



Overview

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements.

RCPP combines the authorities of four former conservation programs – the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and the Great Lakes Basin Program. Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of EQIP, CSP, ACEP and HFRP; and in certain areas the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.

RCPP



Regional Conservation Partnership Program



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.



Benefits

RCPP encourages partners to join in efforts with producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales.

Through RCPP, NRCS and its partners help producers install and maintain conservation activities in selected project areas. Partners leverage RCPP funding in project areas and report on the benefits achieved. The Secretary of Agriculture may also designate up to eight critical conservation areas to focus RCPP assistance.

Eligibility

Eligible Partners - Agricultural or silvicultural producer associations, farmer cooperatives or other groups of producers, state or local governments, American Indian

tribes, municipal water treatment entities, water and irrigation districts, conservation-driven nongovernmental organizations and institutions of higher education.

Eligible Participants - Under RCPP, eligible producers and landowners of agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland may enter into conservation program contracts or easement agreements under the framework of a partnership agreement. RCPP assistance is also available independent of a partner if the land is located either in a partner project area or in a critical conservation area designated by the Secretary. Conservation program contracts and easement agreements are implemented through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) or the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP). NRCS may also utilize the authorities under the Watershed and Flood Prevention Program, other than the Watershed Rehabilitation Program, in the designated critical conservation areas.

How to apply

NRCS will announce a request for proposals that will outline requirements for proposal submissions for funding. NRCS will review partnership proposals according to the priorities identified in the announcement and make project selections. Upon selection of a partnership proposal, NRCS and the partner will enter into a partnership agreement through which they will coordinate to provide producers in the project area assistance. Partnership agreements may be for a period of up to five years. NRCS may extend an agreement one time for an

additional 12 months if needed to meet the objectives of the program.

Producers may apply for RCPP assistance in several ways:

1. At the producer's request, a partner may submit the application for participation in a selected project area
2. Directly at their local USDA Service Center in a selected project area
3. Directly at their local USDA Service center in a critical conservation area designated by the Secretary of Agriculture

Partnership Agreement

The partnership agreement defines the scope of the project, including:

1. Eligible activities to be implemented
2. Potential agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operation affected
3. Local, state, multi-state or other geographic area covered
4. Planning, outreach, implementation, and assessment to be conducted

Partners are responsible for contributing to the cost of the project, conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project and for conducting an assessment of the project's effects. In addition, partners may act on behalf of the eligible landowner or producer in applying for assistance and for leveraging financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives.

Before closing the agreement the partner must provide an assessment of the project costs and conservation effects.

More Information

For more information visit your local USDA Service Center or www.nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill.

Find Your Local USDA Service Center

<http://offices.usda.gov>

What's new?

RCPP is a new partnership program that combines the authorities of four former programs - Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and the Great Lakes Basin Program, and delivers assistance through covered programs, including EQIP, CSP, ACEP and HFRP, and Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations in Critical Conservation Areas.

www.pia.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service