THE 2015 NRI: CHANGES IN LAND COVER/USE

BACKGROUND

• The National Resources Inventory (NRI) is a statistical survey of natural resource conditions and trends on nonfederal land. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conducts the NRI in cooperation with Iowa State University’s Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology.

• NRCS released the 2015 NRI in September 2018.


TOTAL SURFACE AREA AND LAND COVER/USE CATEGORIES

• The contiguous 48 states, Hawaii and the Caribbean Territories cover 1,944,142,600 acres of land and water. Of this, there are 1,371,732,100 acres of non-federal rural land, 405,278,200 acres of federal land, 115,076,700 acres of developed land and 52,055,600 acres in water areas.

• Rural land is comprised of: cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, other rural land, and land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

• American Farmland Trust uses the term agricultural land to refer to land cover/use categories that are readily available for agricultural production: cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and land in CRP.
LAND CONVERTED TO DEVELOPMENT

- Nationally, **44,231,700 acres of rural land** were converted to **developed land** between 1982 and 2015.

- Between 1982 and 2015, **25,107,300 acres of agricultural land** were converted to **developed land**. This represents an area larger than the states of Indiana and Rhode Island combined and amounts to an **average annual rate of 760,827 acres per year**.

- Between 2002 and 2015, **5,982,900 acres of agricultural land** were converted to **developed land**, which equals an **average annual rate of 460,223 acres per year**.

- The national rate of agricultural land conversion declined during the most recent NRI reporting period (2012–2015). The average annual conversion rate (294,933 acres per year) was down 18 percent from the previous reporting period (2007–2012).