

## **USDA Accomplishments Under the Bush Administration 2001-2008**

### **Expanded Conservation and Protected Our Natural Resource Base**

High quality soils and abundant supplies of clean air and water are valuable elements for production agriculture and forestry and their neighboring communities. America's soils, water supplies and range and forest ecosystems host the raw materials for food, clothing, shelter, and energy.

#### **Protected Watershed Health**

- Proper management of agricultural and forest land is vital to efficient use and protections of our natural resources. On Earth Day in 2004, President Bush set a goal to increase our Nation's wetlands by creating, improving, and protecting at least three million wetland acres by 2009. USDA's Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) contributes roughly one-third of the acres towards this Initiative. Under the Bush Administration, enrollment in WRP has doubled with 2 million acres enrolled as of October 2008.
- In 2004, USDA initiated the Conservation Security Program, which provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes. From 2004 to 2008, USDA has offered the program in 331 different watersheds and has provided financial assistance to nearly 21,400 participants on 17.5 million acres of working agricultural lands.
- In 2007, USDA entered into a partnership agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish and promote trading water quality credits through cooperative conservation. Water quality credit trading uses a market-based approach that offers credits as incentives to implement conservation practices that improve water quality. The agreement features a pilot project within the Chesapeake Bay basin to showcase the effectiveness of environmental markets.

#### **Engineered New Improvements for Our Environment**

- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) helps farmers and ranchers implement structural and management conservation practices that since the start of the Bush Administration have totaled 312,599 contracts on 144.8 million acres.
- In August 2004, President Bush announced the re-enrollment or extension of 28 million acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land, resulting in over 80 percent of the acreage under contracts extended or re-enrolled. CRP is the nation's largest private-lands conservation financial assistance program, with over 36 million acres enrolled to date.
- Under the Bush Administration, the one-millionth acre was enrolled under the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a voluntary land retirement program that helps agricultural producers protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water.

## **Protected Forests and Grasslands**

- ☑ USDA and the U.S. Department of Interior are using tools and authorities provided by the President's Healthy Forests Initiative and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 to promote project planning to reduce fire hazards and restore forests and grasslands.
- ☑ Removing excess vegetation and carefully prescribed burning reduces the risk from wildfires on more than 3 million acres. Watersheds were restored and wildlife habitat rehabilitated on nearly 1 million additional acres when hazardous overgrowth was reduced.
- ☑ USDA has updated the National Fire Plan's 10-year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan for reducing wildland fire risk to communities and the environment.
- ☑ Through the Forest Legacy Program, USDA works with States, private landowners, and other conservation partners to protect environmentally important forests threatened by land development and other non-forest uses. More than 1.6 million acres of environmentally important private lands have been protected through the Forest Legacy Program granting conservation easements and fee-sample purchases.
- ☑ The Grasslands Reserve Program enrollment exceeded expectations by quickly reaching the \$254 million funding limit to enroll 2 million acres under easement or long term rental agreements. The program reached that statutory funding cap in fiscal year 2005, two years ahead of schedule.