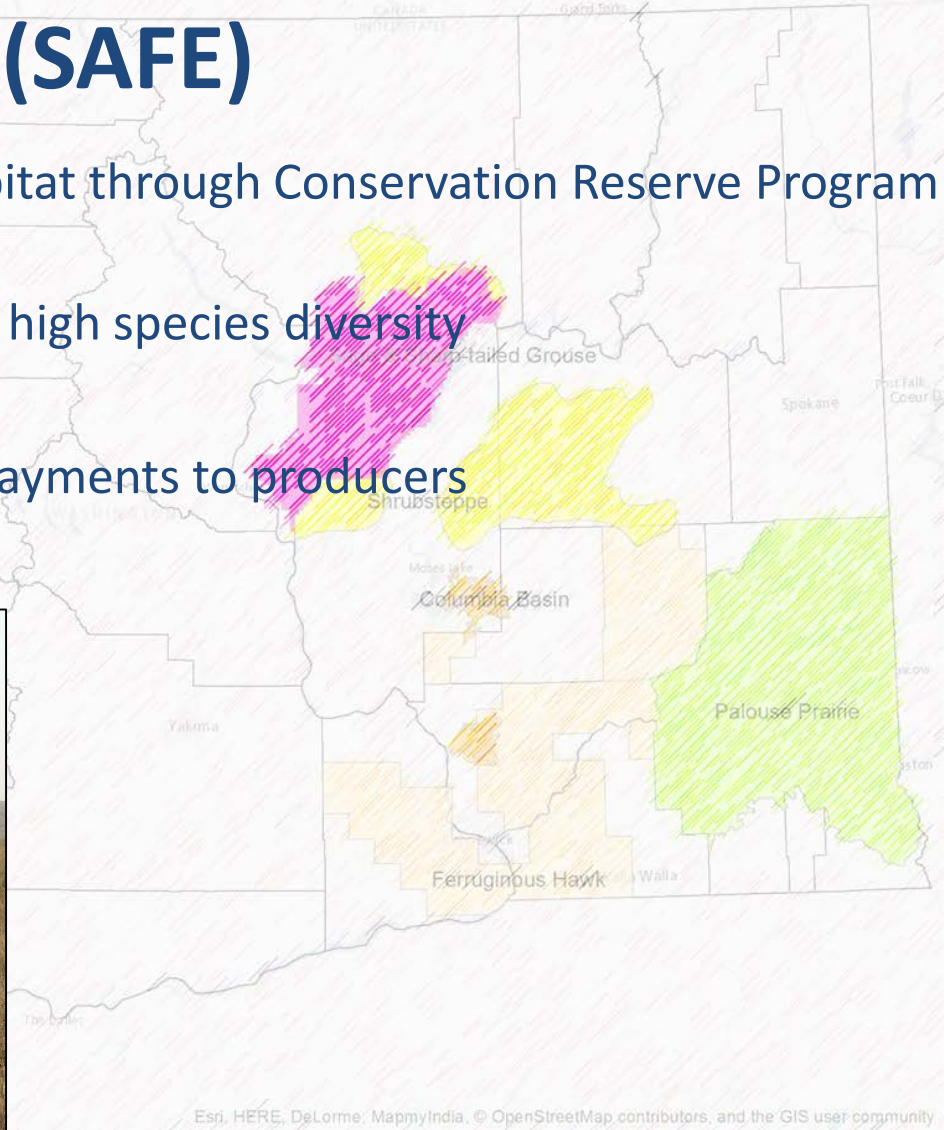
40,000 waterfowl HUNTERS

WDFW Farm Bill Work

- WDFW has roles at local, state, and national levels
- Wildlife Program – team of 14 private lands biologists working on wildlife conservation and recreational access on private lands
- Habitat Program – aquatic species conservation on private lands
- Conservation projects often lead to access projects and vice versa

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)

- Develop quality wildlife habitat through Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Primarily native plants with high species diversity
- Nearly 110,000 acres
- Est. \$7 million/year USDA payments to producers



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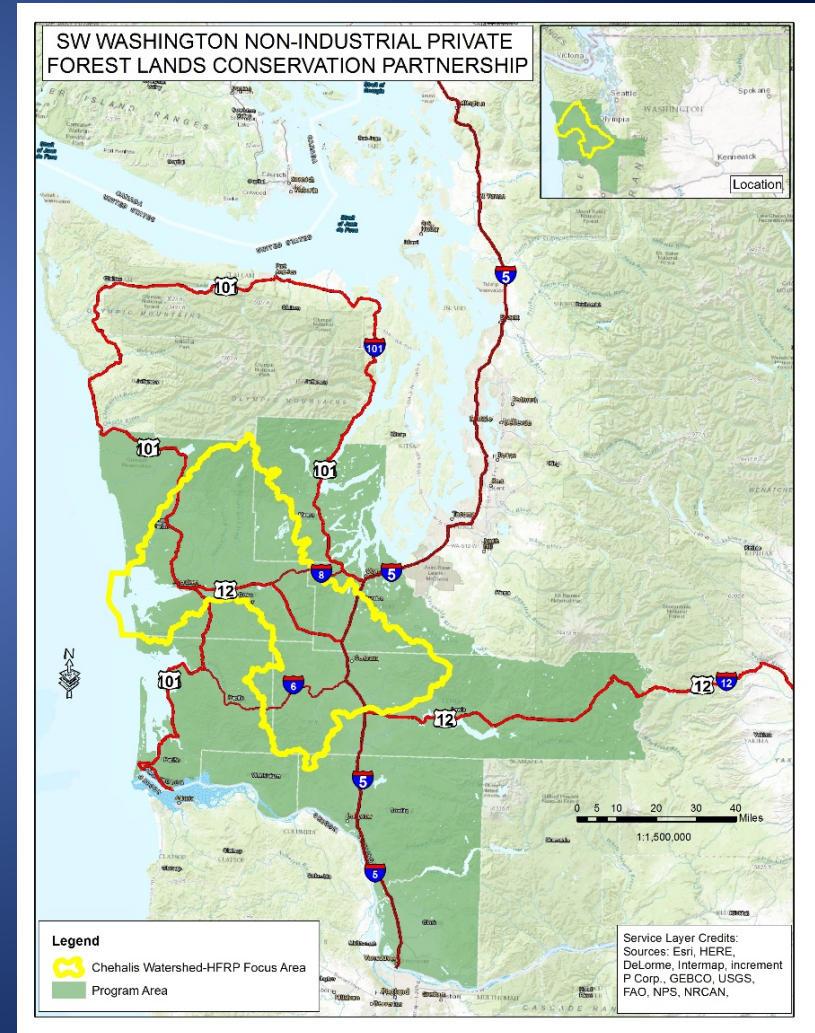
Douglas County Efforts



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| RCPP Statewide Partners | Private landowners, tribes, NGOs, land trusts, RFEs, RCO, WDFW, NRCS |
| Focus | Wide array of natural resources issues |
| USDA \$ (10 projects) | \$48.5 million (2014-2017) |

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| WDFW Lead RCPP Partners | Small forest landowners, State Conservation Commission, DNR, 8 conservation districts, NRCS |
| Focus | Fish & wildlife habitat, water quality, forest health |
| USDA \$ 2017 | \$1.3 million (included in total above) |



Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP)

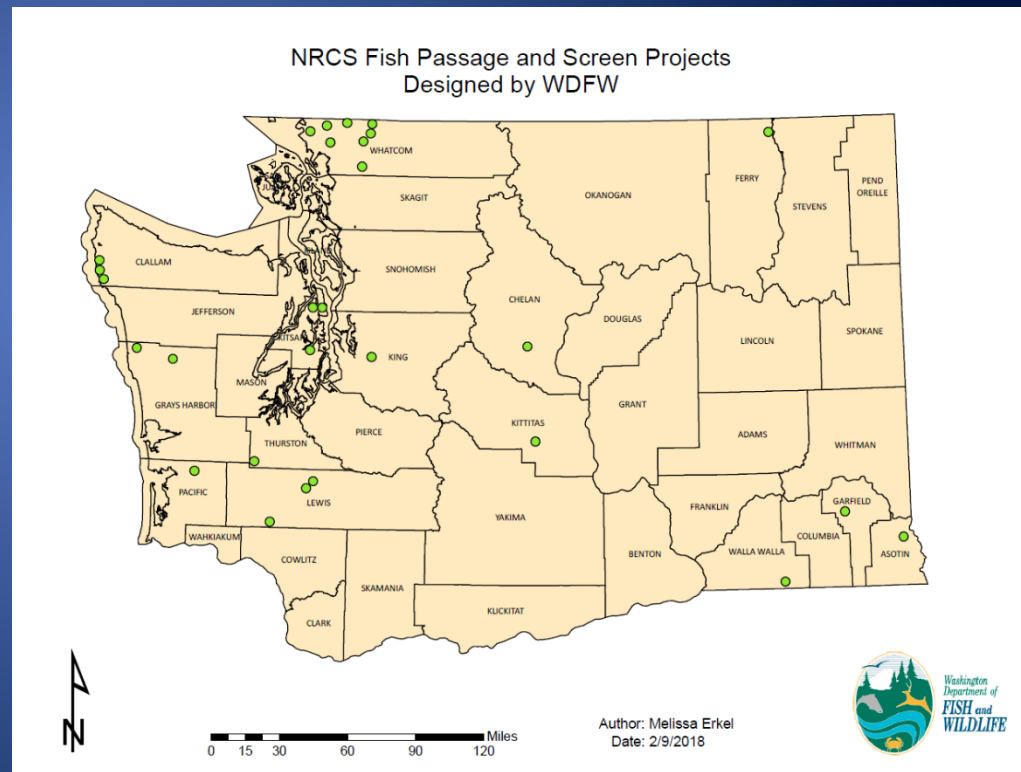
- Funding for public recreational access and habitat improvements on private lands
- WDFW has received three grants
 - 2010 (\$1,498,406)
 - 2011 (\$377,769)
 - 2016 (\$1,393,634)
- \$ not only incentive - help managing hunters, technical assistance, increased enforcement presence, provided signage, etc.
- Many participate without funding



Photo: Rob Wingard, WDFW Private Lands Biologist Region 4

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

| | |
|--|--|
| Partners | Farmers, ranchers, small forest landowners, tribes, NRCS, WDFW |
| Focus | Multiple natural resources issues |
| USDA \$ | \$16.4 million (2016-2017) Wildlife & supporting practices |
| WDFW Fish Passage & Screening | Private landowners, tribes, RFECS/RCO, NRCS |
| # Projects | 28 (22 west, 6 east) see map |
| USDA \$ WDFW Tech. Assist. | \$1 million (2014-2018) |
| USDA \$ WDFW Designed Financial Assist. | \$2.1 million (2014-2018) |



Map: Melissa Erkel, WDFW Fish Passage Biologist





WDFW and NRCS Partnership

Working Together to Improve Fish Passage and Aquatic Habitat

Sean Taylor, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
325 N 13th Ave. Walla Walla, WA 99362



What is a Fish Passage Barrier?



High Velocity



Excessive Water Surface Drop



Shallow Water Depth

WDFW & NRCS Partnership

WDFW and NRCS working with farmers and small forest landowners to provide:

- Statewide technical assistance for all aquatic projects
- Improved fish passage and screening
- Reduce Flooding
- Improve water quality
- Conduct habitat restoration



Aquatic Habitat Restoration



Barrier Removal (left) and Finished Restoration (right)

- Project partners**
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - Snake River Salmon Recovery Board
 - Walla Walla County Public Works

- Accomplishments**
- Full barrier removed.
 - Upstream and downstream passage restored.
 - 10.2 miles of habitat opened.
 - Future partnerships planned with Walla Walla County

Large Wood Placement



Floodplain and Side Channel Connection



Fish Screens

Pump Diversion Screens



Riverscreen



Pump Rite (Pac-Ag)

Gravity Diversion Screens



Rotary Wiper



Modular Drum

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- RCPP encourages partners to join in effort to address resource concerns and conduct restoration
- Partners work with private landowners to design and implement voluntary conservation solutions
- WDFW has partnered with Whatcom Conservation District to address fish passage in WRIA 1
- In 2016 funding was awarded! \$1 million will be spent on fish passage and restoration projects including partner match

I'm Interested! Now What?

- Contact WDFW to evaluate the crossing/project and eligibility
- Landowners fills out application, accepted year round
- NRCS staff conducts site visit to verify eligibility and rank project

WDFW Contact Information

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Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Practices eligible for financial and technical assistance:

- Riparian forest buffers
- Erosion control on forested roads
- Wildlife habitat plantings
- Forest management practices
- Fencing and stock water
- Large woody material placement
- Fish passage barrier correction
- Irrigation efficiency upgrades
- Stream channel restoration
- Fish screens

Future Directions: Salmon Recovery Funding

Targeted financial assistance for Salmon restoration efforts

- Special initiative funding in addition to general EQIP dollars
- West, Central, East and Tribal pools for regional distribution

Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)



- Purpose – protect critical areas (including fish and wildlife habitat) and agriculture viability through a voluntary incentive-based approach
- 27 counties opted-in to VSP
- WDFW member of Technical Panel
- WDFW Habitat Biologists participating in local Watershed Groups developing VSP plans
- Farm Bill programs provide incentives

3 Key Takeaways

1. Farm Bill is largest funding source for private lands conservation (important to access also)
2. Farm Bill programs are voluntary and incentive-based
3. Farm Bill integral to many conservation partnerships that benefit fish and wildlife including diversity and game species

Questions?



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