



United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Programs and Initiatives



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USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Key Topics:

- Opportunities Abound!!!
- RCPP
 - Proposal tips
- Other opportunities for Partnerships and innovative ideas
- Let's talk!





OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND!!!

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives>. The browser's address bar and the page title are circled in red. The page content includes the USDA logo, the text "Natural Resources Conservation Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE", a search bar, and a navigation menu. The menu items are "CONSERVATION BASICS", "GETTING ASSISTANCE", "PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES", "RESOURCES", "NEWS & EVENTS", and "CONTACT". The "PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES" item is circled in red. Below the navigation menu is a large blue banner with the text "Programs & Initiatives".



OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND!!!

PROGRAM Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is NRCS' flagship conservation program that helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners integrate conservation into working lands.



PROGRAM Conservation Innovation Grants

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a competitive program that supports the development of new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands.



PROGRAM Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land.



PROGRAM Conservation Stewardship Program

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) helps you build on your existing conservation efforts while strengthening your operation.



WATERSHED PROGRAM Emergency Watershed Protection

The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, a federal emergency recovery program, helps local communities recover after a natural disaster strikes.

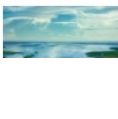


WATERSHED PROGRAM Watershed Rehabilitation

The Watershed Rehabilitation Program (REHAB) helps project sponsors rehabilitate aging dams that are reaching the end of their design life and/or no longer meet federal or state safety criteria or performance standards. Since 1949, NRCS has assisted local sponsors in constructing over 11,600 dams.

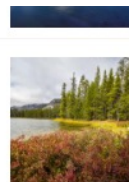


WATERSHED PROGRAM Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program



EASEMENT Healthy Forests Reserve Program

The Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP) helps landowners restore, enhance and protect forestland resources on private and tribal lands through easements and financial assistance.



WATERSHED PROGRAM Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program Buyouts

NRCS administers the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, which is designed for emergency recovery work, including the purchase of floodplain property buyouts.



EASEMENT Wetland Reserve Easements

Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE) help private and tribal landowners protect, restore and enhance wetlands which have been previously degraded due to agricultural uses.



INITIATIVE Landscape Conservation Initiatives

NRCS uses Landscape Conservation Initiatives to accelerate the benefits of voluntary conservation programs, such as cleaner water and air, healthier soil and enhanced wildlife habitat.



INITIATIVE Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) was developed as a coordinated effort to identify priority issues, find solutions, and effect change on private grazing land, enhancing existing conservation programs.



INITIATIVE On-Farm Energy Initiative

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) On-Farm Energy Initiative helps farmers and ranches make voluntary improvements that can boost energy efficiency on the farm.



EASEMENT Agricultural Land Easements

Agricultural Land Easements help private and tribal landowners, land trusts, and other entities such as state and local governments protect croplands and grasslands on working farms and ranches by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land through conservation easements.



PROGRAM Agricultural Management Assistance

The Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) helps agricultural producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing or natural resource conservation practices.



PROGRAM Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides a yearly rental payment to farmers who remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality.



INITIATIVE High Tunnel Initiative

A High Tunnel System, commonly called a "hoop house," is an increasingly popular conservation practice for farmers, and is available with financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).



INITIATIVE Organic Initiative

The National Organic Initiative, funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), is a voluntary conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance for organic farmers and ranchers, or those interested in transitioning to organic.



INITIATIVE Air Quality Initiative

The NRCS National Air Quality Initiative helps agricultural producers meet air quality compliance requirements by providing technical and financial assistance for improving agricultural operations.



Lots to work with....



TYPES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE... the classics.

Many times used as framework for other initiatives



AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM

Programs that protect wetlands and ag lands by purchasing conservation easement rights from the landowner.



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Emphasizes conservation performance - earn higher payments for higher levels of conservation that address natural resource concerns.



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Producers receive assistance to implement conservation practices that address natural resource concern outlines in a conservation plan.

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND!!!

- Landscape Conservation Initiatives
 - National Water Quality Initiative, Mississippi River Basin Initiative, etc.
- Resource Conservation Partnership Program



National Water Quality Initiative

- National Water Quality Initiative is a partnership among NRCS, state water quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where farmers can use conservation practices to make a difference.

- Planning and implementation(based on a plan)

- Think targeted EQIP

States approach this slightly different....Indiana solicits proposals.



Resource Conservation Partnership Program(RCPP)

Latest News

\$1.7 Billion in Investments in Climate-Smart Agriculture: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing nearly \$1.7 billion in funding to support the adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices, which have direct climate mitigation benefits, advance a host of other environmental co-benefits, and offer farmers, ranchers and foresters new revenue streams.

This includes an unprecedented \$1.1 billion investment across 81 projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which takes a voluntary approach to expand the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships.

Resource Conservation Partnership Program(RCPP)

The **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land.

Partner proposal driven!

“The Farmers Helping Hellbenders Initiative was developed by 14 partnering conservation and agriculture organizations and will address the recovery of the Eastern Hellbenders and improvement of aquatic resources in the Blue River watershed by increasing enrollment in agricultural conservation practices.” USDA-NRCS web





How does RCPP Work?

- What - RCPP helps producers protect working agricultural lands to ensure resilience to climate change by increasing the sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife, and related natural resources.
- How - NRCS and partners co-invest in conservation activities to address resource concerns at a regional scale.
- Where – Private or Tribal agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, or associated land on which an eligible activity would benefit agricultural land.
- Duration – RCPP projects are typically five years.



RCCP Funding Opportunities



Classic

- NRCS reimburses producers directly for FA activities.
- NRCS delivers a majority of TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- Partner's primary role is to provide outreach, measure impact, and deliver partner contributions to amplify NRCS funding.

Alternative Funding Arrangements

- Partner installs practices for producers or reimburses producers for FA activities.
- Partner delivers a majority of TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- NRCS support limited to non-delegable tasks such as confirming the eligibility of producers and land, AGI verification, and compliance with NEPA/HEL/WC.

Resource Conservation Partnership Program(RCPP)



RCPP Proposal Tips:

- Read the previous Notice of Funding Opportunity to prepare for the upcoming NFO
- Like a grant, don't rush, 1 year or more???
- Review other funded projects
- Line up partners and start talking commitments
- Decide on type of RCPP, AFA or Classic, Easements?
- Contact the State RCPP Coordinator(Jerod in Indiana)
- **Review NRCS Priorities**

NRCS Priorities – keep these in mind for proposals

- Advancing Equity, Justice, and Equal Opportunity
- Addressing Climate Change
- Supporting Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
- Cultivating a Diverse, Well-Trained Workforce
- Building Partnerships



ASSISTANCE TO HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED PRODUCERS



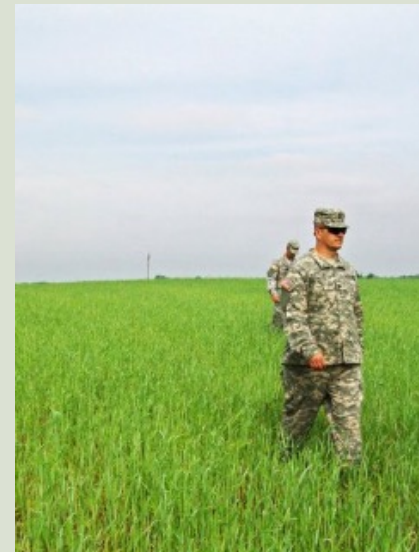
**LIMITED RESOURCE
FARMER**



BEGINNING FARMER



**SOCIALLY
DISADVANTAGED**



MILITARY VETERAN

Dependent on each program, HU producers are eligible for:

- Higher payment rates
- Payment advances
- Priority for funding

Other Opportunities

Equity in Conservation Outreach Cooperative Agreements

Fund two-year projects to expand the delivery of conservation assistance to producers who are new to farming, are low-income, identify as one or more marginalized race or ethnicity, and/or are military veterans.

The program encourages new partnerships and the development of state and community leadership for underserved producers, with projects focusing on key conservation priorities including:

- Improving soil health and water quality,
- Providing habitat for at-risk wildlife,
- Improving natural resources and productivity on agricultural lands,
- Increasing access to conservation staff and resource in urban areas, and/or
- Building and strengthening local and regional food systems and markets

Other Opportunities

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Joint Chiefs' project proposals are developed at the local level through a collaborative process between NRCS, Forest Service and partners. Past partners have included county, state, non-governmental, Tribal, utilities or private individual stakeholders.

Where public and private forests meet.

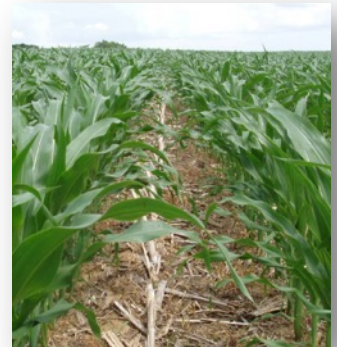
USDA -Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production (UAIP) competitive grants

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program

Let's Talk

- Many options
- some fit better than others
- Partners may be waiting in the wings

Lots of info/resources available as well...
i.e. Sand County Foundation RCPP Webinar





United States Department of Agriculture

Thank you!
For more information about NRCS Programs:

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<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state>

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Helping People Help the Land.