

# What Makes Conservation Work?

## Lessons from Key Informant Interviews

A.E. Luloff, Sociologist, Pennsylvania State University  
Dana Hoag, Economist, Colorado State University  
Deanna Osmond, Soil Science Extension, North  
Carolina State University

# CEAP

## Conservation Effectiveness Assessment Program

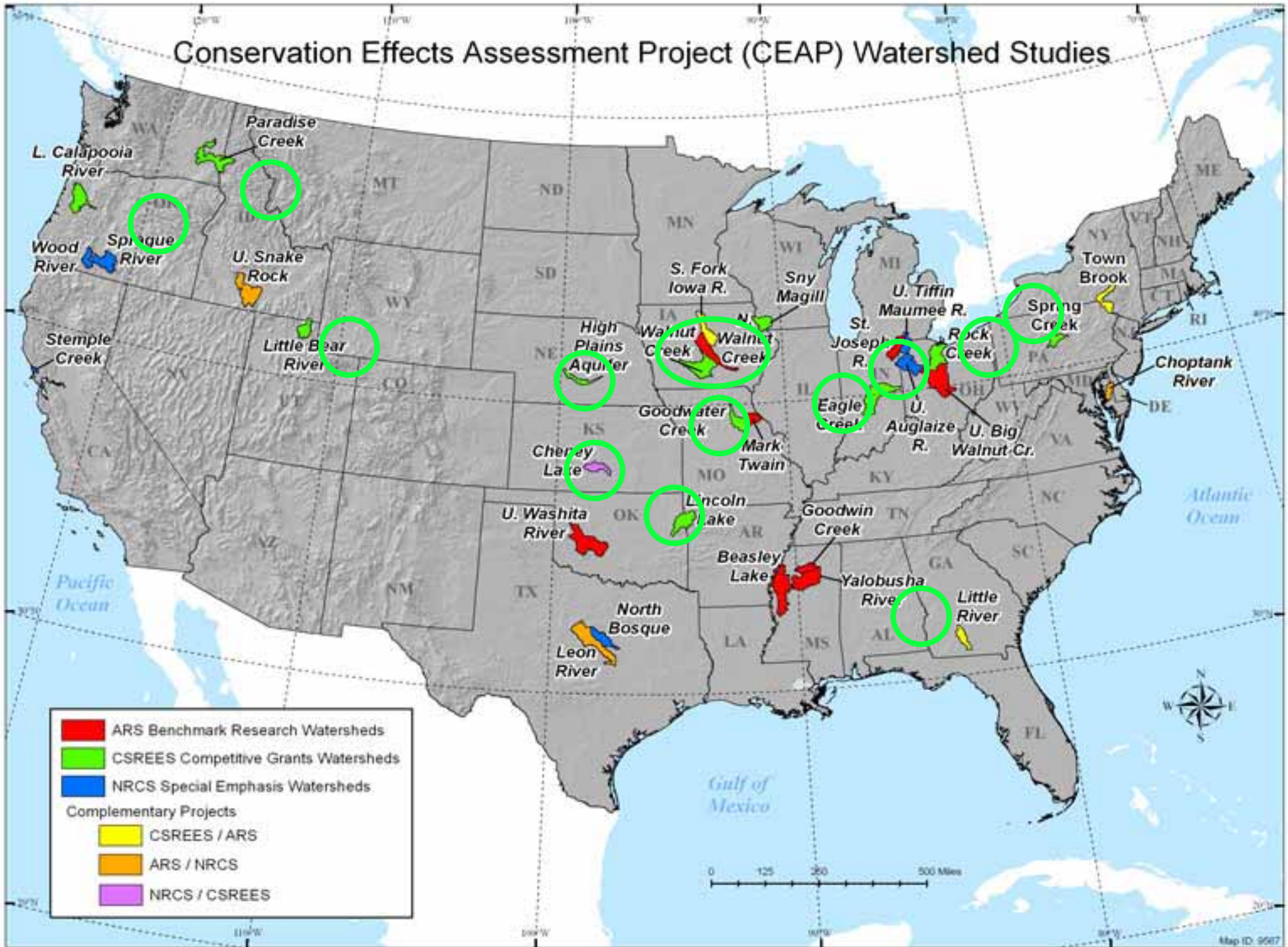
- Initiated in 2003 to:
  - Quantify conservation benefits
  - Transfer knowledge to farmers, ranchers, community leaders, and other stakeholders
- Composed of:
  - 14 USDA *ARS Benchmark* sites
  - 10 USDA NRCS *Special Emphasis* sites
  - 13 USDA *Competitive Grant* sites

# Our Project Focuses On:

An evaluation of the effects of/on conservation to illuminate critical lessons for Extension, NRCS, Local and other Policy Makers, and Watershed Planners

The 13 USDA Competitive Grant sites

# Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) Watershed Studies



# Two Part Framework:

- (1) Collect quantitative, technical information from each of the 13 projects
- (2) Conduct qualitative, case studies in each site – especially holistic descriptions from carefully selected residents in these watersheds (*Key Informants*)

# Qualitative Analysis (QA) and Key Informant (KI) Interviews

- QA focuses most often on words and their meanings, not numbers – constructivist approach as opposed to positivist approach – avoids close-ended answers
- QA is associated with field research data collection
- KIs – individuals knowledgeable about the community, broadly representative of local interest groups, factions, and social status levels
- KIs identified by reputation, position, and/or decision making capacity

# Who We Interviewed

- 26 interviews, 37 people
  - Producers
  - Extension
  - NRCS
  - Environmentalists
  - Ag Suppliers
  - Insurance Agents
  - FSA
  - Judge
  - Professors, Water Science
  - County Commissioners
  - Zoning and Planning
  - Ag Reporter

# What We Asked (1)

Where you live

# What We Found (1)

- Do people within a site describe it the same?
- Are different sites described in different terms?
- What terms do people use to describe sites?
  - Topography/Weather – *great for growing crop x*
  - Religion
  - History/tradition – *Agricultural roots*
  - Community – *Nice people; urban transplants*

# What We Asked (2)

Water quality

# What We Found (2)

- Is there a problem?
- What does science say?
- Are stakeholder views consistent; are differences systematic?
- Who causes pollution?

# What We Asked (3)

Conservation practices

# What We Found (3)

- Which work?
- What supports best management practices?
- Other influences??

# What We Asked (4)

Education and Technical Assistance

# What We Found (4)

- Where do people learn about conservation?
- Effectiveness:
  - Extension
  - NRCS
  - Other farmers
  - Significant others

# What We Asked (5)

Conservation History

# What We Found (5)

- Historical perspectives
- Future prospects

# What's Next

- Finish Key Informant Interviews at 9 more sites (1+ years)
- Compare within and across sites
- Synthesize lessons learned
  - Monitoring and measurement
  - Modeling
  - How sources of contamination are best managed
  - Influence of community, finance, government