



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in Virginia - 2016

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven, locally-led approach to conservation. It offers new opportunities for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to harness innovation, welcome new partners to the conservation mission, and demonstrate the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation.

In 2016, NRCS is investing up to \$220 million in 84 high-impact projects that impact every state in the nation, including two in Virginia. This investment, which builds on the \$370 million invested for 2014 and 2015, will help conservation partners and agricultural producers conserve natural resources, leading to cleaner and more abundant water, healthier soil, enhanced wildlife habitat and many other benefits.

Blue Ridge PRISM Landowner Programs Expansion

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$894,000 (State)

Lead Partner: Shenandoah National Park Trust

Number of Partners: 11

Participating State(s): Virginia

The Blue Ridge PRISM project is the first Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) in Virginia to address invasive plants. Since invasive species control is more effective if a large collection of adjacent landowners perform the same treatments, the project area identified ten counties with nearly three million acres to target along the northern Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. The Blue Ridge PRISM has designed an innovative grassroots program to solve a challenge of every CWMA—organizing contiguous landowners into large blocks and coordinating the work—called the Area Stewards Program. Area Stewards are proactive landowners who treat invasive plants on their own properties and enlist their neighbors to do the same.

Upper Clinch-Powell Watershed Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$4.5 million (National)

Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy – Clinch Valley Program

Number of Partners: 16

Participating State(s): Tennessee & Virginia (**lead state**)

The globally important Upper Clinch-Powell River Watershed, located in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia and Tennessee, is a leading national hotspot for biodiversity and imperiled species sustaining over 40 varieties of rare mussels and supporting at least 129 native types of fish. Surrounding the rivers is a rural landscape that includes forests, coal mining areas, sensitive caves which are critical to groundwater, working farms, and small Appalachian towns struggling to remain economically viable. To protect and sustain this region, The Nature Conservancy and partners formed the Clinch-Powell Clean Rivers Initiative (CPCRI) to document and address ecosystem stressors including excess sediments and nutrients, metals, dissolved solids, pesticides and persistent organics. This project is designed to improve water quality and aquatic habitat by developing a local working group for resource identification and bmp prioritization, designing a GIS-based ranking system to prioritize RCPP project investments, implementing agricultural and mining BMPs in biologically critical areas, and assessing the positive impacts of these BMPs on water quality.

