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MAPPING THE MONEY: AN ANALYSIS OF SPENDING UNDER THE CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

BY ANNA JOHNSON, CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS | DECEMBER 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Long-term viability of farms and ranches depends on the sustained health of soil and water resources. However, most conservation practices require a front-end investment from farmers and ranchers, which can serve as a barrier for implementation. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a number of federal programs that take different approaches to supporting farmers, ranchers, and landowners in preserving natural resources.

Some support landowners by removing land from production—this is how the Conservation Reserve Program generally operates, offering 10- to 15-year leases on land for removing it from agriculture. One function of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program is to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands that may have been previously farmed.

However, a number of management practices in farming and ranching preserve soil, water, and other natural resources, such as planting cover crops, extending crop rotations, reducing tillage, and rotational grazing. For farmers, ranchers, and landowners interested in maintaining production on the land while pursuing these practices, there are “working lands conservation” programs.

USDA’s two major working lands conservation programs are the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). These take complementary approaches to serving farmers and ranchers. Both offer the opportunity for producers to meet with USDA and develop conservation plans for their land. EQIP is best suited for those new to conservation, as it offers financial assistance for a variety of conservation options, and producers can pick and choose these in their applications.

CSP, the focus of this paper, is distinct from EQIP in a number of ways. First, CSP is designed to serve those farmers and ranchers who demonstrate they are currently invested in conservation; ongoing conservation is required for eligibility, and a portion of a CSP contract is to maintain current conservation. Through five-year contracts, CSP ensures farmers and ranchers are able to also increase conservation across their entire operations—preventing cases in which good conservation happens on some acres while others are neglected. Second, CSP allows farmers and ranchers to intensify the conservation they are doing through selecting “enhancements” as well as adding new conservation practices. One example of an enhancement is planting multispecies cover crops instead of a single species; another is doing no-till in such a way as to specifically preserve soil moisture.

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145 MAIN STREET, PO BOX 136 | LYONS, NE 68038 | 402.687.2100 | CFRA.ORG

Despite the clear value CSP offers in supporting farmers and ranchers in enhancing conservation of natural resources on their operations, funding has been reduced a significant amount in the last two farm bills. This paper follows the funding for CSP, and details the channels through which it flows.

PART I: CSP FUNDING CHANNELS AND POOLS

A. TOTAL CSP FUNDING

CSP was authorized in the 2008 farm bill. In every subsequent farm bill, its total funding has been decreased.

The 2008 farm bill created the Conservation Stewardship Program, renaming and significantly changing what was previously the Conservation Security Program. CSP was unusual in that it received not a funding authorization, but an acreage authorization. USDA was allowed to enroll 12.769 million acres per year in CSP, and was required to make sure the program didn't cost more than \$18 per acre to run, on average, nationally.

As USDA began enrolling as many as 12.769 million acres per year into CSP contracts, after five years, as many as 63.8 million acres could be enrolled in CSP at one time. At the time of the 2008 farm bill passage, the Congressional Budget Office estimated CSP would increase its annual costs to more than \$1 billion in 2012 and hit \$2 billion per year by 2018.¹

The 2014 farm bill decreased the number of acres USDA was allowed to enroll per year from 12.769 million to 10 million. It also maintained the requirement that CSP cost \$18 per acre on average, nationally. The Congressional Budget Office revised downward its spending projections for CSP accordingly, predicting the program would cost \$1.2 billion to \$1.9 billion annually during the next 10 years.² In annual predictions,

1 "January 2009 CBO Baseline." Congressional Budget Office, 2009, cbo.gov/sites/default/files/recurringdata/51317-2009-01-ccc.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

2 "CBO's April 2014 Baseline for Farm Programs." Congressional Budget Office, April 14, 2014, cbo.gov/sites/default/files/recurringdata/51317-2014-04-usda.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

this funding range remained fairly constant for the next several years.

The 2018 farm bill changed the CSP funding structure from a total acreage cap to a total funding cap, and pulled the annual funding cap downward to the levels below:³

- \$700,000,000 for fiscal year 2019;
- \$725,000,000 for fiscal year 2020;
- \$750,000,000 for fiscal year 2021;
- \$800,000,000 for fiscal year 2022; and
- \$1,000,000,000 for fiscal year 2023.

In addition, the 2018 farm bill further diluted funds available for CSP by guaranteeing contracts to specific participants of commodity programs. It reserved funds for the Grasslands Conservation Initiative, where cropland that was enrolled as base acres but had been planted to grass for 10 years became eligible for CSP and was made ineligible for commodity payments. While the Grasslands Conservation Initiative is a benefit to those eligible, this change did effectively reduce the amount of funding available for general CSP applicants.

In short, from more than \$2 billion under the 2008 farm bill to between \$1.1 billion and \$1.9 billion under the 2014 farm bill to less than \$1 billion under the 2018 farm bill, CSP funding has been cut in half since the 2008 farm bill.

Finally, CSP is subject to across-the-board budget cuts, collectively referred to as "sequestration," as enacted in the Budget Control Act of 2011 and extended several times after. The amount of funds cut or "sequestered" from CSP and other farm bill conservation programs has varied from year to year. In 2018, the rate was 6.6%; in 2019 it was 6.2%; and in 2020, 5.9%.⁴

3 These funding totals do not reflect any changes due to sequestration.

4 "2021 USDA Explanatory Notes - Natural Resources Conservation Service." U.S. Department of Agriculture, pp. 29-100, usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/27nracs2021notes.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

B. FUNDING LEVELS ADDRESSING FIVE YEARS OF CSP CONTRACT PAYMENTS

Another characteristic unique to CSP, as compared to many other federal programs, is that while funding is discussed in terms of annual costs, the funds go to annual payments made under five-year contracts. Under the current authority of the 2018 farm bill, USDA allocates all of the year’s available funds toward the five-year contracts begun that year. For example, out of the \$750 million in funds available in fiscal year 2021, USDA began CSP contracts with farmers for which the total five-year cost will be paid from the \$750 million.

C. CONTRACT PAYMENTS AND NRCS EXPERTISE

CSP funding has always been split to serve two important public services. The first is offering payments on CSP contracts to farmers and ranchers, known as financial assistance. The second is for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff time on conservation planning and supporting producers in applying for CSP, known as technical assistance. USDA has the sole discretion on how much CSP mandatory funding to allocate toward financial or technical assistance.⁵ In annual budget documents, NRCS shares some information about CSP mandatory funding going to technical and financial assistance. For example, in fiscal year 2020, NRCS reported putting \$562 million toward CSP technical assistance, \$507.3 million in financial assistance for all contracts begun in 2020, and \$2.2 billion in financial assistance toward all enrolled contracts.^{6,7} (The final figure presumably includes

funds that were obligated, or promised to be paid, in previous years.)

D. SERVICING 50 STATES AND FIVE TERRITORIES

In administering CSP, USDA must divide available new funding for the year among the 50 states and five territories. Authorizing legislation gives USDA broad authority to develop a formula for allocating these funds. While USDA is directed to primarily consider the proportion of land eligible in each state, it may also take into account the conservation needs, the degree to which the program may support producers in addressing those needs, and other considerations.⁸

CSP legislation also requires funds to be allocated among the states to support contracts with organic producers based on the number of certified and transitioning organic operations and acres within the state.

USDA does not publish the internal criteria for how CSP funds are allocated among the 50 states and five territories, or how much is moved among states during the contracting period to redistribute excess funds to states with higher numbers of applications. However, in recent years it has released the number of acres treated per state as well as the funds obligated in annual budgetary documents. The top five states for acres treated in fiscal year 2020 are shown in Tables 1 and 2 on page 4.⁹

5 “16 USC 3841: Commodity Credit Corporation.” U.S. Code, Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives, [uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:16%20section:3841%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:16%20section:3841%20edition:prelim)). Accessed October 2021.

6 “2022 USDA Explanatory Notes - Natural Resources Conservation Service.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, pp. 29, 82, 94-99, usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/28NRCS2022Notes.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

7 “U.S. Department of Agriculture FY 2022 Budget Summary.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, pp. 49, usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022-budget-summary.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

8 “16 USC 3839aa-24: Duties of the Secretary.” U.S. Code, Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives, [uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:16%20section:3839aa-24%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:16%20section:3839aa-24%20edition:prelim)). Accessed October 2021.

9 “2022 USDA Explanatory Notes - Natural Resources Conservation Service.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, pp. 94-97, usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/28NRCS2022Notes.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

**TABLE 1: CSP GENERAL ENROLLMENT—
“CLASSIC” ENROLLMENT IN 2020**

State	Number of acres treated
New Mexico	933,753
Utah	563,636
Oregon	469,438
California	369,556
Nebraska	319,400

TABLE 2: CSP RENEWALS IN 2020

State	Number of acres treated
South Dakota	409,975
Illinois	199,902
Montana	192,783
Nebraska	179,053
Oregon	122,211

TABLE 3: USDA CSP ALLOCATIONS FOR 2020 CSP

Allocations	Amount
New contracts (“classic” CSP)	\$321,672,307
Renewal contracts	\$150,312,329
Grasslands Conservation Initiative contracts	\$35,312,314
Total	\$507,296,950

E. CSP FUNDING POOLS

A state’s CSP funding allocation for a fiscal year is divided further to ensure it is made available for a number of different eligible groups.

New contracts and renewal contracts. The CSP legislation requires USDA to offer both new contracts and renewal contracts, but does not specify how available funding should be divided between the two groups, nor does USDA release publicly its formula for deciding. The number of contracts eligible for renewal also can vary significantly from year to year.

Grasslands Conservation Initiative. As stated above, CSP enrollment is guaranteed to the limited number of producers who are eligible and interested.

Table 3 shows how much funding USDA allocated to these three groups in 2020.¹⁰

In addition to ensuring that new, renewal, and Grasslands Conservation Initiative contracts are offered, USDA must ensure that funds support the following specific audiences and purposes.

Land use. Of all the eligible land types specified in legislation—cropland, grassland, rangeland, pasture land, nonindustrial private forest land, and other land types—USDA determined that applications for CSP on nonindustrial private forest land should compete in a separate funding pool from the others. Although USDA does not widely release the amount of funding reserved for the two pools of agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land, in 2018 nonindustrial private forest land constituted 6% of total CSP payments. Cropland accounted for 71% of acreage payments that year; pasture, 10%; rangeland, 7%, and associated agricultural land, 6%.¹¹

Audience. CSP legislation also reserves 5% of funds for beginning farmers and ranchers and 5% of funds for socially disadvantaged farmers

10 Ibid.

11 “Analysis of CSP Enrollment in FY 2018, NSAC Special Reports.” National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, February 2020, sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/FY18-CSP-Data-Special-Report_FINAL.pdf. Accessed October 2021.

and ranchers.¹² Between 2015 and 2018, USDA exceeded this percentage benchmark each year for each group, including offering more than 10% of contracts to socially disadvantaged producers in 2015; in 2018, this had decreased to 5%.¹³

F. COMPETITION

Every year, USDA receives far more CSP applications than funds are available. For example, only 25% of CSP applications were funded in 2020, 25% were ineligible or cancelled by the applicant, and 50% required further review to determine eligibility for consideration in 2021. USDA uses funding pools to ensure similar applications compete with each other. For example, beginning farmer applications in a state are considered together.

PART II: CONTRACTS

The previous section describes the various channels by which USDA divides CSP funding among states and types of contracts. The next section will focus on how contract payments to farmers and ranchers are calculated and structured.

A. SIZE RANGE OF CSP CONTRACTS

CSP contracts are legislatively capped at \$200,000, while USDA regulation holds that joint operations may enter contracts of \$400,000. Legislation also allows Indian Tribes to enter contracts greater than these limits:

- Legislation: 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-24 (f): *A person or legal entity may not receive, directly or indirectly, payments under the program that, in the aggregate, exceed \$200,000 under all contracts entered into during fiscal years 2019*

12 The farm bill defines “socially disadvantaged” as an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group, or one whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of the group without regard to their individual qualities. USDA NRCS has identified American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics as socially disadvantaged groups.

13 Ibid.

through 2023, excluding funding arrangements with Indian Tribes, regardless of the number of contracts entered into under the program by the person or legal entity.

- Regulation: 7 CFR 1470.24 (h): *Contract limits. Each conservation stewardship contract will be limited to \$200,000 over the term of the contract period, except that conservation stewardship contracts with any joint operation will be limited to \$400,000 over the term of the contract period.*

The following figures describe how many CSP contracts are awarded above the legislative limit of \$200,000 over five years, or \$40,000 each year. Between 2016 and 2018, NRCS made payments greater than \$40,000 in a year on 1,221 contracts, out of 37,864 total contracts. The funds paid in excess of \$40,000 total more than \$63 million for that period; the corresponding contracts represent 3% of total contracts offered during that time. (This figure excludes 11 contracts with Tribes that were larger than the \$400,000 contract level.)

While no minimum payment is established in either legislation or regulation, USDA internal guidance holds that the minimum contract payment should be \$1,500 in one year.¹⁴

USDA is legislatively prohibited from ranking a CSP contract proposal more favorably if a producer is willing to accept a lower payment than they are otherwise eligible for.

B. ELEMENTS OF THE CSP CONTRACT PAYMENT

USDA follows a formula for calculating the annual payment under a new CSP contract, which includes the only government payment option for existing conservation.

1. Existing activities

- Land use: the number of acres in each land use is multiplied by a standard rate, which in 2020 was \$7.50/acre for cropland and farm-

14 “Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual, Subpart J–Payments, 507.93, Minimum Contract Payment.” Natural Resources Conservation Service, pp. 52-53, November 2016, directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=40156.wba. Accessed October 2021.

stead land, \$3/acre for pastureland, \$1/acre for rangeland, \$0.50/acre for nonindustrial private forest land, and \$0.50/acre for associated agricultural land.

An operation with 300 acres of cropland and 100 acres of pastureland would have this portion of its payment calculated as:

$$\begin{aligned} & (300 \text{ acres cropland}) * (\$7.50) + \\ & (100 \text{ acres pasture}) * (\$3) = \\ & \$2,250 + \$300 = \\ & \$2,550 \text{ for one year of the contract,} \\ & \text{or } \$11,500 \text{ over the life of the contract} \end{aligned}$$

- Resource concern categories already met: NRCS identifies a number of potential resource concern categories, and each state and territory must select its top priorities. When applying for CSP, a farmer or rancher works with NRCS to establish which of those priority resource concern categories already are being met. For example, they may be meeting wind and water erosion, pest pressure, and degraded plant condition. The number of resource concerns met on each land use at the time of application is multiplied by a standard rate, regardless of acreage. This rate was \$350 for applications submitted before 2019, and has been reduced to \$300.

An operation that demonstrated it had met three priority resource concerns on cropland and two more on rangeland at the time of applying would have this portion of its payment calculated as:

$$\begin{aligned} & (3 \text{ resource concerns met on cropland}) * \\ & (\$300) + (2 \text{ resource concern categories} \\ & \text{met on rangeland}) * (\$300) = \\ & \$1,500 \text{ for one year of the contract} \end{aligned}$$

2. Additional activities

- Payment for practices and enhancements to be implemented under CSP contract: This portion of the payment is to support the cost of the conservation practices and enhancements to be carried out under the contract; NRCS offers producers the option of implementing nearly 40 practice options and nearly 170 enhancements when enrolling in CSP. This portion of the payment is calculated by multiplying the amount (units) of the prac-

tice to be implemented by the corresponding payment rate. Payment rates for conservation practices vary from state to state and year to year.

- Some practices and enhancements are done annually on an operation, and for these there is a payment portion for each year they are carried out. Other practices and enhancements are done periodically, and for those, payment is scheduled for the year they are performed.
- An operation in Iowa in 2020 applying to a) plant 200 acres of multispecies cover crops during one year, b) continue no till to prevent soil erosion on that same 200 acres, c) instate a crop rotation for soil health on 200 acres, and d) extend a filter strip by one acre would have this portion of its payment calculated as:

$$\begin{aligned} & (200 \text{ acres of multispecies cover} \\ & \text{crops}) * (\$7.13/\text{acre}) + \\ & (200 \text{ acres of no-till to prevent soil} \\ & \text{erosion}) * (\$2.79/\text{acre}) + \\ & (200 \text{ acres of crop rotation for soil} \\ & \text{health}) * \$4.66 + \\ & (1 \text{ acre of extending an existing filter} \\ & \text{strip}) * \$807.12 = \\ & \$3,723.12 \text{ for one year of the contract} \end{aligned}$$

- Supplemental payments: The 2018 farm bill made certain conservation practices eligible for increased payment rates. For example, the payment rate for a resource conserving crop rotation is legislatively required to be increased to a higher level (up to 150%) than the standard formulas USDA uses. In Iowa in 2020, it was \$19.55/acre.
- Bundles: NRCS offers groupings, or “bundles” of practices that, when implemented together, address resource concerns in a more comprehensive and cost-effective manner. Bundles are slated for higher payment levels than their individual practices add up to. One example of a bundle is the Grazing Bundle 2, which consists of the practices of access control, fencing, and streambank and shoreline protection; in Iowa in 2020 it was offered at \$2,241.69 per acre.

TABLE 4: OBLIGATIONS BY PAYMENT TYPE IN 2019 AND 2020

Obligations	Iowa	Nebraska
Existing Activity Payments	\$20,300,788	\$23,807,134
Conservation practices	\$1,231,525	\$2,932,076
Enhancements	\$7,631,461	\$14,992,163
Bundles	\$294,362	\$201,415
Total	\$29,458,136	\$41,932,788

TABLE 5: TOP FIVE PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS FOR NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES IN CSP CONTRACTS IN 2019 AND 2020

Iowa		Nebraska	
Cover crop (340)	515	Prescribed grazing (528)	497
Residue and Tillage Management, No-till (329)	472	Pest Management Conservation System (595)	475
Conservation Cover (327)	320	Cover Crop (340)	364
Pest Management Conservation System (595)	270	Nutrient Management (590)	209
Nutrient Management (590)	214	Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health (E528Q)	191
Total, all Iowa	13,256	Total, all Nebraska	11,464

Table 4 illustrates how funding was used in 2019-20 for different portions of the payments formula in Iowa and Nebraska.

Of note, the authority for this payment formula spans congressional legislation, USDA regulation, and USDA internal guidance. For example, legislation mandates that CSP offer payment for both existing and new activities, while the USDA NRCS Manual details the elements of acres, resource concerns, and other variables that affect a total payment.¹⁵

One important area where CSP differs from its sister program, EQIP, is in payment levels for conservation practices. EQIP offers financial assistance payments for specific practices without taking the broader conservation of the operation into account, and the payment rates are calculated at a higher level than for CSP. Because a CSP payment factors in the existing conservation and land uses, USDA lowers the per-unit payment rate for new conservation practices implemented under a CSP contract.

For example, in 2020 in Iowa, the payment rate for cover crops under CSP ranged from \$3.52 to \$26.67 per acre (representing planting a winter kill cover crop species and planting cover crops on less than one acre, respectively). For EQIP, the payment rates were \$17.60 and \$200.01 per acre for equivalent practices (the latter level only available to historically underserved producers).

15 “Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual, Part 507–Conservation Stewardship Program.” Natural Resources Conservation Service, November 2016, directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=40156.wba. Accessed October 2021.

TABLE 6: TOP FIVE PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS FOR NUMBER OF ACRES IN 2019 AND 2020

Iowa		Nebraska	
Pest Management Conservation System (595)	162,152	Prescribed Grazing (528)	1,044,899
Nutrient Management (590)	111,806	Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health (E528Q)	588,246
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (329)	99,825	Maintaining quantity and quality of forage for animal health and productivity (E528140Z1)	520,832
Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques (E595A)	74,780	Pest Management Conservation System (595)	319,098
Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses (E590A)	74,107	Improved grazing management through monitoring activities (E528N)	265,580

TABLE 7: TOP FIVE PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS FOR FUNDS OBLIGATED IN 2019 AND 2020

Iowa		Nebraska	
Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses (E590A)	\$1,275,767	Maintaining quantity and quality of forage for animal health and productivity (E528140Z1)	\$1,909,173
Reduce risk of pesticides in surface water by utilizing precision pesticide application techniques (E595A)	\$762,077	Improving nutrient uptake efficiency and reducing risk of nutrient losses (E590A)	\$1,217,039
Reduce risks of nutrient loss to surface water by utilizing precision agriculture technologies (E590B)	\$735,848	Prescribed Grazing (528)	\$990,672
Establish Monarch butterfly habitat (E327B)	\$478,677	Use of body condition scoring for livestock on a monthly basis to keep track of herd health (E528Q)	\$894,242
Cover Crop (340)	\$466,612	Reduce risks of nutrient losses to surface water by utilizing precision ag technologies (E590118X)	\$812,750
Total, all Iowa	\$29,502,074	Total, all Nebraska	\$41,935,681

TABLE 8: OBLIGATIONS OF SELECT PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS THAT ADDRESS SOIL HEALTH IN 2019 AND 2020, IOWA

Practice/enhancement name	Number of instances	Total funds obligated
Conservation Cover (327)	320	\$18,698
Cover Crops (340)	515	\$466,612
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	95	\$5,981
Forage and Biomass Planting (512)	144	\$36,151
No-Till (329)	472	\$223,144
Reduced Till (345)	31	\$19,813
Nutrient Management (590)	214	\$117,463
Prescribed Burning (338)	46	\$3,953
Prescribed Grazing (528)	58	\$18,763
Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)	105	\$11,541
E328 enhancements - crop rotation group	108	\$117,225
E329 enhancements - no-till group	251	\$369,504
E340 enhancements - cover crop group	355	\$641,373
E345 enhancements - reduced tillage group	70	\$100,538
E382B - fencing to improve grazing management	1	\$1,115
E386 enhancements - field border management	39	\$39,075
E512 enhancements - forages planting group	19	\$1,975
E528 enhancements - grazing management group	9	\$8,708
E580105Z - stream corridor bank stability improvement	1	\$890

C. FUNDING FOR PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS

The conservation practices and enhancements that are most popular or that cover the most acreage in Iowa and Nebraska are somewhat different from those that receive the most funding, as demonstrated by data from 2019 and 2020 contracts, shown in Table 5 on page 7, and Tables 6,¹⁶ and 7 on page 8.

D. FUNDS SUPPORTING SOIL HEALTH

Because CSP is a voluntary program, there are no requirements that participating farmers and ranchers select particular practices or address

particular resource concerns. However, an overview of the relative funds that are being obligated to support practices aimed at addressing a particular resource concern can offer helpful illustration as to how CSP works on the ground.

Table 8 above and Table 9 on page 10 offer a window into how CSP allows farmers to preserve and support soil health. While most of these practices and enhancements address multiple resource concerns, NRCS has identified clusters that support soil health. These tables show how many instances of these practices and enhancements appeared in CSP contracts in Iowa and Nebraska between 2019 and 2020, and the corresponding funds that NRCS obligated to support these practices and enhancements.

 16 Totals not included since many acres are enrolled in multiple practices.

TABLE 9: OBLIGATIONS OF SELECT PRACTICES AND ENHANCEMENTS THAT ADDRESS SOIL HEALTH IN 2019 AND 2020, NEBRASKA

Practice/enhancement name	Number of instances	Total funds obligated
Conservation Cover (327)	107	\$15,362
Cover Crops (340)	364	\$606,388
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	95	\$56,005
Forage and Biomass Planting (512)	35	\$12,527
No-Till (329)	39	\$22,408
Reduced Till (345)	25	\$18,103
Nutrient Management (590)	209	\$186,940
Prescribed Burning (338)	20	\$2,183
Prescribed Grazing (528)	497	\$990,672
Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)	185	\$17,640
E328 enhancements - crop rotation group	51	\$182,343
E329 enhancements - no-till group	47	\$51,399
E334A - controlled traffic farming to reduce compaction	10	\$98,016
E340 enhancements - cover crop group	267	\$511,723
E345 enhancements - reduced tillage group	38	\$71,196
E382B - fencing to improve grazing management	3	\$8,850
E386 enhancements - field border management	13	\$31,971
E512 enhancements - forages planting group	15	\$1,875
E528 enhancements - grazing management group	129	\$864,173
E550 enhancements - range planting for increasing/maintaining organic matter	9	\$3,225
E666A - Maintaining and improving forest soil quality	4	\$1,284

IV. CONCLUSION

Since the 2008 farm bill, CSP has fulfilled a complex job in supporting thousands of farmers and ranchers in voluntarily increasing conservation on millions of acres. In doing so, an expansive list of conservation practices and enhancements is available to address a myriad of local concerns. To administer this complex nationwide program, USDA divides and parses the overall CSP funding to meet several priorities, including balancing demand for new and renewal contracts and meeting set-aside targets for particular audiences. This in depth description of CSP traces the path of that funding for the layperson, from Congress to on-the-ground conservation.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS

Established in 1973, the Center for Rural Affairs is a private, nonprofit organization with a mission to establish strong rural communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship, and genuine opportunity for all while engaging people in decisions that affect the quality of their lives and the future of their communities. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

