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USDA Announces Recipients of Conservation Innovation Grants in 40 States

Supports pioneering efforts in conserving and protecting natural resources

ST. PAUL, MN, August 22, 2011—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the winning proposals for the 2011 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). Through CIG, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is investing nearly \$22.5 million in innovative conservation technologies and approaches that address a broad array of existing and emerging natural resource issues.

“Conservation Innovation Grants allow our partners to demonstrate innovative approaches to address some of the nation’s most compelling natural resource concerns such as soil erosion, water and air quality, and energy,” said Don A. Baloun, Minnesota NRCS State Conservationist. USDA will work very closely with farmers, ranchers and private forest landowners to help them gain opportunities to address natural resource concerns on their property.

Besides advancing innovations that address erosion prevention and other perennial natural resource issues, the 2011 CIG award winners will demonstrate the effectiveness of new ways to reduce odors from poultry and livestock operations, reclaim mining lands, develop ecosystem markets and expand solar energy use on farms. Grant winners pay 50 percent of project costs.

Projects will be carried out in 40 states. Eight of the approved grants support development of conservation innovations in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and another eight focus on the Mississippi River Basin.

A summary of all proposals selected for a 2011 Conservation Innovation Grant is available at www.nrcs.usda.gov. Some examples include:

Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Wisconsin - \$481,665 to the Environmental Defense Fund, Inc. to develop the Right Practice, Right Place: Development and deployment of a conservation planning toolkit and improved incentive strategies to reduce nutrients in HUC 12 watersheds in the Upper Mississippi River Basin

Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin - \$761,820 to the Sure Harvest to develop a Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops.

"The 52 grants announced today will help some of America's top agricultural and conservation institutions, foundations and businesses develop unique approaches to

enhancing and protecting natural resources on agricultural lands,” Vilsack said. “The results of their creativity and problem solving will benefit conservation-minded farmers and ranchers, and everyone who relies upon our nation’s natural resources for food and fiber.”

The NRCS administers CIG as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Grants are awarded to state and local governments, federally recognized Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations and individuals.

For more information about NRCS conservation programs online, visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or visit the nearest USDA Service Center in your area.

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