



PRESS RELEASE

USDA Invests \$1.5 Billion in 92 Partnership Projects to Advance Conservation and Climate-Smart Agriculture as Part of the Biden-Harris Investing in America Agenda

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USDA today announced a historic \$1.5 billion for 92 partner-driven conservation projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

WASHINGTON, October 23, 2024 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced a historic \$1.5 billion for 92 partner-driven conservation projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. Partners will provide \$968 million in contributions to amplify the impact of the federal investment. Selected RCPP projects will help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners adopt and expand voluntary, locally led conservation strategies to enhance natural resources while tackling the climate crisis.

Today's investment is made with funding available through the Farm Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act. The Inflation Reduction Act is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's Investing in America Agenda and the largest investment in climate action and conservation in world history, which has enabled USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to boost funding for RCPP. In total, the Inflation Reduction Act provides \$19.5 billion to support USDA's oversubscribed conservation programs, including \$4.95 billion for RCPP.

"The Regional Conservation Partnership Program is an example of public-private partnership at its best," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Thanks to the boost in funding from the Biden-Harris Administration's Inflation Reduction Act we're able to invest even more in this popular and important program and increase our conservation impact across the country, supporting our nation's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners while at the same time protecting our natural resources for the future."

"America's working lands and forests are crucial in our fight against the climate crisis — from sequestering carbon pollution to absorbing the impact of storms and floods," said John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President for International Climate Policy. "Today's awards make sure that the people who know those landscapes best — farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners — have the resources they need to lead this important work."

The projects support priorities in conservation and climate and can save farmers money and increase productivity. For example, there are six projects that support use of innovative technologies to reduce enteric methane emissions in livestock. There are also 16 projects that address water conservation in the West, ensuring producers and communities have the tools they need to adapt in the face of continued drought pressures. And 42 projects promote terrestrial wildlife habitat conservation and restoration, as directed by the recent USDA Secretarial memo: Conserving and Restoring Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Connectivity and Corridors.

NRCS also set aside \$100 million for Tribal-led projects, part of a broader effort to support Tribes and Tribal producers through NRCS conservation programs. From this set aside, NRCS has made seven awards to five different tribes and tribal entities.

By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.

Examples of projects include:

- **The InterTribal Buffalo Council** will work to restore and manage native grasslands ecosystems utilizing buffalo and conservation practices on 83-member tribal nation's lands across three

projects in Utah, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Florida, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. This project will work to restore cultural and spiritual practices, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse emissions.

- **The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** will address emissions of greenhouse gases contributing to climate change and water quality degradation. The primary goals of this project are to reduce enteric emissions from dairy cows and to improve manure management at the farm level.
- **The Arizona Association of Conservation Districts** will fund two agricultural conservation easements in Arizona while addressing resource concerns related to drought, wildfire and climate uncertainty. Partners intend to increase the protection of biodiversity via the permanent protection of more than 2,000 acres of historic ranchland and open space, among other activities.
- **Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development** will work to restore streambanks and establish riparian buffers in western North Carolina to improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, promote sustainable agriculture, sequester carbon and build strong community partnerships to ensure long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits for the region.
- **The US Endowment for Forestry and Communities** will work to prevent at-risk plant and animal species from becoming listed under the federal Endangered Species Act as threatened or endangered. To ensure habitat protection, RCPP funds will be used for a combination of U.S.-held and entity-held permanent conservation easements.

[See the list of all the 92 awarded projects here.](#)

Projects are being awarded under both RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFA, the lead partner works directly with agricultural producers to support the development of innovative conservation approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic.

Since the start of the Biden-Harris Administration, RCPP has made 334 awards totaling more than \$3 billion. Since its inception, RCPP has made 812 awards involving more than 4,000 partner organizations, with more than \$4 billion in NRCS funding amplified by another \$4 billion in partner contributions.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit usda.gov.

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