

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) Funds Available in the Mississippi Delta

Jackson, MS, February 16, 2011 – Al Garner, State Conservationist, has announced this week the continuation of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative in the Mississippi Delta. These 3 projects in the Mississippi Delta will help landowners and producers within the Mississippi Delta River Basin voluntarily implement conservation and management practices that prevent, control, and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

"USDA is working aggressively to improve the health of the Mississippi River Basin," said Garner. "The funding announced today will help producers implement a system of conservation practices that will control soil erosion, improve soil quality, and provide wildlife habitat."

Nationally, more than \$22 million in Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) funds will be administered through the Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. Nearly \$20 million will be provided in Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) funds. Partner organizations will contribute additional financial resources.

Under the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Mississippi will provide total of \$6.3 million of financial assistance during federal fiscal year 2011 for projects in the following watersheds:

CCPI-Proposal List

Big Sunflower River Watershed

Deer Creek-Steele Bayou Watershed

Upper Yazoo Watershed

WREP-Proposal List

Wetland Enhancement & Restoration in the Big Sunflower Watershed in the Mississippi Delta.

These multi-year watershed projects were selected through a competitive process. A listing of the projects by state, and additional information about the MRBI, are available at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_overview.html.

The MRBI will help NRCS and its partners expand their capacity to improve water quality throughout the basin. CCPI will use a conservation systems approach to manage nitrogen and phosphorous, which will minimize runoff and reduce downstream nutrient loading. WREP will encourage strategic placement of wetland restoration projects.

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NEWS RELEASE

NRCS celebrated 75 years of helping people help the land in 2010. Since 1935, the NRCS conservation delivery system has advanced a unique partnership with state and local governments and private landowners delivering conservation based on specific, local conservation needs while accommodating state and national interests.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is encouraging landowners, farmers, and producers to visit their local conservation district office and apply for assistance through the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI).

The deadline for applying for assistance during the first application cut-off period is **March 11, 2011**.

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