



CUTS TO USDA CONSERVATION STAFF IN 2025 REMOVE LOCAL EXPERTISE IN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES NATIONWIDE

PROSPECT PARTNERS, LLC

MARCH 23, 2026

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture experienced a 22% (-2657) loss of staff in 2025 as part of a White House initiative to reduce the size of the overall federal workforce. In contrast with a USDA leadership [pledge](#) to “bring USDA closer to the people it serves,” personnel cuts have reduced federal presence in agricultural communities, potentially raising barriers to farm conservation program access.

Newly available federal workforce data shows that the majority of NRCS staffing reductions eliminated front-line positions tasked with assisting farmers, ranchers, and foresters with participation in conservation related grant programs. Nationwide, over 1300 counties and three territories experienced a net reduction of headcount in 2025, with 144 counties losing 100% of NRCS staff by year’s end.

Prospect Partners analysis of federal workforce data that the U.S. Office of Personnel released on March 4, 2026 (<http://data.opm.gov>) provides the public its first window into how USDA staffing reductions in 2025 reduced or eliminated local conservation expertise in hundreds of agricultural communities.

NRCS staffing reductions were concentrated in the federal agency’s three largest front-line conservation jobs:

- Soil Conservation: 694 counties lost staff, with 100% loss in 158 counties
- General Natural Resources Management: 380 counties lost staff, with 100% loss in 254 counties
- Soil Conservation Technician: 286 counties lost staff, with 100% loss in 255

Other significant NRCS staffing cuts in 2025 included Rangeland Management (100% loss in 43 counties representing one in four counties with that position at the start of 2025) and Civil Engineering (100% loss in 74 counties, representing one in five counties).

Prospect Partners will continue its analysis of the newly available USDA workforce data in the coming weeks, with findings published on our website and via Substack. Inquiries, feedback, and corrections are welcome at media@prospectdc.com.



APPENDIX: REFERENCE TABLES AND MAPS

All tables and maps were developed by Prospect Partners, LLC using data published at <http://data.opm.gov> by the US Office of Personnel Management on March 4, 2026 and obtained by Prospect Partners on March 5, 2026. States, territories, and the District of Columbia are incorporated into table counts and percentages.

Table 1: County Level Impact of Changes in USDA NRCS Headcount Overall in 2025 (All Occupations)

Staffing Impact	Counties	Share of Counties
Net Gain	167	7%
No Net Change	949	39%
Net Loss*	1302	54%
Total	2418	100%

**Net loss in 2025 of all NRCS staff in 144 counties representing 6% of counties with any NRCS staff at the beginning of 2025.*

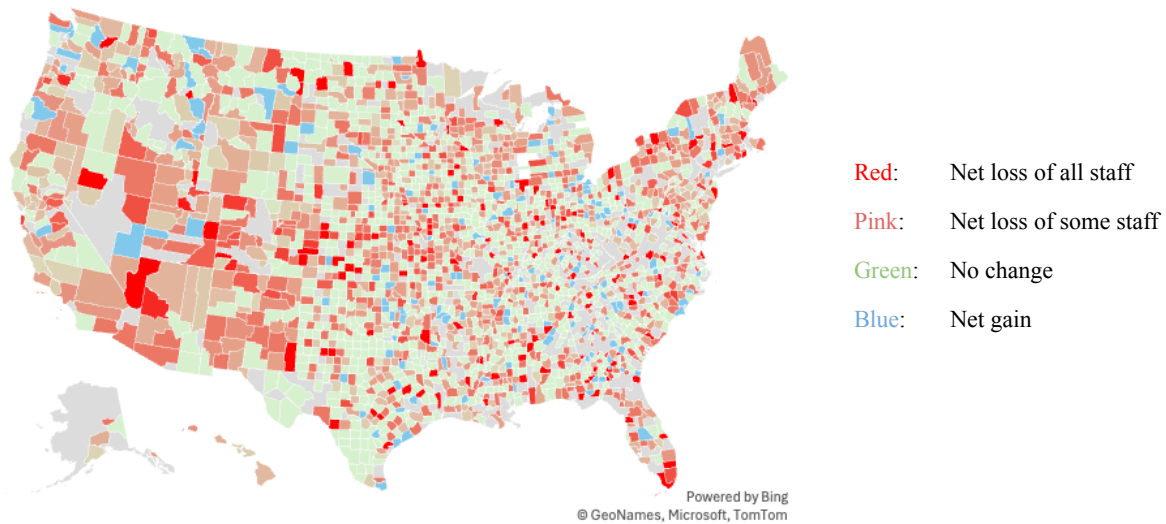


Table 2: County Level Impact of Changes in USDA NRCS Headcount in 2025 (Soil Conservation, General Natural Resources Management, Soil Conservation Technician)

Staffing Impact	Counties	Share of Counties
Net Gain	184	8%
No Net Change	1139	48%
Net Loss*	1043	44%
Total	2366	100%

***Net loss in 2025 of all NRCS Soil Conservation, General Natural Resources Management, Soil Conservation Technician staff in 139 counties representing 6% of counties with NRCS these staff at the beginning of 2025.*

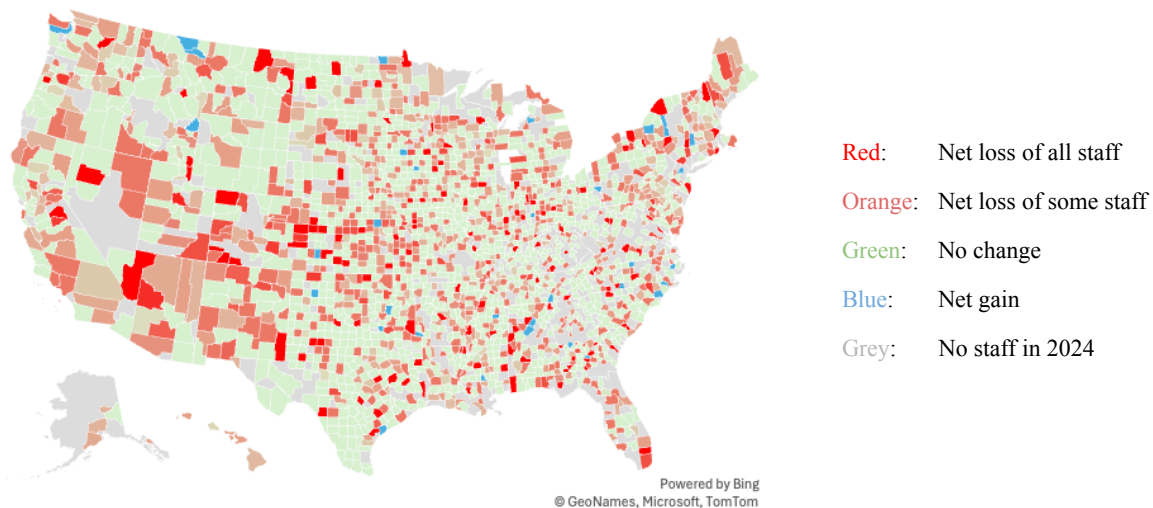


Table 3: County Level Impact of Changes in USDA NRCS Headcount Overall in 2025 (Rangeland Management)

Staffing Impact	Counties	Share of Counties
Net Gain	16	9%
No Net Change	111	60%
Net Loss*	57	31%
Total	184	100%

***Net loss in 2025 of all NRCS Rangeland Management staff in 43 counties representing 23% of counties with NRCS Rangeland Management staff at the beginning of 2025.*

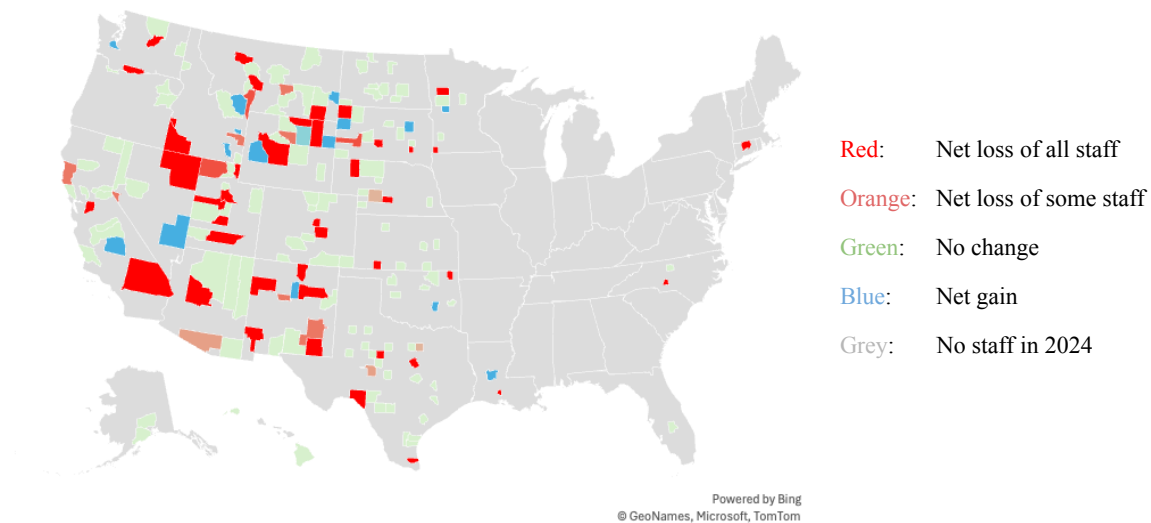


Table 4: County Level Impact of Changes in USDA NRCS Headcount Overall in 2025 (Civil Engineers)

Staffing Impact	Counties	Share of Counties
Net Gain	43	13%
No Net Change	154	46%
Net Loss*	136	41%
Total	333	100%

***Net loss in 2025 of all NRCS Civil Engineering staff in 74 counties representing 22% of counties with NRCS Civil Engineering staff at the beginning of 2025.*

