
Conservation Collaboration Grants and Agreements FY2023

The purpose of Conservation Collaboration Grants or Agreements (CCGA) is to leverage NRCS and partner resources to:

1. Improve soil health.
2. Improve landscape performance in dealing with water quantity issues; either excess or inadequate, and downstream impacts.
3. Improve water quality.
4. Improve habitat for local wildlife species of concern.
5. Improve the environmental and economic performance of working agricultural lands.
6. Assist communities and groups to build and strengthen local food projects that provide healthy food and economic opportunities.

Emphasis will be placed on projects that:

1. Build technical capacity to implement Farm Bill Conservation Programs.
2. Build technical capacity of NRCS and partner field conservation employees.
3. Build the capacity of local partners to develop and implement effective projects.
4. Leverage non-Federal resources to achieve positive natural resources conservation outcomes.

There were 11 proposals submitted by partners for approximately \$3.7 million. North Dakota was able to award approximately \$2.7 million to 5 partners under this opportunity. Partners include:

- North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- ND State University
- University of North Dakota
- Enhancing and Strengthening North Dakota Nonprofits and Communities
- Ecological Insights

North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts

The purpose of this agreement is to provide up to ten Farm Bill Specialists to multi-county areas across North Dakota to assist with day-to-day workloads, deadlines and to address natural resource concerns.

North Dakota State University

There are two distinct agreements:

- Research - The purpose of this agreement, between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and North Dakota State University (Recipient), is to address the pesticide contamination issue from rinsate and container using the state-of-the-art far-UVC (222 nm) system, which aligns well with the mission of NDSU to provide creative and cost-effective solutions to current agricultural and environmental problems.
- Research - The purpose of this agreement, between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and North Dakota State University (Recipient), is to increase the diversity of existing native prairie restorations by comparing a spike seeding method with a base seed mix, and to research the viability of utilizing the same seeding methods in restoring highly invaded native and/or “reconverted” grasslands.

University of North Dakota

There are two distinct agreements:

- The purpose of this agreement, between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and University of North Dakota (Recipient), is to develop a comprehensive time series on grassland health status for last three decades to understand the past vegetation changes (which will allow us to better understand the future).
- The purpose of this agreement, between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and University of North Dakota (Recipient), is to investigate the impacts of tillage practices (zero till, variable stubble heights, thoroughly tilled) on snow processes, soil organic carbon and phosphorous, snow water equivalent (SWE) and runoff at edge-of-the-field (EOF) and watershed scale in the Ox Creek Watershed (OCW) using the combination of field-based observations and process-based modeling.

Enhancing and Strengthening North Dakota Nonprofits and Communities

The purpose of this agreement, between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Strengthen ND (Recipient), is anticipated by the end of the grant period include: 1) 15 farmers graduated from the Strong Farms Incubator; 15 farmers served as paid interns; 540 local foods producers and stakeholders received support and technical assistance through virtual incubator programming; 2) small farmers, ranchers, institutions and local foods stakeholders connected through an official value-added agriculture accelerator program, focused on building a strong local foods economy as an avenue for increased market access; and 3) retiring farmers, landowners, and farm seekers connected with properties, mentors, mentees, and technical assistance to increase access to land for aspiring farmers.

Ecological Insights

The purpose of this agreement, between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and ECOLOGICAL INSIGHTS (Recipient), is to address the following questions and needs for two watersheds currently in the watershed planning process: 1) How might

watershed restoration affect ecosystems services associated with water yield, sediment retention, and carbon sequestration, 2) Are modeled carbon inventories representative? 3) What other ecosystem services may be enhanced with restoration and how are these valued in the literature, and 3) Create training materials appropriate for technical staff and partners. Results will enhance understanding of ecosystem services for more effective conservation of resources at a watershed scale.