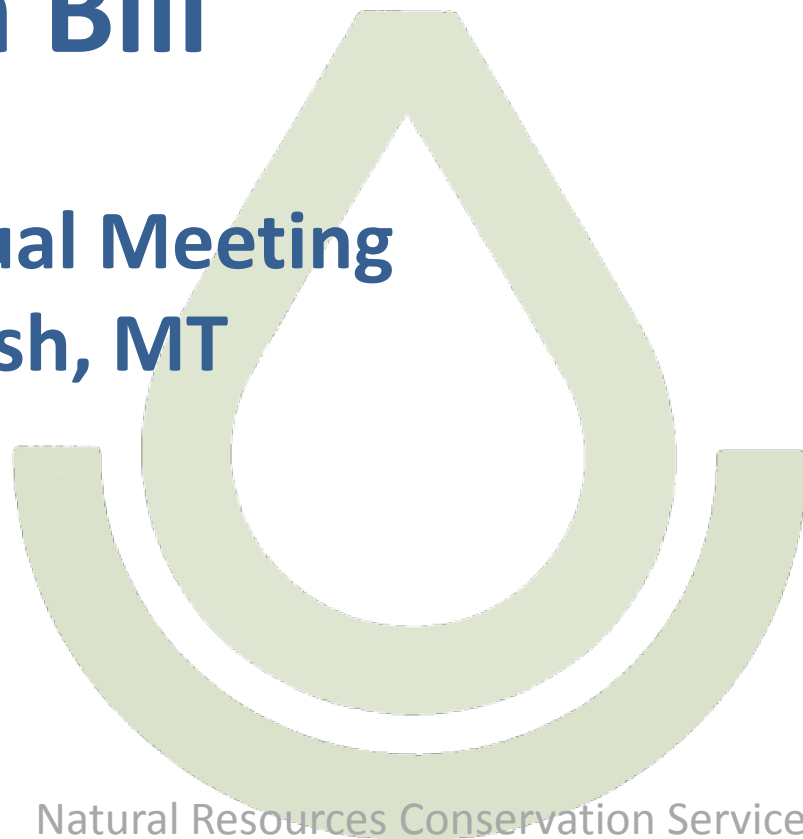




Implementing the 2014 Farm Bill

NASCA Annual Meeting
Whitefish, MT

Kevin Norton
State Conservationist
Louisiana



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Overview

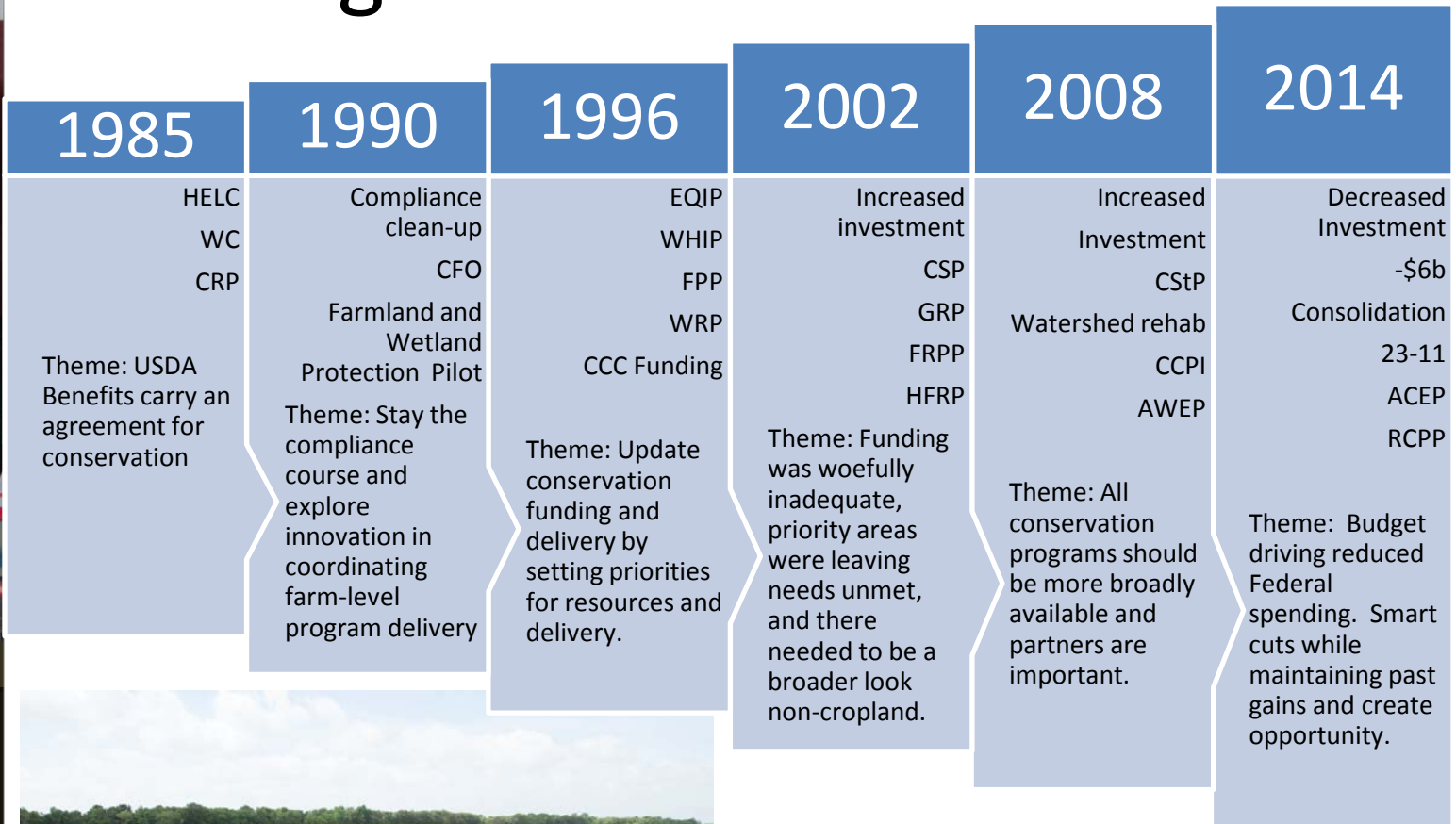
- Looking back
- How we got here
- Opportunities
- What does the future hold

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Looking Back



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Looking Back

- OUR Partnership's Success
 - HELC and Wetland Compliance (determinations and implementation)
 - Coped with issues of remaining relevant (no-funding and shifting of staff)
 - Prioritization could work - successes
 - Elevated opportunities lost because of lack of funding
 - Adapted to changing agriculture landscape



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Looking Back

- OUR Partnership's Success
 - Innovative thinking for voluntary, incentive based and locally-led conservation
 - Viable options to regulatory enforcement
 - Embracing new partnerships (listening, education, and cultivating)
 - Expanding the reach beyond traditional conservation (ACP, GPCP, WQIP, etc.)
 - Maintaining client privilege



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How we got here

- Deficit Reduction Act (Super Committee)
- All authorizing committees were to make cuts.
- Reductions across titles
- Money titles – Commodity, Conservation, Nutrition, Insurance
- Agriculture was prospering and expanding



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How we got here

- Broad support for conservation
- Success in delivery
- Landscape conservation initiatives – demonstrated leadership
- Partner advocacy
- Opportunity to generate savings through consolidation
- Create opportunity to fill the funding gap



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How we get here

- Growing world population
- Increased agriculture exports
- Advances in technology
- Threat of greater regulation
- Increased oversight, expectations, and performance = accountability



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Opportunities

- Conservation Reserve Program
 - Opportunity to focus to marginal landscapes
---continuous sign-up, CREP, SAFE,
 - Incorporated managed grasslands – 2m acres
 - One time early-out for 2015
 - Management flexibility for beneficial use
 - Opened opportunity for management on tree plantings - thinning
 - Incidental use of buffers allowed



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Opportunities

- Conservation Stewardship Program
 - 10 million acres/year
 - Removed the Conservation Measurement Tool as a requirement.
 - More local identification of resources issues
 - Need to expand activities to reflect local needs
 - Demonstrate results



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Opportunities

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
 - Emphasis on locally driven resource needs
 - Clearly incorporates wildlife habitat as a program objective
 - Increased payment limitation (fixed 5)
 - The program is recognized for the ability to adapt to resource issues across the U.S.



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Opportunities


- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
 - Combines the easement functions of:
 - FRPP and GRP into ALE (partner)
 - WRP into WRE (federal)
 - Smaller total program
 - States work with the any or all that fit the resource need
 - Prioritize to the most critical need integrating the programs into a working agricultural landscape
 - WRE 24 month ownership and waive county cap for class IV-VII, subclass “w”



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Opportunities

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Combined CCPI, AWEF, Great Lakes and Chesapeake Bay
 - Covered Programs CSP, EQIP, ACEP, HFRP +\$100m/yr. and PL-566 in CCA's
 - 7% contribution from covered programs
 - 8 Critical Conservation Areas
 - State (25%), National (40%), and CCAs (35%)



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Opportunities

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Expand opportunities to bring more resources to conservation – not re-divide the pot
 - Does not remove authority for landscape initiatives (only MRBI operated under CCPI)
 - Does not limit STC's ability to work locally on priorities and/or with partners

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Opportunities

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Balanced selection process
 - Solutions
 - Participation
 - Contribution
 - Innovation
 - Entity must have demonstrated working relationship with producers
 - Partners must contribute significantly

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Opportunities

- We have the ability to deliver meaningful and relevant conservation practices at the local level
- We have to be willing to lead local conservation – resource/problem solving conservation
- Engage within the broader conservation community



Opportunities

- We must increase efficiency in delivery of technically sound conservation
- Increased technical capacity will have to come from the partners
- Complacency and comfort are the enemy of the good. (Not just perfection)



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What the future holds?

- Appropriations and sequestration
- Regulatory influence
- Environment for leadership and success
- Conservation laboratory in action
 - Voluntary, incentive based conservation works
 - Leadership in solving problems by helping producers adapt modern conservation to modern farming
 - Innovate and demonstrate



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What the future holds?

- All agriculture and forest landscapes/producers will experience increased pressure
- The 2018-2020 Farm Bill will be an even greater challenge
 - Budget cutting
 - Perceived wealth (land, value, efficiency)
 - Loss of agriculture influence/representation (engaged and legislatively)



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What the future holds?

- Continue to build the conservation chorus
 - District leadership
 - State government and politicals
 - Producers
 - Partners
 - Benefiting communities



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