

Caribbean Area: Overview

Through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality and aquatic habitats in priority watersheds with impaired streams. NRCS will help producers implement conservation and management practices through a systems approach to control and trap nutrient and manure runoff. Qualified producers will receive assistance for installing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces. For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers with assistance to implement voluntary conservation practices that protect natural resources while maintaining production and profits.

Caribbean Area Priority Watershed

RIO GRANDE DE AÑASCO, PR

The Rio Grande de Añasco is one of the primary rivers discharging into Mayagüez Bay and drains one of the largest watersheds in Puerto Rico. The Añasco watershed covers an area of 257 square miles and includes portions of Añasco, Mayagüez, Las Marías, Maricao, San Sebastián, Lares, Yauco, and Adjuntas municipalities. The watershed is ranked # 5 on the list of impaired watersheds in the Puerto Rico Unified Watershed Assessment, due primarily to sediment, bacterial and chemical contamination (low dissolved oxygen, high arsenic and turbidity). Many of these pollutants are directly related to agricultural sources such as fertilizers, pesticides and manure from crop and pasture lands.



Contour row cropping for plantains is one of the many conservation practices to be used in the Rio Grande de Añasco watershed.

SOURCE: NRCS

Resource concerns in the Añasco watershed that will be addressed through this initiative are sheet and rill erosion, water quality and quantity, plant health, flooding and invasive species.

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals

The National Water Quality Initiative will work in selected watersheds to help farmers, ranchers and forest landowners improve water quality and aquatic habitats in impaired streams.

will provide technical assistance and planning tools to determine which conservation actions will provide the best results to improve water quality on your land. Nutrient management systems, erosion control, conservation

tillage, pest management, and buffers systems are just some of the practices being offered as part of the National Water Quality Initiative. To help install these conservation practices, financial assistance to share in the cost of these conservation practices is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Partnerships

NRCS identified priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships and state water quality agencies. Partners sometimes offer financial assistance in addition to NRCS programs. NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, conservation districts, nongovernmental organizations and others to implement this initiative. This strategic approach will leverage funds and provide streamlined assistance to help individual agricultural producers take needed actions to reduce the flow of sediment, nutrients and other runoff into impaired waterways.

