Webinar Agenda

• Introduction

• RCPP Overview

• 2022 Funding Announcements

• Administrative Priorities

• Announcement for Program Funding
Webinar Agenda

• What Makes a Good Project?

• General Information

• Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA) Guidance

• National Guidance

• Key Dates

• Q&A
RCPP Overview

• The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners.

• RCPP partners develop project applications to address specific natural resource objectives in a proposed area or region.
What is RCPP?

- Partnerships
- Goals
- Outcomes
- Leverage
What RCPP is NOT

- **It is NOT a grant**
  - Producer contracts are not grants

- **RCPP proposal submissions are NOT intended for individuals**

- **Does NOT use match but instead partner contributions**
2022 Funding Announcements

• $225 million available between both Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA) and Classic

• Up to 15 RCPP AFA projects

• Up to $200 million for Classic projects
2022 Funding Announcements

• Maximum $10 million

• Minimum $250,000

• RCPP Portal is now available to submit proposals
Administrative Priorities

• Climate-Smart Agriculture

• Urban Agriculture

• Racial Justice & Equity

• Priority consideration for Historically Underserved (HU) proposals
Announcement for Program Funding (APF)

APF covers:
• Funding Availability
• Eligibility Information
• Project Funding
• Proposal Requirements
• Proposal Review Criteria
• Project Information and Administration
• Submission Information
• RCPP Agreements, Contracts, and Conservation Activities
Funding Availability

2 Types of Fund Pools

• State/Multi-State

• Critical Conservation Areas (CCA)
Funding Availability

RCPP Critical Conservation Areas
Associated Priority Resource Concerns

Great Lakes Region (IL, IN, MI, MN, NY, PA, OH, WI)
• Water quality degradation
• Inadequate habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates

Mississippi River Basin (AR, KY, IA, IL, IN, LA, MN, MO, MS, OH, SD, TN, WI)
• Water quality degradation
• Inadequate habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates
• Excess/insufficient water/drought

Prairie Grasslands Region (CO, KS, IA, MO, MN, MT, ND, NE, NM, OK, SD, TX, WY)
• Inadequate habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates
• Degraded plant condition
• Excess/insufficient water/drought
Eligibility Information

Covered Programs

• Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

• Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

• Conservation Stewardship Program (CStwP) (excludes Grassland Conservation Initiative)

• Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

• Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

• Public Law 83-566 Watershed Program (excludes Watershed Rehabilitation)
Eligibility Information

Eligible Activities

• Land management

• Land rental

• Entity-held easements

• U.S.-held easements (not eligible under AFA)

• Public works/watersheds
Project Funding

RCPP Funding Request

- **FA**—70%
- **TA**—30%

**Implementation**
- TA—23%
- NRCS—5%
- Negotiated—18%

**Enhancement**
- TA—7%

Financial Assistance (FA) minimum — conservation on the ground using RCPP contracts and supplemental agreements.

Technical Assistance (TA) maximum — required to help get conservation on the ground.
Implementation TA—23% of total NRCS request

• 5% retained by NRCS, non-negotiable, for required project implementation activities

• 18% retained by NRCS unless requested and justified by partners and approved by NRCS (Classic)

• See table in funding announcement for possible implementation TA activities:
  • Providing information and/or tools for planning, evaluation, and ranking.
  • Planning and installation of activities
Enhancement TA—7% of total NRCS request

- Partners may request TA funding for project enhancement activities

- See table in funding announcement for list of possible activities
  - Project management
  - Producer outreach
  - Project-related communications
  - Outcomes development, measurement and reporting
  - Development of innovative conservation approaches
Enhancement TA—7% of total NRCS request, cont’d

- Example requests at 7% level
  - $2 million project, $140k maximum
  - $4 million project, $280k maximum

- Subject to negotiation during agreement development

- Partners must identify means of justifying expenses as a part of their Portal application

- If not requested, total project TA maxes out at 23%
Administrative Costs

- The RCPP statute prohibits NRCS from reimbursing partners for any administrative costs

- Equivalent to “overhead” or “indirect costs”

- Indirect costs may be counted as partner contributions

- Organizations with an active NICRA must use the rate identified in the NICRA

- Entities without a NICRA may use a 10% indirect cost rate (calculated using lead partner contributions as basis)
Partner Contributions

• Goal that partners contribute at least equal the NRCS investment in the project

• Value-added contributions that enhance the overall impact and efficacy of the project.

• Lead partner assumes full responsibility for delivery of contributions

• All non-lead partner contributions must be supported by a commitment letter as part of proposal
Partner Contributions, cont’d

• Funding from non-USDA Federal agencies may be counted, provided funding is: 1) expended during the life of the project, 2) expended within the project’s geographic boundary and, 3) is expended in support of the project’s goals and objectives.

• Portal application requires justification of contribution value

• Table in the funding announcement includes potential contribution activities
• Each proposal is reviewed based on the APF criteria found in each announcement.
RCPP Agreements, Contracts, and Conservation Activities

Appendix 1 starts on p. 28 (Classic only)

*Agreements with sponsors for public works/watershed activities, technical assistance, and entity-held easement agreements.
What Makes a Good Project?

- Objective
- Goals
- Boundary
- Priority areas within boundary
- Land use
- Resource concerns
- Conservation Activities
- Payment rates/caps on practices
What Makes a Good Project? cont’d

• How will objectives be met?

• Contributing partners are established

• Roles of partners are determined

• What are partners bringing to the table?

• What kind of partner TA is being requested?
  – What do you plan to get reimbursed on?
What Makes a Good Project? cont’d

• What innovative tools are you using?
• How are your goals going to be met?
• What are your planned outcomes?
**General Information**

- **Project goals cannot overlap with other existing agreements**
- **5 year agreement**
  - During the life of an agreement, only one 12-month time extension is permitted
  - Consider years 2-4 as Financial Assistance years
- **Partners can spend ahead if they so choose**
- **Can close out an agreement early by spending all dollars ahead of schedule**
AFA Project Types

- Infrastructure investments that address natural resource concerns such as drought, wildfire, or water quality impairment.

- Development and implementation of watershed, habitat, or other area restoration plans.

- Innovative approaches to leverage the Federal investment with private financial mechanisms. These projects may include pay-for-performance, pay-for-success, and environmental market approaches.

- Any other project consistent with RCPP program goals and objectives that cannot be effectively carried out through RCPP Classic.
AFA Guidance

• Additional administrative and TA responsibilities

• Partners develop ranking criteria

• Partners pay producers and landowners for conservation activities

• Partners complete all the TA-I except the 5% retained by NRCS
AFA Guidance

• Proposals may only be submitted for competition in one fund pool.

• US Held Easements are not eligible
National Guidance

• National RCPP guidance

• How to Apply
  • https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/financial/rcpp/?cid=nrcseprd1477816

• RCPP Portal
  • https://nrcs-sites.secure.force.com/
Key Dates

• Application period open through 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on April 13, 2022

• Anticipate Award Announcements August 2022
National Webinar on RCPP Easements

What: Webinar on RCPP Easements
When: February 10th 3:00-4:30pm EST
URL: https://ems8.intellor.com/login/842485
Call in Number: 888-251-2949 or 215-861-0694
Access Code: 9567946#
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