



News Release

Natural Resources
Conservation Service

100 W. Capitol Street
Suite 1321
Jackson, Mississippi 39269

Contact: Laura T. Anderson, Public Affairs Officer
laura.t.anderson@usda.gov
601.863.3922

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Seeks Landowners Interested In Conservation Easements In The Upper Pearl River

JACKSON, Miss, September 25, 2023 - Farmers and landowners who are interested in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) easements and tribal land contracts can apply for conservation assistance. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners aim to protect water quality and wildlife habitat along the Upper portions of the Pearl River by enrolling perpetual easements. In fiscal year 2024, this RCPP will provide financial assistance to landowners, with Wildlife Mississippi serving as the lead partner.

Mississippi USDA-NRCS State Conservationist Kurt Readus stated, "RCPP is a unique program that utilizes non-federal investments from conservation partners to accelerate conservation in selected project areas. This approach allows us to make the most of our collective resources to address locally identified concerns, specifically the Upper Pearl River watershed for this project."

RCPP project description and associated partners:

This project, in collaboration with Wildlife Mississippi, aims to protect 7,500 acres through perpetual easements and 30-year tribal land agreements. The protected areas will stretch from the Pearl River Valley Water Supply District through Redwater, Carthage, and Standing Pine in Leake County to the upper north portion of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in Neshoba County. The focus will be on eligible properties on private lands within the project area.

These actions will prevent future land-use conversions that could harm habitats for native wildlife and negatively impact water quality. This is crucial for maintaining populations of two at-risk aquatic turtles and up to 11 species considered to be of the greatest conservation need in Mississippi.

How to Apply

To apply for RCPP, individuals and entities actively engaged in agricultural production are eligible to participate. Farmers and landowners are encouraged to plan ahead and sign up for USDA conservation funding. Although NRCS accepts applications throughout the year, applications received after October 27th will be considered based on funding availability in subsequent cycles.

All eligible applications received by **October 27, 2023**, will be prioritized, evaluated, and ranked for funding in 2024. Farmers should contact their local USDA Service Center to get started on producer eligibility and planning. Applications ranking highest in a funding category will be funded first and is subject to availability of program funds. Farmers and landowners interested in receiving financial

assistance through these programs are encouraged to apply now by contacting your local service center [USDA Service Centers](#).

When visiting with NRCS staff about the RCPP program, landowners are encouraged to inquire about NRCS' comprehensive conservation plans. The Agency continually strives to put conservation planning at the forefront of its programs and initiatives. Conservation plans provide landowners with a comprehensive inventory and assessment of their resources, as well as an appropriate start to improving the quality of soil, water, air, plants, and wildlife on their land.

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