



United States Department of Agriculture

2014

Farm Bill

**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



RCPP

RCPP is a new regional program that:

- Furthers the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife on a regional scale
- Encourages partners to cooperate with producers
- Provides assistance through:
 - Partnership agreements
 - Program contracts or easement agreements
- Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:
 - Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
 - Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program (CBWP)
 - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
 - Great Lakes Basin Program for Erosion and Sediment Control

RCPP

Covered programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

RCPP Funding

Available Funding

- \$100 Million of Direct RCPP funding each year
- 7% of funds from the four covered programs (ACEP, CStP, EQIP, HFRP) reserved annually through April 1st

RCPP

- RCPP will implement eligible activities on eligible land through:
 - Partnership agreements under which NRCS enters contracts and easement agreements with producers and landowners participating in a project with a selected partner; and
 - Conservation Program Contracts (CPCs) or easement agreements in—
 - Critical conservation areas; or
 - In a selected partner project area but who are seeking to implement an eligible activity independent of a partner.

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Funding Allocation

- 25% for State Projects
- 40% for National Projects
- 35% for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas

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RCPP program contracts and easement agreements with producers are implemented through covered programs:

- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

RCPP

RCPP Purposes are:

- To encourage partners to cooperate with producers in:
 - meeting or avoiding the need for national, State, and local natural resource regulatory requirements related to production on eligible land; and
 - implementing projects that will result in the installation and maintenance of eligible activities that affect multiple agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operations on a local, regional, State, or multistate basis
- To further the regional or watershed scale conservation, restoration and sustainable use of:
 - Soil
 - Water
 - Wildlife
 - Related natural resources

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- Eligible Land includes:
 - Cropland
 - Grassland
 - Rangeland
 - Pastureland
 - Non-industrial private forest land
 - Other land incidental to agricultural production
 - Wetlands,
 - Buffers
 - Etc.

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Critical Conservation Areas

- Secretary will select up to 8 critical conservation areas
- Priority consideration given to geographical areas which:
 - Include multiple States with significant ag production
 - Have an existing agreement or work plans
 - Benefit water quality improvement
 - Benefit water quantity improvement
 - Assist producers to meet natural resource regulatory requirements
- Allows for both Partnership Agreements and for assistance to producers and landowner outside selected partner project areas

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Critical Conservation Areas (continued)

In addition to the covered programs, the authorities under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566), other than Watershed Rehabilitation provisions, may be used in CCAs.

Contact for Watershed Protection questions:
Noller Herbert, Director Conservation Engineering Division

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Partnership Agreements:

- NRCS will conduct a competitive process to select applications for partnership agreements
- NRCS will make public the criteria used in evaluating

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Partners are responsible for:

- Contributing a significant portion of the overall costs
- Conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project
- Acting on a landowner's or producer's behalf, if requested by the landowners or producer in applying for assistance
- Leveraging financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives.
- Conducting and providing an assessment of the project costs and conservation effects

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- In these selected partner project areas, RCPP program assistance is delivered to producers through conservation program contracts and easement agreements under the covered programs.

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Additional Program Provisions

- Allows the Secretary to waive AGI if needed to fulfill purposes of the program
- Allows adjustments to discretionary rules of covered program with Secretary's approval, if requested by partner
- No funding may be used to cover partner administrative costs

Protection, Restoration and Enhancement of Tricolored Blackbird Habitat on Agricultural Lands Currently Funded

- Partnership between the dairy industry and conservation groups to address the factors that challenge California dairy farmers and threaten Tricolored Blackbirds
- Industry-led campaign highlighting farmers role in saving the species and the formation of a working group to develop long term solutions



Central and Southern Sierra Nevada Streambed Restoration Workshops

Proposed multi-county workshops to demonstrate ecological restoration techniques that also improve profitability.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/ca/home/>

...or just google “California NRCS”

- Links to Financial Assistance Programs
- Technical Resources
- Field Office Contact Information
- Media: Press Releases/Videos



Questions?

