USDA Announces $252 Million Available for Regional Conservation Partnership Program

USDA invites potential conservation partners, including private industry, non-government organizations, Indian tribes, state and local governments, water districts, and universities to submit project applications for federal funding through RCPP.

NRCS will award up to $252 million dollars to locally driven, public-private partnerships that improve the nation’s water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat, and protect agricultural viability.

USDA is now accepting proposals for Fiscal Year 2018 RCPP funding. Pre-proposals are due April 21. For more information on applying, visit the RCPP website.

Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 and 27
- Through this project, partners will construct two (Sites 26 and 27) of the remaining ten uncompleted structures as identified in the Wahoo Creek Watershed Plan to address identified flooding and water quality concerns.

Divots in the Pivots
- The Divots in the Pivots Project will restore habitat for wetland-dependent birds in Nebraska’s Rainwater Basin through Natural Resource Conservation Service easements and enhanced irrigation efficiency through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program.
Jon Hansen, Survey Aide, has joined the NRCS staff in the Tekamah Field Office. He will be assisting to install NRCS and NRD conservation practices in the field. Jon started January 9.
CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AT-A-GLANCE

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
New contracts: 707
Acres: 285,426
Obligated: $17,348,195
(Includes all EQIP initiatives)

EQIP Ogallala Aquifer Initiative
Contracts: 92
Acres: 8,918
Financial assistance: $3,357,511

EQIP National Water Quality Initiative
Contracts: 22
Acres: 2,778
Obligated: $716,013

EQIP Organic Initiative
Contracts: 3
Acres: 1,621
Obligated: $185,671

EQIP High Tunnel Initiative
Contracts: 16
Acres: 39
Obligated: $81,401

Conservation Stewardship Program
Contracts: 602
Acres: 540,000
Obligated: $10,474,630

2014 FARM BILL PROGRAMS

The 2014 Farm Bill was enacted in February 2014. NRCS offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit both agricultural producers and the environment. The following is a short description of each.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

CSP helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. Participants earn CSP payments for conservation performance—the higher the performance, the higher the payment.

THE AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM (ACEP)

ACEP provides financial and technical assistance to help conserve agricultural lands and wetlands and their related benefits. Under the Agricultural Land Easements component, NRCS helps Indian tribes, state and local governments and non-governmental organizations protect working agricultural lands and limit non-agricultural uses of the land. Under the Wetlands Reserve Easements component, NRCS helps to restore, protect and enhance enrolled wetlands.

THE REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (RCPP)

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.

Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of EQIP, CSP, and ACEP; and in certain areas the Watershed Operations and Flood Prevention Program.

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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
    Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
    1400 Independence Avenue, SW
    Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.