NRCS Informational Webinar

“An Introduction to RCPP”

Presentation will begin promptly at 3 pm
Webinar Hosts

Laura Williams
NRCS - WA
RCPP State Coordinator
Laura.Williams@USDA.gov

Alexandra James
Skagit Conservation District
RCPP Easement Liaison
alex@skagitcd.org
Housekeeping

- Recorded Session
- 1 Hour Session with Q&A
- Participants Muted with Video Off
- Submit Questions via Chat
RCPP Webinar Series

1. An Introduction to RCPP, hosted by Laura Williams
   October 18, 3-4 pm

2. RCPP & Conservation Easements, hosted by Alex James
   October 25, 3-4 pm

3. Watershed & Public Works, hosted by Laura Williams
   November 1, 3-4 pm

4. Developing an RCPP Proposal, hosted by Laura Williams
   November 8, 3-4 pm
RCPP Classic 2.0 Projects- Purpose

An RCPP Project is a Partnership Agreement

NRCS conservation activities are coordinated with partner value-added significant contributions (and activities) to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns with greater impact than either would solely through their individual programs.

NRCS co-invests with partners to implement projects that have innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns identified in the proposal.
RCPP CLASSIC

• National Funding Opportunity
  • $200 Million Investment

• Not a Grant – NRCS funding for the project
  • Funding NOT given to Partners – rather funding is contributed to project

• 2 Nation-Wide Funding Pools:
  • State/multi-state
  • Critical Conservation Areas

• Competitive:
  • 2019- 34% of proposals submitted funded
  • 2020-2021- 47% of proposals submitted funded (avg of 23.5% per year)
RCPP National Critical Conservation Areas

- 8 CCA’s
- Specific Resource Concerns
Western Waters RCPP CCA

Required Resource Concerns:

• Excess/insufficient water/drought
• Water quality degradation
• Inadequate habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates
Eligibility
Lead Partners

- A State or unit of local government
- An Indian Tribe
- A Conservation District
- A Farmer Cooperative
- A water district, irrigation district, acequia, rural water district or association, etc.
- A municipal water or wastewater treatment entity
- An institution of higher education
- An organization or entity with an established history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land
Contributing Partners

- Eligible partners
- Third-party individuals or organizations
  - Producer contracts (developed under the RCPP) are NOT partner contributions

Lead Partners responsible for delivery of all partner contributions
Eligible Land

- Agricultural or Nonindustrial private forest land
- Associated Land (with eligible agricultural lands)
  - Single producer has ‘control’ of a patchwork of public & Private AND wishes to apply land management across all operation.
- Tribal Land
- Limited Public Lands
  - A watershed / public works structure which benefits SPECIFIC producers (farmers).
Eligible Producers

• Farm Bill Program Compliance & Eligibility
  • Provide Tax ID number
  • Comply with the Highly erodible land (HEL) & Wetland provisions of Farm Bill
  • Comply with Adjusted Gross Income provisions or receive waiver
  • Where applicable, provide % interest share of operations or ownership

Get Started with NRCS
AGI Eligibility

Adjusted Gross Income Waiver

1. Programmatic project level. “AGI Applicability Waiver”
   • Project Lead partner can request the applicability of AGI be waived for the Project.
   • Must demonstrate required for project success.
   • Partners should include in proposal if able.

2. Individual project level. “AGI Limitation Waiver”
   • Applicability of AGI within an RCPP project.
   • Must demonstrate individual participation critical for success of project.
Project Components
The Four Pillars

1. Impact
2. Partner Contribution
3. Innovation
4. Partnership & Management

Pillars are the Proposal Ranking Criteria
RCPP – The Four Pillars

1. Impact
   • A critical environmental issue documented
     • Resource concerns identified

2. Innovation
   Novel or unique approach to achieve project goal – Examples:
   • Partner and NRCS FA combined in novel/unique way to achieve goal
   • Partner using FA to provide NRCS cost share as an incentive
   • Proposing use of RCPP Flexibilities in coordination with partner contribution
   • Partner provide a unique service to producers to achieve project goal
   • Partner funds a unique practice to achieve goal that compliments NRCS practices (need to consider NEPA)
RCPP – The Four Pillars

3. Partner Contribution

- 1:1 with NRCS at minimum
- Obligated Funds
- Partner(s) expected to provide funding for specific significant meaningful project activities:
  - Coordinate with NRCS funding and project activities
  - Bring Value to the Project
  - Assist Producers
  - Not all Technical Assistance (over 30% is too much)
  - TA should not duplicate NRCS TA unless the different roles explained
RCPP – The Four Pillars

3. Partnership & Management

• Partnership
  • Diverse partner group, manageable size
  • Experience and capacity with NRCS conservation planning
  • A history of working with NRCS and Agricultural producers
  • Clear roles of each partner – explain in narrative & include resume
  • Dedicated POC and staff

• Management
  • Developed and realistic project timeline
  • Experience managing similar projects
  • Self motivated – take project initiative
  • A specific outreach plan
  • A specific plan to reach historically underserved
  • Specialized experience and capacity if needed
    • Engineering – with NRCS specification and standards
    • Biologist- Section 7 or other ability
    • Forester- Forest Management Plans to NRCS criteria
Funding & Activity Types
RCPP Funding

- NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) – 70%
  - Obligated by NRCS
- NRCS Technical Assistance (TA) - 30%
  - NRCS Use
  - Supplemental Agreements may be developed for partners
- Partner Contribution
  - FA and TA
  - Cash and in-kind
  - Coordinated with NRCS funding
  - Value added
RCPP Funding - FA
70% Financial Assistance (FA)

RCPP Program Activity Types

1. Land Management – Producer Contract
2. Rentals – Producer Contract
3. Easements-project purpose - Supplemental Agreement
   I. Entity held Easements: similar to ACEP-ALE
   II. US held easements: similar to ACEP-WRE & HFRP
4. Public Works/ watershed projects - Producer Contracts or Supplemental Agreement
RCPP Funding - TA

30% Technical Assistance (TA)

- Implementation TA (TA-I) – 23%
  - Conduct NRCS Conservation Planning to implement FA
    - Negotiated between Partner and NRCS
    - In most projects NRCS will require
    - NRCS Inherently Governmental Activities- 5%

- Enhancement TA (TA-E) – 7%
  - Project management
  - Outcomes monitoring / data analysis
  - Outreach
Project Outcome

Measurable metric of the project resource concern

• An environmental metric
• Requires a baseline survey
• Requires monitoring
  • Can use modeling
• NOT # of contracts or Acres of practice (outputs)
Project Outcomes - Examples

- Water Quality Effects
  - Sediment, temperature, & nutrient monitoring
- Aquatic & Terrestrial Wildlife
  - Population or habitat surveys
- Forest Inventory
  - Canopy, ground cover, & species richness surveys
NRCS

FA 70%
RCPP Activity Types

TAI 23%
TAE 7%

Partner

FA %
Partner Coordinated Activity

Partner TA %

TAI-Purpose
TAE-Purpose

*Excessive Partner TA begins to lose value unless well explained
1 – Agreements with partners for public works/watershed activities, technical Assistance, and entity-held easement agreements.

2 – Contracts with a producer may contain one or more of the components listed in this section.
Getting Started
RCPP Classic - Getting Started

1. Eligible partners & contributing partners develop a project proposal addressing a conservation concern, identifying the resource concerns, in a discrete geographic area.

2. NRCS financial assistance is requested in the proposal to address resource concerns through Land Management (NRCS Practices) and rental contracts, easements or public works / watershed projects with eligible producers.
RCPP Classic - Getting Started

3. Partners develop and propose significant contributions.

- Value added activities connected / coordinated to project
- Measurable (not some undetermined #, such as enforcement)
- Developed for the project (i.e. NOT usual partner work)
- Address resource concerns
- Benefit Agricultural producers (explain in proposal).
4. Partners develop innovative approach to combining NRCS partner funding or bringing innovative conservation practices not available through NRCS programs:

- Introducing conservation incentives tied to or separate from NRCS FA.
- Including conservation that addresses project resource concerns on non NRCS eligible land in project area (still benefit producers).
- Provide other innovative conservation services or programs that collaborates and compliments NRCS conservation.
RCPP Classic – Getting Started

5. Attend the other RCPP topic Seminars as applicable to individual projects.

6. Meet with the RCPP Coordinator to discuss project and meet with the RCPP Easement Liaison (if applicable).

7. Meet with the NRCS District Conservationist (& Area Conservationist) in the Project area to discuss the proposal.

8. Attend the RCPP Proposal Development Seminar

9. Review and download resources on the National “How to Apply” website.
**Contributing Partners**

- Develops proposal, Identifies resource concern
- Develops Project innovation
- Manages significant contribution activities
- Propose partnership agreement deliverables w/NRCS
- Independently Leads and coordinates project
- Receives supplemental agreements for TA and executes
- Provides project reporting
- Guides Landowners
- Might conduct conservation planning

**Lead Partner**

**RCPP PROJECT PARTNERSHIP**

- Coordinates program administration-statewide and nationally
- Reviews, approves and manages partnership agreement & deliverables
- Reviews proposals / awards
- Responsible for TA management
- Awards TA in supplemental agreements
- Responsible for conservation planning
- Develops producer contracts w/ awarded FA
- Develops easement agreement and parcel contract
Project Length & Timeline
RCPP 2.0 Classic Timeline

1. **Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO):** Nov 2021-Jan 2022
2. **Proposal State & National review:** Feb-Apr 2022
3. **Programmatic Partnership Agreement (PPA) Negotiations:**
   - 2-3 months
   - Partner presentation to NRCS
   - Partner Program Portal training
   - PPA drafts & reviews
RCPP 2.0 Classic Timeline

4. Supplemental Agreements: 2-3 months
5. NRCS obligates FA and SA funds: 2 wks-1 month
   = Producer contract ready to be accepted!

NFO to Producer Contract Total Time = 8-10 months
Resources
RESOURCES

- **RCPP Practice Scenarios and Payment Schedule**
- **RCPP How To Apply Webpage:**
  - Overview of RCPP Classic (webinar)
  - RCPP Partner’s Proposal Guide for RCPP Classic and Renewals (PDF, 2.4MB)
  - National Funding Opportunity (past and present once released)
  - FY 20-21 RCPP Classic FAQs - 2020.9.10 (PDF, 151KB)
  - State RCPP Coordinators - As of August 21, 2020 (PDF, 85KB)
  - Sample Letter of Commitment (DOCX, 39KB)
  - Outcomes Guidance (PDF, 159KB)
  - RCPP Entity Held Easements Minimum Deed Terms
Q & A

• Ask questions via Chat feature.
• Questions will be answered in order.
• Remaining questions will be answered and emailed to participants.