



# 2007 Farm Bill Conservation Programs

## Regional Priorities for the Great Lakes

March 2007

### Background on the Issue

Roughly one-third of the land within the Great Lakes basin is used for agricultural purposes, and an estimated 600 million tons of topsoil erode from cropland in the Great Lakes states each year.<sup>1</sup> This not only reduces the productivity of the land for growing crops and supporting livestock, but also contributes to pollution of the region's water bodies through stormwater runoff and the transport of sediments, nutrients, pesticides and pathogens into nearby streams, rivers and lakes.

The 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization provides a number of opportunities to advance priorities for the Great Lakes and to address threats to long-term agricultural productivity, habitat and water quality of the lakes and streams of our region. Specifically, the Great Lakes community views this reauthorization as an opportunity to begin to implement components of the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) was initiated by a federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force in response to Presidential Executive Order 13340, which recognized the Great Lakes as a "national treasure" and called for the improvement of federal coordination on the Great Lakes. More information on this effort is available at [www.glrc.us](http://www.glrc.us).

### Great Lakes Priorities for the 2007 Farm Bill

The following Farm Bill Conservation Programs will help to address specific GLRC Strategy recommendations:

- Reauthorize **Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control** with continued coordination by the Great Lakes Commission to achieve recommended soil loss reductions.
- Reauthorize **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** to protect and restore wetlands and riparian habitats, and support hydrological improvements to urban watersheds.
- Reauthorize **Conservation Security Program (CSP)** to protect and restore wetlands and riparian habitats, support the development and implementation of comprehensive nutrient and manure management, and support hydrological improvements to urban watersheds.
- Reauthorize **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** to protect and restore riparian habitats, restore buffers, achieve reductions in soil loss, support the development and implementation of comprehensive nutrient and manure management, and support hydrological improvements to urban watersheds. Transfer existing provisions of **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)** to EQIP to protect and restore wetlands, coastal shore and upland habitats.
- Reauthorize **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)** to protect and restore wetlands, coastal shore and upland habitats.

#### *This fact sheet prepared by the Great Lakes Commission*

The Great Lakes Commission is an interstate compact agency that works on behalf of the eight Great Lakes states to advance restoration, protection and sound management of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin.

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### Funding History and Committee Jurisdiction

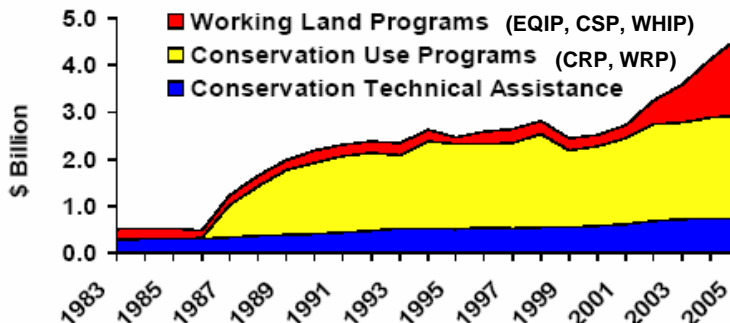
First passed in 1949, the U.S. Farm Bill is a collection of laws, policies and legislation related to agriculture production, food distribution and hunger.<sup>2</sup> The bill focuses on basic

<sup>1</sup> Soil and Water Conservation Society. 2006. *Great Lakes, Clean Water: Realizing the Promise of U.S. Department of Agriculture Conservation Programs*.

<sup>2</sup> Discussion of past Farm Bill legislation authored by Rural Coalition, [www.ruralco.org](http://www.ruralco.org).

farm programs within titles such as: farm payments, agricultural trade, conservation, food assistance, agricultural promotion, credit, rural development, and research and education. Conservation provisions have been increasingly significant priorities in the Farm Bill since 1985. Current committee jurisdiction for the 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization lies with the U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee and the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture.

**Figure 1. Conservation Program Spending (1983-2006)**  
(Source: USDA, Economic Research Service)



## Progress to Date and Areas for Improvement

In recent years, the Farm Bill conservation programs have achieved reductions in soil erosion on U.S. cropland and increased habitat and water quality improvements. The following table shows past accomplishments of several key conservation programs.

**Table 1. Conservation Activities Funded Nationally through Key Farm Bill Conservation Programs**  
(Source: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency)

	Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control	Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	Conservation Security Program (CSP)	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
Enrolled acres or funded projects	389 projects	36.7 million acres	15.4 million acres <sup>1</sup>	51.5 million acres <sup>2</sup>	2.3 million acres <sup>2</sup>	1.85 million acres
Payments to farmers/landowners	\$14 million	\$1,815 million	\$230.5 million <sup>1</sup>	\$1,080 million <sup>2</sup>	-	-

<sup>1</sup>Data available for Fiscal Years 2004 – 2006 only

<sup>2</sup>Data available for life of program through Fiscal Year 2004

Many stakeholders across the country also recognize the following areas for additional improvement and coordination to achieve greater program efficiency:

- Improve the cost-effectiveness of programs;
- Facilitate increased accountability for results through monitoring and evaluation;
- Create and reward higher standards for environmental performance and long-term conservation planning;
- Improve the implementation of technical assistance, coordination, communication and training;
- Increase federal funding and/or cost-share levels while expanding eligibility to farmers and ranchers nationwide;
- Allow for program flexibility to identify local resource priorities; and
- Streamline enrollment processes.

## Benefits to the Great Lakes Region

As many of the country’s top agricultural producers, the Great Lakes states have a lot at stake. The 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization provides a number of opportunities for the Great Lakes states to advance priorities in addressing threats to long-term agricultural productivity, habitat and water quality of our lakes and streams. By building a stronger case for conservation programs and additional funding in the revised legislation, soil and water resources will be better protected for current and future generations.

## Links for More Information

- 2002 Farm Bill Conservation Programs: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002)
- Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes: [www.gllrc.us/strategy.html](http://www.gllrc.us/strategy.html)