



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in Kentucky - 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 three in Kentucky. 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.

Overgrazing and Soil Degradation on Horse Farms

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$476,000 (State)

Lead Partner: University of Kentucky

Number of Partners: 9

Participating State(s): Kentucky

While Kentucky is known for its iconic horse farms and rolling pastures, it is estimated that small to medium sized horse farms occupy over 750,000 of land in the state. Pastures on these farms are often overgrazed and the land base is poorly managed due to the lack of agricultural experience of many horse farm owners. The objective of this project is to implement improved pasture management practices on 25 small to medium sized EQIP eligible horse farms in Kentucky. First, three farms will be identified as demonstration farms and we will work with NRCS to incorporate a broad range of approved practices. These farms will be monitored throughout the four-year project for pasture cover and productivity, soil health, water quality and the successful implementation of other practices. Field days on the demonstration farms will help NRCS staff sign up the 25 farms and will show many small horse farms owners in KY and surrounding states the benefits that improved pasture and farm management have for the environment and their horses.

Precision Conservation Management

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$5.3 million (CCA)

Lead Partner: Illinois Corn Growers Association

Number of Partners: 30

Participating State(s): Illinois (**lead state**), Iowa & Kentucky

The Precision Conservation Management program (PCM) is an innovative service program designed to apply hard-nosed financial farm business planning with precision conservation technology to provide a blueprint for conservation decision-making. The goal of PCM is to integrate conservation into the foundational farm management of commodity crop operations. PCM will provide financial impact analysis of conservation practices, technical assistance from trained conservation specialists, supplemental privately-funded financial assistance, data-rich assessment tools to guide producers through NRCS program options, and precision conservation technology to enhance effectiveness and minimize risk associated with conservation practices. PCM is dedicated to helping make the Conservation Stewardship Program the flagship program for producers seeking environmental performance linked to economic sustainability. PCM's founding



mission is to use farmer data to serve farmers' interests with specific emphasis on conservation adoption. Upon enrolling in PCM, cooperators create a farm profile using PCM's Farmer Portal, a web interface that quickly, accurately, and securely collects farm data to create a field-by-field inventory of detailed agronomic management practices. After creating farm profiles, PCM specialists offer cooperators a privately-funded incentive to conduct a Resource Analysis and Assessment Plan (RAAP), assessing farm sustainability and identifying natural resource concerns. Using the RAAP, PCM specialists guide cooperators through NRCS program options with a long-term goal of preparing them for the CSP. Finally, cooperators utilize the Conservation Client Gateway to apply for NRCS programs. PCM will succeed in increasing conservation adoption because it approaches conservation from the perspective of the Midwest farmer – protecting business interests while implementing conservation practices that benefit the environment and local communities.

Seeding Ground Cover on Marginal Lands

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$360,000 (State)

Lead Partner: Scott County Conservation District

Number of Partners: 7

Participating State(s): Kentucky

This project will repair eroded areas in row cropped fields that have continued to erode due to lack of cover crops or excessive rains, flooding and overflowing, washing out the uncovered crop areas. The Districts will hold Erosion Education Workshops to announce EQIP sign-up periods and answer questions about the program, will update the KY Ag Water Quality Plans, and will join the KY River Watershed Watch to be trained to correctly collect water samples.

