

NRCS Conservation Initiatives

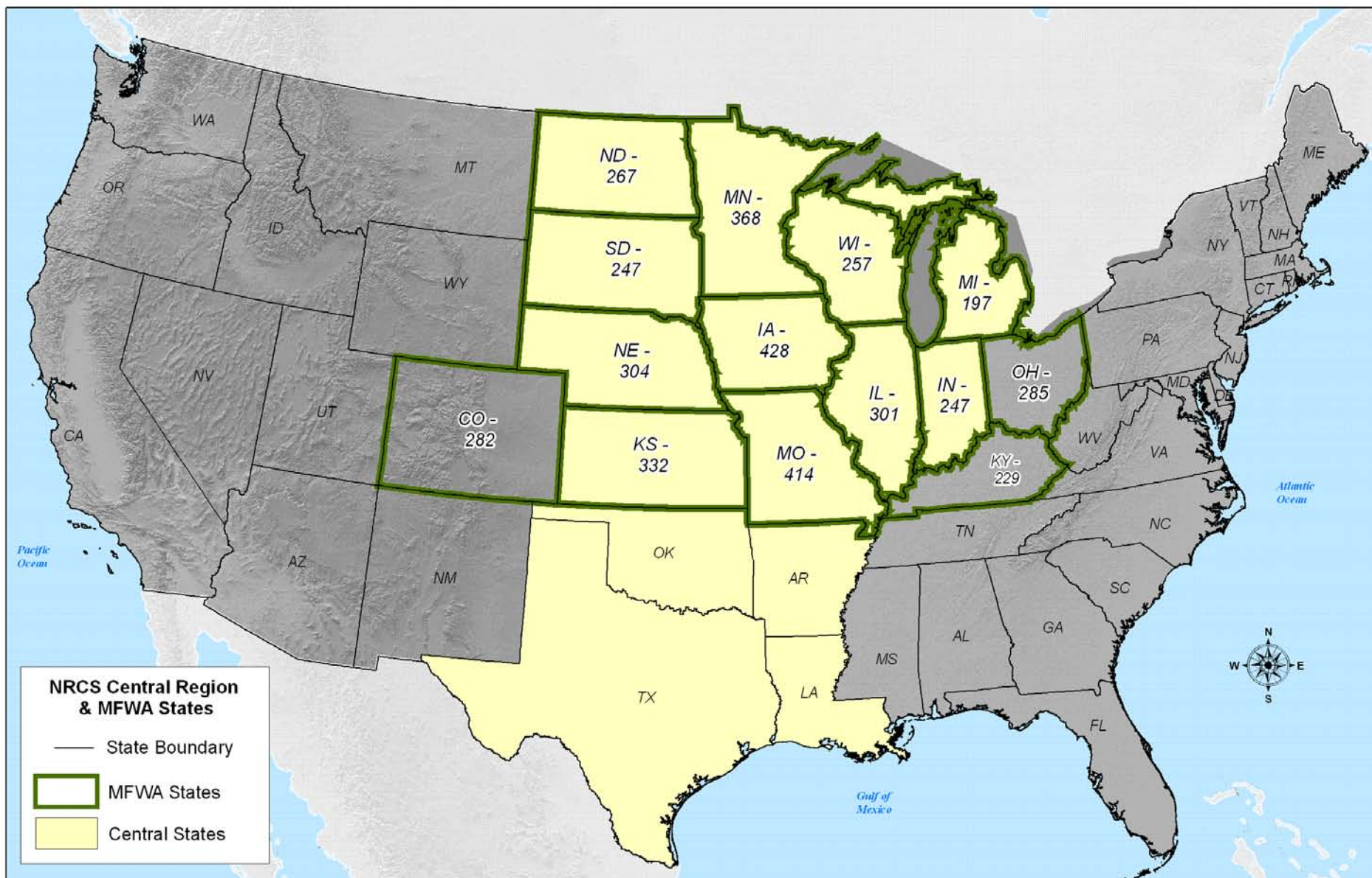
MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCIES

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USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service



Purpose of NRCS Conservation Initiatives

Each initiative seeks to do one or more of the following:

- Raise Awareness, Stimulate Interest, and Generate Enthusiasm and Commitment for Voluntary Action
- Engage Partners and Participants through Education and Outreach
- Coordinate Efforts (Internal and External) to Optimize Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Focus Funding to Optimize Conservation Results
- Generate Additional Resources from Partners to Expand Capacity and Accelerate Action
- Establish Core Conservation Practices/Systems for Consistency and Effectiveness of On-the-Ground Action
- Create Transparency and Accountability, with an Emphasis on Conservation Outcomes
- Foster Innovation and Flexibility

Where NRCS Initiatives Come From

- Congressional (Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, and Air Quality)
- Inter-Agency (Coral Reef)
- Departmental (Southeast Forestry Initiative, New England/New York Forestry Initiative)
- Chief (Sage-Grouse, Mississippi River Basin, Ogallala)
- State Conservationist/State Technical Committee (Lesser Prairie Chicken, Wetlands Conservation)
- Combination of the Above

Types of NRCS Initiatives

- National Issue Based (Organic and Transition to Organic, Energy Audits)
- Landscape or Watershed Based (Mississippi River Basin)
- Species (Habitat) Based (Sage-Grouse, Lesser Prairie Chicken)
- Ecosystem Based (Southeast Forestry Initiative)
- Practice Based (High Tunnel)

Major NRCS Initiatives in FY2010 (Operational)

- Air Quality (EQIP)
- Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI)
- Coral Reef Task Force Partnership Initiative (CRTFPI)
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)
- Southeast Forestry Initiative (SE Forestry)
- Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)
- Organic & Transition to Organic
- Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI)
- Lesser Prairie Chicken (LEPC) Initiative
- New England/New York Forestry Initiative (NE-NY Forestry)
- Ogallala Water Conservation Initiative
- High Tunnels
- Energy Audits

NRCS Conservation Initiatives FY2010

Initiative	Type	Program(s)	Funding Opportunity
Air Quality	Issue	EQIP	\$37,500,000 (FA & TA)
CBWI	Watershed	CBWI	\$43,000,000 (FA & TA)
CRTFPI	Ecosystem	Partnership Grant (CTA)	\$100,000
GLRI	Watershed	CTA, EQIP, WHIP, FRPP, & EWP-FPE	\$33,450,000 (includes FA, TA, Commission & LaMP)
SE Forestry	Ecosystem	EQIP, WHIP, and HFRP	\$5,766,000 (FA & TA)
NE/NY Forestry	Ecosystem	WHIP	\$5,442,000 (FA & TA)
MRBI	Watershed	CCPI, WREP, & CIG	\$80,000,000 (FA) + TA
Organic	Issue	EQIP	\$50,000,0000 (FA & TA)
SGI	Habitat	EQIP & WHIP	\$ 23,300,000 (FA & TA)
LEPC	Habitat	EQIP, WHIP, & GRP	\$ 9,225,000 (FA & TA)
Ogallala	Landscape	EQIP	\$9,260,000 (FA & TA)
High Tunnels	Practice	EQIP	\$6,915,000 (FA)
Energy Audits	Issue	EQIP	\$2,000,000 (FA)

What is different about these Conservation Initiatives? (not all items applicable to each initiative)

- Dedicated funding in addition to base program = acceleration;
- Focus: Resource concerns; watersheds/landscapes/ecosystem/habitat/issue; and conservation practices and systems;
- Use of easements and rental agreements to complement working lands conservation;
- Partner involvement in initiative design;
- Competition through RFP's in selecting watershed focus;
- Significant partner contributions;
- Additional flexibilities in CCPI not available through ongoing programs (for EQIP, WHIP, and CSP)
- Payment schedule: income forgone, acquisition of technical knowledge, and producer training; and,
- Accountability and assessment, including some funding for edge-of-field monitoring.

Strategic Watershed Action Teams (SWAT)

- The President's 2011 budget for NRCS proposes \$25 million for Strategic Watershed Action Teams
- Between 2002 and 2009, NRCS financial assistance increased 260 percent, but the number of staff fell by 13 percent. Surging workload, coupled with declining staff, has made it difficult for NRCS to concentrate staff in high priority watersheds and landscapes.
- NRCS plans to deploy these teams in high-priority watersheds and landscapes to more effectively address top resource concerns.
- We project having 35 teams, each of which will work in a designated area for 3 to 5 years. There will be 5 to 7 experts on each team, including soil conservationists, engineers, etc., as needed.
- We plan for outreach to 100 percent of landowners in the targeted areas. Similar efforts in the past showed improved program participation and performance, but we will monitor to justify continued investment.
- This budget initiative will enable NRCS to concentrate additional resources where most needed.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

NRCS Priorities for GLRI

- Invasive Species
- Nearshore Health/Nonpoint Source Pollution
- Habitat Protection and Restoration

GLRI – NRCS Implementation Key Features

- Financial assistance (FA) and technical assistance (TA) delivered by NRCS is funded by EPA at ~ \$34 million in FY 2010, through an Interagency Agreement
- The purpose is to foster and support voluntary conservation action by private landowners to protect and restore priority watersheds

GLRI – NRCS Implementation Key Features

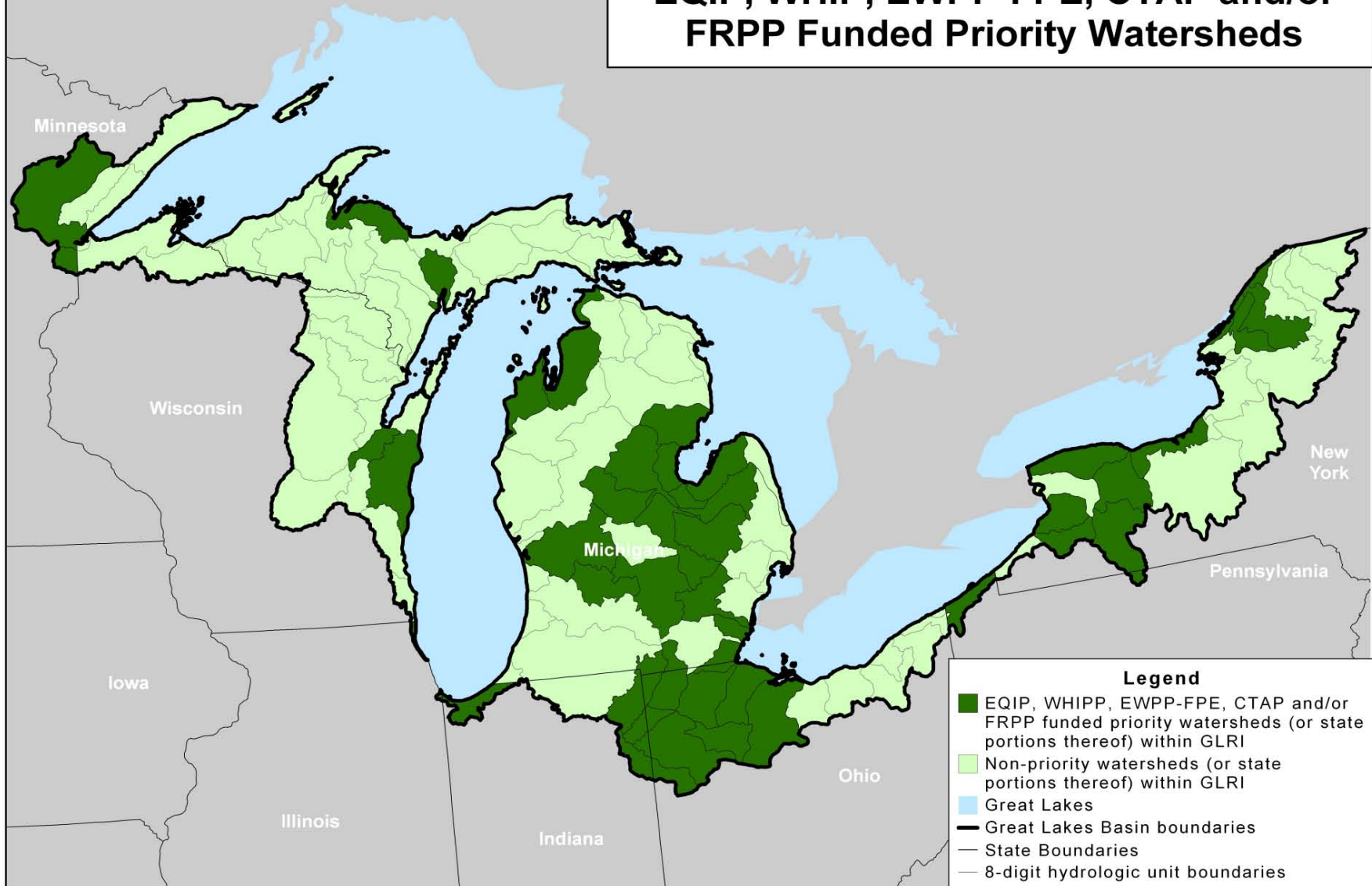
- Using NRCS program authorities: CTA, EQIP, WHIP, EWP-FPE, and FRPP.
- Common sign-up period June 1 – July 1.
- For EQIP and WHIP, using priority conservation practices, distinct ranking and funding pools.

GLRI – NRCS Implementation

Key Features

- Priority Watersheds – NRCS GLRI Priority Watersheds represent 33% of total GLRI land area (about 25 out of 75 million acres)
- Involves 8 states: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin
- Initial NRCS focus is six priority watersheds (plus smaller areas of concern): Green Bay/ Fox River, Grand Calumet River, Maumee River, Saginaw River, St. Louis River and Genesee River
 - Focused application within priority watersheds

2010 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative - EQIP, WHIP, EWPP-FPE, CTAP and/or FRPP Funded Priority Watersheds

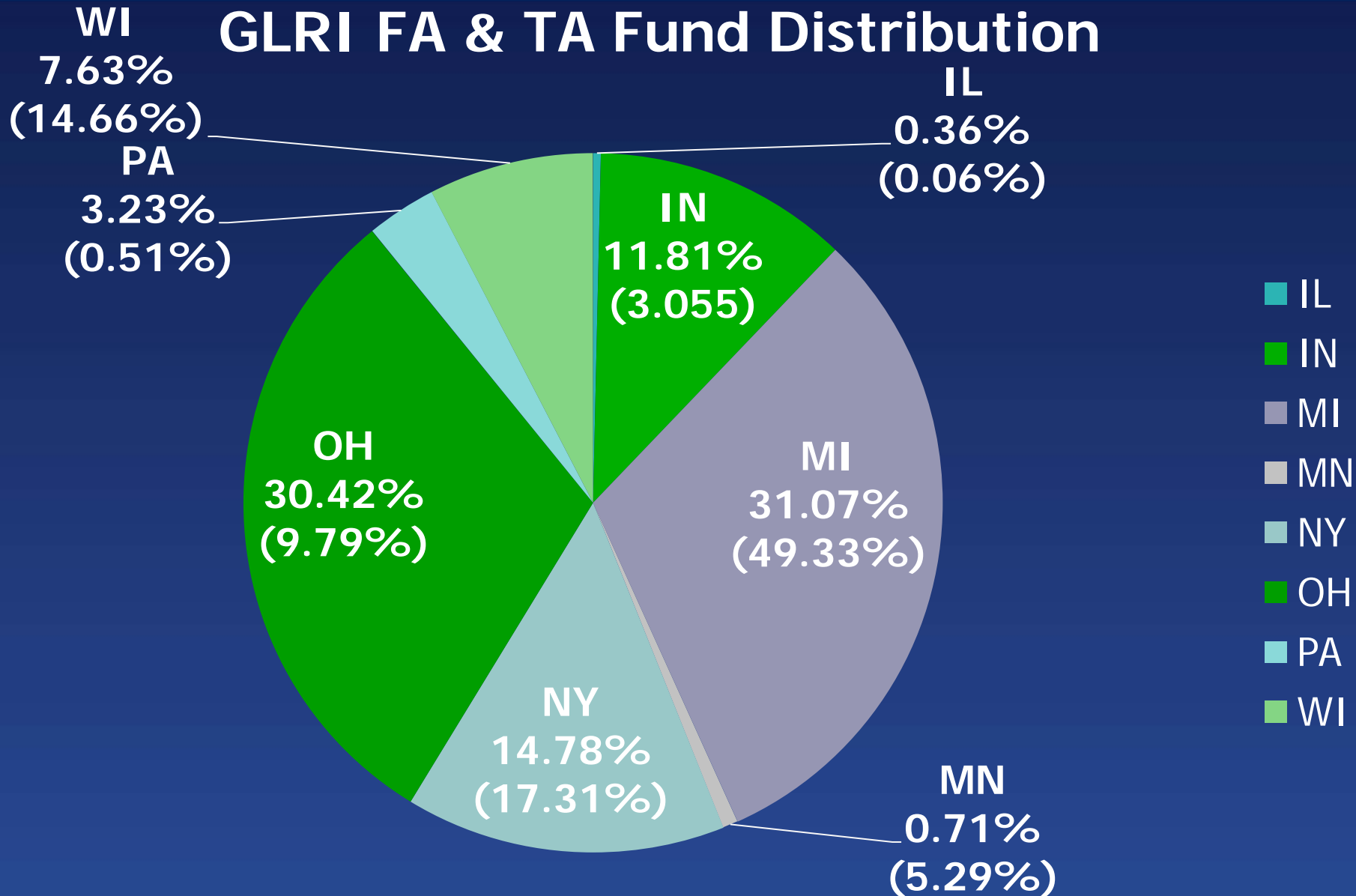


U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Resource Inventory and Assessment Division
Washington, D.C. June 2010

Map ID: 11428

Source: Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
US Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

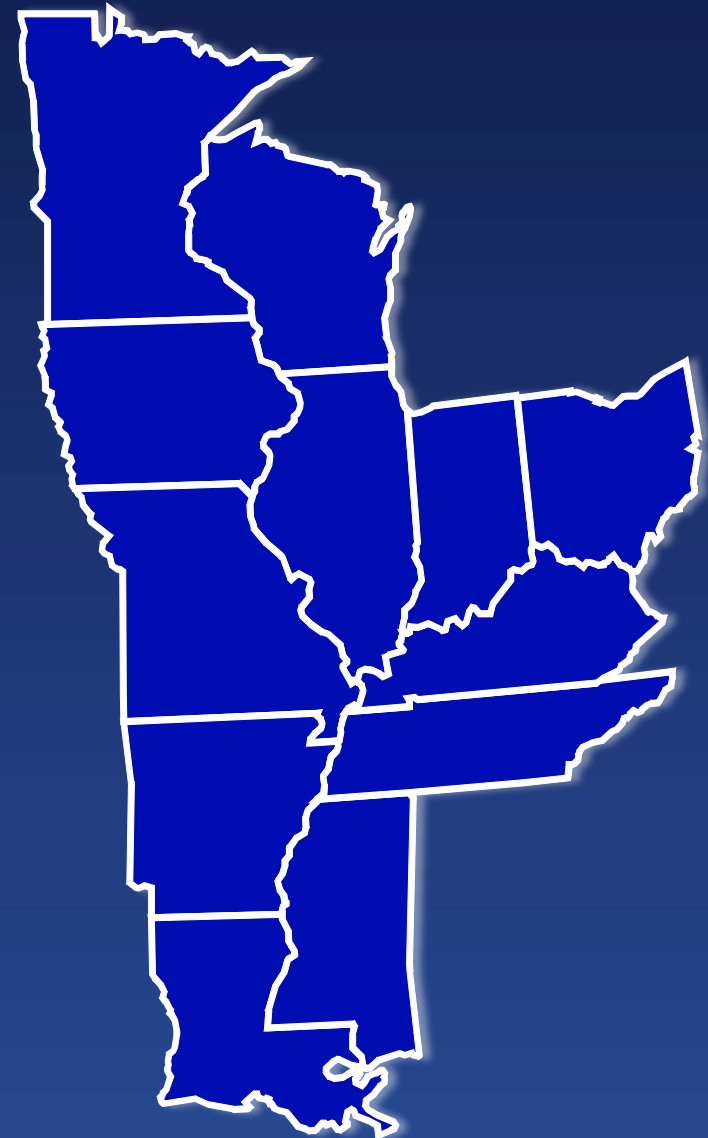
GLRI FA & TA Fund Distribution



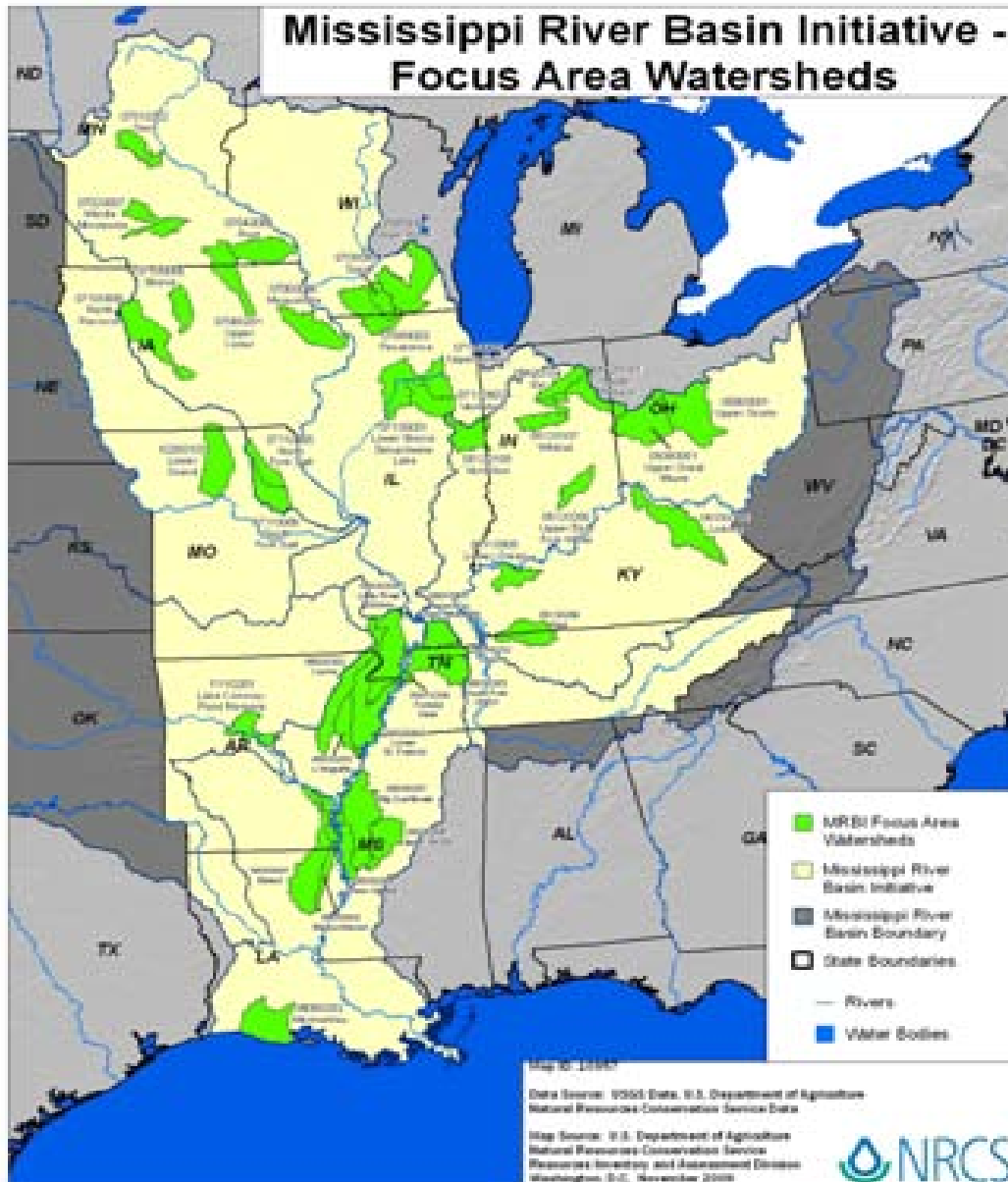
Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)

MRBI Geographic Scope

- Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin.



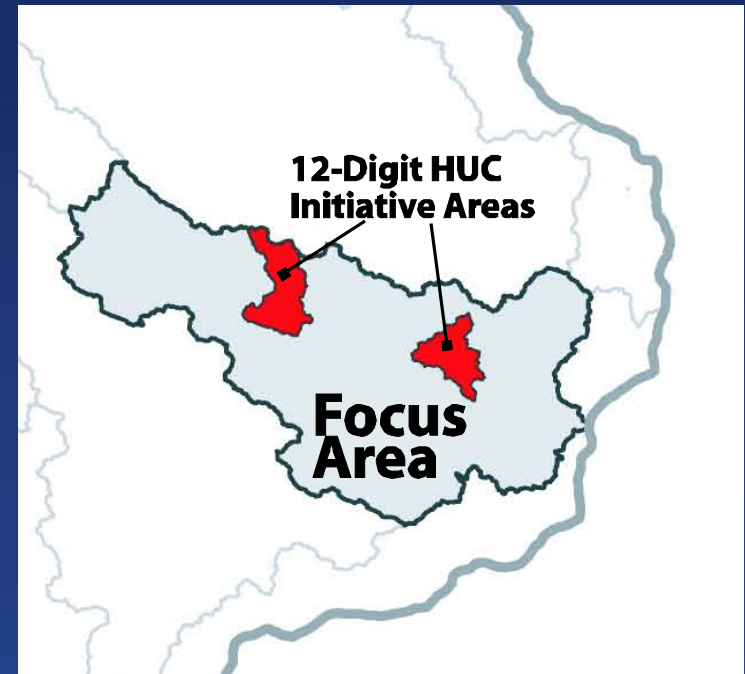
Mississippi River Basin Initiative - Focus Area Watersheds



- Within the 12 MRBI States, there are 41 Focus Area Watersheds
- Watersheds were selected by STCs with input from State Technical Committees

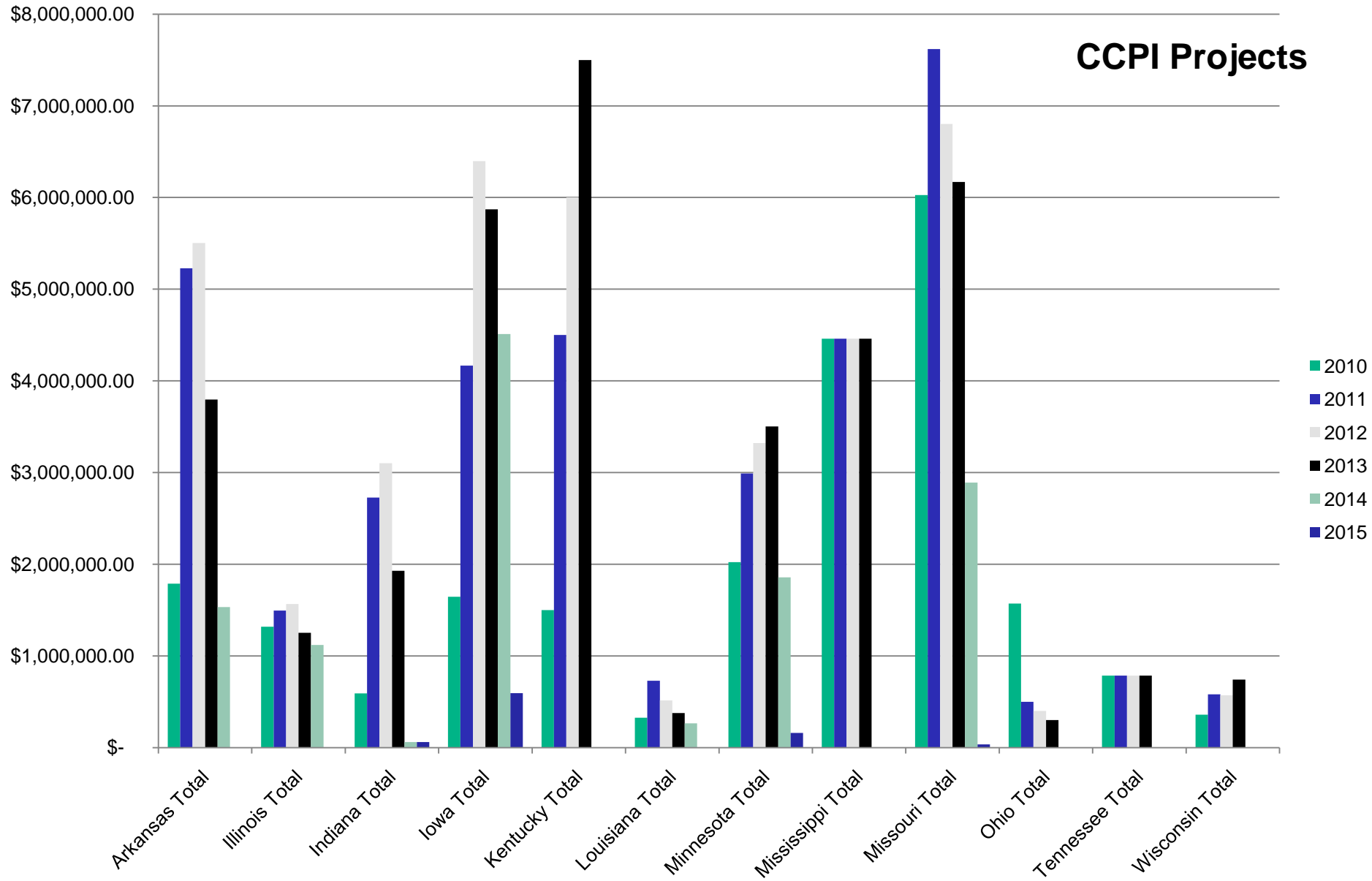
MRBI Project Areas

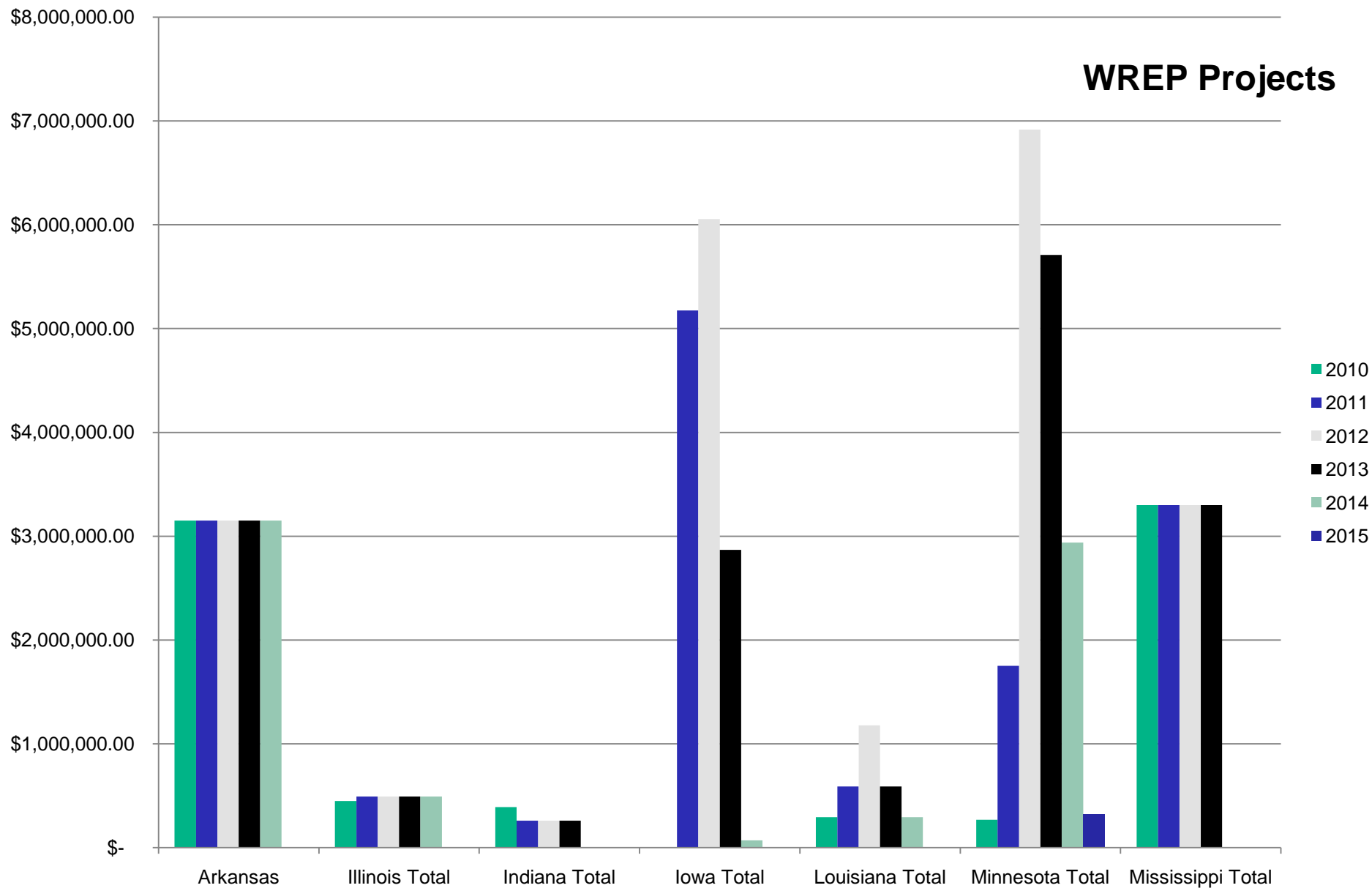
- Projects address one or more 12-digit HUC watersheds within a Focus Area Watershed.





CCPI Projects





MRBI Objective

Improve health of the Mississippi River Basin by assisting producers to voluntarily implement conservation systems which:

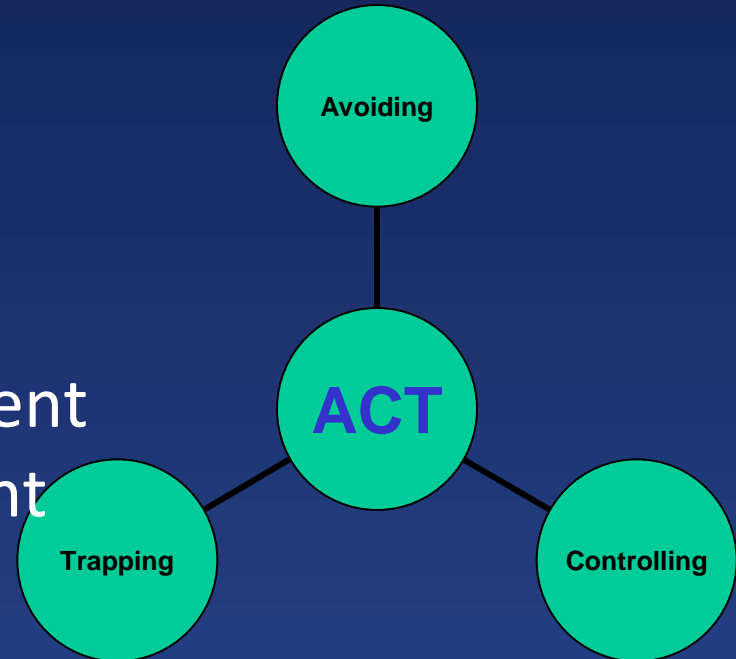
- Avoid, control and trap nutrient runoff
- Restore/enhance wildlife habitat
- Maintain agricultural productivity

Conservation Systems Approach

- A conservation systems approach implements multiple practices and management techniques that work together to address water quality nutrient issues at the edge of farm fields.
- Practices
 - Core
 - Supporting

Avoiding, Controlling, Trapping (ACT)

- Avoiding
 - Nutrient Management
 - Rate, Timing, Form, Methods
- Controlling
 - Residue & Tillage Management
 - Drainage Water Management
- Trapping
 - Buffers
 - Wetlands designed for nutrient removal



MRBI Outcomes

Improved Water
Quality



Improved Wildlife
Habitat



Restored Wetlands

The Years Ahead

We work in a setting where there will always be;

- New challenges, such as:
 - Economic downturns,
 - Complex landowner patterns,
 - Energy conservation,
 - Climate change mitigation and adaptation, and
 - Risk management from natural disasters
- New Information and understanding
 - As we gain experience and knowledge
 - As science and technology continue to evolve
- New opportunities
 - To help solve conservation challenges

The Years Ahead

- All this calls for new collaborative responses and a continuing and even stronger commitment to voluntary working lands conservation
- Chief White refers to the 70/30 rule – 70 percent of the contiguous US is private lands – the success of conservation will depend on what happens in that 70 percent
- The historical local, state and federal partnership, complemented by the private sector (both nonprofit and profit) will remain at the core of facilitating voluntary actions by the nation's farmers and ranchers



“We cannot depend on windshield surveys and office planning to carry out a job of the complexity and magnitude of safeguarding our farmland and controlling floods.”

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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