



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in Indiana - 2016

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven, locally-led approach to conservation. It offers new opportunities for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to harness innovation, welcome new partners to the conservation mission, and demonstrate the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation.

In 2016, NRCS is investing up to \$220 million in 84 high-impact projects that impact every state in the nation, including three in Indiana. This investment, which builds on the \$370 invested for 2014 and 2015, will help conservation partners and agricultural producers conserve natural resources, leading to cleaner and more abundant water, healthier soil, enhanced wildlife habitat and many other benefits.

Big Pine Watershed Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1.8 million (National)

Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy

Number of Partners: 4

Participating State(s): Indiana

The Big Pine watershed, located in west-central Indiana, is a tributary of the Wabash River and part of the Mississippi River drainage. The Big Pine Watershed Partnership will engage the power of the supply chain and the trust of agronomy retailers to further conservation in Indiana's Big Pine watershed through the targeted implementation of nutrient and sediment reducing practices to achieve watershed water quality objectives. Agronomists and crop advisors will engage growers to adopt EQIP and CSP practices that can improve nutrient efficiency, soil health and water quality. Partners will help target grower engagement and practice enrollment to locations most likely to produce greatest conservation return (tons of sediment or pounds of nutrients retained per EQIP/CSP dollar spent). The project partners will also work to streamline grower screening and enrollment for EQIP/CSP participation through the use of precision agronomic tools. This information will be used in the Fieldprint Calculator to help quantify environmental outcomes resulting from implemented actions. The partnership's goal is to deliver an additional 8,000 acres of cover crops, 10,100 acres of nutrient management and 4,850 acres of CSP. Both practices and acreage targets will greatly accelerate progress towards long-term Best Management Practice targets identified in the recently completed Big Pine Creek and Mud Pine Creek Watershed Management Plan.

Improving Working Lands for Monarch Butterflies

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$6 million (National)

Lead Partner: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Number of Partners: 12

Participating State(s): Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas (**lead state**) & Wisconsin

Our partnership will restore, manage and conserve wildlife habitat for monarch butterflies on agricultural and tribal lands using four main strategies: conservation planning and assessment; habitat improvement and best management practices; building an adequate seed supply for milkweed and nectar plants; and, enhancing organizational coordination and capacity. To provide the greatest conservation outcomes, the project will focus work within two NRCS Critical Conservation Areas: Prairie Grasslands Region and Mississippi River Basin. Targeted areas will be identified through a US Geological Survey-led



initiative examining fine-scale opportunities for the restoration of milkweed and other pollinator plants. This project will contribute to national goals in terms of habitat and increase the number of monarch butterflies. This in turn will represent the best opportunity to avoid future regulations related to monarch butterflies from being imposed on farmers and ranchers in the future.

Soil Health on Reclaimed Mine Lands

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$885,000 (State)

Lead Partner: Knox County SWCD

Number of Partners: 13

Participating State(s): Indiana

Partners will work with farmers, landowners and mine operators to implement a suite of soil health practices on reclaimed mine lands in order to improve the health of the soil, reduce the amount of sediment laden runoff reaching streams and rivers and improve wildlife habitat. The project will focus on the roughly 175,000 acres of reclaimed mine lands that are cropped in the Indiana counties of Vigo, Clay, Sullivan, Greene, Knox, Daviess, Gibson, Pike, Dubois, Warrick and Spencer.

