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News Release

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NRCS Accepting Applications for Conservation Easements near Fort Huachuca

\$5.9 Million to be invested in water conservation efforts along the Colorado River Basin

PHOENIX, November 8, 2016 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will accept and process applications for the Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) component of the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#) in the Fort Huachuca area. Up to \$5.9 million will be made available for these conservation easements to improve water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat and protect agricultural viability. The funding is being made available through NRCS’ innovative [Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\)](#).

In the 2016 round of RCPP applications, the Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Conservation project was selected as one of the high-impact projects. The goal of the project is to address water supply and fish and wildlife habitat within the Colorado River Critical Conservation Area through the use of conservation easements. The focus area of the Babocomari River and Sonoita grasslands, contain large working landscapes with landowners interested in conservation. This partnership has been working collaboratively to protect and enhance these natural resources as well as provide education, outreach and increased enrollment in NRCS programs in the area.

NRCS is now accepting applications for Fiscal Year 2017 ACEP-ALE funding in the Fort Huachuca RCPP area. Applications are due **December 7, 2016**. For more information or to apply, visit the [Arizona RCPP ACEP ALE webpage](#).

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, RCPP investments of nearly \$600 million have already driven 199 partner-led projects, including five projects in Arizona. The program leverages local leadership to establish partnerships that can include private companies, local and tribal governments, universities, non-profits and other non-government partners to work with farmers, ranchers and forest landowners on landscape- and watershed-scale conservation solutions that work best for their region.

RCPP assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Agricultural

Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP); and in certain areas the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.

ACEP consolidates three former NRCS easement programs – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, Grasslands Reserve Program and Wetlands Reserve Program – into two components – one that protects farmlands and grasslands and another that protects and restores agricultural wetlands.

Through the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership, the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior are working with a variety of partners to align resources and implement a comprehensive, multiple-tool approach to promoting and sustaining compatible land uses in a manner that protects nearby military test and training needs while benefiting all partners and landowners.

Since 2009, USDA has invested more than \$29 billion to help producers make conservation improvements, working with as many as 500,000 farmers, ranchers and landowners to protect over 400 million acres nationwide, boosting soil and air quality, cleaning and conserving water and enhancing wildlife habitat. For an interactive look at USDA's work in conservation and forestry over the course of this Administration, visit <https://medium.com/usda-results>.

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