

Ogallala Aquifer Initiative

Conservation Beyond Boundaries

OAI

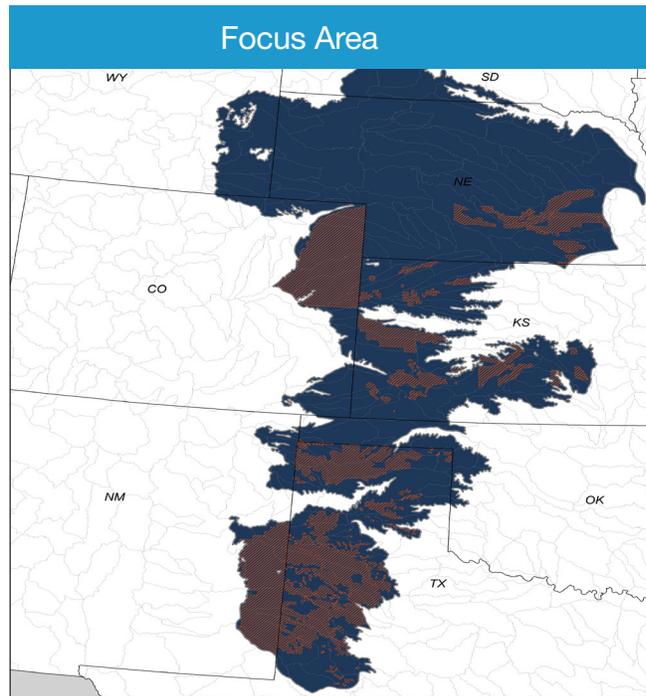
Underlying the Great Plains in eight states, the Ogallala supports nearly one-fifth of the wheat, corn, cotton and cattle produced in the United States. It has long been the main water supply for the High Plains' population and is being used at an unsustainable rate. The reservoir was created more than a million years ago through geologic action and covers about 174,000 square miles.

Using a comprehensive set of conservation practices, the Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI) aims to reduce aquifer water use, improve water quality and enhance the economic viability of croplands and rangelands in Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas, South Dakota and Wyoming.

NRCS and the Ogallala Aquifer

Conservation activities are targeted in focus areas where NRCS and partners have identified projects that conserve water and strengthen agricultural operations. NRCS provides agricultural producers with technical and financial assistance to implement a variety of conservation practices, including improving irrigation efficiency, managing nutrients, implementing prescribed grazing and other conservation systems. Funding comes from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and partners typically leverage additional funds in focus areas.

During fiscal years 2011-2014, OAI addressed water quantity and water quality concerns in wide-ranging targeted areas in eight states that occupy the Ogallala Aquifer region. During this time, NRCS invested over \$66 million of financial assistance to 1,539 producers to help them implement groundwater conservation practices on approximately 325,000 acres.



Outcomes and Impacts

By improving irrigating efficiency and implementing conservation systems, producers benefit from using less inputs. Improved water management reduce expenditures for energy, chemicals and labor inputs, while enhancing revenues through higher crop yields and improved crop quality. Additionally these efforts help maintain the long-term viability of the irrigated agricultural sector and offset the effect of rising water costs and restricted water supplies on producer income.

By conserving water, the useful life of the aquifer is extended, flow is increased in rivers, benefiting wildlife like the least tern, whooping crane, pallid sturgeon and piping plover. These efforts also improve the quality of water by prevent runoff of sediment and nutrients.



The Ogallala Aquifer Initiative provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to improve irrigation efficiencies.

Fiscal Year 2015 Ogallala Aquifer Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and active and completed contracts

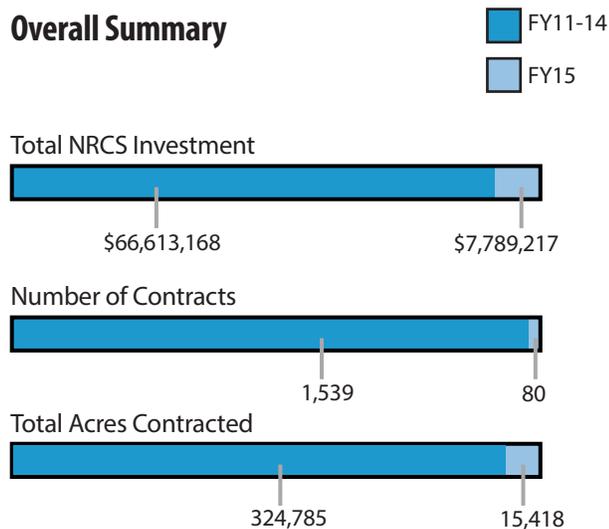
State	Focus Area	Acres	NRCS Investment	Contracts
Colorado	Northern High Plains Groundwater Basin	5,460	\$530,975	10
Kansas	OAI High Priority Area	1,565	\$1,187,459	9
Nebraska	Central Platte Natural Resource District	1,081	\$653,107	12
Nebraska	Little Blue Natural Resource District	877	\$540,398	10
Nebraska	Upper Big Blue Natural Resource District	1,005	\$589,215	7
New Mexico	Eastern New Mexico OAI Focus Area	1,196	\$1,413,711	8
Texas	OAI Partnership	4,234	\$2,851,352	24
Total		15,418	\$7,789,217	80

Data source: NRCS Resource Economics, Analysis and Policy Division, October 2015.

NRCS GOALS

Through OAI, NRCS works with producers and conservation partners to reduce withdrawals of water and to extend the life of the aquifer. To help address these goals, NRCS has set five milestones for its work with producers and partners to complete by 2018. These milestones include the conservation of 78,000 acre-feet of water, improving irrigation efficiency on 42,100 acres, converting operations to dryland farming on 28,500 acres, installing 277 irrigation water management systems, and using nutrient management on 21,000 acres.

Overall Summary



2018 Milestones:

