

State Source Water Protection Programs:

A PROGRESS REPORT ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY COORDINATION SINCE THE PASSAGE OF THE 2018 FARM BILL



September 2021



The [Association of State Drinking Water Administrators \(ASDWA\)](#) and the [Ground Water Protection Council \(GWPC\)](#) have been working with our members to support and promote state source water protection (SWP) program planning and implementation throughout the nation for many years. Our efforts began with the development of the state source water assessments per the 1996 Amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act and continued over the past 20 plus years in coordination with multiple partners. This included establishing the [National Source Water Collaborative \(SWC\)](#) in 2006 with 13 (that has now grown to 29) different member agencies associations, and organizations for which ASDWA and GWPC are the Co-Chairs. ASDWA and GWPC work together with these and other organizations and our collective members to support state and local level implementation of source water assessment, protection planning, projects, and practices by sharing information, and conducting meetings and webinars to discuss and enhance new and existing opportunities for coordination and source water protection outcomes.



2021 ASDWA and GWPC State SWP Survey and Information Collection

This fact sheet and [the associated report with state examples](#) are primarily intended for ASDWA and GWPC's members and their state SWP programs that are managed by the state SWP coordinators, as well as other SWP partners. The information in the report is based in part on the responses of 40 state SWP programs to a survey that ASDWA and GWPC conducted in the spring of 2021, and includes other information collected over the past several years through a variety of communications and meetings with our members. The purpose is to share information about the accomplishments of state SWP program efforts since the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill (Agriculture Improvement Act, particularly the Conservation Title), including challenges and state examples of potential solutions for making further progress.

2018 Farm Bill Conservation Title

Section 2503 of the 2018 Farm Bill, for the first time, added source water protection as one of the explicit goals when targeting conservation practices, and recognizes the role of PWSs in identifying priority areas. This includes:

- Identifying priority areas for drinking water protection in each state with NRCS [State Technical Committees \(STCs\)](#). These can address water quality, quantity, surface, and groundwater.
- Directing at least 10% of total funds available for conservation programs ([except for the Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#)) toward source water protection, an estimated \$4 billion over 10 years.
- Additional incentives (up to 90% reimbursement) for private agriculture and forest landowners who work with state and local NRCS offices to implement practices that benefit source waters.

Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National SWC website○ Agricultural Collaboration Toolkit○ Learning Exchanges○ How-to-Collaborate Toolkit and Map	Contacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Source Water Contacts• EPA Regional Source Water Coordinators• NRCS State Conservationists• State Forest Action Plans and Contacts• USFS Regional Offices	Websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NRCS Conservation Programs• ASDWA SWP website• EPA SWP website• AWWA SWP website
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ASDWA-GWPC Report Findings: State SWP Program Coordination Challenges and Tips for Success

Collaboration is the Key to Success: Collaboration considers the interests and needs of each partner to find common ground and achieve both mutual and individual goals such as improved water quality, soil health, and land management and conservation. By collaborating, state SWP programs, NRCS, and other agricultural and forestry partners can work together to ensure multiple benefits and the best use of financial and technical resources to reduce impacts to surface water and groundwater, and protect public health and water quality – based on what is important for each partner.

State SWP Program Work with NRCS and Forestry Partners: Challenges

- Both state SWP programs and NRCS state and local offices are challenged with limited staff and resources, and staff turnover.
- State SWP programs are sometimes located in different state agencies with different structures and priorities that can limit coordination across programs to leverage resources and opportunities to make progress on SWP efforts.
- State SWP programs may need persistence and repetition to connect and build relationships with forestry partners.
- Most state SWP programs have worked with NRCS and multiple partners, yet some are still disconnected from the NRCS process for selecting priority areas and taking the next steps to leverage conservation programs to promote the implementation of agricultural practices.
- State NRCS offices could support better engagement with state SWP programs by sharing more information and project examples and meeting more often with NRCS SWP subcommittees, or meeting ad hoc with the state source water program and interested utilities, to identify next steps to promote implementation in priority source water areas.
- Site-specific SWP circumstances sometimes create challenges that require additional efforts and partners to understand and ensure that practices and actions create an effective solution for protecting and improving the drinking water source.



State SWP Program Work with Forestry Partners: Tips for Success

- Many state SWP programs engaged with state foresters for the first time to include drinking water priorities in their State Forest Action Plans (SFAPs) and are now more connected to federal and state forestry efforts that can fund SWP projects.
- State SWP program involvement and interest in working with the USFS and NRCS Foresters has increased in the last year based on mutual forestry management and water quality goals.

State SWP Program Work with NRCS: Tips for Success

- State SWP programs and NRCS share common ground in their mutual goal of protecting and improving water quality, surface water and groundwater, and in their commitment to working through partnerships.
- State NRCS offices with SWP subcommittees or workgroups have helped to further progress.
- State NRCS offices that have a longer history of working with state SWP programs have sustained and built on their success.
- State SWP programs that have participated in and provided presentations at NRCS State Technical Committee Meetings created a great starting point for further collaboration.
- State NRCS offices that have conducted outreach and communication to landowners have received more interest and participation.
- State SWP programs that have engaged with local SWCDs to coordinate with communities and PWSs have achieved success working with landowners.
- State SWP programs can work with NRCS on well siting and decommissioning.
- State SWP programs that shared GIS data and worked directly with NRCS to select the priority SWP areas have established a good foundation for implementing projects to achieve mutual water quality goals.
- Some state SWP programs have worked with NRCS and other state programs to achieve success in planning and funding for local projects.

State SWP Program Work with Other State Agencies and Partners: Tips for Success

- State SWP programs that coordinate directly with other state agencies and/or are co-located with the state Clean Water Act (CWA) Nonpoint Source (NPS) and 319 programs have achieved cross-program successes through integrated approaches.
- State SWP programs that have a statewide source water collaborative, legislative or regulatory directives, policies, priorities, and/or funding have greater capacity for SWP planning and implementation actions.
- States that have worked with EPA Regional source water coordinators have been able to further SWP actions in coordination with additional partners.
- States that have contracted and work with technical assistance (TA) providers have achieved success working with PWSs at the local level.