

OVERVIEW

Private citizens own over 90 percent of the land in Indiana which includes nearly 15 million acres of farmland and about 4 million acres of forestland, making stewardship absolutely critical to the health of our environment. Each day, farmers and forest landowners are making decisions about natural resource use and management that impacts soil and water quality. With the **Natural Resources Conservation Service's** help, many are creating more productive lands while maintaining healthy ecosystems.

Indiana Natural Resources Conservation Service

RCPP

Regional Conservation Partnership Program



The **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to farmers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to farmers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements. Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of other Farm Bill conservation programs; and in certain areas the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.

BENEFITS

RCPP encourages partners to join in efforts with farmers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales.

Through RCPP, NRCS and its partners help farmers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits achieved. The Secretary of Agriculture may also designate up to eight critical conservation areas throughout the U.S. to focus RCPP assistance.

WHAT'S NEW IN RCPP

RCPP is a new partnership program that combines the authorities of four former programs: the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and Great Lakes Basin Program, and delivers the conservation assistance through Farm Bill conservation programs, including Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural Conservation Easements Program (ACEP), Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP), and Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations in designated critical conservation areas.



ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Partners - Agricultural or silvicultural producer associations, farmer cooperatives or other groups of producers, state or local governments, Indian tribes, municipal water treatment entities, water and irrigation districts, conservation-driven nongovernmental organizations, and institutions of higher education.

Eligible Participants - Under RCPP, eligible producers and landowners of agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland may enter into conservation program contracts or easement agreements under the framework of a partnership agreement. RCPP assistance is also available independent of a partner if the land is located either in a partner project area or in a critical conservation area designated by the Secretary. Conservation program contracts and easement agreements are implemented through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), or the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP). NRCS may also utilize the authorities under the Watershed and Flood Prevention Program, other than the Watershed Rehabilitation Program, in the designated critical conservation areas.

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HOW TO APPLY

NRCS will announce a request for proposals that will outline requirements for proposal submissions for funding. NRCS will review partnership proposals according to the priorities identified in the announcement and make project selections. Upon selection of a partnership proposal, NRCS and the partner will enter into a partnership agreement through which they will coordinate to provide assistance to producers in the designated project area. Partnership agreements may be for a period of up to five years. NRCS may extend an agreement one time for an additional 12 months if needed to meet the objectives of the program. Producers may apply for RCPP assistance in several ways:

1. At the producer's request, a partner may submit the application for participation in a selected project area
2. Directly at their local USDA Service Center in the selected project area
3. Directly at their local USDA Service Center in a critical conservation area designated by the Secretary of Agriculture

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The partnership agreement defines the scope of the project, including:

1. Eligible activities to be implemented
2. Potential agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operation affected
3. Local, state, multi-state or other geographic area covered
4. Planning, outreach, implementation, and assessment to be conducted

Partners are responsible for contributing to the cost of the project, conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project and for conducting an assessment of the project's effects. In addition, partners may act on behalf of the eligible landowner or producer in applying for assistance and for leveraging financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives. *Note: funds in the partnership agreement cannot be used to for administration.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/programs/farbill/?cid=stelprdb1248173> or contact Jill Reinhart, ASTC for Special Programs at: jill.reinhart@in.usda.gov

