

Summary and Resources

Small Spaces, Whole Ecosystems: Conservation on Small Scale and Urban Farms

November 12, 2024 | Webinar

NRCS Serves Small-Scale Farms



- Removing barriers to assistance
 - No acreage minimums
 - Outreach partnerships
 - Increased training
 - Increased payment rates

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
14150 Research Center Drive, Lincoln, NE 68503

Financial Assistance Programs

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)



- Helps growers build on existing conservation efforts
- No acreage minimum
- Practices (EQIP) vs. Enhancements (CSP)
- Five-year contract
- \$4,000 minimum annual payment
- Applications due late winter/early spring

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NRCS E340F - Cover Crop to Minimize Soil Compaction

Participants joined live for this one-hour webinar, guiding farmers and agriculture professionals through conservation opportunities on small-scale and urban farms through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

This session covered the historical and current context of NRCS assistance for small acreage and urban farms and introduced NRCS natural resource concerns and Conservation Practice Standards. The session continued by exploring the technical and financial assistance programs that NRCS has to offer. Urban farmer Velvet Welch and NRCS Urban Conservationist Nathan Lind shared their experience working together to support the creation and sustainability of a new community garden.

The session ended with a live Q&A session allowing participants to ask questions of Velvet Welch, Nathan Lind and OAK conservation staff. Participants received more information on farm business taxes, NRCS financial assistance programs and supported conservation practices.

Small-Farm Conservation Support

Velvet Welch (Sacred Earth Community Garden) shared her experience starting a community garden designed to be a therapeutic and educational space for youth in the West End of Louisville. Velvet tested the soil, laid wood mulch and built raised beds to establish the garden. She also connected with the [Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District](#), which supported the garden through its High Tunnel Assistance

Sacred Earth Community Garden



Velvet Welch, Louisville KY

- Farm and therapeutic greenspace
- Youth 16-24 - paid to work with their hands, growing fresh healthy produce to combat food apartheid

OAK

Program to install a high tunnel (with help from [Grow Appalachia](#)). Through the District's High Tunnel Assistance Program, Velvet connected with **Nathan Lind**, who recommended additional conservation measures and explained that some were eligible for financial assistance.

Velvet is enrolled in the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for [Cover Crop to Minimize Soil Compaction](#) and has applied for the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for [Pollinator](#), [Water Catchment](#) and [Micro-irrigation](#) conservation practices.

OAK's Conservation Outreach Coordinator Mad Marchal elaborated on NRCS conservation assistance for small-acreage farms, from on-the-ground farm visits to irrigation plans to the rich online resources NRCS provides. Mad discussed two NRCS financial assistance programs relevant to small-scale farmers. The [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) provides cost-share assistance on a diverse range of conservation practices, and the [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP) awards farmers a \$4,000 minimum annual payment for five years for enhancements to existing conservation practices. Mad expanded on the logistics of program applications, deadlines, payment rates and tax considerations and shared the first three steps farmers and growers can take to get started with NRCS programs.

OAK is grateful to Velvet Welch and Nathan Lind for sharing their experience and knowledge with us, to USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for providing essential participant support and conservation guidance and to all the farmers and ag professionals who took time out of their busy schedules to share in the learning and conversation.

This event was supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Resource Links

View the [Webinar Recording](#) and Review the [Webinar Slides with Interactive Links](#)

OAK Resources

- [On-Farm Conservation](#) - This new program provides outreach and education for farm-based conservation on owned or leased land. Eligible participants are Kentucky farmers and landowners with production or subsistence farms, urban or rural growing spaces, community-run projects or privately managed lands.
 - **OAK's Conservation Outreach Coordinator Mad Marchal** is available to assist farmers with connecting to their local NRCS field staff, to reduce barriers to entry into NRCS programs and to offer logistic support and conservation education. Contact Mad at mad@oak-ky.org or (502) 509-9839 or [schedule a free call](#)



OAK Conservation Education and Support

- [One-on-One Farmer Support](#)
- [Conservation Resources](#)
- [Field Days](#)
- [Webinars](#)
- [Virtual Conservation Chats](#)
- **Priorities:**
 - ["Historically Underserved"](#)
 - [Climate Smart Practices](#)

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture



The graphic features a dark blue background with white text. On the right side, there is a photograph of two people standing in a field, one pointing towards the distance. The OAK logo is in the bottom right corner.

- [OAK 2025 Conference](#) - OAK's annual conference, now in its 14th year, includes a growing audience of hundreds of Kentuckians and neighbors active in the region's food systems: farmers, researchers, nonprofit professionals, federal and state agency partners, technical service providers and conscious consumers working collectively to build a resilient local food system for all. Collaboration among these diverse voices, grounded in the connection to Kentucky farms, soil and communities, provides a rich foundation for learning and growth. **Registration is open, and scholarships are available.**
- [OAK Farmer Field Days](#) - Hosted on working farms, these events highlight organic crop and livestock systems and best practices in production, marketing, business and resilience on Kentucky farms. Watch OAK's newsletters and website for the Field Day calendar.
- [Organic Production Assistance Program](#) - The organic production consultation services provide dedicated organic technical assistance to Kentucky farmers who are currently using or interested in adopting or expanding organic practices.
- [OAK Transition Program](#) - Organic transition specialists assist farmers interested in transitioning to USDA-certified organic production. Organic specialists are available for one-on-one consultations, providing a personal level of service and technical assistance on-site, at the farmer's convenience
- [Soil Health and Climate-Smart Project](#) - Build soil health and improve on-farm resilience. Enrolled farms access direct technical, educational and resources and receive incentive payments from implemented climate-smart practices. Learn more; apply today!
- [Join OAK today!](#) The organic farming network in Kentucky is growing. Together, we are creating a thriving regional food and farming network. Your support and participation help provide resources to farmers, inspire community members and enhance organics across KY!
- [Sign up for OAK newsletters](#)—For farmers and consumers, OAK offers a variety of regular communications to stay connected to Kentucky food and farming news, research and events.

Funding /Technical Assistance Resources and Service Providers

- Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development ([KCARD](#))
 - Free [business planning](#) for Kentucky farms and agribusinesses
 - [Funding assistance and grant information](#) (Kentucky and beyond)
 - Sign up under "GET UPDATES" on [KCARD website](#) to receive e-newsletters
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Read this first! [A Guide to USDA Resources for Historically Underserved Farmers](#)
 - USDA [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)-Kentucky](#)
 - [How to Start a Farm: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
 - Find your county's office in [West Kentucky](#) or [East Kentucky](#)
 - [Four Steps to FSA Assistance](#) (including what to take to your first visit!)
 - [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)-Kentucky](#)

USDA-NRCS and Other Conservation Resources

- [USDA Urban Agriculture Programs at a Glance](#)
 - [NRCS and Urban Agriculture](#) factsheet

- [Farming in the City](#) (video)
- [Urban Soils Focus Team | Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)
- [Site Evaluation for Urban Soil Health](#)
- [Conservation Practices for Soil Health in Urban and Small-Scale Agriculture](#)
- Small-scale Farm Support
 - [Solutions for Small-Scale Farms | Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)
**Note, not all conservation practices listed are supported by NRCS KY. Please contact your local NRCS field office for more information.*
 - [Small Scale Solutions for your Farm: Soil Testing](#)
- [Backyard Conservation | Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)
- [Conservation at Work Video Series | Farmers.gov](#)
- Conservation Stewardship Plan ([CSP](#)) [Enhancements_Organics.pdf](#)

Additional Resources and Programs:

- [Urban High Tunnel Initiative — Jefferson County Conservation District](#)
- [Organic Site Preparation](#)
- [Ecological Management of Problem Vegetation \("Invasive Weeds"\) — Beyond Pesticides](#)
- [Control Mechanisms | National Invasive Species Information Center](#)

This event was supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender in accordance with USDA Departmental Regulation 4300-3, Equal Opportunity (EO) Public Notification Policy, and Section 7.