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# News Release

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December 8, 2020

## **Improve Water Quality and Wildlife Habitat in Clear Creek Watershed**

*Application Deadline is January 15, 2021*

**COLUMBUS, OH, Dec. 8, 2020** — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will offer an opportunity for agricultural producers and landowners to improve water quality and improve wildlife habitat with the Clear Creek Water Quality and Wildlife Habitat Initiative. Application deadline for Ohio NRCS FY21 funding consideration is January 15, 2021.

Water and soil quality are of primary concern in the Clear Creek Watershed with over half of the watershed in agricultural land use. NRCS conservation professionals and partners will provide technical assistance to help farmers or landowners determine which conservation actions will provide the greatest environmental benefits. Effective conservation measures provide farmers with an arsenal of ways to keep nutrients in their fields and out of lakes and streams. Utilizing effective nutrient management will help reduce nutrients and sediment from entering Clear Creek Watershed while cover crops keep the ground covered to prevent soil erosion, trap nutrients, and improve soil health.

Conservation cover, cover crops, grassed waterways, and critical area seedings are just a few of the conservation practices available with this special project. Each will help to improve water and soil quality as well as address the loss of quail population and the need for wildlife habitat. Grassed waterways filter and reduce erosion by slowing and diverting runoff as well as providing habitat for ground nesting birds. While cover crops are an important measure to improve water quality and soil health, they also provide much needed extra forage and habitat for reduced quail populations and other wildlife during cold winter months.

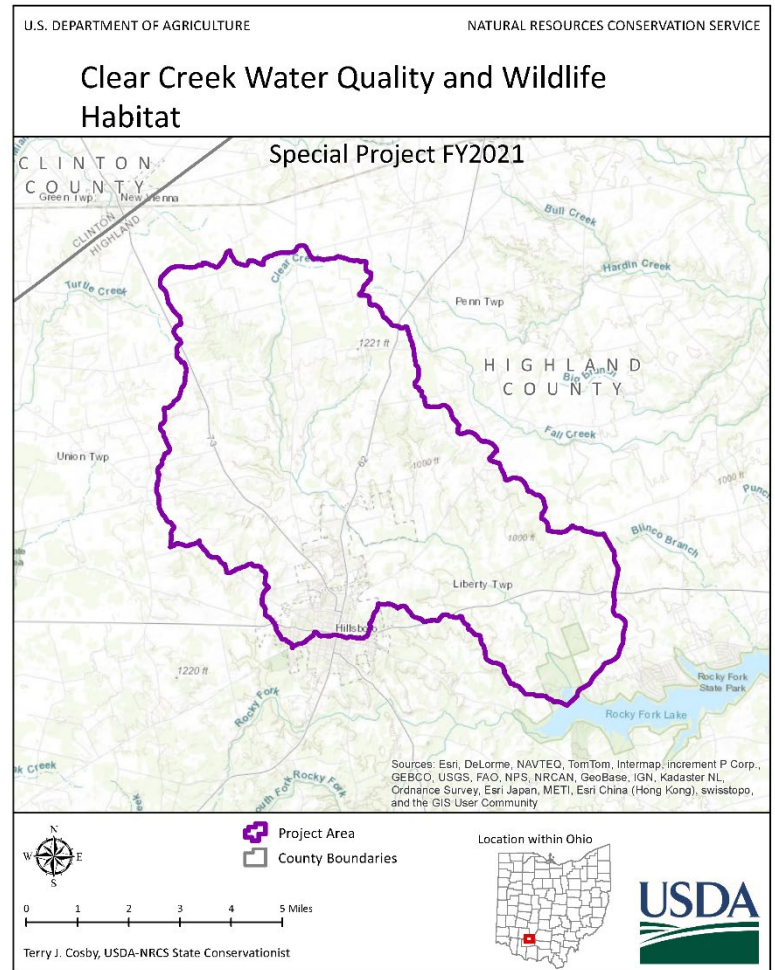
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The Clear Creek Watershed is in the northern part of Highland County. Participants are encouraged to implement effective conservation practices to help address habitat loss and conduct targeted restoration activities for ground nesting birds and other wildlife.

To help install conservation practices, NRCS will provide financial assistance to approved applicants through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that helps agricultural producers protect the environment while promoting agricultural production. With EQIP, NRCS conservation experts provide technical assistance to implement environmentally beneficial conservation practices on working agricultural land.

Individuals interested in applying for the Clear Creek Water Quality and Wildlife Habitat Initiative should contact their [local NRCS conservationist](#) as soon as possible. Be sure to check the status of your Service Center when you reach out to us. For offices with restrictions on in-person appointments, we are still available by phone, email, and through other digital tools. Your Service Center's status is available at <https://www.farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status>.

Applications signed and submitted to NRCS by the January 15, 2021 deadline will be evaluated for fiscal year 2021 funding. Visit Ohio NRCS website under "[EQIP Funding Categories](#)" for more details. To learn more about EQIP or other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS conservation programs, visit [Get Started with NRCS](#) or contact your local [USDA Service Center](#).



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