

NRCS NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Mississippi River Basin Partnership Project Proposals Due March 19

Projects Would Improve Water Quality and Conserve Wetland Habitat on Farms in 13 States

ST. PAUL, MN, January 5, 2012 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Dave White today announced that proposals for conservation projects addressing water quality and wetland conservation in the Mississippi River Basin are due to NRCS by March 19, 2012. Accepted projects would support conservation efforts already underway on agricultural operations in the basin, improve the overall health of the Mississippi River and help reduce hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico.

"This is an outstanding opportunity for conservation-minded farmers to do even more to protect and improve one of America's most valuable resources," White said. "Working together, we can deliver more of the environmental and economic benefits of cleaner water to everyone who relies on the food, fiber and fuel produced by landowners in the Mississippi River Basin."

Through this request for proposals, NRCS is providing up to \$37 million in new financial assistance through the [Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative](#) (MRBI) for projects in 54 priority watersheds in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

These projects will compliment actions to be carried out through the new [Gulf of Mexico Initiative](#), an effort that focuses up to \$50 million in conservation assistance over three years to farmers and ranchers in priority areas along seven major rivers that drain into the Gulf.

Approved proposals will include conservation practices that prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff, improve wildlife habitat, restore wetlands, and keep agricultural operations productive. Examples of such practices are nutrient, residue and tillage management, crop rotation and tree planting.

A Request for Proposals, which includes a list of eligible watersheds and application addresses, appeared in the January 3, 2012, Federal Register and can be read and downloaded at <http://federalregister.gov/a/2011-33692>.

This call for project proposals includes new priority watersheds: five that make land between levees eligible for conservation easements in an area extending from southern Illinois to the Gulf of

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Mexico; five that address water quantity concerns associated with water quality issues; and three watersheds in Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin where water quality issues can be addressed.

In addition to funding for new projects, \$55 million in additional financial assistance from conservation programs is being made available to support more than 95 previously approved MRBI projects in the 13 states.

Federally-recognized Indian tribes, state and local units of governments, farmer cooperatives, producer associations, institutions of higher education and other nongovernmental organizations are encouraged to apply.

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