



Watershed Programs Overview August 5, 2026

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NRCS Watershed Programs

Who is NRCS?

- An agency of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Established in 1935 as a result of the dust bowl
- Formerly known as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) (until 1994)



What does NRCS do?

- Provide assistance to land users to protect their natural resources – soil, water, air, plants and animals
- More simply put – NRCS Helps People Help the Land
- Voluntary and Science Based





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Watershed and Flood Prevention
Operations (WFPO) Program



Watershed Rehabilitation (REHAB)
Program



Emergency Watershed Protection
(EWP) Program



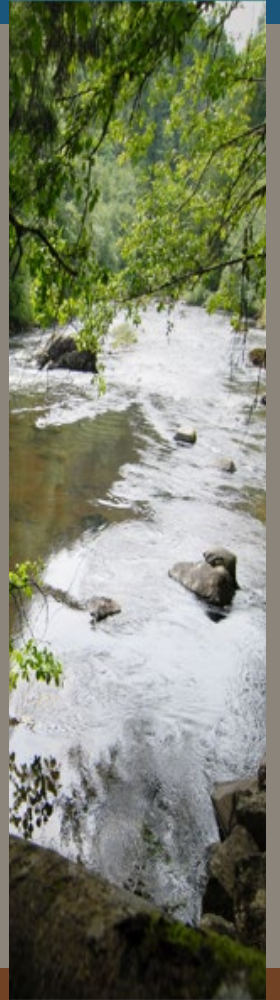
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NRCS has been in the Watershed Business for Years!

- Watershed Operations
 - PL534 since 1944
 - PL566 since 1954
- Watershed Rehabilitation (since 2000)
- Emergency Watershed Protection (1950s)





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WFPO program provides technical and financial assistance for the purpose of:

- Flood Prevention
- Watershed Protection
- Public Recreation
- Public Fish and Wildlife
- Agricultural Water Management
- Municipal and Industrial Water Supply
- Water Quality Management



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Watershed and Flood Prevention Program

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WFPO History:

- Started in the 1940/50s
- Over 11,800 dams built, many miles of channel work
- Program did not receive funding from early 2000s until 2017





Watershed REHAB

program provides assistance to local project sponsors to:

- **rehabilitate** aging dams, and/or
- **build or augment** existing water supplies based on current and future water supply demands.



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Watershed Rehabilitation Program



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Emergency Watershed Protection Program: a federal emergency recovery program, helps local communities recover after a natural disaster strikes.



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Emergency Watershed Protection Program

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WFPO and Rehab Process/Timeline:

Preliminary Investigation Findings Report (PIFR)/ Assessment Phase: to determine if the project has any insurmountable challenges and is compatible with the PL-566 program (6-12 months)

Planning Phase: watershed plan and environmental document, alternative identified (18 months)

Design Phase: Alternative(s) designed (1-2 years)

Construction/Implementation Phase (2-5 years)

EWP Process – Up to 220 days:

Planning

- Damage Survey Report

Design

- National Engineering Manual
- NRCS conservation practice standards & specs

Construction/Implementation

- Provide Emergency Watershed Protection



Local Sponsors are the key to Watershed Project success.

- Projects are long term; local champions are integral!
- Locally led
- Must have the ability to:
 - Land Rights/Assurances
 - Permits and Licenses
 - Meet Financial Obligations/ Authority to Levy Taxes
 - Operation and Maintenance





Watershed Projects

Helping Communities Solve Natural Resource Issues

Every State has a Watershed Project - There are 2,100 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assisted watershed projects in the United States with projects in every state and two territories.

Why It Matters:

These projects provide over **\$2.2 billion in average annual benefits to over 48 million people.**

Average Annual Watershed Program National Benefits

Agricultural flood protection benefits	\$385,824,825
Non-agricultural flood protection benefits	\$479,824,325
Agricultural benefits (non-flood)	\$458,202,145
Non-agricultural benefits (non-flood)	\$994,044,928
Total average annual monetary benefits	\$2,297,896,224

Number of bridges benefited	61,702
Number of farms and ranches benefited	181,551
Number of homes benefited	611,093
Number of businesses benefited	46,586
Number of public facilities benefited	3,663
Acres of wetlands created or enhanced	282,037
Ac. of upland wildlife habitat created or enhanced	9,427,086
Miles of streams enhanced or protected	47,770
Number of domestic water supplies benefited	27,874
Reduced soil erosion (tons/year)	92,341,221
Tons of animal waste properly managed	4,801,640
Water conserved (acre feet/year)	1,851,387



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In Louisiana, since 1954, under the Watershed Program (PL-566):

34 projects completed (3.8 million acres)

11 projects active (1.8 million acres)

2,900 miles of channel with pipedrops (erosion control structures)

150 weirs/grade stabilization structures

35 dams

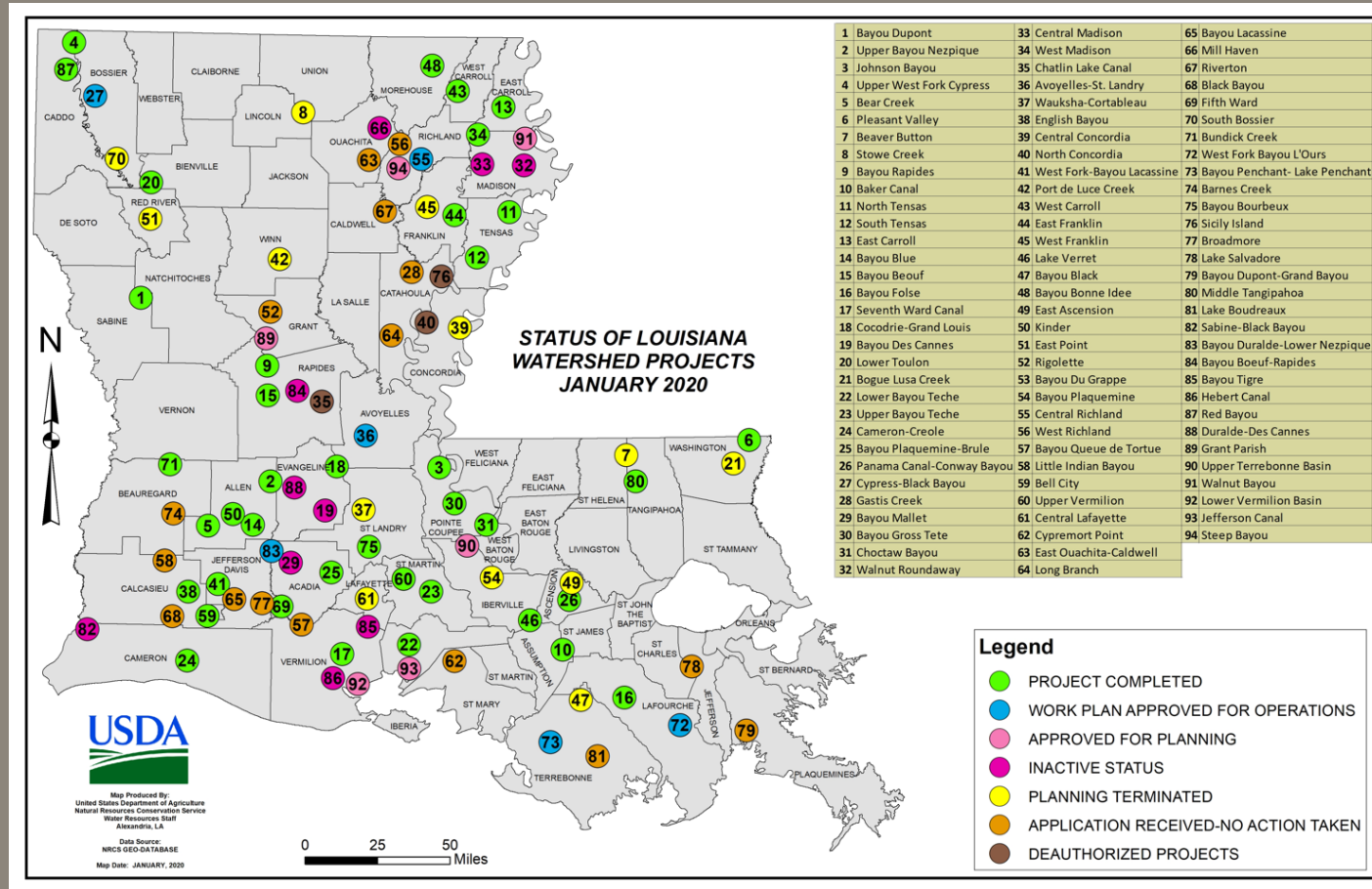
60 miles of levee

4 recreation areas

11 cooperative river basin studies complete

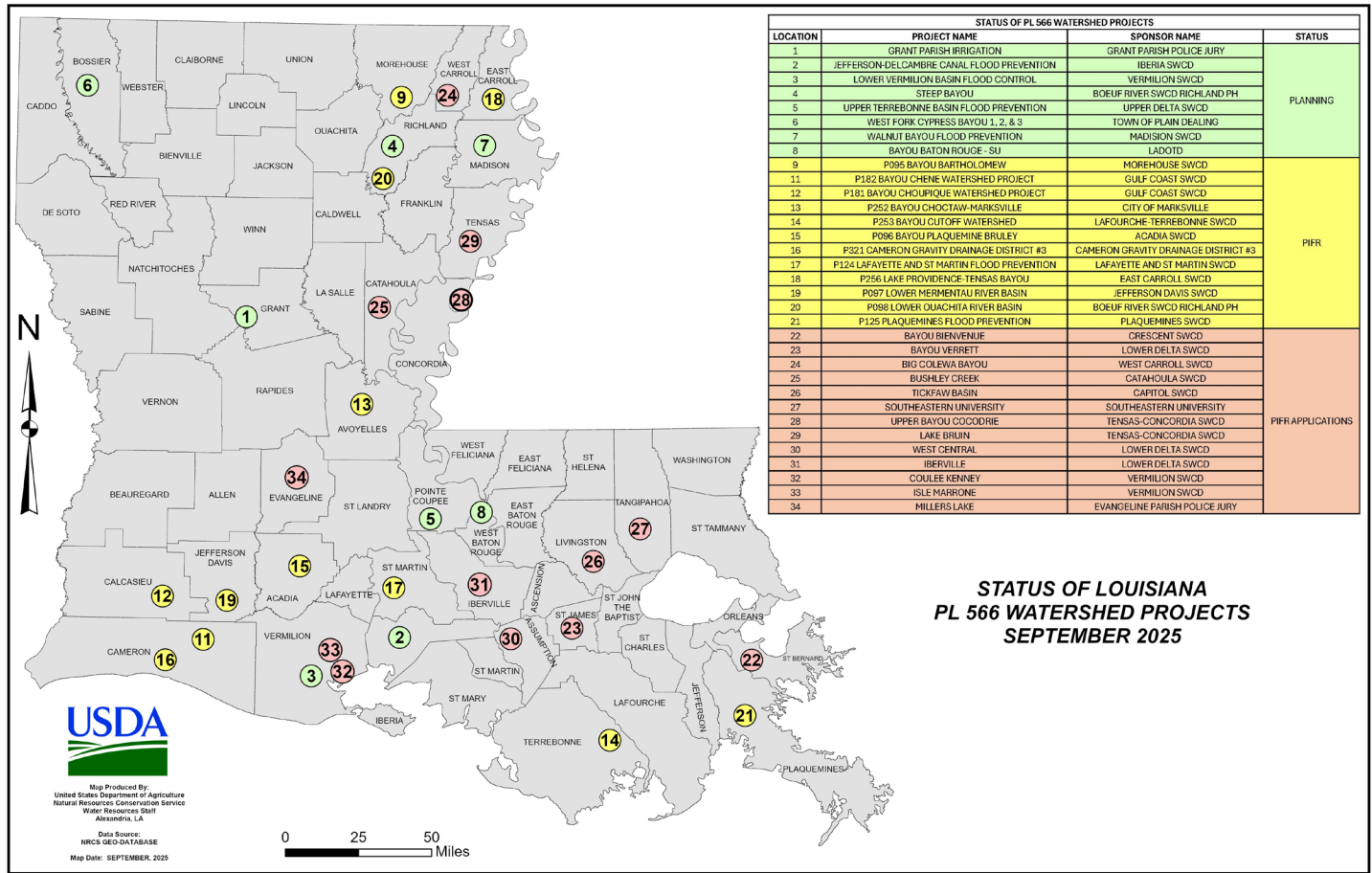


Watershed Programs



Historical Watershed Projects

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Current Watershed Projects



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The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer,
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