

# Maple Syrup Production

## Technical Note 12



### Partnering with NRCS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assists Maple Syrup producers by providing conservation technical assistance. This assistance may lead to funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). NRCS conservationists work with landowners and managers of sugar bush to implement energy and forestry conservation practices on the land. For many of these farms, conservation work is mostly for the sugarhouses, or facilities where the syrup is processed.

### EQIP Ag Energy Assistance

Through the EQIP, energy auditors conduct an on-farm energy audit, recommending possible conservation practices to use energy wisely. Why does maple sugar production depend on energy? The sap collected from trees is mostly water. To get to the thick consistency and rich taste we all love, that water needs to be evaporated, and that takes energy.

Through Ag Energy EQIP, assistance is available to producers in two ways.

1. EQIP enables the producer to identify ways to conserve energy through an Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP) Conservation Activity Plan (128) conservation activity plan, also known as an on-farm energy audit. AgEMPs are completed by a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP). Payment for the completion of an AgEMP is provided through EQIP based on the type and size of the agricultural operation.
2. EQIP provides assistance to implement some of the conservation practices recommended in the energy audit. After an

AgEMP is completed, a producer may be eligible for additional financial assistance to implement various recommended measures using energy related conservation practices. Producers seeking funding to implement recommendations from an approved AgEMP must apply for the specific eligible practices outlined in the AgEMP report.



NRCS provides financial assistance opportunities on two pieces of equipment – reverse osmosis (RO) heaters and enhanced pre-heaters under the conservation practice standard Farmstead Energy Improvement (374). These are designed to upgrade old, inefficient equipment used during the sugaring process, increasing effectiveness and decreasing energy use. They can reduce fuel consumption leading to better air quality through reduced emissions and a reduction in wood or oil used in the process.



## EQIP Forestry Assistance

The NRCS also provides technical and financial assistance through forestry practices to benefit sugar bush stands. Through a Conservation Activity Plan (106) Forest Management Plan, or the equivalent, such as a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Managed Forest Law Plan, producers can complete forestry practices. Two beneficial forestry practices are as follows.

1. Forest Stand Improvement (CPS 666) includes activities such as marking trees to be thinned on mature stands, pre-commercial thinning, and competition control on younger sugar bushes, and
2. Brush Management (CPS 314) includes removal of invasive species, such as buckthorn that can invade sugar bush stands.

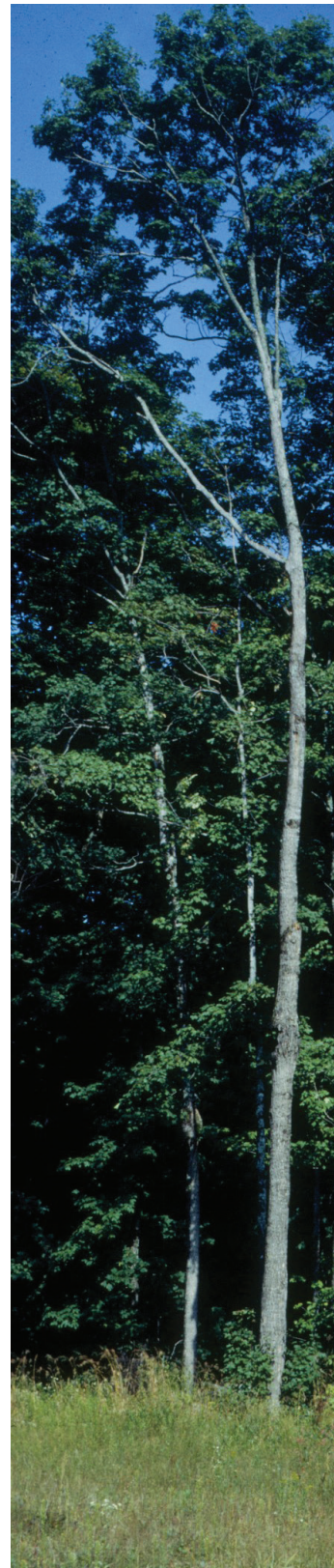
## CSP Forestry Assistance

The NRCS can also assist maple syrup producers through the Conservation

Stewardship Program. The Sugar Bush Management (E612133X3) practice relates to adding species diversity to sugar bush to enhance pollinator and wildlife needs. The goal is to maintain at least 20% of basal area in species other than sugar maple to provide species diversity. Half of the trees that are not sugar maples (10%) will be mast producing species that help sustain wildlife populations. This practice also includes tapping trees sustainably, minimizing impact to the trees and the forest, using appropriate equipment and methods for the Midwest region. Many other enhancements for forestry exist through CSP to help improve wildlife and pollinator habitat, forest health, and increase species diversity.

## Contact Us

For more information about how NRCS can assist maple syrup producers, please contact your local USDA Service Center for your county by visiting [www.farmers.gov](http://www.farmers.gov).



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