USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

National Water Quality Initiative Fact Sheet

South Carolina

Conservation practices such as no till farming help reduce erosion and sedimentation in streams, as well as trap nutrients before they leave the field.

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.

South Carolina Priority Watersheds

South Carolina has identified four priority watersheds for this initiative:

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- Polk Swamp in Dorchester County;
- Upper Little Saluda River in Saluda;
- Big Swamp in Florence County;
- Chinquapin Creek in Aiken and Lexington Counties

They were selected because of high nutrient levels, and because they have great potential for addressing the identified problems. Eligible producers in these four SC watersheds will invest in voluntary conservation practices to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities. Using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to producers for implementing conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips, animal waste management systems, and prescribed grazing systems in watersheds with impairments where federal investments can make a difference in improving water quality.

Conservation Funding and Practices

NRCS conservation professionals 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 though the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

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.

Partnerships

SC NRCS identified their four priority watersheds through the help of local partnerships including the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC). NRCS will continue to coordinate with local and state agencies, South Carolina Soil & Water Conservation Districts, SCDHEC, 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.

Producer Benefits

Water quality conservation practices benefit agricultural producers by lowering input costs and enhancing the productivity of working lands. Conservation investments are good for all Americans because well managed farms limit pollution from runoff, produce food and fiber, sustain rural economies, and provide food security to the Nation. All across the country—farmers, ranchers and forest landowners are voluntarily taking action and putting conservation on the ground to improve water quality on millions of acres!

Public Benefits

NRCS is proud to be involved in a nationwide effort with landowners and communities to improve and protect our water resources. The landowners and farmers participating in the initiative will receive conservation payments to work on the land in a sustainable way which provides cleaner water. In addition to the financial assistance, the land will remain productive into the future. Communities benefit by having clean waterways, safer drinking water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife.

How to Apply

Almost every county in the Nation has a *USDA Service Center.* To get started, make an appointment at your local office. You will need to establish eligibility and farm records for your land. NRCS will help you complete an application while explaining which conservation practices are available in your watershed. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during fiscal year 2013, must be received by June 21, 2013.

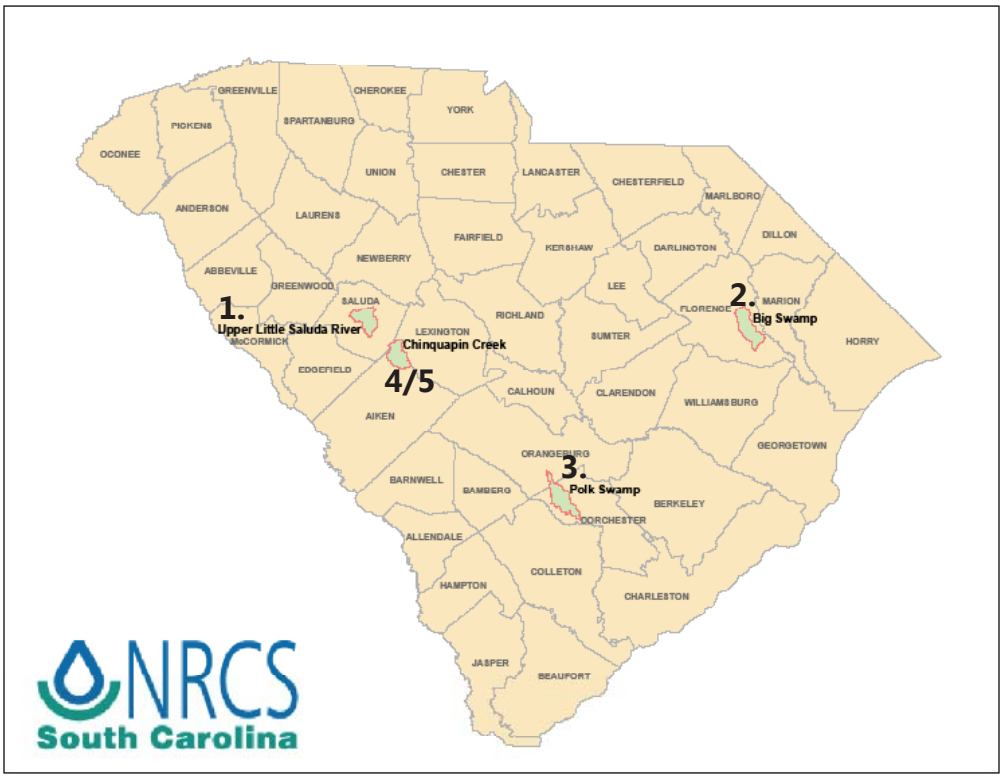
For More Information

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

1. Saluda County NRCS Office (Upper Little Saluda River Watershed)
201 East Church Street
(864) 445-8118 ext. 111
hugh.smith@sc.usda.gov

2. Florence County NRCS Office (Big Swamp Watershed)
215 Third Loop Road, Suite 300
(843) 669-9686, ext. 114
matthew.anderson@sc.usda.gov

3. Dorchester County NRCS Office (Polk Swamp Watershed)
5809 West Jim Bilton Boulevard
(843) 563-3218, extension 103
jeff.lucas@sc.usda.gov

4. Aiken County NRCS Office (portion of the Chinquapin Creek Watershed)
1555 Richland Avenue East, Suite 400
(803) 649-4221, ext. 108
josh.martin@sc.usda.gov

5. Lexington County NRCS Office (portion of the Chinquapin Creek Watershed)
123 Park Road
(803) 359-3165, ext. 106
rafael.mendez@sc.usda.gov