

The Farm Bill and Fish and Wildlife Conservation

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Working Assumptions

- **70% of U.S. land base is private**
- **50% of the 365 million hectares in the U.S. is cropland, pastureland, and rangeland**
- **Private lands critical to conservation of biological diversity**



History

- **Farm Bills +/- 6 years**
- **Prior to 1985 farm bill focused on agricultural subsidies**
- **1985 Farm Bill broke the trend and began directly addressing conservation**



1990 Farm Bill Builds on Conservation Programs

1990 Farm Bill brought another major conservation program to address declining wetlands and the Nation's "No Net Loss of Wetlands"

▷ Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)





2002 Farm Bill

**Committed \$17 billion to private
lands conservation**

USDA Farm Bill Themes



- **Quality of environment**
- **Fish and wildlife habitat**
- **Private lands**
- **Locally led Conservation**
- **Conservation Partnerships**

Program Elements


- ✦ All programs are voluntary
- ✦ Programs are competitive
- ✦ Target most environmental benefit for \$\$ through ranking
- ✦ Programs emphasize Partners

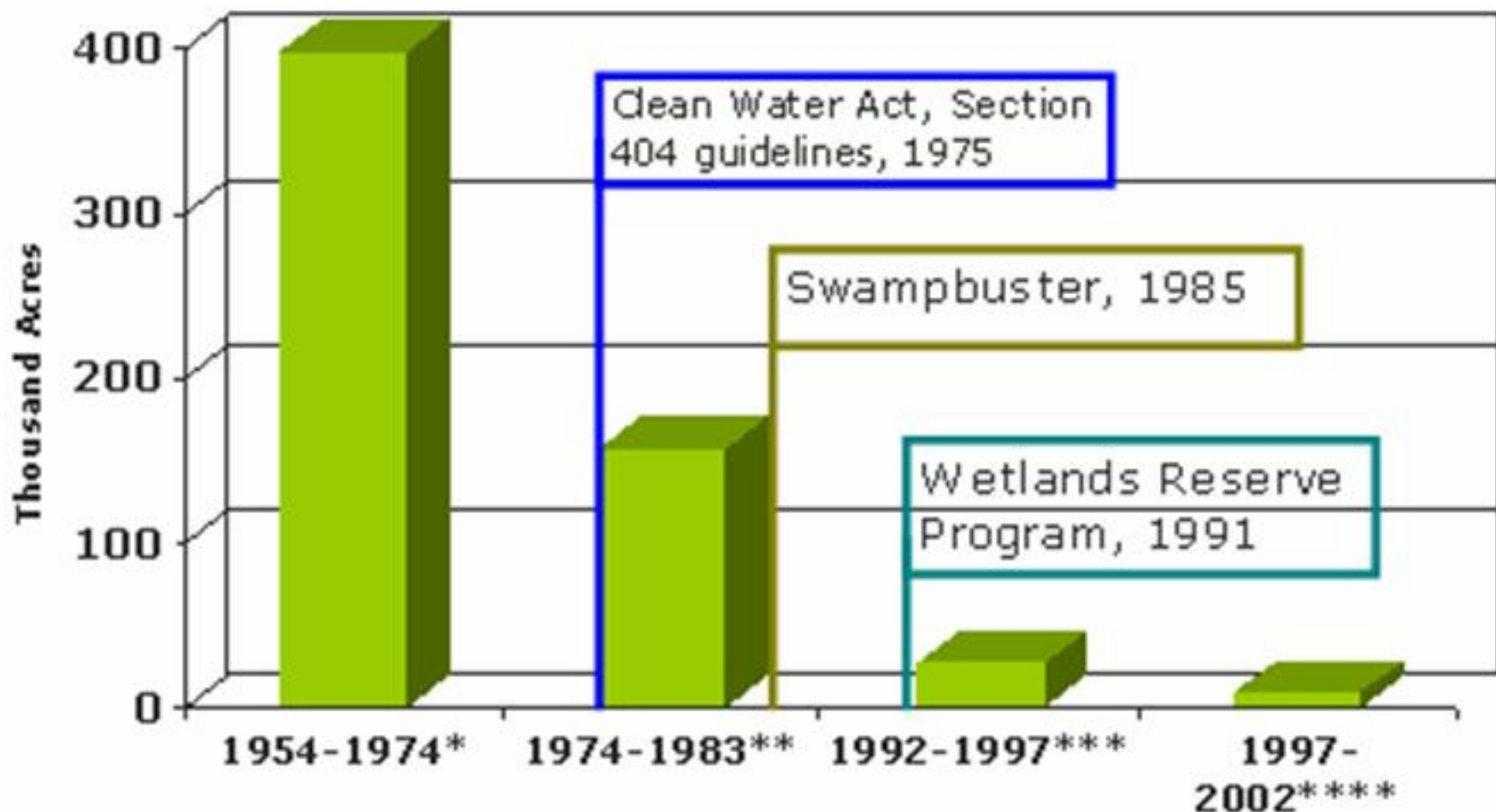
Sodbuster

A photograph of a tractor plowing a field. The foreground shows deep, curved furrows in the dark soil. In the middle ground, a green tractor is pulling a plow, moving across a lighter-colored, less-tilled area. The background consists of a vast, flat expanse of dark brown soil under a clear sky.

Placing new land into agricultural use without adequately addressing soil erosion results in loss of USDA economic benefits

Swampbuster

- ❖ **Conversion of wetlands results in lost of USDA benefits**
 - ❖ **Significantly decreased loss of wetlands in agricultural landscapes**
- 
- A white egret stands in a field of tall, green grasses. The bird is facing right, with its long neck extended. The background is a soft-focus landscape of more grasses under a clear sky.



Average annual wetland loss due to agriculture, 1954-2002 and significant federal legislation (*Frayer et al. 1983, **Dahl and Johnson 1991, ***NRCS, NRI 2000, ****NRCS, NRI 2004)

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- **Cropland seeded to permanent cover for 10 - 15 years**
- **Cost share to establish cover**
- **Annual rental payments**
- **Approximately 14 million hectares**

CRP Has Several Implementation Strategies

- **Continuous CRP-focus on whole field plantings of grass and forbs or trees**
- **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program -focuses on landscape level projects and partnerships**

Benefits of CRP

- ▷ **Water Quality (reducing fertilizers, pesticides and sediment into aquatic systems)**
- ▷ **Reduced Soil Erosion**
- ▷ **Wildlife and Fish**



What's been quantified:

12 million ducks produced
between 1992 and 2002 on CRP

13.5 million pheasants produced
annually

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

- ▶ **Restore and protect wetlands and riparian zones**
- ▶ **Three types of agreements:**
 - ▷ **Cost share only**
 - ▷ **30 year easement**
 - ▷ **Perpetual easement (bulk of program)**



WRP Accomplishments

1.8 million acres

Size 1-20,000 acres

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

- ❖ **Partners with local easement programs to maintain land in agriculture and associated use**
- ❖ **Contribute funds (50%) toward purchase of easement**
- ❖ **Partner holds easement**
- ❖ **450,000 acres as of 2006**

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)



▷ **75% - 90% cost share**

▷ **Priorities**

- Water quality
- Air quality
- Erosion/sedimentation
- At risk species


Types of EQIP Practices for At Risk Species


- **Predator friendly to reduce predation on livestock (grizzly bears, wolves)**
- **Sage-grouse and prairie chickens (deferred grazing)**



Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

Develop and improve fish & wildlife habitat

Provide 75% or greater cost share

5 to 15-year contracts



Grasslands Reserve Program

- ▷ **Focus is grazing lands & biodiversity**
- ▷ **Easements and contracts**
- ▷ **First implemented in FY 2004**
- ▷ **Sage grouse targeted last two years**

Conservation Security Program (CSP)

- ▷ **Annual payments for good stewardship, highest payment must address wildlife habitat quality**
- ▷ **Enhancement payments**
- ▷ **This may eventually dwarf all programs**

Reward the best, motivate the rest

Healthy Forests Reserve Program

Not a farm bill program, but given to NRCS by the Healthy Forests Reserve Act of 2003

- ▷ **First time funding in 2006**
- ▷ **Contracts and Easements**
- ▷ **Promote T&E conservation, improve biodiversity and carbon sequestration**

Make the Farm Bill work for you

- ✦ **Bring landowners to USDA programs**
- ✦ **Work partnerships with NRCS**
- ✦ **Use programs to restore habitat quality**

Building on Protected Areas

- ❖ **80,000 acres of WRP easements surround the Cache River NWR (Ivory Billed Woodpecker)**
- ❖ **200,000 acres of CRP in same county as Agassiz NWR**
- ❖ **Newest NWR (Glacial Ridge) is composed of 18,000 of WRP land**

Farm Bill Future

- **Programs will most likely be renewed (2007)**
- **Best guess - wildlife/wetland /easement programs will continue to be a priority but.....**
- **\$\$\$ is going to get tight.....**



Summary

- **Private lands are critical to fish and wildlife conservation**
- **Farm Bill is not just about farms**
- **We are talking about billions of dollars for conservation programs on private lands.**
- **Farm Bill includes both easement programs and restoration practices**