



Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) Forestry Initiative

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Vermont

About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works to protect and conserve natural resources on our nation's private lands.

A part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS administers conservation programs funded primarily through the 2008 Farm Bill.

The conservation provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill will affect farmers for years to come. New provisions continue to build on the conservation gains made by U.S. citizens over the past decade. Existing programs have been simplified and new programs created to address high priority environmental protection goals.

In addition to addressing a broad range of environmental goals, the 2008 Farm Bill includes increased financial assistance for new, limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers.

Contact NRCS:



Vermont

USDA Service Centers

- Berlin: 802-828-4493
- Brattleboro: 802-254-9766
- Middlebury: 802-388-6748
- Morrisville: 802-888-4935
- Newport: 802-334-6090
- Rutland: 802-775-8034
- St. Albans: 802-524-6505
- St. Johnsbury: 802-748-2641
- White River Jct.: 802-295-7942
- Williston: 802-865-7895

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering a special initiative for New England and New York forestry operators to improve forest stewardship.

In Vermont, NRCS offers payment to private forestland operators for implementing a variety of practices that will improve their forests and benefit fish and wildlife. In addition, WHIP can also assist private forestland operators in addressing soil erosion concerns within the forest.

Conservation Practices Eligible for Financial Assistance

The goal of the New England / New York Forestry Initiative is to expand stewardship opportunities within WHIP for private forest lands (lands with existing tree cover or that is suitable for growing trees) through forest land planning. Conservation practices that improve wildlife habitat, forest health and productivity, and water quality are offered through this initiative.

Private forestland operators who only need or want to address soil erosion concerns on their forest operations should apply to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Forestry Pool. Private forestland operators need to have a Forest Management Plan in place prior to completing forestland practices in an EQIP contract and for certain practices in the WHIP Forestry Initiative.



Forest Stand Improvement – May be used for mast tree release or for pre-commercial thinning of pole sized stands.



Forest Trails and Landings – On parcels under forest management to address soil erosion and water quality concerns on existing forest skid trails.



Invasive Plant Control – May be used to control invasive plants to improve wildlife habitat.

Upland Habitat Management – Focused upon apple tree release and often used in tandem with a tree pruning practice.

Early Successional Habitat Mgt. - Focused upon non-commercial stands and forest types (e.g. aspen-birch) and old fields.

When should I apply to EQIP vs. WHIP?

If you want to only address soil erosion on your forest land you will need to apply to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Forestry Pool. **If you've owned your land for less than 10 years, you should apply to the EQIP Forestry Beginning Farmer Pool.**

Part of being eligible for WHIP includes implementing practices that will benefit fish and wildlife habitat. Erosion control practices alone will not address this requirement.

If you need or want to address fish and wildlife concerns on your forestland in addition to forestry practices, you should apply for the WHIP Forestry Initiative. There are generally more funds available in this initiative for forest operators than there are in EQIP.



Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

WHIP helps participants develop fish and wildlife habitat in private agricultural land and non industrial private forest land.

Who can apply?

- Private forestland operators who's forest operation has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees and is owned by any nonindustrial private individual or legal entity that has definitive decision making authority over the land.
- Total WHIP payments to a person or legal entity cannot exceed \$50,000 per fiscal year.

How do I apply?

- Contact your local USDA Service Center to speak to one of our conservation professionals to begin the program application process.
- You will need to file several forms to ensure that you are eligible for federal programs.
 - Information and an application checklist are available on our website
- Conducting a resource inventory with NRCS and developing a conversation plan is one of the first steps in applying to WHIP.
 - A conservation plan will:**
 - Identify immediate or potential problems that will result in resource degradation and lower production.
 - Facilitate restoration management of fish and wildlife habitat, while protecting soil and water and your land's productivity

When should I apply?

- Applications may be submitted anytime. All applications will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available. Ranking criteria for each program is available on our website.

Please call your local NRCS office or visit us online for more information.

