



## **Sand County Foundation (SCF): Grasslands and Oak Savannas for Water and Wildlife – 2018 FB RCPP Project #2320 (CCA)**

### **Project Description/Summary:**

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partnership that leverages capabilities and resources, targets assistance where it is most needed, cooperatively engages project partners, and works collaboratively with agriculture producers, forest land managers, and Tribes. This project focuses on the driftless area and will increase terrestrial habitat to benefit grassland birds and pollinators, reduce nutrient and sediment loss from vulnerable lands, improve the economic well-being for farmers and rural communities, and extend NRCS resources to historically underserved producers. This project will focus exclusively on perennial solutions and include transitioning sensitive cropland to permanent and productive vegetation. Activities will restore degraded grasslands and oak savannas, support prescribed grazing systems, promote agroforestry and prairie strips, and control invasive species.

### **Project Area:**

Applicants must have 50% or more of the project in the Sand County Foundation (SCF) project area; ranking will be set to implement these boundaries. See map at the end of this document.

### **Eligible Land Management Producer Contract Land Uses:**

Crop, Forest, Pasture, and Associated Ag Land

### **Eligible Resource Concern Categories:**

This RCPP Project is within the Mississippi River Basin Critical Conservation Area (CCA). As such, each producer contract must address at least one of the priority resource concerns of inadequate habitat, insufficient water/drought, or water quality degradation (equivalent CART resource concern categories are Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss AND/OR Terrestrial Habitat AND/OR Aquatic Habitat AND/OR Source Water Depletion).

The SCF priority resource concern categories are: Long Term Protection of Land; Terrestrial Habitat; and Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss. At least one of these primary resource concern categories must also be addressed by the producer contract. For example, a producer contract could address a resource concern in the Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss category and meet both CCA and SCF requirements or a producer contract could address resource concerns in Long Term Protection of Land and Terrestrial Habitat categories to meet both CCA and SCF requirements.

### **Eligible Land Management and Rental Practices:**

The Schedule of Operations must include at least one of the core practices or must be completing a conservation system that supports core practices that are documented as already implemented on the land and identified in the CART assessment as historical or observed practices.



Code	Practice Name	Core
311	Alley Cropping	Core
327	Conservation Cover 4/	Core
332	Contour Buffer Strips 4/	Core
381	Silvopasture	Core
386	Field Border 4/	Core
391	Riparian Forested Buffer	Core
393	Filter Strips 4/	Core
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting	Core
528	Prescribed Grazing	Core
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	Core
643	Rare and Declining Habitat 6/	Core
666	Forest Stand Improvement 6/	Core
106	Forest Management Plans 5/ 6/	
110	Grazing Management Plans 5/	
159	Grazing Design and Implementation 5/	
165	Forest Management Design and Implementation Activity 5/ 6/	
314	Brush Management	
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	
328	Conservation Crop Rotation 7/	
338	Prescribed Burning 2/	
382	Fence	
384	Woody Residue Treatment 1/ 2/	
394	Firebreak	
472	Access Control	
484	Mulching	
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	
512	Pasture and Hayland Planting	
516	Livestock Pipeline	
533	Pumping Plant	
560	Access Road	
561	Heavy Use Protection	
574	Spring Development	
575	Animal Trails and Walkways	
578	Stream Crossing	
606	Subsurface Drain	
614	Watering Facility	
620	Underground Outlet	
642	Water Well	
645	Upland Wildlife Management 3/	



647	Early Successional Habitat Development and Management
654	Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment
655	Forest Trails and Landings
RFRN	Rental

- 1/ CPS 384 may be planned to facilitate planting of the site, typically for oak savanna restoration.
- 2/ Cannot pay for both 338 Prescribed Burning and 384 Woody Residue Treatment to achieve the same purpose; 384 requires the woody debris to be taken offsite.
- 3/ 645 Upland Wildlife Management can be paired with practices 391, 420, and 612 that have an HSI.
- 4/ This vegetative practice requires a native species scenario; use the Prairie Strip Guidance Document.
- 5/ CPAs and DIAs will be contracted separately from practice implementation contracts.
- 6/ CPA 106, DIA 165, 643, and 666 are to support Oak Savanna Restoration if the project partners have identified the applicant has a site for Oak Savanna Restoration. The CPA and DIA are written for the forest unit, but the unit must have an oak savanna restoration site.
- 7/ 328 Crop Rotation is only to be used as a supporting practice for 311 Alley Cropping.

**Rental Activity Payments (RFRN)**

The RCPP Rental Activity Worksheet for RFRN will be completed and followed for eligible rental practices. Participants may receive up to 3 years of rental payment. Rental payments are earned the year after practice installation. Practice installation scenario may include Foregone Income and the next year the Rental payment would kick in for up to 3 years. Eligible RFRN practices include 420 Wildlife Habitat Planting, 332 Contour Buffer Strips, 386 Field Border, 393 Filter Strip, 512 Pasture and Hay Planting (in conjunction with 528 Prescribed Grazing according to 159 Grazing Management Design or equivalent), 311 Alley Cropping, 381 Silvopasture, 391 Riparian Forest Buffer, 327 Conservation Cover and 612 Tree/Shrub Establishment.

**Application Processing:**

RCPP is a stand-alone program and requires its own NRCS-1200 application separate from other NRCS FA programs. All 2018 Farm Bill (FB) RCPP applications will be continuously accepted, and signup cut off dates will be publicly announced each year. For Land Management and Rental producer contracts, question 2 of the NRCS-CPA-1200 Conservation Program Application (version October 2021) should be marked "Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)". Write "2320 SCF RCPP LMR" in box 2a (see NB 300-22-8). 2018 Farm Bill RCPP applications will be managed through Conservation Desktop. USDA Financial Assistance Eligibility will need to be determined manually with the Farm Service Agency's Subsidiary Report.

**2. Interested in participating in the following (select all that apply):**

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE)	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)	

a) Program enrollment type, activity type, and/or project name, as applicable:

2320 SCF RCPP LMR



## Workload Prioritization

A workload prioritization tool will be used and can be found on [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov) under the RCPP projects page.

1. The application is in the Sand County Foundation project scope (Driftless Area, see map), and is for a CPA 106 and/or DIA 165 for Oak Savanna, or CPA 110 Grazing Management and/or 165 Grazing Design.
  - Yes, **(HIGH)** <end review>
  - No, continue to Question 2
2. This application will address 1 of the 2 eligible resource concern criteria (Terrestrial Habitat or Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss) by implementing one of the core practices: 311 Alley Cropping, 327 Conservation Cover, 332 Contour Buffer Strips, 381 Silvopasture, 386 Field Border, 391 Filter Strip, 393 Riparian Forest Buffer, 420 Wildlife Planting, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 612 Tree/Shrub Establishment, **643 Restoration of Rare and Declining Natural Communities** or 666 Forest Stand Improvement.
  - Yes, **(HIGH)** <end review>
  - No, **(LOW)** <end review>

## Partner Responsibilities

Sand County Foundation has partnered with Valley Stewardship Network and Technical Service Providers to assist in writing prescribed grazing plans. Savanna Institute, another partner, will help with agroforestry practices. Partners will also recruit applicants and work with those applicants on conservation plans for grazing and forestry. Someone who has not been working with the project partners may come to NRCS and apply for a CPA/DIA to get a plan developed to then come back and apply for a practice implementation contract.

## Bundling

Bundled applications will be identified by a project partner and communicated to the state RCPP Coordinator and Field Offices. Bundle applications receive ranking points for being a bundle identified by a partner. Applications can be for grazing, agro-forestry, prairie, or oak savanna restoration. These will have a conservation connection to similar sites in close proximity or be of a high priority identified by the project partners.

## Ranking Criteria

The ranking criteria will be written to favor Historically Underserved participants with a special emphasis on Beginning Farmers. The conversion of HEL cropland to pasture and perennial buffers will be prioritized. Partners will recruit eligible producers addressing similar resource concerns within agriculture and conservation networks such as producer-led watershed groups and bird conservation areas. Ranking Criteria in forestry will have a heavy focus on oak savanna restoration.



Section: Applicability - WI - 2320 SCF RCPP v24		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Does the assessed practice schedule intersect the boundary of the 2320 SCF priority area?	50% or greater of the project is in the SCF defined Driftless Area	--
	Otherwise	--

Section: Category - WI - 2320 SCF RCPP v24		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Is this application meant to compete in the Sand County Foundation RCPP Project?	Yes - 2320 SCF RCPP	--
	No	--

Section: Program - WI - 2320 SCF RCPP v24		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
PQ1: This application includes 2 or more Core practices (see hover text).	YES	40
	NO	0
PQ2: This application is for at least 1 CPA or DIA practice;	YES	34
	NO	0
PQ3: The applicant has marked on the NRCS-CPA-1200 that they are a Historically Underserved participant.	YES	40
	NO	0
PQ4: Is this application identified as a bundle by the lead partner?	YES	50
	NO	0
PQ5: The applicant has worked with a conservation planner through the conservation process to the extent that;	all implementation requirements or job sheets for all activities included in the application are complete and final.	24
	at least 1 practice in the application has an implementation requirement or job sheet that is complete and final.	7
	no implementation requirement or job sheets are complete and final.	0
PQ6: Where is the participant's progress in obtaining permits to complete the project?	The project does not require permits.	12
	The project requires permits and the participant has all final permits in hand.	12
	The project requires permits and the participant has applied for all required permits.	6
	The project requires permits and the participant has not applied for all required permits.	0



Section: Resource - WI - 2320 SCF - RCPP v24		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
RQ1. The application contains practices which will;*	Restore Oak Savanna Habitat	40
	Restore Prairie Habitat	15
	Convert Cropland to Permanent Vegetation	15
	Implement Agro-forestry practices	15
	Convert Continuous grazed pasture to rotationally grazed pasture	15
	None of the Above	0
RQ2. A majority of the application area is located in a 2023 priority area or watershed.	Yes at least 50% of the project is within a priority area (southern Iowa County) or watershed (Rush and Tainter of Crawford County)	100
	Otherwise	0

**RCPP Project Contacts:**

*RCPP Coordination:*

RCPP Coordinator, Ryan Gerlich, (608) 662-4422 ext. 227, [ryan.gerlich@usda.gov](mailto:ryan.gerlich@usda.gov)

LMR Contract Coordinator, Jenn Chakravorty, [jennifer.chakravorty@usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.chakravorty@usda.gov)

*Lead Partner with Sand County Foundation (SCF):*

Craig Ficenec, (608) 395-8402, [cfcenec@sandcountyfoundation.org](mailto:cfcenec@sandcountyfoundation.org)

Approved project scope:

