

THE 2002 FARM BILL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIVATE LANDS CONSERVATION IN MONTANA^{AFS}

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Conservation programs of the 1996 Farm Bill administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) brought millions of dollars to Montana's private landowners from 1997-2002. These volunteer conservation programs benefited Montana's soil, water, plant and animal resources. Recent passage of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (FSRIA) of 2002 will continue to strengthen the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) conservation efforts on American's private lands. FSRIA reauthorized many popular and effective programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (FRPP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and its spin-off programs the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Farmable Wetland Program (FWP). These programs were reauthorized with significant funding increases included. Also included in the 2002 Farm Bill are the new programs Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) and the Conservation Security Act (CSP) along with special provisions for limited resource producers, beginning farmers, and technical service providers.