



THE FARM BILL:

America's down payment on its environmental debt.

Mark Ackelson, President
June 2011

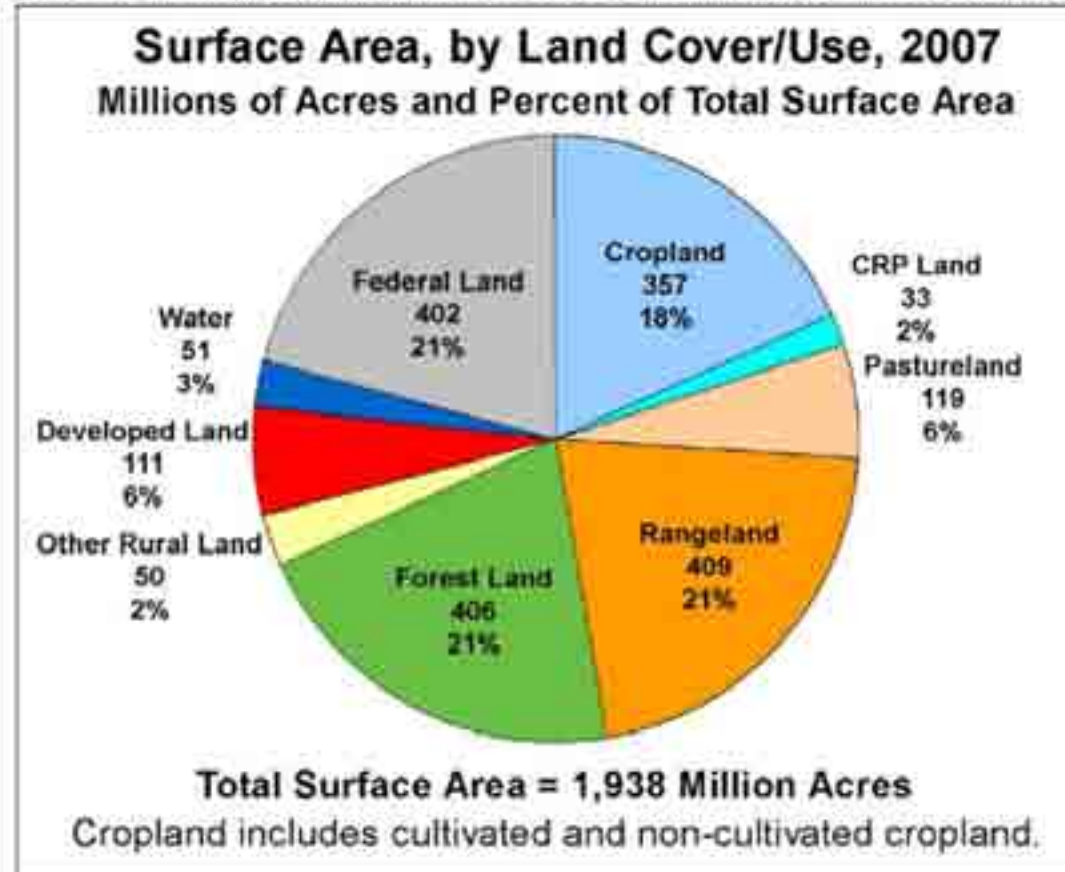
Charts and tables from the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2011. Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act Appraisal 2011.
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/rca/index.html>

What will our grandchildren say?

- **It is unfair to burden our descendants with an ever-growing national debt.**
- **Likewise, our refusal to fix our environmental problems just defers and compounds the conservation costs we pass on to our descendants**
- **So far, Congress seems intent on expanding this environmental debt in the name of fiscal deficit reduction.**

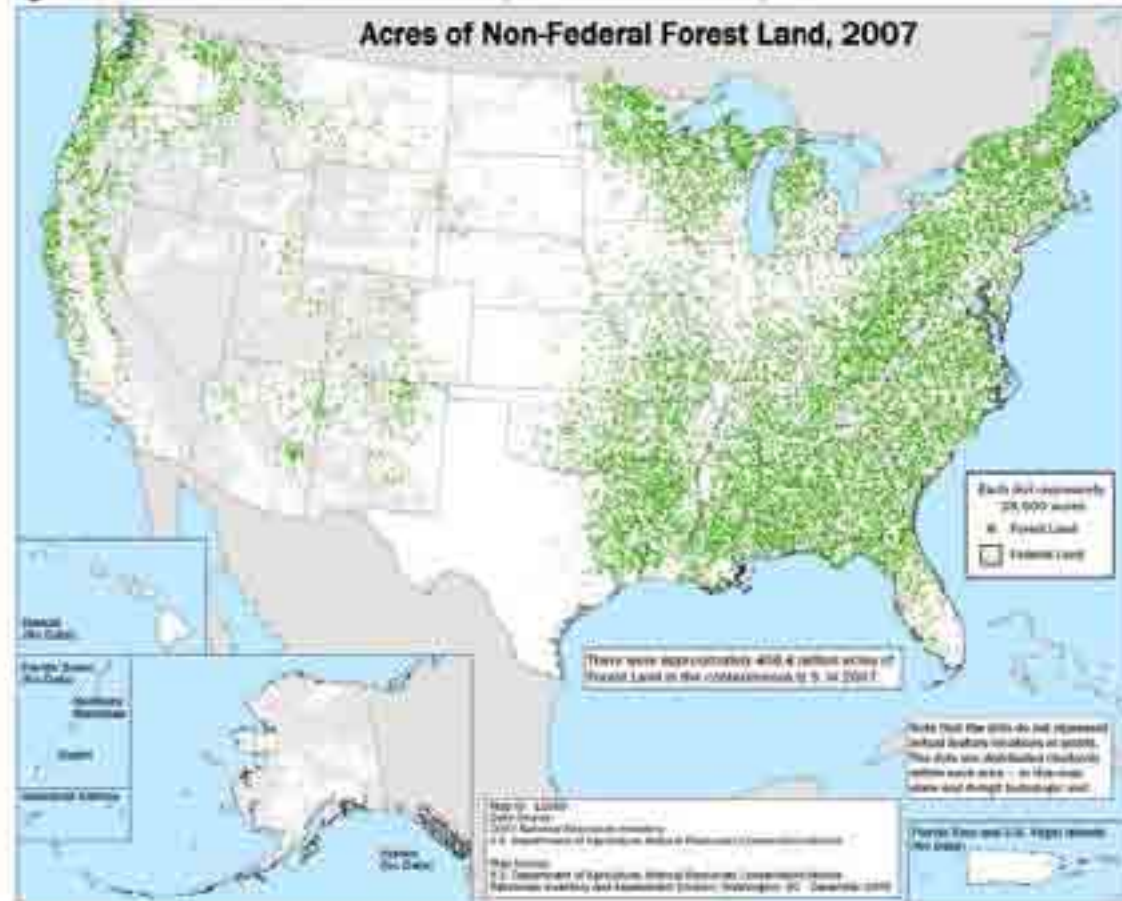
Will the U.S. Government continue to rent 2% of private lands for soil, water, and wildlife benefits?

Figure 1-1. Distribution of land uses, conterminous 48 States, 2007



Will federal tax incentives remain available for permanent protection of forests and other conservation lands?

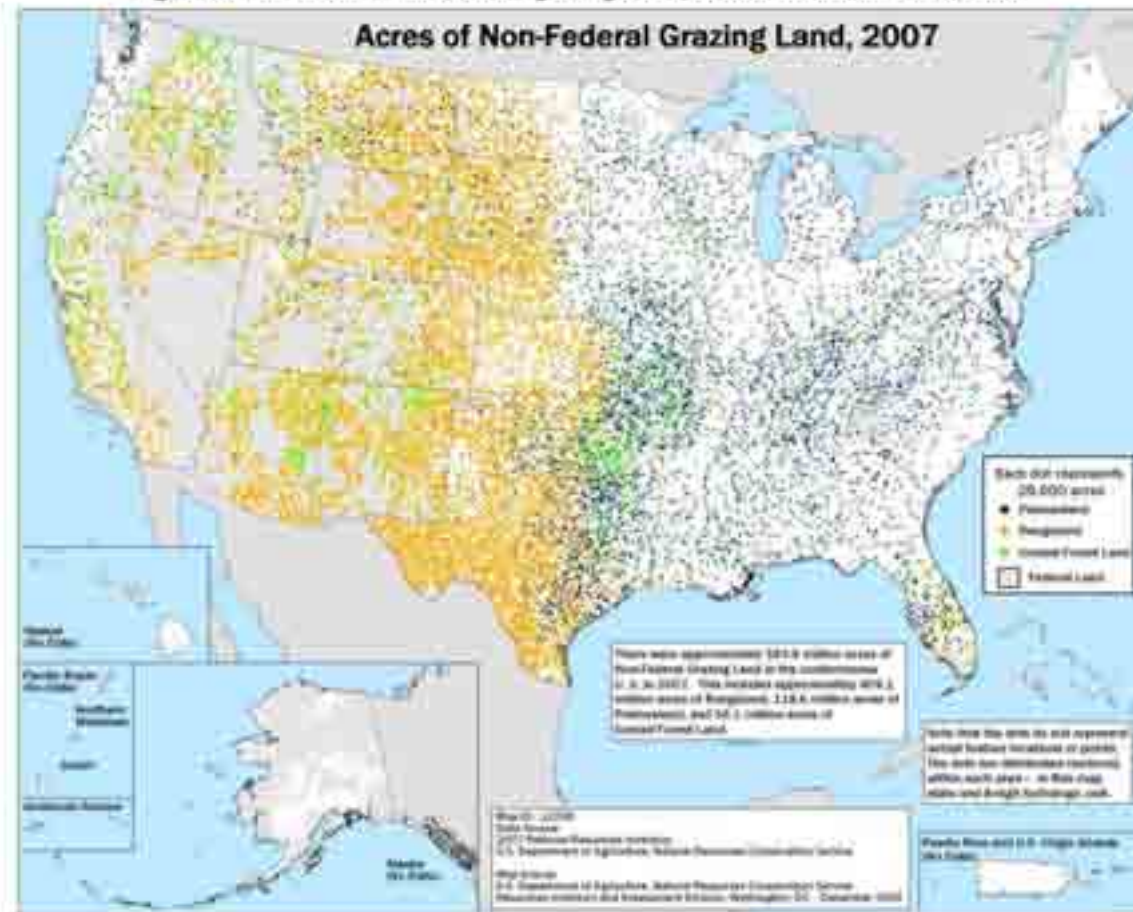
Figure 1-10. Location of non-Federal forest land, conterminous 48 States, 2007



SOURCE: USDA-NRCS/2007 NR1

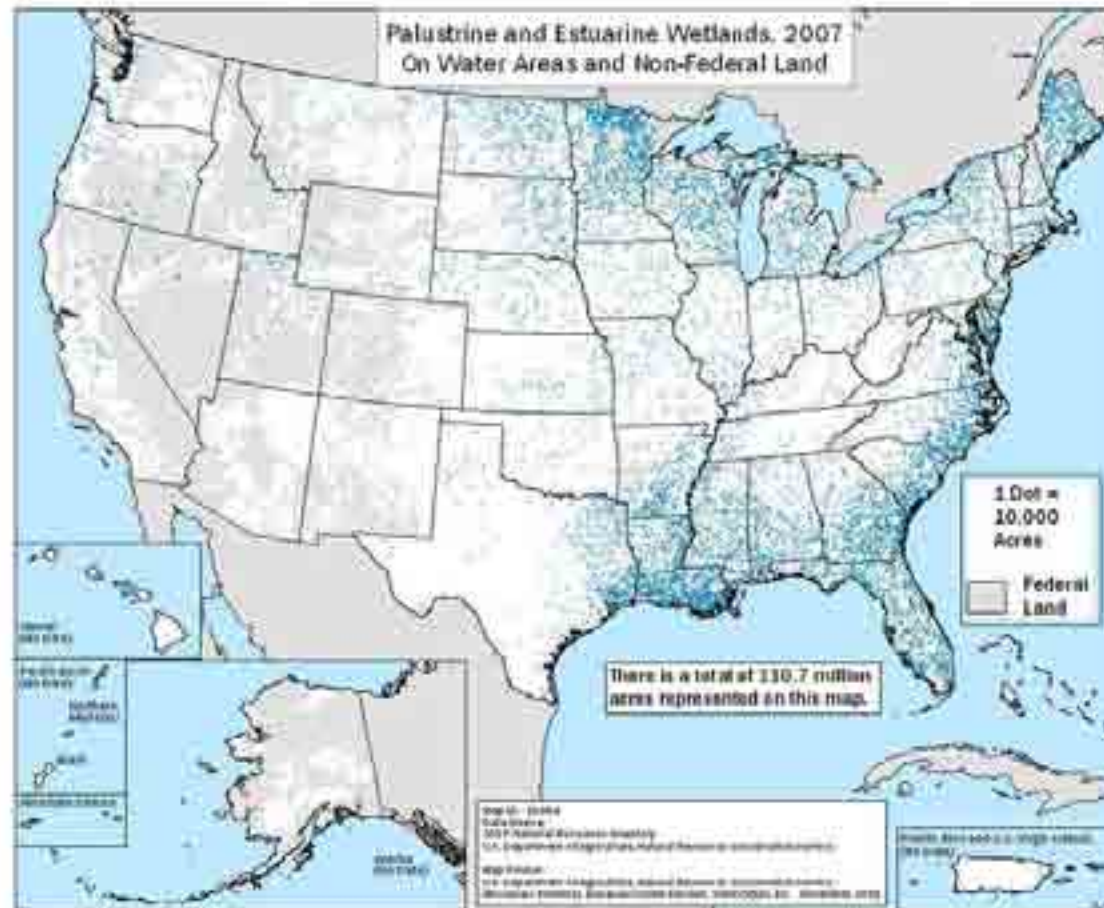
Will the Grassland Reserve Program be eliminated?

Figure 1-6. Location of non-Federal grazing lands, conterminous 48 States, 2007



Will the Wetlands Reserve Program be eliminated?

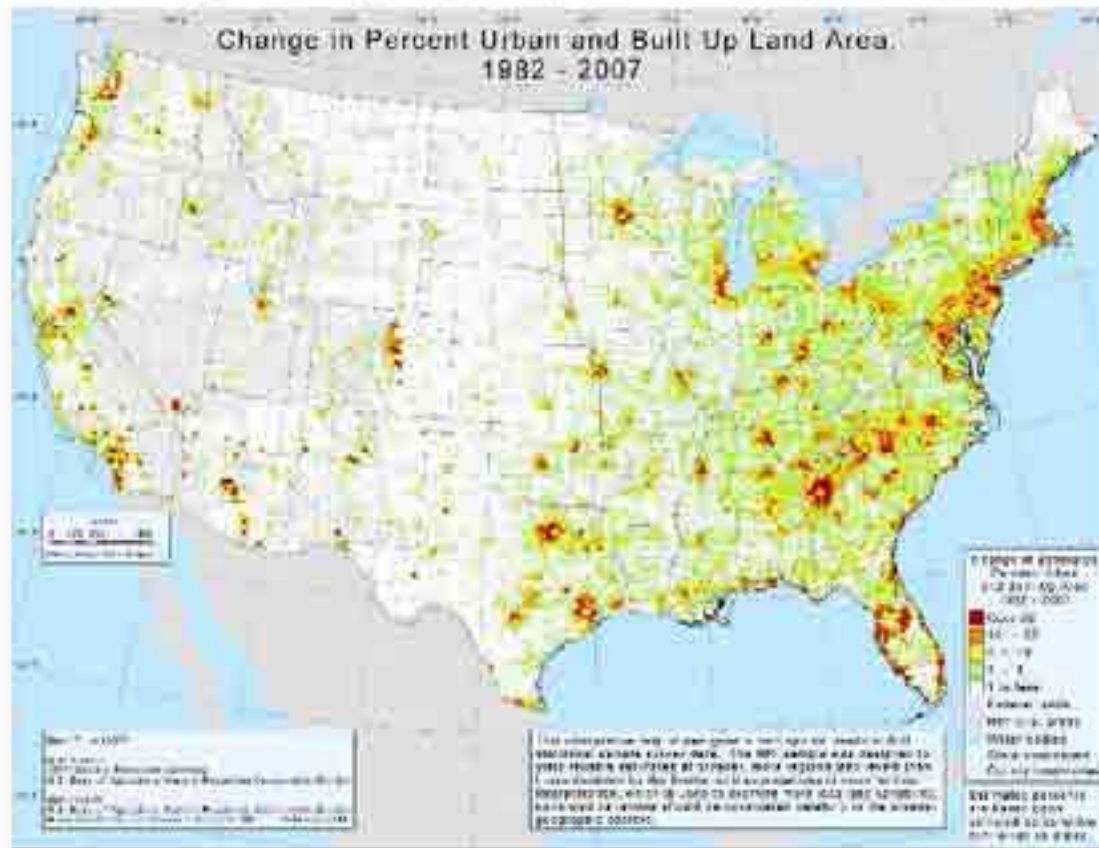
Figure 3-19. Location of wetlands; conterminous 48 States, 2007



SOURCE: 2007 National Resources Inventory, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

Will the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program continue to be funded?

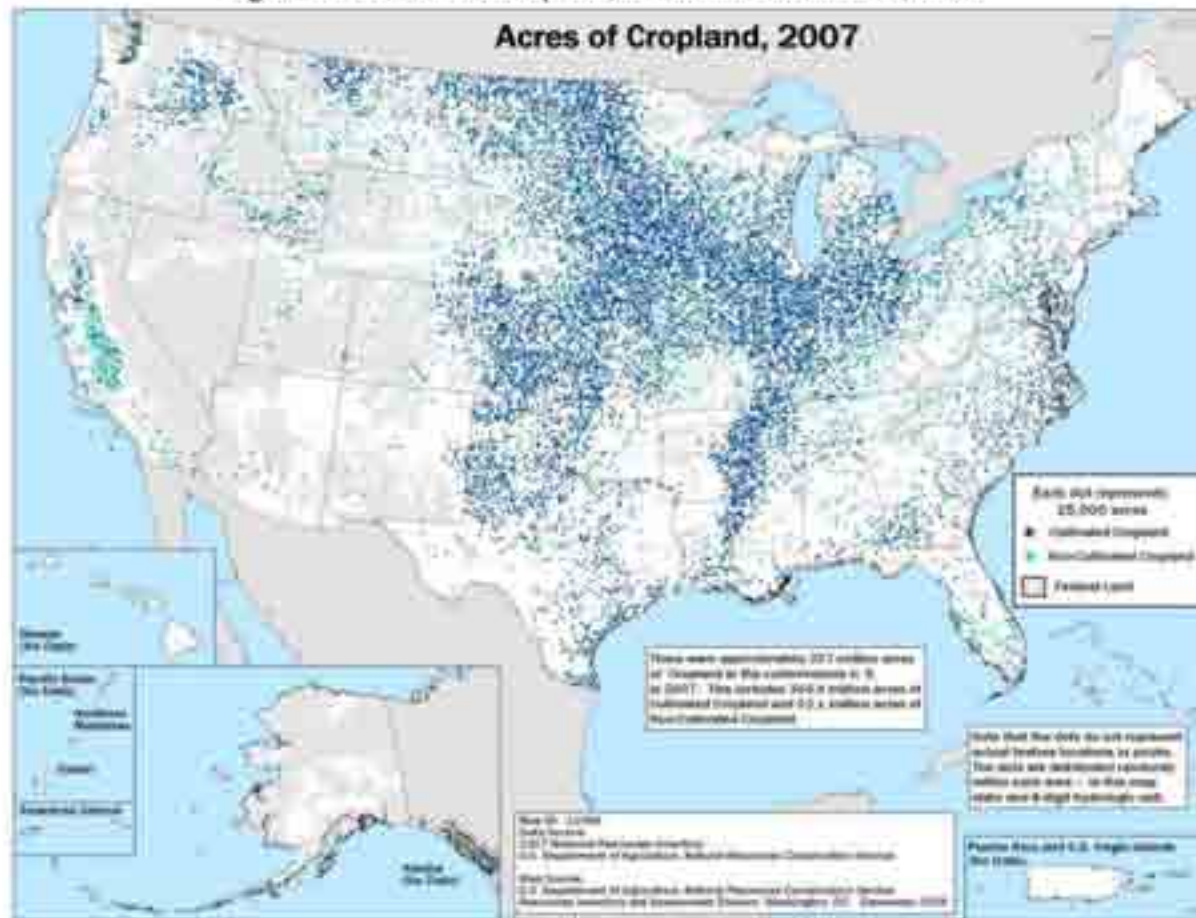
Figure 1-14. Newly developed land, conterminous 48 States, 1982-2007.



Source: USDA-NRCS 2007 NRI

How many years will congress cut conservation incentives for working lands?

Figure 1-3. Location of cropland, coterminous 48 States, 2007

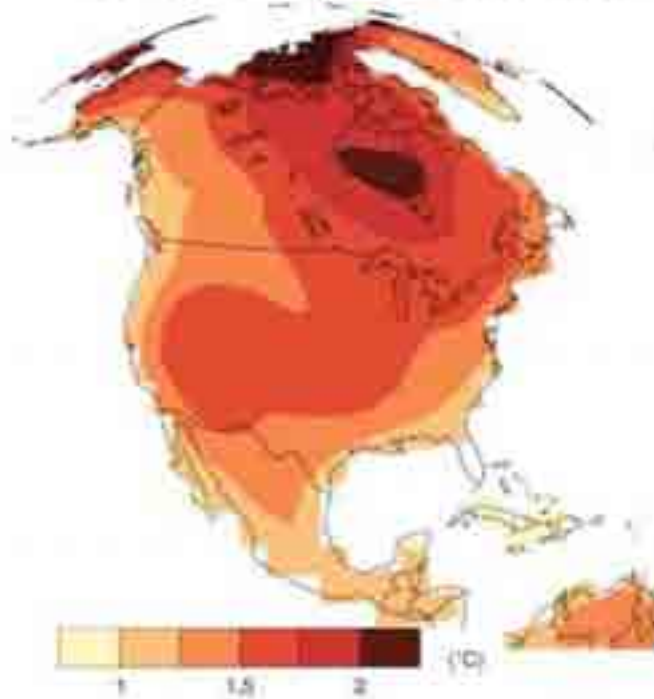


SOURCE: USDA-NRCS/2007 NRI

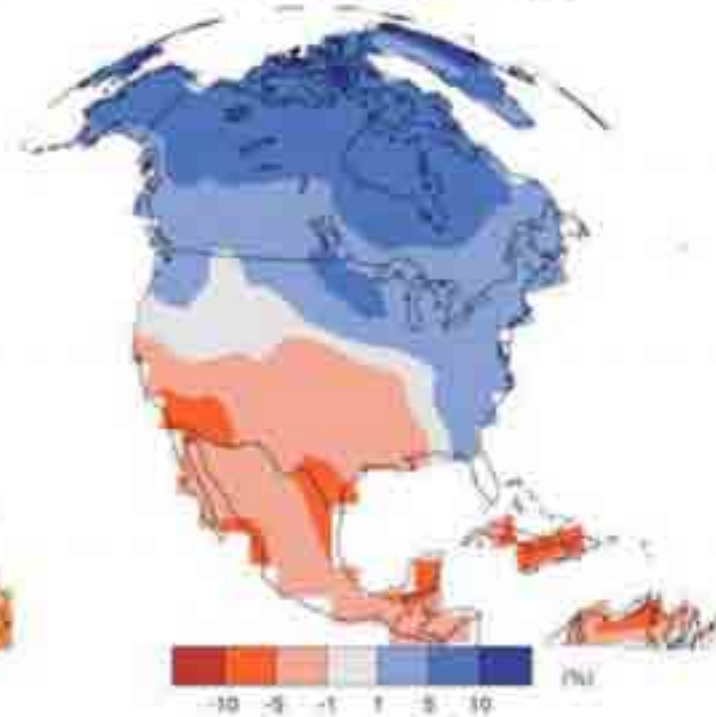
Will Congress budget for conservation costs of frequent natural disasters?

Figure 5-4. IPCC A1B Surface Air Temperature and Precipitation Projections

Surface Air Temperature 1990 - 2030



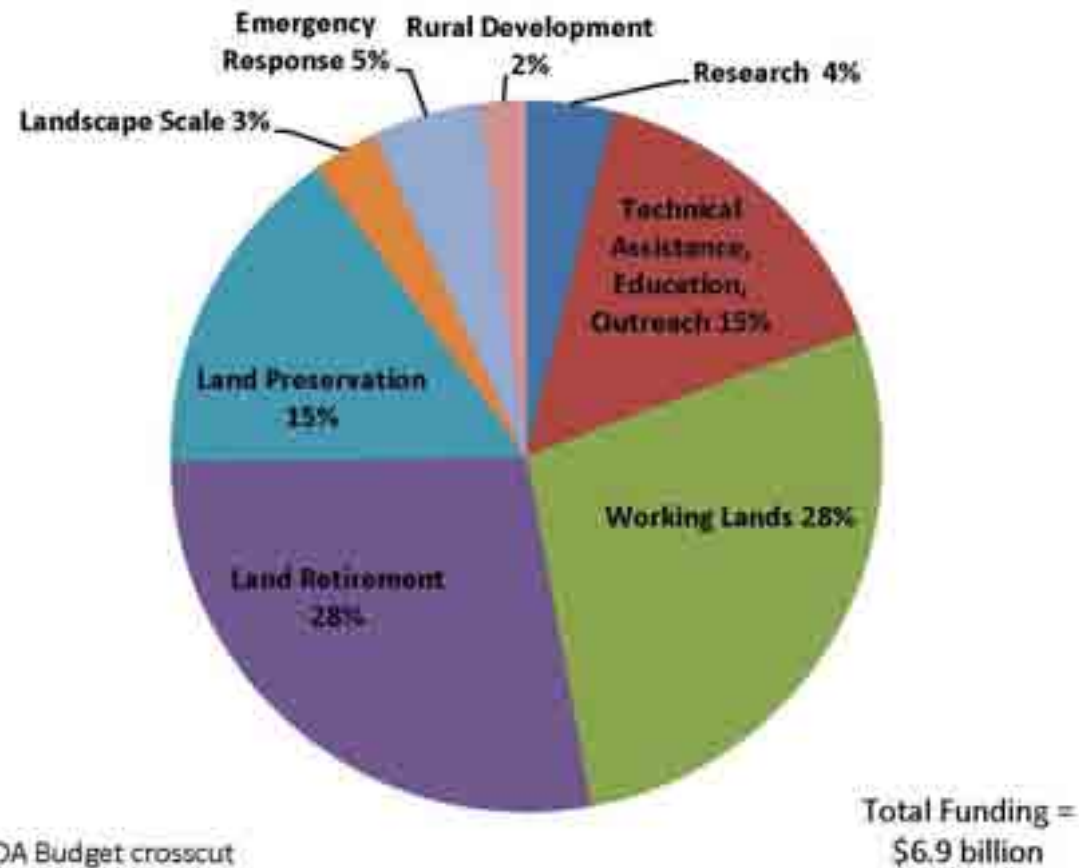
Precipitation 1990 - 2030



NCAR/DOE Climate Change Prediction Group: www.cgd.ucar.edu/ccl/ccp

Will Congress support a balanced portfolio of conservation investments through USDA?

Figure 4-5. USDA conservation investments in 2010, by program type



Source: USDA Budget crosscut

Working lands investments

Table 4-4. Working lands investments¹

Fiscal year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Agency	<i>Constant 2009 dollars, in millions</i>										
NRCS	262	326	601	923	1,260	1,409	1,434	1,389	1,655	1,495	1,930
Total	262	326	601	923	1,260	1,409	1,434	1,389	1,655	1,495	1,930

¹ Data include both technical and financial assistance.

Recommendations

1. Maintain working lands programs with the approved baseline funding authorized under the current farm bill.
2. USDA budget cuts should come from commodity subsidies, not conservation programs.
3. The Conservation Stewardship Program is top priority because it engages farmers and ranchers in a continuous improvement process that considers all environmental needs.
4. Increased enforcement of existing environmental law is needed. Cost sharing to comply with environmental laws should only be available to economic hardship cases.

Land retirement investments

Table 4-5. Land retirement investments¹

Fiscal year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Agency	<i>Constant 2009 dollars, in millions</i>										
FSA	2,084	2,254	2,364	2,228	2,113	1,894	1,944	1,881	1,949	1,860	1,810
NRCS	47	32	32	69	73	77	81	60	61	56	59
Total	2,141	2,286	2,396	2,295	2,186	2,071	2,026	1,961	2,009	1,916	1,868

¹ Data include both technical and financial assistance.

Recommendations

1. The Conservation Reserve Program is needed to transition the most environmentally sensitive crop acres to a sustainable land use.
2. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is important for targeting USDA funds with the states.
3. Continuous sign-up CRP practices are needed to help mitigation the poor land use decisions otherwise rewarded by farm subsidies.
4. CRP should purchase permanent conservation easements in cropped floodways prone to scour and channel erosion during major floods. This practice would resemble Emergency Watershed Program easements, except permanent habitat would be established prior to major flooding, rather than after catastrophic damages have occurred.

Land preservation conservation investments

Table 4-6. Land preservation conservation investments¹

Fiscal year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Agency	<i>Constant 2009 dollars, in millions</i>										
FS	42	83	87	86	76	64	63	61	60	57	75
NRCS	287	309	455	535	512	500	318	335	285	707	981
Total	329	392	541	620	588	564	381	396	346	764	1,056

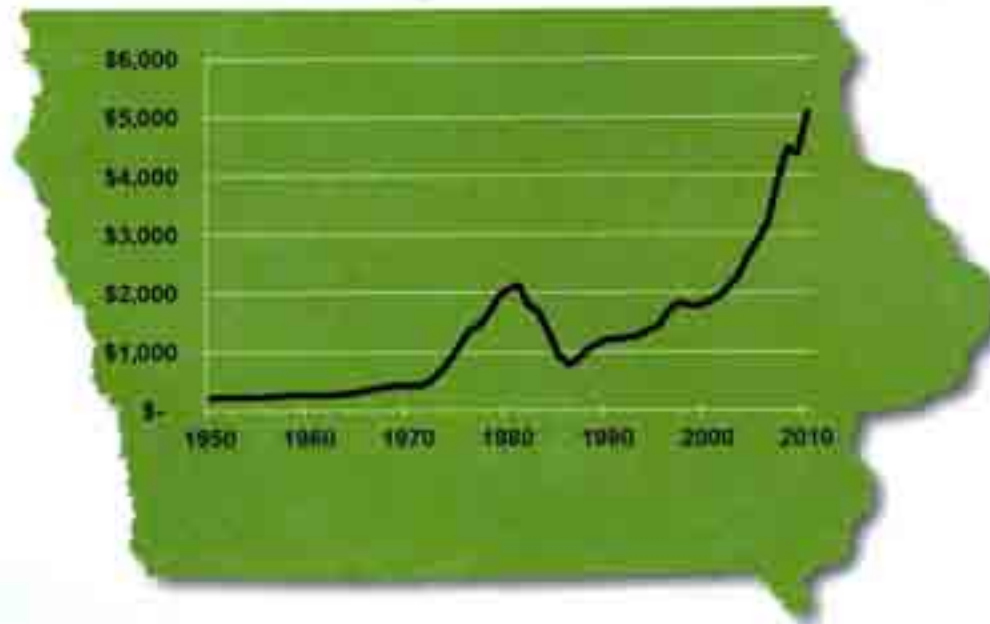
¹ Data include both technical and financial assistance.

Recommendations

1. Baseline funding for the Wetland Reserve Program should be restored, and greater use of the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program is needed to target federal funds.
2. Baseline funding for the Grassland Reserve Program should be restored, with all funds used for permanent protection of native or reconstructed grassland with diverse native species.
3. The Farm and Ranchland Protection Program should be reauthorized and funded at the baseline level now in the farm bill.
4. All USDA conservation easement programs should be targeted, permanent, and cooperative endeavors. The priorities of the administration's America's Great Outdoor Initiative should provide easement reforms in the farm bill.

Make targeting and permanency the priorities

AVERAGE VALUES all grades 1950-2010



Graph from Dr. Michael Duffy, ISU
2010 IOWA LAND VALUE SURVEY

Closing Thoughts



“Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us, and training them into a better race to inhabit the land and pass it on. Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of insuring the safety and continuance of the nation.”

Aug. 3, 1910 - Theodore Roosevelt

Questions or Comments?



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation



Iowa
Natural Heritage
Foundation