

News Release

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USDA Offers Conservation Assistance to Landowners to Protect Forestlands with the Upper Pearl RCPP Easement Project

Jackson, Miss., Sept. 29, 2025 - Private landowners, tribes, land trusts, and other groups who wish to restore and protect important wetlands through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) have until **Oct. 31, 2025**, to apply for funding consideration for the FY 2026 enrollment period for the Upper Pearl River At-Risk Species and Source Water Protection Conservation Easement Project, Phase 2. The project area is comprised of land in Hinds, Leake, and Neshoba Counties within a 1/2-mile buffer on either side of the Pearl River.

This project is similar to opportunities provided in the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP), which provides assistance to landowners and eligible entities to restore and protect forest ecosystems. NRCS accepts applications year-round, but applications will be ranked and funded during the enrollment period.

RCPP in The Farm Bill

RCPP was first authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill and reauthorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. RCPP uses a partner-driven approach to address conservation challenges on agricultural land by funding solutions. By pooling resources and working together towards common goals, RCPP showcases the effectiveness of public-private partnerships in benefiting both agriculture and conservation. Currently, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is managing 375 active RCPP projects nationwide with almost 2,000 partners involved.

“RCPP is a unique program that utilizes non-federal investments brought by conservation partners to speed up conservation in chosen project areas,” stated Mississippi NRCS State Conservationist Kurt Readus. “This approach helps us maximize the use of our combined resources to tackle locally identified concerns.”

Forestland conservation easements funded through this RCPP Project will be permanent, 30-year easements, or 30-year tribal contracts. Eligible lands include lands that will:

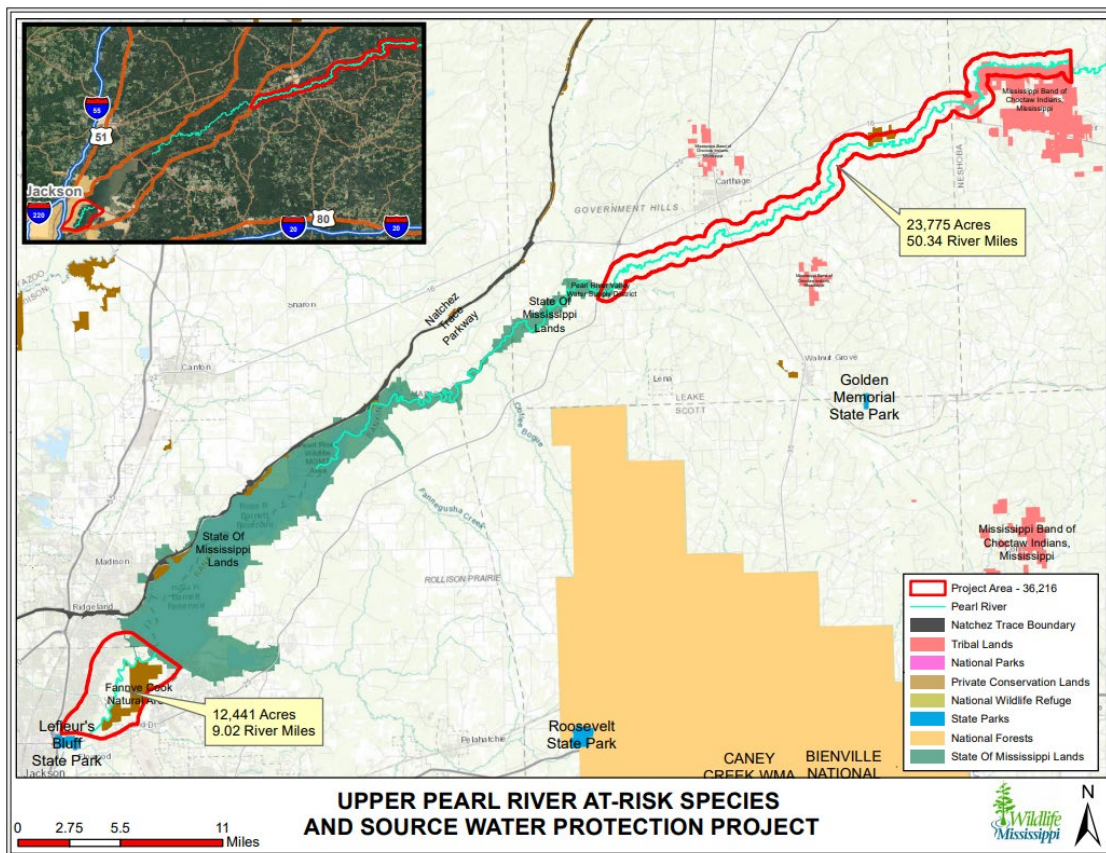
- Promote the recovery of endangered or threatened species
- Improve biodiversity
- Enhance carbon sequestration

Mississippi Projects:

Project ID# 2482-MS Upper Pearl River At- Rick Species and Source Water, Phase 1

Project ID# 2804-MS Upper Pearl River At- Rick Species and Source Water, Phase 2.

Project Summary: Phases 2 of the Upper Pearl River At-Risk Species and Source Water Protection Project will continue the work of Phase 1 by focusing on protecting, restoring, and sustainably managing native forest habitats, riparian areas, and wetlands. Wildlife Mississippi and four partners will use conservation easements to protect farmland, forests, and Tribal lands that are crucial to safeguarding the unprotected private lands upstream of Mississippi's largest source of drinking water for the city of Jackson. Additionally, project activities will enhance critical habitats for migratory birds and turtle species that are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.



Project, which includes Hinds, Leake, and Neshoba Counties.

Land Management Activities

Private landowners in Mississippi with property in previously mentioned counties can apply for financial assistance through land management contracts. They can utilize various conservation practices, including prescribed burning, firebreaks, fuel breaks, tree and shrub establishment, tree and shrub site preparation, forest stand improvement, restoration of rare or declining natural communities, brush management, herbaceous weed control, critical area planting, riparian forest buffers, streambank and shoreline protection, upland wildlife habitat

management, wildlife habitat planting, conservation cover, woody residue treatment, fencing (for water quality improvement), and filter strips (native species only).

More Information

The NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to assist people in conserving, maintaining, and improving our natural resources and environment. More information about NRCS conservation programs can be found at <https://www.farmers.gov/> or <https://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov> under the Programs tab.

To learn more about NRCS programs, producers can contact their local USDA Service Center. Producers can also apply for NRCS programs, manage conservation plans and contracts, and view and print conservation maps by logging into their farmers.gov account. If you don't have an account, sign up today.

For 90 years, NRCS has helped farmers, ranchers and forestland owners make investments in their operations and local communities to improve the quality of our air, water, soil, and wildlife habitat. NRCS uses the latest science and technology to help keep working lands working, boost agricultural economies, and increase the competitiveness of American agriculture. NRCS provides one-on-one, personalized advice and financial assistance and works with producers to help them reach their goals through voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. For more information, visit nrcs.usda.gov.

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