





This annual report highlights the work that NRCS Missouri, our conservation partners and our customers accomplished in 2002. These accomplishments reflect conservation work on private land that provide benefits to all Missouri's residents.

The result of these efforts to get conservation on the land is that Missouri residents have cleaner water, more wildlife, less soil erosion, and improved pastures and woodlots.

What lies ahead? The 2002 Farm Bill provides even greater opportunities to expand our efforts and accelerate our conservation accomplishments. These opportunities can only be realized through the dedication and hard work of NRCS employees, our partners, and the people we serve.

Roger A. Hansen
Missouri State Conservationist

Landowners Find Incentives in the Wetlands Reserve Program

Three years ago Richard Mauzey grimaced each time he bounced over a gully while attempting to harvest corn from marginal cropland on his Chariton County farm. Now Mauzey smiles as he literally floats across the same tract of hard-to-farm land sandwiched between railroad tracks and a nearby creek.

Thanks to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Mauzey is just a short boat ride away from a duck blind on his own private waterfowl refuge. More and more landowners, like Mauzey, are discovering the benefits of retiring marginal sections of their agricultural land to WRP. Through WRP, they improve the makeup of their farms, provide habitat for wildlife, and profit financially.

WRP pays landowners to protect, restore, and enhance wetlands on their property. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) aids landowners in their restoration efforts by providing them with technical and financial support.

“WRP places a value on land that farmers think is worthless or that they can't afford to maintain,” says Mick Hawkins, NRCS conservation technician in

Mick Hawkins, NRCS conservation technician (right) and Richard Mauzey review Mauzey's conservation plan during a tour of the Mauzey family wetland in Chariton County.



Chariton County. "It basically gives a value to not-so-valuable ground, and it has changed the way farmers look at wetlands. They know this program is there to help them."

A landowner participating in WRP either enters into a cost-share restoration agreement with USDA or signs an easement in exchange for a cash payment. Many participants earn additional income by leasing hunting rights, Hawkins says.

"What some of these lands were worth 20 years ago, they're worth 20 times more now with the WRP," says Hawkins.

Mauzey says he just enjoys having his own family wetland. Richard, his father Kenneth, and Richard's sons enjoy the time they can spend together in the duck blind. Richard says he is most appreciative of his wetland when he invites children to visit his duck blind. "I get more out of seeing the looks on kids faces when they come out here during duck season," he says. "They are really enjoying themselves."

by Cassie Piercey, EarthTeam volunteer



About NRCS

NRCS in Missouri is designed for customer service and field office support. We have 100 field offices serving 114 counties employing over 400 employees. In addition to field offices, NRCS also has other technical offices. These offices support soil survey, watershed projects, water quality, outreach, resource conservation and development and plant materials.

Our field offices are co-located with the USDA Farm Service Agency, Rural Development and local soil and water conservation district staffs. The state is divided into five areas led by area conservationists. Those five areas are further divided into one-to-three county field office service areas (FOSAs) led by district conservationists.

The State Office, located in Columbia, provides technical and administrative support for all other offices and is made up of nine separate teams. They are Engineering, Water Resources, Information Resources Management, Resource Inventory and Assessment, Field Technical Services, Public Information and Marketing, Administration and Finance, Human Resources and the State Conservationist's staff.

Programs Summary

This annual report covers one fiscal year - from October 1, 2001, to September 30, 2002. In a few cases, to show trends, data from other years have been included. The information in this publication highlights a number of our annual activities in fiscal year 2002.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

WRP helps landowners restore wetlands on agricultural and non-agricultural lands. Restored wetlands provide wildlife habitat for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species and other wetland wildlife. WRP started as a pilot in Missouri in 1992. To date, 664 applications have been funded statewide encompassing 83,141 acres. In 2002, NRCS accepted 40 applications covering 6,024 acres.

Conservation Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is simply about helping people. NRCS employees provide conservation options, recommendations, planning, or application assistance to individual farmers, ranchers, local governments, and even individual homeowners.

During Fiscal Year 2002, NRCS and its partners in Missouri provided technical assistance to 129,608 customers, including 49,218 first-time customers. They helped land users apply conservation systems on 883,923 acres and plan conservation measures that, when applied, would protect another 727,622 acres.

They helped establish irrigation management systems on 61,449 acres in southeastern Missouri, helped establish prescribed grazing systems on 123,445 acres in the state's grassland areas, and helped landowners improve wildlife habitat on 190,173 acres throughout the state.

Missouri's natural resources conservation team also provided technical assistance to install 117 animal waste management systems.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals. EQIP provides financial and technical help to install or implement structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

In 2002, Missouri farmers requested more than \$83 million in EQIP financial assistance. The \$8.2 million available funded 146 of the 2,344 Missouri EQIP applications. This financial assistance will help install conservation practices that will reduce soil erosion, use water more efficiently, and improve grazing land and wildlife habitat.

Farmland Protection Program (FPP)

Missouri NRCS signed a cooperative agreement in 2002 that will permanently protect 102 acres of farmland adjacent to Wilson's Creek National Battlefield near Springfield. Portions of an early Civil War battle occurred on this land. The FPP conservation easement protects the site's rural, agricultural character and ensures that the view from the battlefield will remain similar to what it was during the battle in 1861.

Plant Materials Program

The Elsberry Plant Materials Center (PMC) primarily serves Missouri, Illinois and Iowa. Its mission is to develop and transfer plant materials and technology for the conservation of natural resources. During 2002, nine of 29 plants released nationally through the Plant Materials Program were from the Elsberry PMC.



Soil Survey

The Missouri Cooperative Soil Survey Program continues to be one of the strongest in the country. In April, the milestone of completing the initial soils inventory for the state of Missouri was celebrated in Jefferson City. Federal, state and local agencies and organizations are committed to the next phase, refining the initial soils data and delivering current soils information and interpretations to the citizens of Missouri.

Watershed Program (PL-566)

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act authorizes NRCS to provide assistance to local organizations in planning and implementing watershed projects.

In 2002, Missouri's \$5.5 million allotment of PL-566 watershed implementation funds was used to award 10 contracts in seven watersheds. The contracts are for constructing 43 floodwater retarding structures, installing an ADA-designed walking/jogging trail and fishing platform along the McKenzie Creek in Piedmont, and for acquiring floodprone property and buildings in the Hickory Creek floodplain at Neosho.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

WHIP is designed to maintain ecosystem diversity by improving habitats of reduced or declining wildlife populations within agricultural systems. Missouri obligated more than \$455,000 with 71 contracts during 2002.



601 Business Loop 70 West, Suite 250 • Columbia, MO 65203
(573) 876-0901 • www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov

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