



Natural Resources Conservation Service
359 East Park Drive, Suite 2
Harrisburg, PA 17111



State Technical Committee

AGENDA

Thursday, January 18, 2024

This meeting will be conducted both in-person at the PA NRCS state office and remotely via Microsoft Teams internet conferencing. The office address, meeting link and a call-in telephone number are provided at the end of this document.

1:00 pm Welcome – Denise Coleman, NRCS State Conservationist

1:10 pm RCPP Presentation: Implementing a strategy to rapidly restore ag-impaired streams in Central PA; Adrienne Hobbins, Program Manager, Chesapeake Conservancy

1:50 pm **Technical Reports**

- Engineering – Tim Peters, State Engineer
- Ecological Sciences – Dan Ludwig, State Resource Conservationist

2:15 pm **Financial Program Reports**

- Updates – Jared Shippey, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – Ryan Cornelius, EQIP Program Manager
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) – Ashley Lenig, Conservation Program Manager
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Adam Dellinger, Regional Conservation Partnership Program Coordinator

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2:30 pm Partnership and Easement Programs Report

- Partnerships and Outreach Updates- Susan Parry ASTC for Partnerships
- Agricultural Conservation Easements Programs (ACEP) – Melissa Hanner, Easement Program Manager

3:00 pm Committee Input & Adjourn

Open Forum for State Technical Committee members- ideas for topics or agenda items for future meetings; statewide online survey.

***2024 Dates for State Technical Committee Meetings:**

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

Wednesday, July 17, 2024

Thursday, October 24, 2024

January 18, 2024; Microsoft Teams meeting link:

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 267 044 151 901

Passcode: 2J7TRH

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 202-650-0123,657303009#](#) United States, Washington DC

Phone Conference ID: 657 303 009#

State Office Address and STC Webpage Link:

[Pennsylvania State Technical Committee](#) | [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

STC Handout Web Page Link:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/pennsylvania/pennsylvania-state-technical-committee-0>

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United States Department of Agriculture

Directions to the NRCS Pennsylvania State Office



USDA-NRCS

**359 East Park Drive, Suite 2
Harrisburg, PA 17111**

NRCS is located on the east corner of the building

Telephone: 717-237-2100

Fax: 717- 237-2238

Building hours are: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

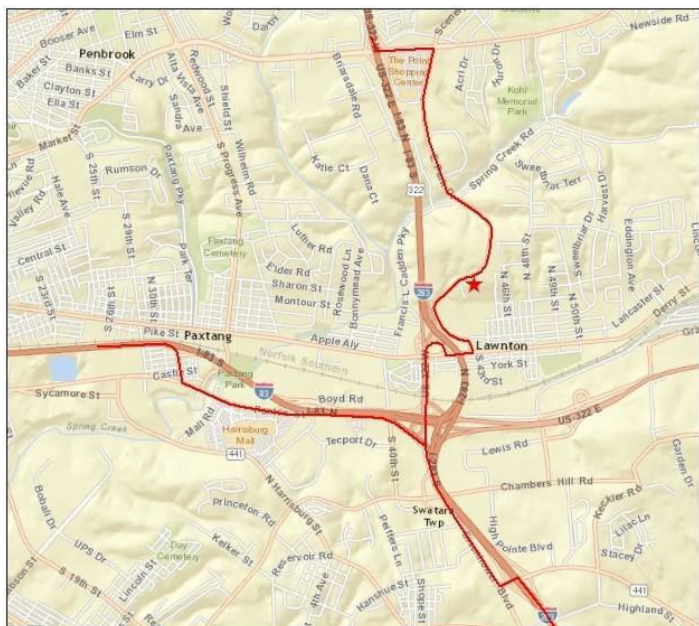
If arriving outside of building hours please arrange for someone to meet you at the west building entrance to allow access to the building.

Driving Directions

From Washington, DC: Take MD-295 N. - toward BALTI- MORE; Merge onto MD-295 N via the exit; Merge onto I-95 N toward; BALTIMORE/COLLEGE PARK; Merge onto I- 695 N/BALTIMORE BELTWAY INNER LOOP via exit

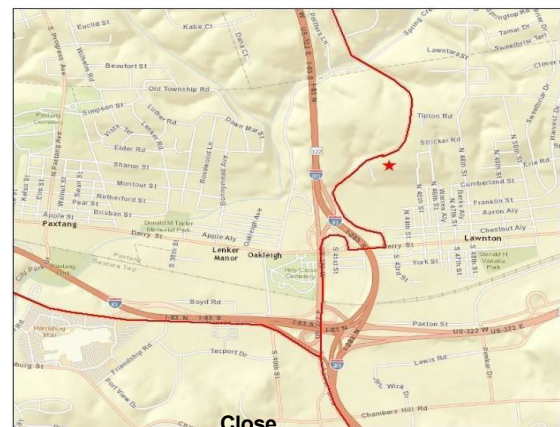
number 49B- on the left- toward I-70/I83/TOWSON; Merge onto I-83 N via exit number 24 toward TIMONIUM/YORK PA.; Continue on I83 N to exit number 45 toward Paxton Street; merge onto S 32nd Street; turn left onto Capital Area Greenbelt/Parkview Lane; turn left onto Capital Area Green- belt/City Park Drive and continue to follow Capital Area Greenbelt; take the 1st right onto Derry Street; turn left onto East Park Drive and travel approximately 0.6 mile.

Destination will be on the right.



From Philadelphia: Take exit 247 to merge onto I- 283 N toward PA-283/Harrisburg/Hershey; take exit 2 for PA-441 N; turn left onto PA-441 N/Lindle Road; turn right onto Eisenhower Boule- vard; continue onto US-322 W; keep right at the fork, follow signs for Derry Street; keep left at the fork, follow signs for Lawnton; turn left onto Derry Street; Take the 1st left onto East Park Drive and travel approximately 0.6 mile.

Destination will be on the right.



From Pittsburgh: I-76 E/Pennsylvania Turnpike East; Take exit 236 toward U.S. 15 N/Harrisburg; continue on the ramp and merge onto US-15 N; Take the exit onto PA-581 E toward I-83/ Harrisburg/Hershey; Merge onto I-83 N; take exit 45 toward Pax- ton Street; Merge onto S 32nd Street; turn left onto Capital Area Greenbelt/Parkview Lane; turn left onto Capital Area Greenbelt/City Park Drive and continue to follow Capital Area Green- belt; take the 1st right onto Derry Street; turn left onto East Park Drive and travel approximately 0.6 mile.

Destination will be on the right.

From State College: Merge onto US-322E via the ramp to Lewistown; Merge onto US-22/US-322; Take the exit onto I- 81N/US-322E toward Hershey; Continue on US-322 E, follow signs for I- 83S/Hershey York; Continue onto I-83S/US-322E; Take Exit 48 for Union Deposit Road; Turn left onto Union Deposit Road; Turn right onto East Park Drive and travel approximately 0.6 mile.

Destination will be on the right.

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Pennsylvania State Technical Committee Meeting

January 18, 2024

The Pennsylvania State Technical Committee Meeting was held in the USDA Conference Room at the NRCS State Office on Thursday, January 18, 2024

Denise Coleman (NRCS) (Natural Resources Conservation Service) opened the meeting at 1 PM. After a few brief comments, she introduced Susan Parry, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Partnership, who in turn introduced the guest speaker.

Adrian Hobbins, Chesapeake Conservancy Program Manager, was introduced and proceeded to discuss the Implementation of a strategy for restoration of ag-impaired streams in Central Pennsylvania. (See attached hand-out) She explained that the Chesapeake Conservancy is an environmental non-profit based out of Annapolis, MD, having an office in Pennsylvania at the Susquehanna University at the Freshwater Research Institute. Having a staff of seven full-time members that has been working over the past years to implement and facilitate a data driven strategy to install conservation practices in the places for water quality, most recently implementing an effort called Rapid Stream delisting. In general, what we are doing is working with small to medium sized livestock producers to implement full farm restoration projects across the six-county region in Central Pennsylvania. She continued to explain the establishment of the collective impact of the program that started in 2017, which took a little over one and one-half years. Grants were received from various sources that solidified the approach planned to take getting everybody aligned and starting to do that proactive outreach and getting the first high priority restoration project group on the ground. In 2019, through our regular workshops, to discuss with our partners about what we should do as a next step for our program. A plan was decided upon to continue using three steps. First step was to select streams from the impaired waters list provided by DPA DEP, next to develop a plan using available resources then to do implementation, determine required maintenance and to monitoring. She continued to explain the further advancement of the Rapid Stream Delisting that included various steps including partnership alignment, proactive landowner engagement, development of conservation or other specific plans written, design and implementation. Establishment of details for long-term monitoring and maintenance completed the plan for implementation. As the implementation of plans continued, in early 2022 the need for an RCPP award was determined, and application for the RCPP award was initiated. The application process required continued feedback from partners and the state NRCS office. It required several steps to determine how much funding partnership could handle, what resource concerns were to be addressed, what practices should be included as well as innovative practices such as manure inject, nitrogen bioreactors and soil testing.

Twenty-two partners provided feedback on application content. Thirteen partner contributions were made totaling \$11.49 Million. Continued the communication with State and Field Offices of NRCS. Also, the Chesapeake Conservancy made 3 staff members and one consultant to assist with developing the proposal between February and April of 2022. The RCPP application was started in late January and was due in early April. The RCPP award granted was for \$10 million, distribution was: \$7 million in direct payment to producers; \$1.63 million for technical assistance funding for partners; \$750 thousand to NRCS for Field Offices to oversee projects and provide technical assistance as needed; and \$556 thousand for the Chesapeake Conservancy to facilitate and administer the award. A Programmatic Partnership Agreement was put in place which included finalizing details for NRCS. The resource concerns, to be addressed by project, were defined for all participating partners. She continued to define the PPA Outcomes for tracking progress. She discussed the outcomes of Socioeconomic effects of the program. In addition to the kind of framework agreement, there were supplemental agreements that are put in place each year to mobilize the funding for the Conservancy as well as the third-party technical service providers. She explained the two supplemental agreements that were established. Leadership Team Meetings are held to keep full partnership up-to-date on RCPP progress and opportunities. Revolving focus topics include setting ranking criteria for RCPP projects; Learning about NRCS procedures and how to describe the; Innovative practice training; Discussions on project match; Learning about partner contribution reporting; and training on NRCS practices (stream restoration). Delisting Catchment Meetings are also conducted. As an example, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is doing some of the outreach, the Huntington County Conservancy District is doing some of it and just keeping really close tabs on where these projects are in terms of progress. One of the Outreach takeaways is the determination of who is the right partner fit, and what are the out-of-pocket expectations of the producer involved. She noted the accomplishments that indicated quite a few applications. In all, \$2.8 million in applications were submitted and ranked, and \$1.3 million that actually went to contract. Challenges were in the areas of deferrals and procedures for installing practices. Overall,

75% of 2023 projects had full funding in place and the remainder had full funding pending. She explained how the Rapid Delisting funding was allocated, how much and to whom it was allocated. She went on to note the lessons learned to this point in the progress of the program, of which project match being one of the biggest the Conservancy helped to facilitate. Reducing out of pocket as much as possible is the key to producer adoption. Again, she acknowledged all funding sources. Also noted was the fact it being challenging to implement large slates of projects in consecutive years because of limited partner capacity.

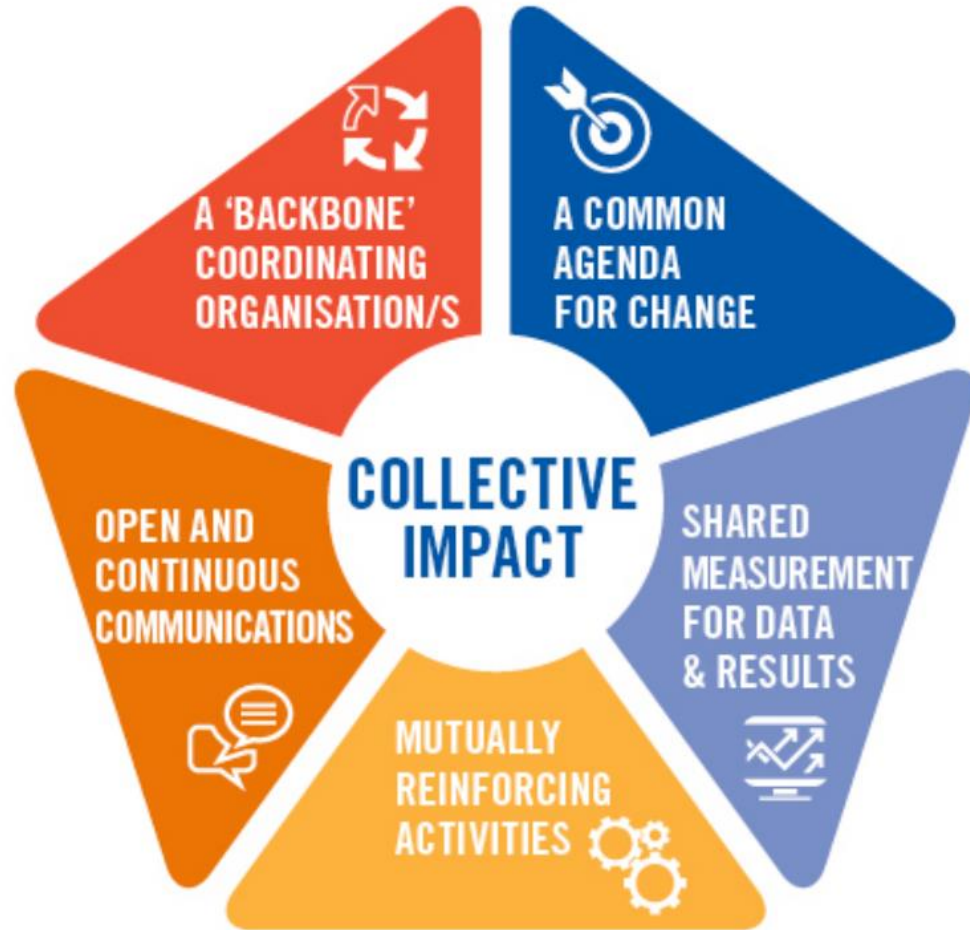
Recommendations to potential applicants included: Start application process early; determine capacity to handle grant funding, partner contributions, and coordinate RCPP award; and that continued communication with partners and grantor is key to moving things along quickly.

Rapid Stream Delisting in Central PA

2022 RCPP Award

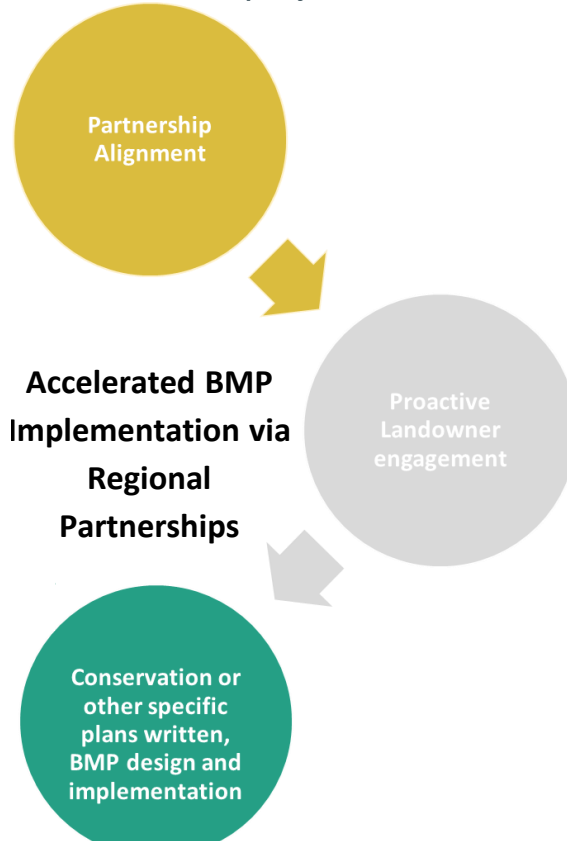
Adrienne Hobbins, Program Manager





2017 - The Beginning

Gaps: Partnership alignment, communication, funding in-hand for restoration projects



Step 1: Select streams



Delineate catchments

Analysis



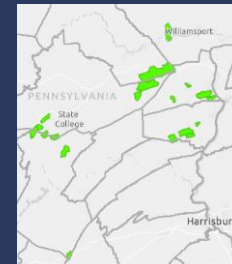
ID most promising

Workshops



Narrow down to most feasible

Catchment selection



Step 2: Develop plan



- ID partners for catchment
- ID parcels as 1) shovel-ready; 2) landowner amenable; 3) outreach priority
- ID funding & TA needs
- Develop outreach & deliverables plan
- Develop monitoring plan

BMPs Needed	Total Restoration Cost
Riparian	\$27,950.00
Barnyard, Riparian	\$20,000.00
Riparian with fencing	\$10,000.00
Riparian	\$33,840.00



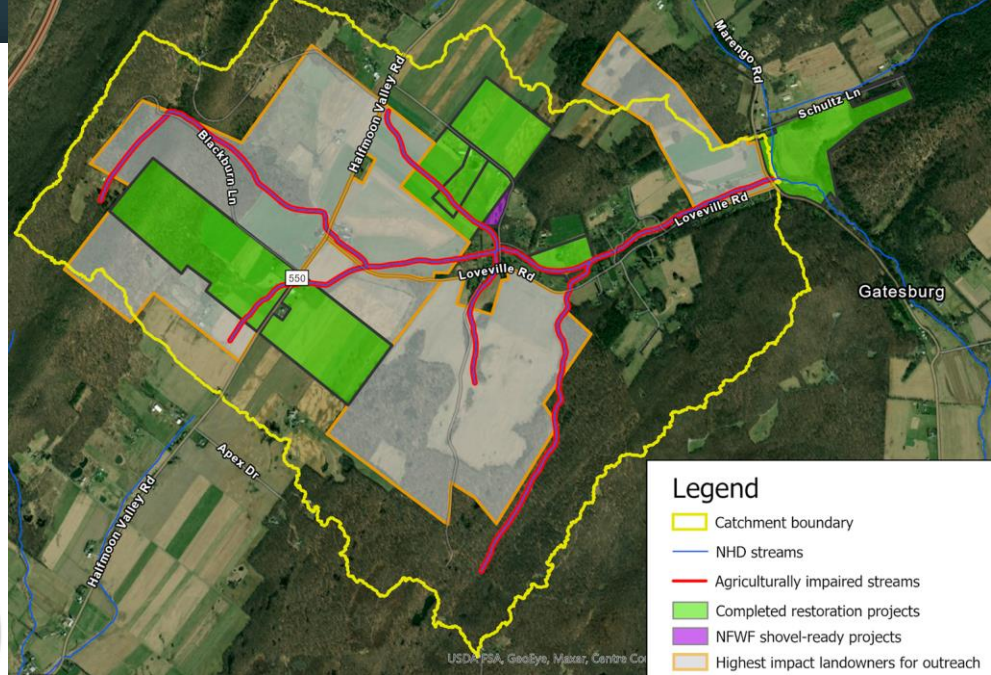
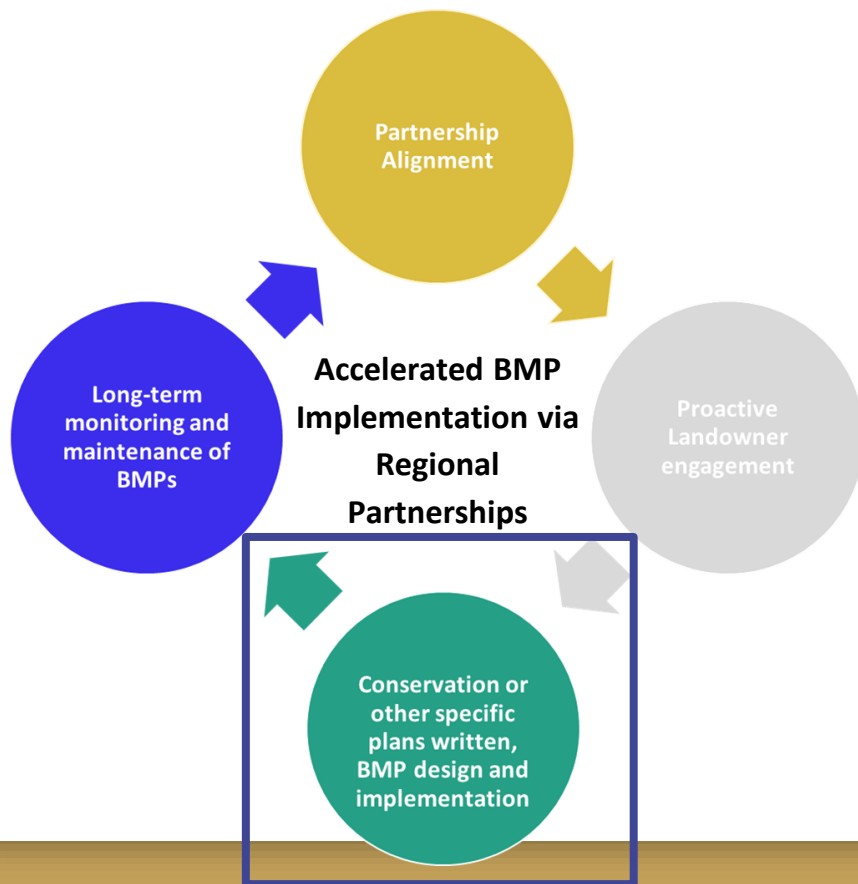
Step 3: Implementation, maintenance, monitoring



- Implement shovel-ready projects
- Carry out small, personal outreach with landowners of high priority parcels
- Secure funding & implement full-farm restoration in the catchment
- Complete periodic stream IBI monitoring
- Maintain practices to deliver long-term benefits

2019 - Birth of Rapid Stream Delisting

Gaps: Tangible Outcomes, Fundraising, scaling implementation, systems approach



RCPP Application: the nuts and bolts

Continued feedback from partners and state NRCS office

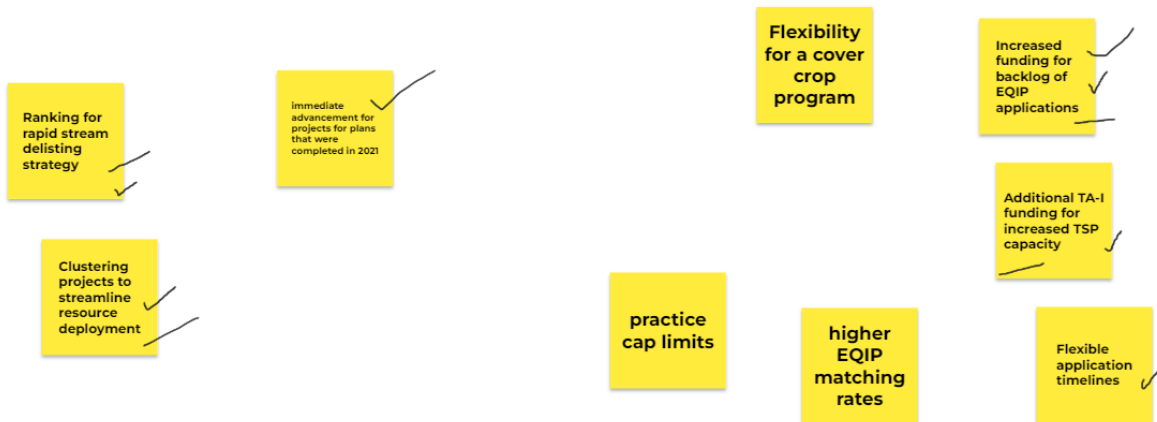
How much funding could partnership handle?

What resource concerns should be addressed?

What practices should be included: EQIP list

Innovative practices: manure injection, nitrogen bioreactors, soil testing

Q8: Provide a justification for why this project could not be carried out through other NRCS Farm Bill programs--what RCPP flexibilities does the project take advantage of?



RCPP Application: the process

Partners

22 partner organizations provided feedback on application content (9 meetings). 13 provided partner contributions totaling \$11.49M.

NRCS

Continued communication with State and Field Offices (5 meetings).

Chesapeake Conservancy

3 staff and one consultant developing proposal between February and April 2022.

The RCPP Award: \$10,000,000 total

Out the door

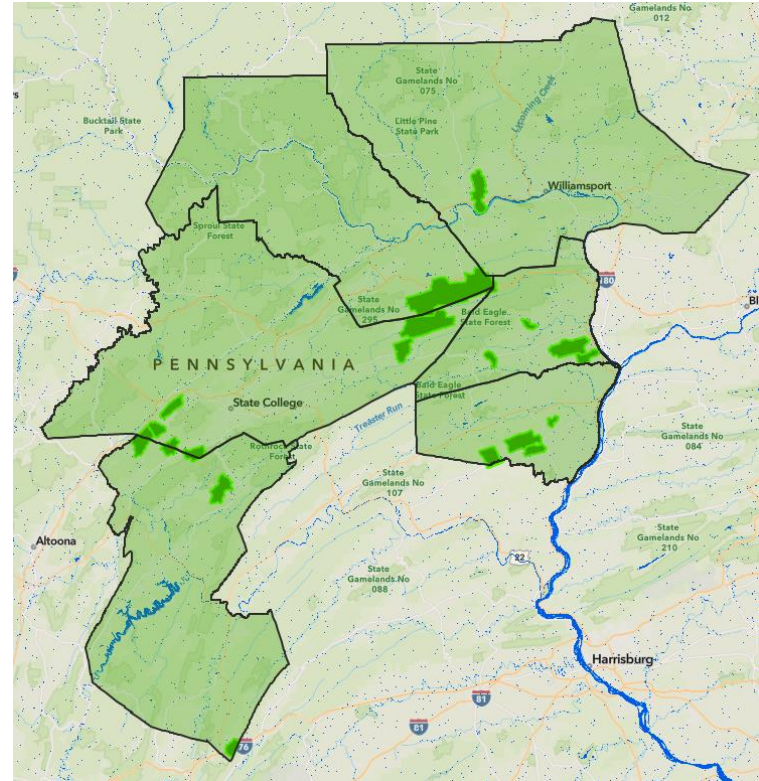
\$7M in direct payments to **producers**

\$1.63M in **technical assistance funding for partners** --covers both outreach and implementation technical assistance

\$750K to **NRCS for field offices** to oversee projects and provide technical assistance

Kept in-house

\$556K for **Chesapeake Conservancy** to facilitate and administer award



Programmatic Partnership Agreement:

Framework to obligate funding to project (funding to CC, partner contrib)

Included finalizing details for:

NRCS resource concerns to be addressed by project



Co.dot.com

**Field sediment,
nutrient pathogen loss**



Utah State University Extension

**Storage and handling
of pollutants**

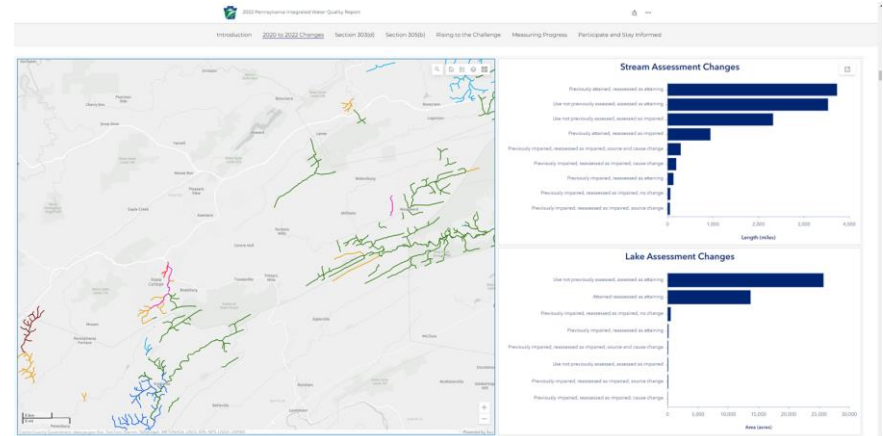
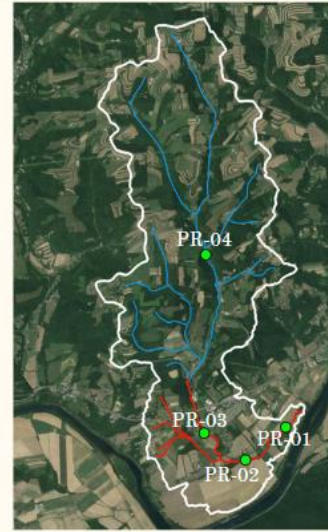


Salish Magazine

**Aquatic and
terrestrial habitat**

PPA Outcomes for Tracking Progress:

- **Modeling:** resulting pollutant load reductions for each restoration project.
- **Monitoring:** changes to aquatic habitat through in-stream monitoring efforts to establish a baseline by catchment.
- **Reassessment:** of streams for the PA DEP Integrated Water Quality Report every 2 years.



PPA Outcomes: Socioeconomic

- **Social:**
 - Number of producers engaged through outreach
 - success of different outreach strategies
 - number of applicants to farmland programs
 - % RCPP FA allocated annually to ensure closeout by FY 2027
 - number of producers enrolled in innovative conservation practices
- **Economic:** Economic outcomes will be measured by **percentage of project costs covered by producers.** Partners will collect information about project costs for 50% of producers in delisting catchments.

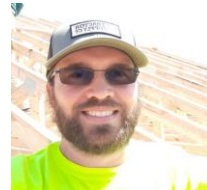


Supplemental agreements for technical assistance for enhancement and implementation

TA-Enhancement	TA-Implementation
CC staff time for project management, innovative practices, outreach	Design of BMPs
Partner outreach to producers	Engineering of BMPs

Leadership Team Meetings:

- Keeping full partnership up-to-date on RCPP progress and opportunities
- Revolving focus topic:
 - Setting ranking criteria for RCPP projects
 - Learning about NRCS procedures and how to describe them
 - Innovative practice training
 - Discussions on project match
 - Learning about partner contribution reporting
 - Training on NRCS practices (stream restoration)



Delisting Catchment Meetings:

Catchment Name: Aughwick Creek

Commitment to Outreach: Huntingdon County Conservation District, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Parcel summary: 4 parcels contribute 80% AIT.

Implementation Partners (TA)	Outreach contact	LO name	Previously completed restoration project	NFWF Shovel-ready projects	Likely amenable to Restoration	Outreach priority	AIT acres filtered
WPC	WPC			Pending GG grant for forest buffer, streambank fencing, livestock crossings, barnyard			94.31
	HCCD				Forest buffer, streambank fencing	X	85.44
	HCCD				Forest buffer, streambank fencing	X	74.38
	TBD					X	98.91
					AIT on 4 rapid delisting parcels		353.04
					Total catchment AIT		439.99

Key:

Completed restoration projects

NFWF shovel-ready projects

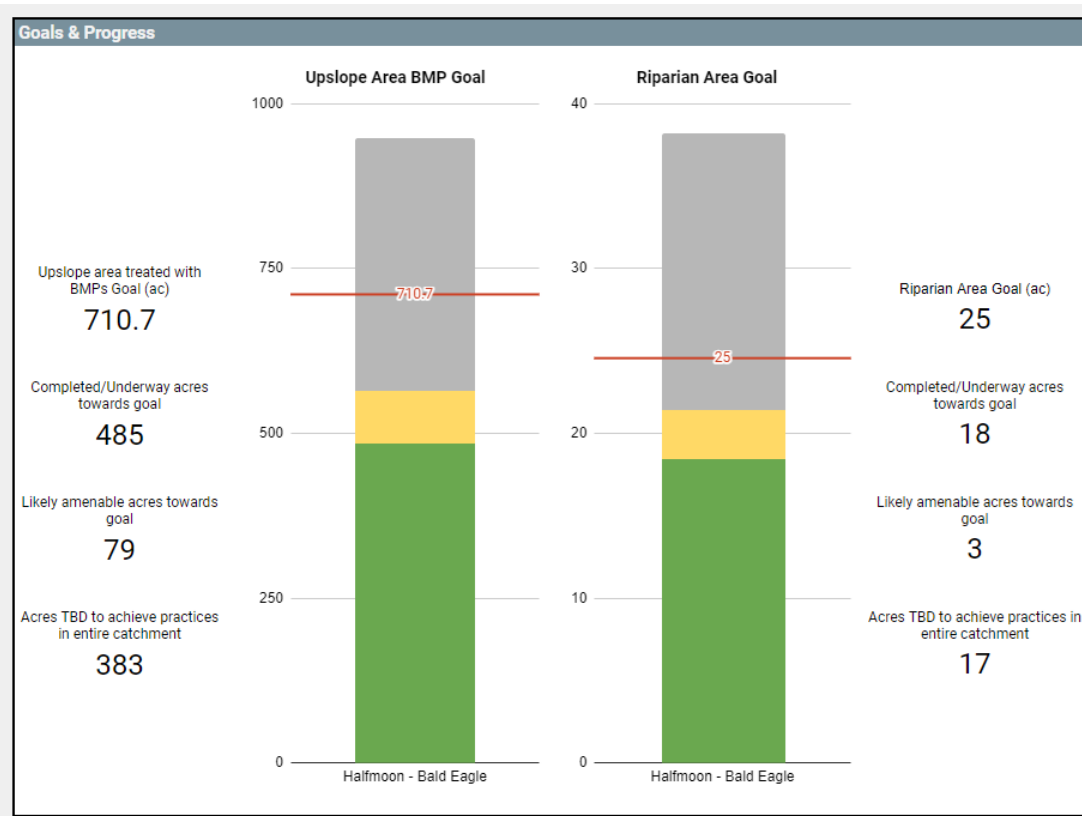
Landowner likely amenable to restoration

Highest impact landowners for outreach



Outreach takeaways: who is right partner fit, what are out of pocket expectations of producer.

Tracking progress: Stream Delisting Dashboard



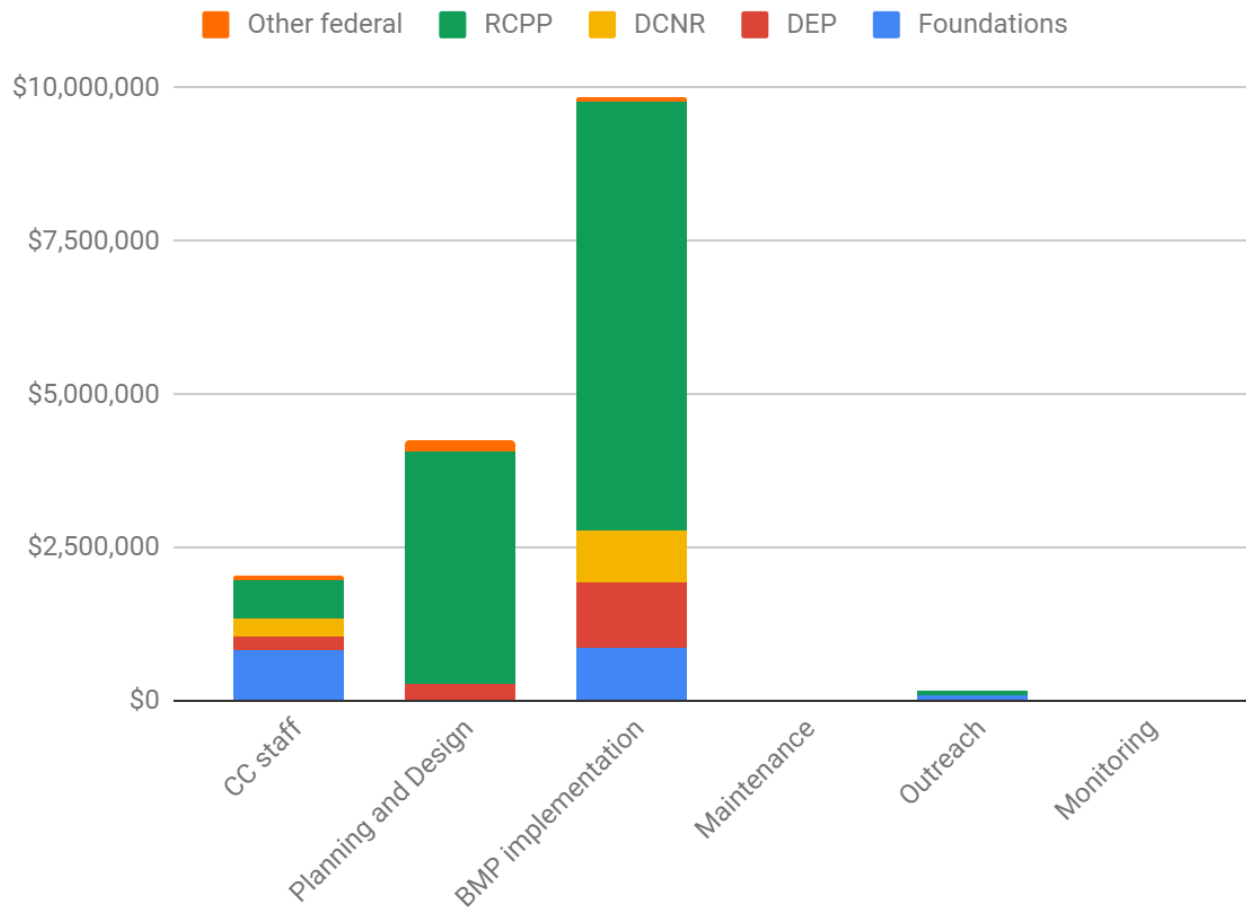
Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Lots of applications
- Challenges: deferrals, procedures for installing practices
- 75% of 2023 projects have full funding in place, remainder have full funding pending



Rapid Delisting Funding Breakdown

**just displaying
funds raised
through CC



Lessons learned:

- Project match is one of the biggest discussions CC has helped to facilitate.
 - Reducing out of pocket as much as possible is **key to producer adoption.**
 - Funding sources used for match in FY 2023 and 2024 from both partners and CC:
 - Ag Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP)
 - Countywide Action Plan (CAP)
 - Growing Greener (GG)
 - National Fish and Wildlife Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) and Small Watershed Grant (SWG)
 - PennVest funding (grant and loan)
 - PennVest Pay for Performance Grant
- Its challenging to implement large slates of projects in consecutive years because of **limited partner capacity.**
 - Hard to implement, build que, and focus on other priorities all at once.



Recommendations to potential applicants:

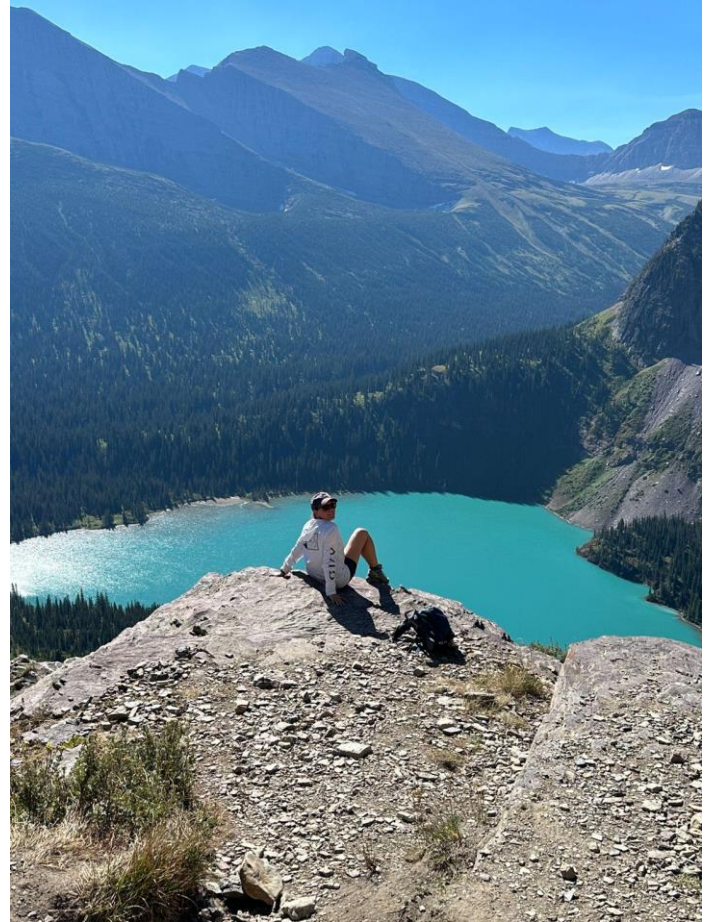
- Start application process early (late January was pretty late and we were definitely crunched for time) and communicate with partners and NRCS state office about application.
- Determine capacity to handle grant funding, partner contributions, and coordinate RCPP award.
- Continued communication with partners and grantor is key to moving things along quickly.

Questions:

Adrienne Hobbins

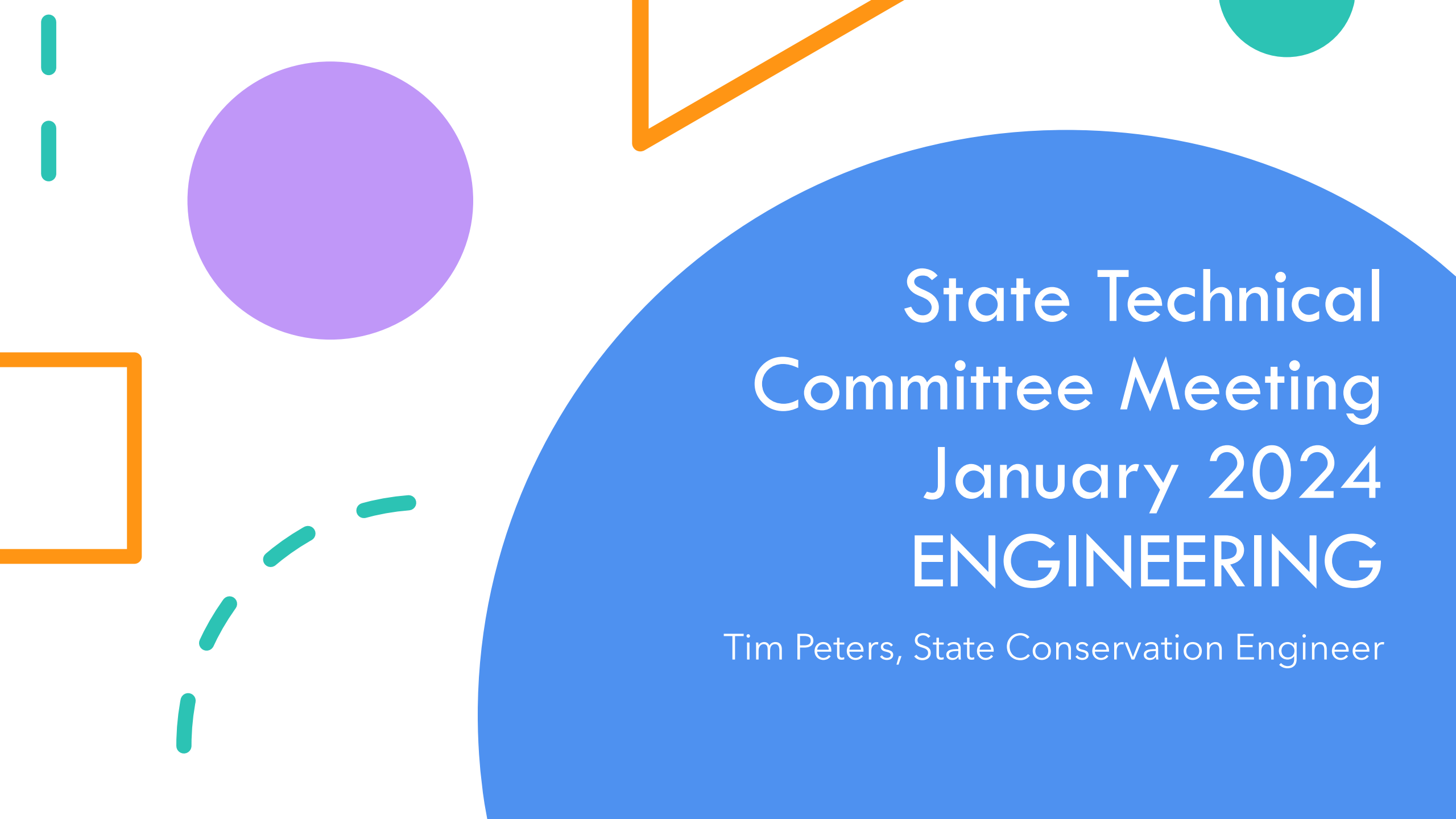
Program Manager

ahobbins@chesapeakeconservancy.org



Tim Peters, NRCS State Conservation Engineer, was introduced and provided a Technical Report update. (See attached hand-out.) Tim started off by announcing that the Annual Virtual Engineering Workshop would be held on January 30th, 2024, and encouraged all to attend. He discussed the topics that are to be covered in the workshop. He continued to provide an EWP update concerning the July storms in SE Pennsylvania. He noted that NRCS received funding for 15 eligible sites in Berks, Bucks and Chester Counties. The respective Conservation Districts being named as the sponsors. DEP has limited matching funds that have been prioritized for Environmental Justice Areas in Berks and Chester Counties.

He also provided an EWP update on the September Storms that occurred in NE Pennsylvania. He stated that 75% EWP program funding was made available for eligible sites in Lackawanna, Wyoming and Luzerne Counties, for which the local Conservation Districts and the City of Scranton are sponsors. Damage survey reports have been completed and DEP may have funding targeted toward the Chesapeake Bay for the 25%. He announced the release of NHCP (National Handbook of Conservation Practice) Standards for FY2024 and discussed those standards that apply to Pennsylvania. In the near future, these standards will be made "state specific", then released for state usage. He encouraged input from everyone. He continued by announcing different trainings that are planned. They include: Boot Camps, with the Basic portion scheduled for April 8-12 with a back-up date of 15-19 April. Boot Camp II is scheduled for April 19th thru May 3rd with a back-up date of 15-19 April; Concrete Fundamentals is scheduled for May 20 thru May 24th; CAD training is scheduled for February 21st thru the 23rd; ACA & Manure Storage Act 38 is scheduled for May 20th thru May 22nd; Liner training is scheduled for 5 thru 9 August.



State Technical Committee Meeting January 2024 ENGINEERING

Tim Peters, State Conservation Engineer

Annual Engineering Workshop

- January 30, 2024 – Virtual Workshop
 - 5 PE PDH
 - Topics
 - Sustainable Concrete
 - Covers and Flares benefits
 - Alternative roof options
 - HUA ventilation
 - Water Withdrawals for Irrigation

EWP July Storms (SE PA) Update

- NRCS received 75% funding for 15 eligible sites
 - Berks – 9 sites
 - Chester – 2 sites
 - Bucks – 4 sites
- Conservation Districts are sponsors
- DEP has limited matching funds – prioritized Environmental Justice Areas
 - 3 Berks sites
 - 1 Chester site

EWP September Storms (NE PA) Update

- EWP program funding was made available
- Eligible Sites:
 - Lackawanna – 5 sites
 - Wyoming – 2 sites
 - Luzerne – 1 site
- Conservation Districts and City of Scranton are sponsors
- Damage Survey Reports are completed
- DEP may have funding targeted towards the Chesapeake Bay for the 25%.

NHCP Standards Release FY2024

- 366 Anaerobic Digester
- 316 Animal Mortality Facility
- 468 Lined Waterway or Outlet
- 367 Roofs and Covers
- 600 Terrace
- 620 Underground Outlet
- 313 Waste Storage

Training

- Boot Camps
 - Basic: April 8-12, April 15-19 (backup)
 - Boot II: April 29-May 3 , May 13-17 (backup)
- Concrete Fundamentals: May 20-24
- CAD: February 21-23
- ACA & Manure Storage ACT 38: May 20-22
- Liner: August 5-9



Thank you

Dan Ludwig, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Ecological Sciences was introduced and provided an update. He announced that Eco Sciences have two practices that they will be working on. They are dealing with Gorge Trails and Landings, and Tree and Shrub establishment. Being Forestry related and the position of State Forester being vacant, things are working a bit slower. He noted that there is training being scheduled for Certified Planners which will be held in the August thru November time frame in Grantville, PA. This will be followed up by a second session to round out the training. Other training planned is Ecological Sciences Job Approval Training for Fence. We did a training last year so we will be scheduling it again this year for our conservation folks that may be helping with EQIP ACAP funded projects. Mark Goodson, our State Agronomist is currently working on updating cover crop rates. He is working with Charlie White at Penn State on this. It is anticipated that we will be reducing some of the rates. He took a few minutes to explain the process followed when National Office Standards are released and what actions are required by NRCS in Pennsylvania.

Jared Shippey, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, was introduced and provided a Programs update. (See attached hand-out.)

EQIP and AMA:

He noted that the state was allocated a significant increase in funding through EQIP and CSP in relation to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). In comparison, last year we received an additional \$3.2 million in EQIP IRA money, this year we received almost \$31 million in addition to the typical allocation of general EQIP, which is \$20 million to \$25 million. Realizing the big task ahead, we looked at it as an opportunity to get these funds out to our customers and initiated a funding mechanism that is called ACT Now. He proceeded to explain how the new ACT Now EQIP-IRA Cover Crop allocations was disbursed within the three administrative areas of the state that had preapproved requests. ACT Now NWQI had 14 preapproved requests. He stated that as of this date, there are 8 EQIP Contract obligations amounting to \$800,000 covering about 2500 acres. It is expected that these numbers will increase significantly from day to day as the contracts are coming in. All these contracts will be obligated and on the books, ready to go, by March 1st.

Financial Assistance Programs Update: CIG, CSP, EQIP-NWQI:

Jared explained that National CIG Classic and National CIG On Farm Trials reviews have been completed. The State competition Notice of Funding Opportunity template has not yet been released from national office, and that interested groups should get on our New Release mailing list to insure proper notification of updated news releases. For CSP he noted that 57 contract renewal obligations have been completed for \$1.6 million covering 8517 acres. He discussed the CSP Classic FY2024 Fund Pools, which included how the 288 applications were distributed to the three administrative areas in the state. Round 1 applications will be completed in January. A new round has been opened and we are now taking applications. CSP Classic CSP 2024-2 have gone out with a signup date ending March 1st. CSP Renewals for FY 2025 have a signup deadline of March 29th. He discussed the changes for the CSP this year, the major change being the minimum pay increased from \$1,500 to \$4,000 for the 5-year program.

He announced that the Environmental Quality Incentives Program - NWQI FY2024 Allocation is \$3.2 million with 14 preapproved applications. Annual Reports for the existing watersheds showing progress toward set goals during the past year are soon to be published.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP):

Jared announced and discussed the New RCPP Projects selected for funding in FY2024. The first being: Scaling adoption of adaptive nitrogen management using cover crop imaging and nitrogen crediting technology. The Lead partner being the Nature Conservancy. \$21.7 million has been awarded for the project areas of the Chesapeake Bay in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. The funding has been made available to plant multi-species cover crops then use low-cost camera systems to produce variable rate fertilizer prescriptions for the following cash crop. The Second being: Mid-Atlantic Dairy Farmers Producing tangible results through climate smart solutions. The lead partner is the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association. They have been allocated \$10 million to apply to the Co-op milkshed within PA, MD, VA and NC. This funding has been made available to build the pipeline of dairy farms ready to implement climate smart-practices which improve local water quality, yield GHG reductions, and to improve soil health. Concerning FY2024 RCPP Land Management Contracts, He announced the application cutoff dates are the same for all RCPP projects and EQIP/AMA as being November 1st, January 1st and March 1st. He announced the newest as being the Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation. The Lead partner is the PA Dept of Agriculture. The amount of the award is \$7.8 million, and the Project Area is statewide. The funding will be available for entity held forest and farmland easements and climate-smart practices on Preserved Farms. FY 2024 will be the first year for Contracts, and interested landowners should contact their local NRCS Field Offices for more information. He noted the FY2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity information about the opportunity to submit FY2024 RCPP project proposals will be available this winter, and to contact Adam Dellinger, NRCS State RCPP Program Manager if interested.



United States Department of Agriculture



Program Updates (EQIP & AMA)

USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service
Pennsylvania, January 18th , 2024



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FY24 EQIP update:



ACT Now EQIP-IRA Cover Crop:

NE- 92 preapproved totaling \$7,754,868

SE- 154 preapproved totaling \$12,887,315

W- 119 preapproved totaling \$9,381,825

ACT Now NWQI:

14 preapproved for \$3,158,780



FY24 EQIP Contracting Obligations to date:



PROGRAM	# OF CONTRACTS	\$ OBLIGATED	CONTRACTED ACRES
EQIP	2	\$73,830	587 ac





United States Department of Agriculture

PA NRCS Programs Team

Financial Assistance Programs Update CIG, CSP, EQIP-NWQI

***Pennsylvania State Technical Committee Meeting
Ashley Lenig, Conservation Program Manager***

January 12, 2024

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Presentation Outline

- **Conservation Innovative Grants (CIG)**
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**
- **National Water Quality Initiative (EQIP-NWQI)**



Conservation Innovation Grants



- Reviews were completed for:
 - National CIG classic
 - National CIG On Farm Trials
- State competition Notice of Funding Opportunity template not released yet from national office
- Interested groups should get on our New Release mailing list



Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP Contract Renewal Obligations Completed

- **57 contracts for \$1,603,046 on 8,517 acres**



Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP Classic FY2024 Fund Pools Note: By PA Areas

Ag Lands-STATEWIDE Classic BFR

Ag Lands-STATEWIDE Classic SDFR

Ag Lands-PA WEST Classic

Ag Lands-PA NORTHEAST Classic

Ag Lands-PA SOUTHEAST Classic

Ag Lands-STATEWIDE Classic Organic

NIPF-STATEWIDE Classic BFR

NIPF-STATEWIDE Classic SDFR

NIPF-PA WEST Classic

NIPF-PA NORTHEAST Classic

NIPF-PA SOUTHEAST Classic

CSP IRA Ag Lands-STATEWIDE SDFR

CSP IRA Ag Lands-STATEWIDE BFR

CSP IRA Ag Lands-PA WEST

CSP IRA Ag Lands-PA NORTHEAST

CSP IRA Ag Lands-PA SOUTHEAST

CSP IRA NIPF-STATEWIDE Classic BFR

CSP IRA NIPF-STATEWIDE Classic SDFR

CSP IRA NIPF-PA WEST Classic

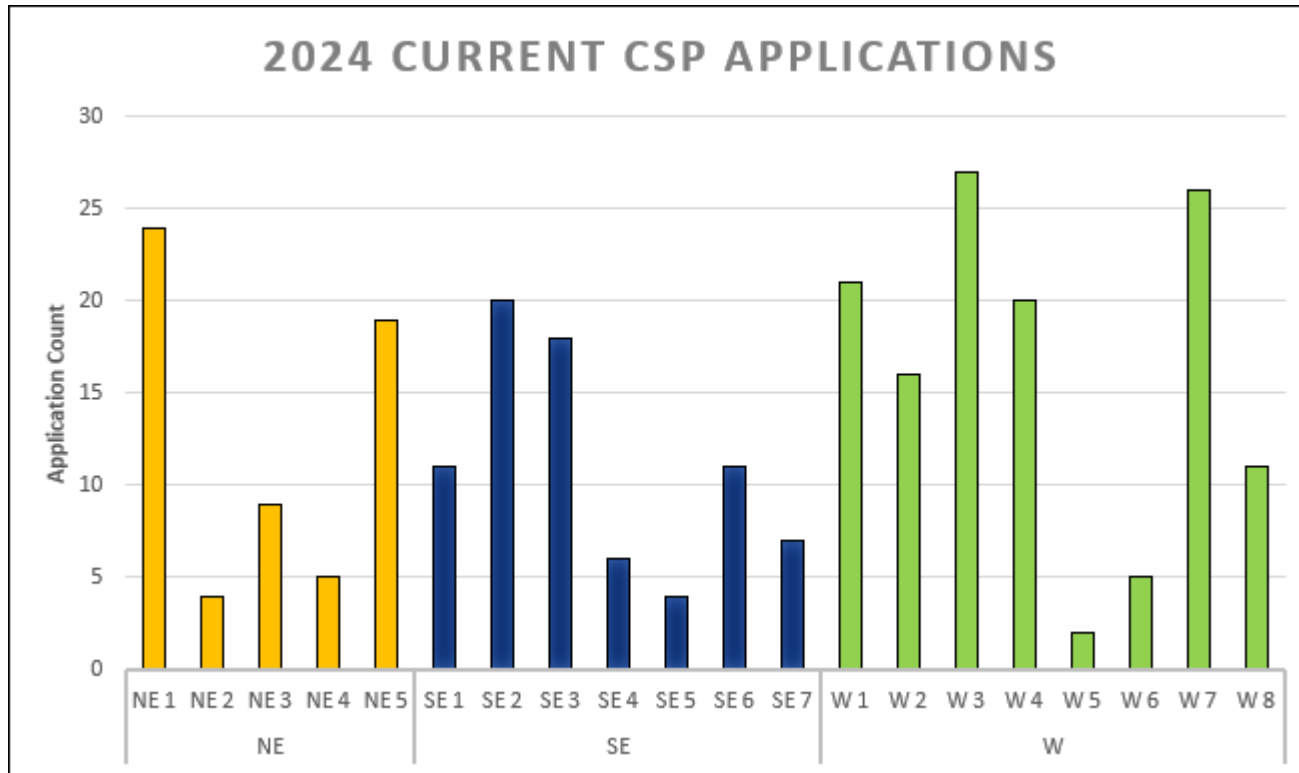
CSP IRA NIPF-PA NORTHEAST Classic

CSP IRA NIPF-PA SOUTHEAST Classic



Applications CSP 2024-1

288 Applications



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Conservation Stewardship Program

CSP 2024-2

- CSP Classic Sign Up 2 New Release went out
- Deadline to sign up by 3/1/2024
- Outreach for more applicants

CSP Renewals for FY2025

- National Bulletin just came out.
- 2020 Contracts
- Deadline to sign up 3/29/2024.



Conservation Stewardship Program

Developed Materials // Changes this year

- Training on 1/16/2024
- Rankings, Cost List, Calculator, Activity Lists, Jobsheets, etc.
- Note that Organic option is not available in CSP IRA

Changes this year

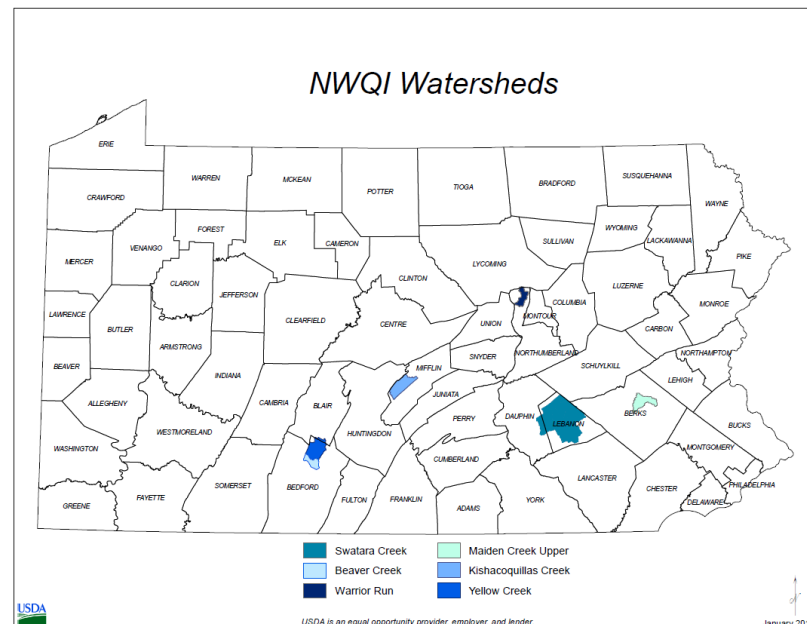
- Expanded footprint (PA)
- Min Pay increased from \$1,500 to \$4,000
- New Cost Calculations for existing activity payment include Historically Underserved payment rate.



National Water Quality Initiative

Environmental Quality Incentives Program – NWQI

- FY2024 Allocation: \$3,168,383
- Preapproved: 14 applications
- Existing Watersheds:
Annual reports were due on 1/5/24 to show progress towards goals during the past year



Questions?

Comments?

A yellow pencil with a sharpened lead tip and a pink eraser is positioned diagonally across the frame. It rests on a stack of four sticky notes. The sticky notes are colored purple, yellow, purple, and purple from bottom to top. The background is a solid dark blue-grey color.

Ashley Lenig
Conservation Program Manager (CSP, CIG, NWQI)
ashley.lenig@usda.gov



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Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Update



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***New* RCPP Projects selected for funding in Fiscal Year 2023**

- **Scaling Adoption of Adaptive Nitrogen Management using Cover Crop Imaging and Nitrogen Crediting Technology**
 - Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
 - Award: \$21,723,626
 - Project Area: Chesapeake Bay in PA, MD, and DE
 - Funding available to plant multi-species cover crops then use low-cost camera systems to produce variable rate fertilizer prescriptions for the following cash crop.
- **Mid-Atlantic Dairy Farmers Producing Tangible Results Through Climate Smart Solutions**
 - Lead Partner: Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association
 - Award: \$10,000,000
 - Project Area: Co-op milkshed within PA, MD, VA, and NC
 - Funding available to build the pipeline of dairy farms ready to implement climate smart-practices which improve local water quality, yield GHG reductions, and improve soil health.



FY24 RCPP Land Management Contracts

- **Application cutoff dates are the same for all RCPP projects and EQIP/AMA**
 - Nov 1, Jan 1, **Mar 1**
- **Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation**
 - Lead Partner: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
 - Award: \$7,850,000
 - Project Area: Statewide
 - Funding available for entity held forest and farmland easements and climate-smart practices on Preserved Farms.
 - **FY24 will be first year for contracts! interested landowners should contact their local NRCS field office for more information.**



FY24 Notice of Funding Opportunity



- **Information about the opportunity to submit FY24 RCPP project proposals will be available this winter**
 - Contact Adam Dellinger, RCPP Program Manager, if your organization is interested in discussing a proposal idea
 - Adam.Dellinger@usda.gov, 717-237-2206



Kristen Hand, DCNR for the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape, was introduced and provided information on the Sentinel Landscape Program. (See attached hand-out.)

(<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fstorymaps.arcgis.com%2Fstories%2Fbb8a24fa758a45d98266c714f7520613&data=05%7C02%7Csusan.parry%40usda.gov%7Cce8bb2d41fb94091b8ff08dc184bfdab%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C1%7C0%7C638411970400462633%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IjkihaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9pWqiImZXI3LtpKf1gsifGnWprb01cTyq6x6JjzhLbM%3D&reserved=0>) She described the Sentinel

Landscape Program as a beautiful marriage between conservation and military preparedness and needs within our landscape. Those installations involved in the Landscape program include: the Letterkenny Army Depot, Carlisle Barracks, the Naval Support Activity at Mechanicsburg and Fort Indiantown Gap. She stated that by working together with several military installations over the years, that there is a lot of overlap between our needs and their needs. In working together, we talk to local governments about compatible use ordinances and also just try and help with easements and workshops on helping those governments understand how we can all work together. The 250 mile long Kittatinny Ridge spans from Northern Maryland to New York's Catskill Mountains through the southeastern section of Pennsylvania. It is a globally important bird way. It is unique because it also touches a lot of others, so it provides not just a corridor for species, but also a great way for partners to get together and connect some of the other conservation landscapes from South Mountain to the Poconos. It contains significant natural and recreational resources, among them is the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge and more than 160 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. She noted the presence of the Regal Fritillary Butterfly habitat protection area on the grounds of Ft Indiantown Gap. She indicated that the possibility of installation of wind turbines pose a threat to the area. They while wonderful from an energy standpoint, they are not so good from compatible use standpoint when you're looking at the ridge as a flyway for both birds and then aviation training for military aircraft. So, getting that information out there and

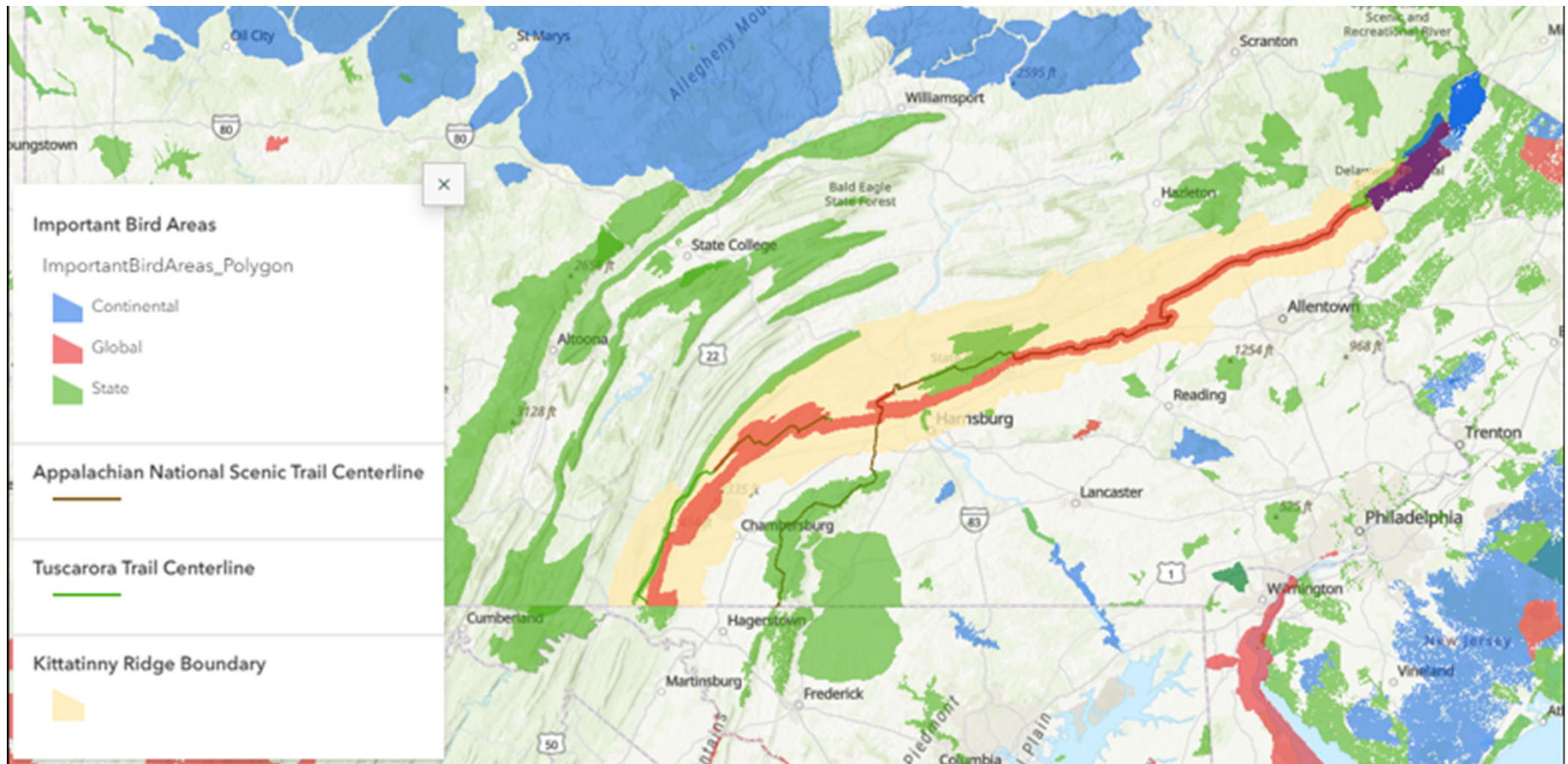
trying to work with local municipalities to understand that some things are good, but not necessarily in the right place, you have to think about that compatible use for the area and what's the overall best use for these things. The same concern as well for the increased warehousing that is going on at the south side of the ridge. While this is great from an economic standpoint, it can be detrimental if there is too much traffic coming in and out of those warehouses. If there was a military emergency and we needed to get troops or supplies out of our bases located in that area, it could cause some problems from an infrastructure standpoint. Again, it's not that we are saying that it is a bad thing, it's great for commerce and the economy, but at the same time, we have to think about the compatible uses. We are trying to protect some of these areas because it is crucial. One of those ways that we try and do some of this is through the promotion of outdoor recreation and trying to preserve some of this land for outdoor recreation, so that in some of the communities along the Ridge, we're still providing economic benefit through trying to help encourage outdoor recreation infrastructure and that provides more of a sustainable economy, a lot of towns, especially on the north side of the Ridge still have some old coal towns that are now environmental justice communities. Trying to encourage the towns and municipalities to get together to encourage outdoor recreation. Funding is available for some of that type of development and working together to try and prepare and get them into a more sustainable economy base instead of extractive industries like coal.

Adam Dellinger, NRCS RCPP Coordinator, was introduced and addressed funding allocations and availabilities for the RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Project. (See attached hand-out.) He indicated that \$7 million has been set aside for easement acquisition across the Kittatinny landscape. He also noted that Partner contributions amounted to \$39 million in support to the project. The main purpose of this project is for Ag and Forest easements. The main resource concerns that we're targeting here are aquatic habitat, terrestrial habitat and then, of course, the long-term protection of land that goes along with those easements. He continued to discuss the priorities set for the different counties within the project area.

Melissa Hanner, NRCS Easement Program Manager, was introduced and continued with the Easement update. She announced that applications are being accepted for Agricultural Easements and Forest Easements. She went on to discuss the accomplishments in both areas noting the total applications and Easements so far cover 1,520 acres for \$1.8 million. She acknowledged the different partners involved in the Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Project. She encouraged those who are interested or have questions concerning Easements, to contact herself or Adam Dellinger, PA NRCS RCPP Coordinator for details, or the Dept of Agriculture Bureau, Farmland Preservation representative, Stephanie Zimmerman who is the Project Lead for this RCPP project. She discussed and recognized other ongoing Federal Easement Programs that included the following: RCPP 2035 - Buffalo Creek Agriculture Easements in Armstrong County; RCPP 2712 - Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation; ACE ALE - Agricultural Land Easements; ACEP WRE - Wetland Reserve Easements. She also discussed the FY2024 Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC) for WRE, noting that the rates have increased by 12 percent from last year.

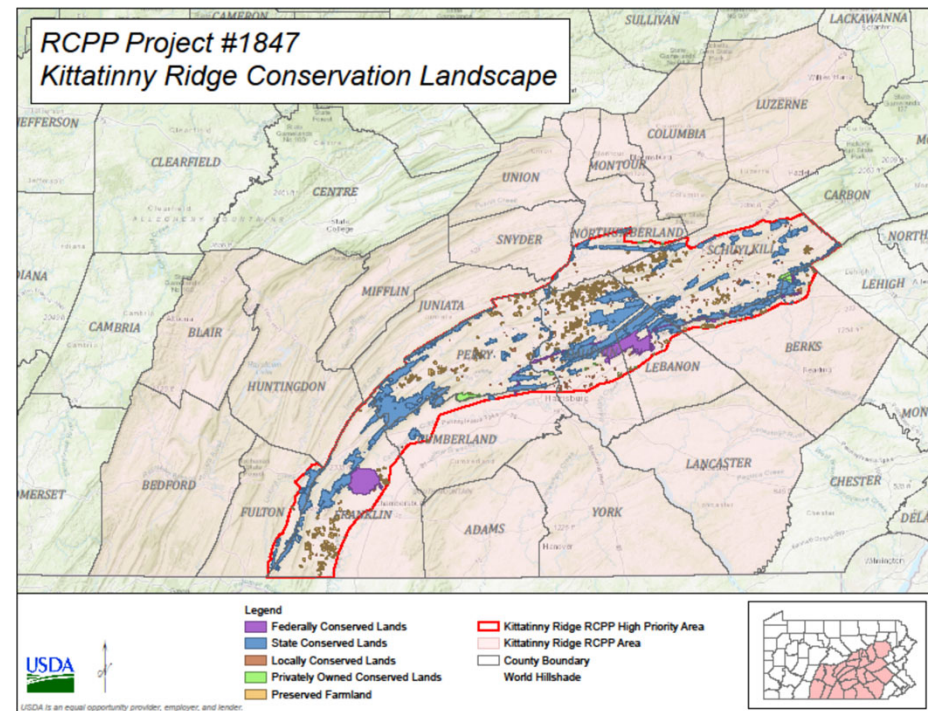
RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Project

- **\$7,000,000 – USDA Allocations**
- **\$39M - Partner contributions**
- **Conservation Easements, Forest Mgt Plans and Conservation plans**

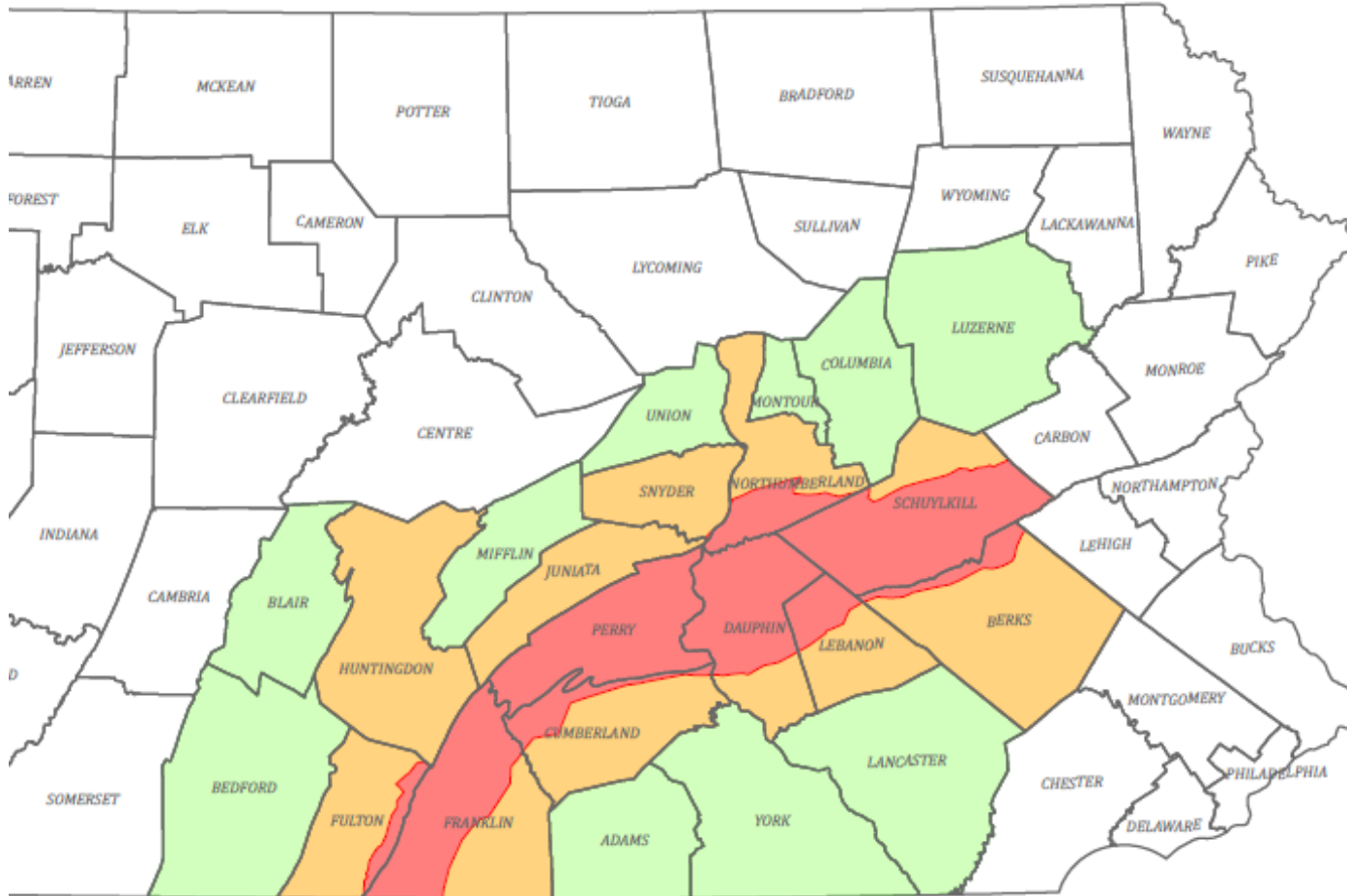


RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Project Overview

- Supports the purchase of Agricultural and Forestland Easements
- Entity Held Easements to benefit Aquatic Habitat, Terrestrial Habitat, and Long-Term Protection of Land
- Conserves the natural integrity of the three military facilities
 - >Fort Indiantown Gap
 - >Letterkenny Army Depot
 - >Carlisle Army War College
- Globally Important Bird Area
- Premier raptor migration corridor in northeast
- Critical watershed protection for the Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers



RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Project Area



County	Priority
Bedford	Low
Berks	Medium
Blair	Low
Columbia	Low
Columbia	Low
Cumberland	Medium - High
Dauphin	Medium - High
Franklin	Medium - High
Fulton	Medium
Huntingdon	Medium
Juniata	Medium
Lancaster	Low
Lebanon	Medium - High
Luzerne	Low
Mifflin	Low
Montour	Low
Northumberland	Medium - High
Perry	High
Schuylkill	High
Snyder	Medium
Union	Low
York	Low





RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Easement Program



Applications are being accepted now.

Agricultural Easements

- Apply through the County Agricultural Land Preservation Board
- 3 easements have closed in Cumberland County (350 acres, \$542,000)
- 3 applications in Schuylkill County (230 acres, \$230,000)

Forest Easements

- Apply through Berks Nature, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, Manada Conservancy
- 2 applications in Schuylkill County (849 acres, \$1,028,208)
- 1 application in Franklin County (92 acres, \$35,492)
- Total applications and easements: 1,520 acres and \$1,835,700 (fed share)





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RCPP-1847 Kittatinny Ridge Corridor Project Partners



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RCPP Questions

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Adam Dellinger–RCPP Program Manager

adam.dellinger@usda.gov

Melissa Hanner – NRCS Easement Program Manager

melissa.hanner@usda.gov

PA Dept of Agriculture, Bureau of Farmland Preservation

Stephanie Zimmerman – Director

stzimmerma@pa.gov





Other federal Easement Programs

RCP 2035 - Buffalo Creek

Agriculture easements - Armstrong County

RCP 2712 – Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation

- Agriculture easements - County Agricultural Land Preservation Board
- Forested easements – Clearwater Conservancy and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

ACEP ALE - Agricultural Land Easements

Applications accepted by Entity holders -
County Land Preservation Board
Lancaster Farmland Trust
Land Conservancy of Adams County

ACEP WRE - Wetland Reserve Easements

Applications accepted by the local NRCS Service Center

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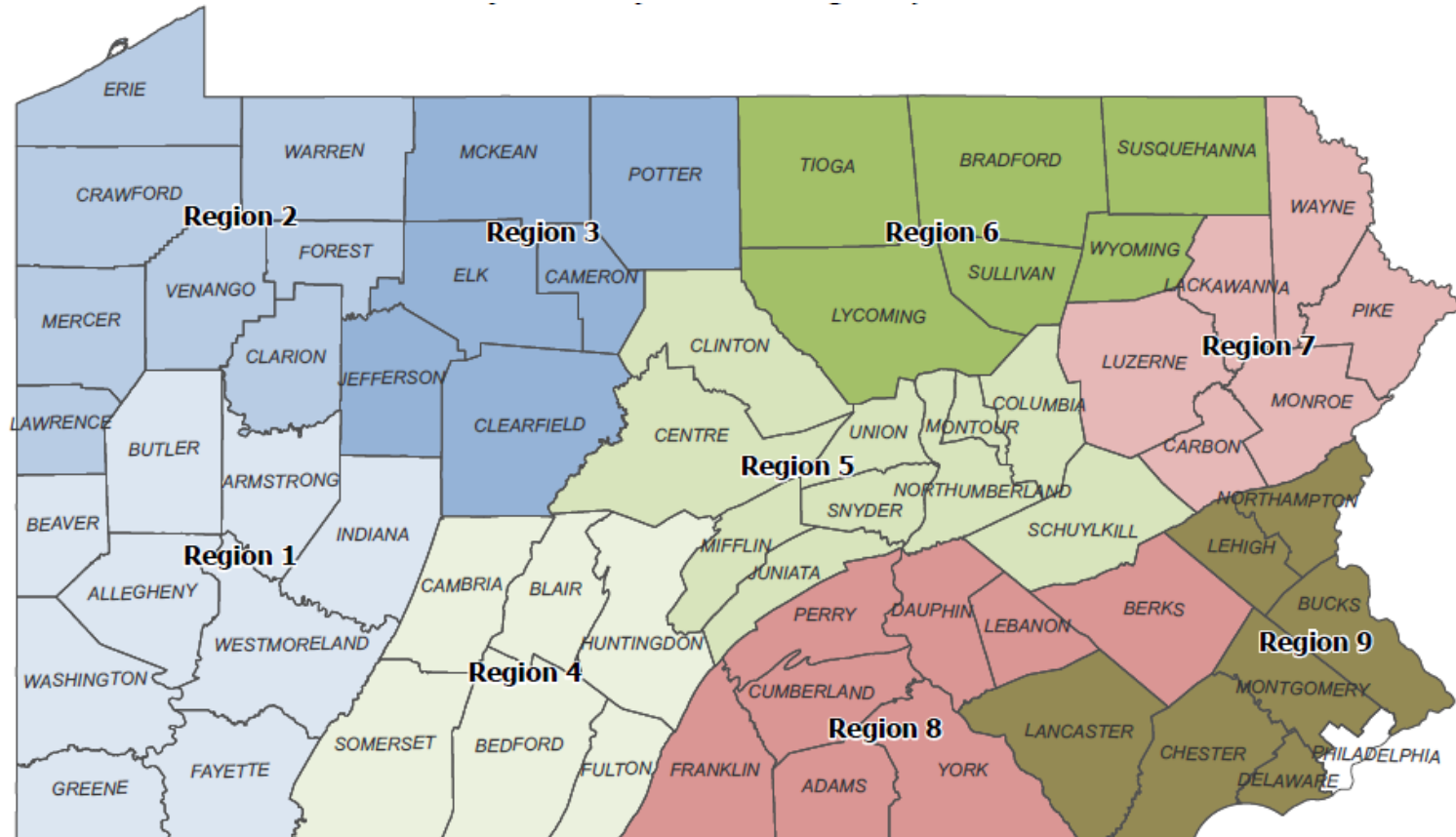
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FY2024 GARC (Geographic Area Rate Caps) for WRE

- ❖ Individual appraisals are used to establish the per acre rate for WRE easements.
- ❖ Easement value is equal to the appraised fair market value minus 5% reduction to account for rights the landowner continues to retain after easement is in place.
- ❖ Pennsylvania counties are grouped into 9 geographic regions for the purpose of setting rate caps that reflect the differing land values across the state.

NTE Rate per acre for Appraisals		
Legend	Market Area	NTE
	Region 1	\$6,215
	Region 2	\$5,600
	Region 3	\$5,600
	Region 4	\$5,600
	Region 5	\$6,635
	Region 6	\$5,600
	Region 7	\$5,600
	Region 8	\$7,979
	Region 9	\$13,318



Susan Parry reminded everyone that she is constantly seeking ideas for different topics of discussion for the State Technical Meetings, as well as folks to present those ideas at our quarterly meetings. In addition, she announced the next State Technical Meeting is to be held on Tuesday, April 16th.

There being nothing left to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.