USDA United States Department of Agriculture

# Regional Conservation Partnership Program

## Fiscal Year 2018 Projects by State

## Alabama

**Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $7,000,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Longleaf Pine Range)
Lead Partner: The Conservation Fund
Number of Initial Partners: 13
Participating States: Alabama (Lead State) and Florida

Longleaf pine forests once encompassed more than 90 million acres across the Southeast. Over the past two centuries, development, conversion to other industrial forest types, and fire suppression have reduced the longleaf pin forests to less than 5 percent of their original range. The Coastal Headwaters Forest project addresses the natural resource concerns of the Longleaf Pine Range CCA in Alabama's Gulf Coastal Plain near the Gulf of Mexico. By restoring longleaf pine, the project will preserve four major coastal river systems in the Gulf Coast Plain and protect habitat for the threatened gopher tortoise.

**Alabama Riparian Habitat Initiative**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,640,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Alabama Soil & Water Conservation Committee
Number of Initial Partners: 8
Participating States: Alabama (Lead State)

Often referred to as "America's Amazon," 10 percent of America's total water resources originate or flow through Alabama, resulting in the state being listed as number one in the nation for the occurrences of freshwater crayfish, fish, turtles, snails and mussel species, many of which are designated as endangered or threatened. The Alabama Riparian Habitat project, an innovative partnership of 13 organizations, will strengthen riparian buffer management practices on the landscape, offering solutions to landowners for the protection and enhancement of Alabama's natural resources. Riparian areas will be fenced off and re-vegetated, alternate water and shade sources will be provided, and stream access will be controlled to allow for improved water quality and grazing management, healthier livestock, and quality of life benefits to residents, visitors, wildlife and downstream water users.

## Alaska

**Keex' Kwaan" Community Forest Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $2,070,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Sealaska Corporation (ANCSA Regional Corporation)

Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Alaska (Lead State)

Sealaska has been working with Alaska Native Village Corporations and several other partners to develop an all-lands, all-hands approach to maximizing rural community benefits from land management activities while improving overall conservation outcomes, especially for Sitka Black-tailed deer and salmon. The Keex' Kwaan' Community Forest Partnership project is modeled off the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership, a successful 2015 RCPP project.

**Copper Basin Subsistence Landscape Resiliency**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,710,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission dba CRITR
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Alaska (Lead State)

This is a unique, innovative, participative project to bring resources together to address subsistence sustainability through habitat enhancement, wildfire prevention measures and biomass harvest support in the Ahtna Traditional Use Territory, a 26 million acre landscape of the Copper River basin.

## Arkansas

**North Arkansas Quail Focal Landscape Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $700,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Arkansas (Lead State)

Early-succession habitat has significantly decreased/deteriorated over the last 50-100 years, mainly due to changing land use. This loss of plant diversity and cover has caused declines in northern bobwhites and numerous songbirds. This project utilizes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and its practices to create early succession habitat to benefit quail, pollinators and other wildlife in northern Arkansas. The objectives of this project align with several initiatives including: the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, the Arkansas Wildlife Action Plan, Partners in Flight Landbird Action Plan and the Arkansas Strategic Quail Plan.

**Carroll County White River Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $590,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Carroll County Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Arkansas (Lead State)

Concentrated poultry farming in Carroll County, Arkansas has degraded water quality in the region. Existing animal mortality facilities are inadequate to prevent pathogens from entering local streams and, ultimately, White River. This project will upgrade mortality facilities with new "In Vessel" technology to improve water quality and reduce or eliminate biohazard risk.

# Arizona

### Partnership GRIC Water Supply Protection Program

Proposed NRCS Investment: $10,000,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Gila River Indian Community
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Arizona (Lead State)

The Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), a federally recognized Indian Tribe, successfully farmed its land until a century ago when upstream diversions left growers with an insufficient water supply, leading to water and soil quality degradation and loss of productive farmland. All of the GRIC's settlement water, particularly the Central Arizona Project (CAP) water, has been affected by drought in the Lower Colorado River Basin. Because of the amount of CAP water in the GRIC's budget, it is exposed to significant risk of shortage. Therefore, the GRIC has engaged in innovative ways to conserve water by partnering with federal and state agencies in a Drought Contingency Plan (DCP) to maintain storage levels in Lake Mead in an effort to stave off a shortage declaration. This project will work to reduce water losses and maintain ground and surface water balances to ensure the long-term sustainability of soil and water quality and quantity.

### SE AZ Grassland Restoration Project

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,250,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Arizona Game and Fish
Number of Initial Partners: 3
Participating States: Arizona (Lead State)

Multiple partners will work to identify grassland restoration projects within the project area through outreach to landowners and lessees. Brush management will be used to restore 10,000 of historic grasslands through this project. These restored acres will benefit a wide variety of grassland obligate species and benefit ranchers through more productive grasslands throughout the project area.

### Lyman North – Grasslands Restoration

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,000,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Apache Natural Resource Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Arizona (Lead State)

The Apache Natural Resource Conservation District has successfully implemented and completed practices to support grassland restoration in the southern portion of the District boundary, improving water and soil quality. This RCPP project extends this landscape scale work into the northern portion of the District, positively impacting rangelands, watersheds and wildlife habitats.

# California

### Palo Verde Valley Water Conservation RCPP

Proposed NRCS Investment: $3,722,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Colorado River Basin)
Lead Partner: Palo Verde Resource Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: California (Lead State)

The Palo Verde project proposes to make protective structural improvements and to conserve water through incentivizing deficit irrigation and organic production. These measures will advance drought resiliency, soil health, water quality, habitat conservation, water accounting and critically important regional water conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin. Currently, Palo Verde Irrigation District growers are engaging in negotiations with the Bureau of Reclamation to conserve water for Lake Mead, which is at critically low levels. This project will help facilitate voluntary grower contributions to that effort.

### McMullin On-Farm Flood Capture Phase 2 Expansion

Proposed NRCS Investment: $6,990,000 (Critical Conservation Area – California Bay Delta)
Lead Partner: Raisin City Water District
Number of Initial Partners: 8
Participating States: California (Lead State)

The MuMullin project will use a series of canals, pumps and turnouts to capture and divert flood water from the King River. This project will protect five thousand acres of farmland from flooding and create habitat for waterfowl.

### Crisis to Opportunity: Sierra Nevada Tree Mortalit

Proposed NRCS Investment: $10,000,000 (National)
Lead Partner: California Association of Resource Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 22
Participating States: California (Lead State)

There is an unprecedented tree mortality crisis in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California due to the impact of prolonged drought and resulting bark beetle infestation. This project will address the issue by removing dead trees from the high mortality area and reforesting where appropriate. The project will help restore forest and watershed health on non-industrial private forestlands by improving soil health, habitat, and air quality and helping to prevent unprecedented catastrophic wildfire that would severely impact all of the national resource priorities. Priority areas include those with the highest tree mortality, areas designated as High Hazard Zones, areas designated as High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, and areas burned within the last ten years. More than 40 local, state and federal entities will participate in this project, pledging over $280 million in match. The partnership will help provide a long term solution by creating the necessary network to solve future problems, educating citizens and agencies about proper forest management and building an awareness of the need for resources for forest management into the future.

**Salinas River Riparian Enhancement Program**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,763,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Resource Conservation District of Monterey County
Number of Initial Partners: 9
Participating States: California (Lead State)

The Salinas River Riparian Enhancement Program project will enhance at least 400 acres of Salinas River floodplain (about 30 river miles) that are infested with the invasive, non-native plant Arundo donax (arundo). Arundo, a 20-30 ft tall bamboo-like grass, grows in dense stands and has very high biomass per area, resulting in huge water loss for riparian areas, habitat degradation for listed steelhead trout and amphibious, terrestrial and avian species, and increased flood risk along the river. This project is the fourth phase of a 10-20 year riparian improvement program to enhance all 1470 arundo-infested acres on the Salinas River, which has the second largest arundo infestation in California.

Landowners along the river are looking for ways to reduce flood risk and save water, but can do little to manage riparian lands due to daunting regulatory hurdles. Our program is fully permitted, allowing landowners to address their resource concerns while enhancing habitat for fish and wildlife. Our innovative, comprehensive monitoring program will quantify ecological and hydrological project benefits through detailed mapping, biological surveys, and a 2-D hydraulic model developed with project partners.

**Stormwater Management Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,249,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: California (Lead State)

Climate change threatens California coastal watersheds, bringing more frequent extreme precipitation events and an associated increase in runoff and a reduction in infiltration, placing even greater stress on limited groundwater resources and surface water quality. This project focuses on stormwater management and collection from hillslopes and agricultural lands to reduce runoff and maximize infiltration to improve water quality and supply in Santa Cruz County and the greater Pajaro Valley basin. The project will maximize growers' ability to collect and manage rainfall, storing it in the soil profile at a depth that it can be utilized by the crop or infiltrated deeper to benefit groundwater supplies. Additionally, implementation of irrigation water management practices will further support growers to reduce pressure on limited groundwater supplies. By leveraging innovative partnerships and incentive programs, this project will serve as a model for agricultural climate change resiliency.

## Colorado

**The Acequia Initiative**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,722,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Colorado Open Lands
Number of Initial Partners: 13
Participating States: Colorado (Lead State)

The Acequia Conservation Initiative project will help historically underserved acequia landowners create stability and sustainability in their agriculture operations. Colorado Open Lands, NRCS and a variety of resource partners have come together to place conservation easements on acequia properties to protect and secure senior water rights, prime soils, native habitat and the areas agricultural heritage.

## Connecticut

### Connecting the Connecticut River Watershed

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,980,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 14
Participating States: Connecticut, Massachusetts (Lead State), New Hampshire and Vermont

This project addresses habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality and climate resilience in high priority aquatic and terrestrial sites across the four-state Connecticut River Watershed. Partners will work with land owners to improve and connect aquatic and riparian habitat; reduce sedimentation and nutrients; and identify and prioritize parcels of land that will safeguard water quality, protect riparian or wetland resources, and increase resiliency to climate change.

## Delaware

### Protecting DE Bay & Inland Bays with Cover Crops

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,020,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Sussex Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Delaware (Lead State)

The Sussex Conservation District and their partners will help improve water quality and soil health in the Sussex County, Delaware portions of the Delaware Bay and Inland Bays Watersheds by implementing cover crops on 10,400 acres. Cover crops are cost-effective practice for improving water quality because of their ability to scavenge excess nutrients in the soil and increase organic matter. Producers will be encouraged to plant cover crops early, taking advantage of longer growing degree days to get better root system establishment. Through plant diversity and early establishment, water quality and soil health will be improved in the targeted watersheds.

### Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation

Proposed NRCS Investment: $6,080,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Chesapeake Bay Watershed)
Lead Partner: Sustainable Chesapeake

Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Delaware, Maryland and Virginia (Lead State)

The Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation project supports a diverse three state partnership to accelerate the adoption of precision nutrient management and soil health practices. Financial and technical assistance will be focused where: 1) practices will have the greatest impact on Chesapeake Bay water quality: 2) farmers have demonstrated enthusiasm for these practices; 3) partner outreach and education and technical assistance efforts support financial assistance delivery; and 4) prime farmland are located. Funds from this project will make significant contributions to reducing nitrogen and sediment loading to the Chesapeake Bay, helping the agricultural sector to meet Chesapeake Bay TMDL milestone goals.

## Florida

### The Ocala to Osceola Wildlife Corridor

Proposed NRCS Investment: $3,560,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Longleaf Pine Range)
Lead Partner: North Florida Land Trust
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Florida (Lead State)

The Ocala-two-Osceola (O2O) wildlife corridor has been long recognized as an important landscape of natural and rural lands that connects two large National Forests and provides critical wildlife habitat for wildlife (Florida Black Bear) and at-risk species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker and gopher tortoise. The 1.6 million acre region encompasses public lands and private forests, most of which is productive timberlands. The O2O Partnership, led by the North Florida Land Trust, is a team of public and private organizations dedicated to enhanced conservation and protection of the rural character and economy of the O2O region. Working with the Florida NRCS, the Partnership will implement its conservation program through a combination of land protection and land management incentives for private landowners.

### Coastal Headwaters Longleaf Forest

Proposed NRCS Investment: $7,000,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Longleaf Pine Range)
Lead Partner: The Conservation Fund
Number of Initial Partners: 13
Participating States: Alabama (Lead State) and Florida

Longleaf pine forests once encompassed more than 90 million acres across the Southeast. Over the past two centuries, development, conversion to other industrial forest types, and fire suppression have reduced the longleaf pin forests to less than 5 percent of their original range. The Coastal Headwaters Forest project addresses the natural resource concerns of the Longleaf Pine Range CCA in Alabama's Gulf Coastal Plain near the Gulf of Mexico. By restoring longleaf pine, the project will preserve four major coastal river systems in the Gulf Coast Plain and protect habitat for the threatened gopher tortoise.

**Gulf of Mexico – Forest to Sea Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,000,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Conservation Fund
Number of Initial Partners: 13
Participating States: Florida (Lead State)

Florida's Big Bend includes one of the least developed coastlines in the continental U.S. and some of the Gulf of Mexico's most productive habitat. This watershed includes some of the largest remaining private forests in the state, but they are increasingly being converted to more intensive uses that negatively impact freshwater flows. The Gulf of Mexico's Forest to Sea project will protect these flows with Healthy Forest Reserve Program easements and restoration practices over large working forests.

**Slow the Flow: Next Generation Practices**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,150,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Florida (Lead State)

The five-year "Slow the Flow" project will protect three watersheds (~4 million acres) in south Florida from high flow and nutrient-rich discharges. By improving on-farm conservation upstream, it will protect estuaries and freshwater ecosystems downstream.

## Georgia

**Georgia Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $3,500,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Longleaf Pine Range)
Lead Partner: US Endowment for Forestry and Communities
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Georgia (Lead State)

The Georgia Gopher Tortoise Conservation Initiative's goal is to prevent the eastern tortoise population from Federal listing, which will save producers across four states from Endangered Species Act regulations. The project will meet this goal by enrolling up to 4,000 acres of longleaf and pine forests into Healthy Forest Reserve Program easements. This project will also improve habitat for many other species, will help maintain rural forestry jobs, and precluding listing will avoid economic impacts on thousands of producers.

**SE Georgia Partners Building Watershed Resiliency**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $406,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Coastal Georgia Resource Conservation and Development Council
Number of Initial Partners: 14
Participating States: Georgia (Lead State)

This project is a regional partnership to build watershed resiliency in southeast Georgia. Building watershed resiliency is a means of preventing a short-term hazard from becoming a long-term community

problem, as well as developing capacity and confidence in local decision-makers and citizens to make sound choices about the natural resources around them. The primary goal is to improve water quality in the Satilla and St. Marys watersheds through implementation of site specific land conservation practices, buffer establishments and easement acquisition.

**Innovative Conservation at the Energy-Water Nexus**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $751,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District and Georgia Association of Conservation Districts
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Georgia (Lead State)

Water and energy are two of the most critical inputs for agricultural operations in Georgia. Utilizing these resources efficiently and strategically paves a sustainable path for the future. This project will develop and implement an innovative approach to conservation with a focus on water and energy. The first approach will be engaging non-traditional partners in conservation to highlight and demonstrate efficiency in irrigation and energy use. The second approach is to build a strategic partnership with a solar development company to harness the conservation value behind farmers' conversion from crop production to green energy production in ecologically sensitive watersheds. Each of these activities will occur simultaneously alongside the implementation of best management practices for irrigation and energy through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

**Helping Farmers Protect Soil and Water Quality**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $751,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Athens Land Trust
Number of Initial Partners: 3
Participating States: Georgia (Lead State)

Athens Land Trust and partners will help producers protect water and soil quality in the Broad/Savannah, Oconee, Ogeechee, Ocmulgee, Satilla and Altamaha Watersheds in Georgia. Athens Land Trust will do this by providing outreach, technical and financial assistance to farmers and landowners regarding sustainable livestock production, conservation practices, sustainable practices in annual and perennial crop production, USDA/NRCS programs and resources, and permanent conservation easements. A special emphasis of the program is engaging socially disadvantaged and beginning and limited resource farmers.

## Hawaii

**Continuing Proposal: HI Watershed Initiative**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $770,000 (State)
Lead Partner: State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife
Number of Initial Partners: 10
Participating States: Hawaii (Lead State)

This project continues the work of a current RCPP project of protecting Hawaii's forests, the source of the islands' fresh water. The State of Hawaii is committed to protecting 30% (253,000 acres) of Hawaii's highest priority watershed forests by 2030 - currently 16% (132,000 acres) are protected. Project sites are lands identified as the highest priority for watershed protection because they contain the most intact native forest and receive the highest rainfall. The scope of the proposed projects include herbaceous weed control of non-native plants, brush management, fencing, tree/shrub establishment with native species, and protection of rare and endangered species habitat. These activities help protect and enhance forested habitats for water recharge, improve water quality, and provide habitat to over 300 listed threatened and endangered species. This continuing project will allow other partners, not currently receiving RCPP funds, to take advantage of this successful program.

## Idaho

**ESPA Monitoring and Water Management Program**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $950,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Aberdeen American Falls Ground Water District
Number of Initial Partners: 9
Participating States: Idaho (Lead State)

The EPSA Monitoring and Water Management Program will increase water availability from Snake River by improving efficiency of water use. Working with agricultural producers to increase efficiency of irrigation, ESPA will help recharge the Reclamation reservoirs and provide protection to water rights on Snake River.

**Camas Prairie Soil Health Implementation Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $337,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Lewis Soil Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 20
Participating States: Idaho (Lead State)

The Camas Prairie Soil Health Implementation Project will target soil quality and soil health concerns within the Camas Prairie. Implementing practices that will focus on increasing the soil quality will improve soil health, water quality and reduce nitrate contamination and pH concerns. The project will focus on cover crops, precision nutrient management and transition to organics on an estimated 3,000 acres. The goal is to implement conservation practices in a collaborative manner, utilizing multiple conservation approaches to deliver measurable solutions and maximizing participation in the watershed while leveraging funds to increase the impact on the critical resources.

**Jim Ford Creek Watershed Implementation Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $343,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Clearwater Soil and Water Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 10
Participating States: Idaho (Lead State)

The Jim Ford Creek Watershed Implementation Project will target the TMDL load reductions needed as outlined in the TMDL Review and Temperature Addendum and the Jim Ford Creek TMDL Addendum Implementation Plan for Agriculture. The primary focus of the implementation plan is temperature with the proposed practices benefiting streambank stabilization, fish habitat and species of concern. Working with 10 partners, funding will be leveraged to double the investment and increase the impact on critical resources.

## Illinois

**MRB-Big Bend Enhancing Water-Soil-Habitat Quality**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,515,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Mississippi River Basin)
Lead Partner: Marshall-Putnam Soil and Water Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 24
Participating States: Illinois (Lead State)

This project, in the Mississippi River Basin CCA, focuses on the Lower Illinois Senachwine Lake HUC 8 (07130001) lying within the boundaries of Marshall/Putnam Counties along the Big Bend of the Illinois River. The goal is to empower producers to voluntarily comply with nutrient load reductions to hold off impending regulatory action in 2025. Partners will work with producers to reduce soil loss by T or better; improve water quality using edge and in-field practices by 50% on treated acres; develop new field test sites for innovative practice and promote installation of those practices that improve water quality and reduce sedimentation; increase wildlife nesting and brooding areas by 2% while increasing populations; and, protect sensitive soils over winter by applying new acres of cover crop. Partners hope to increase producer participation by 50%, with 10-15% being producers who have been previously served by the district.

**Driftless Area Habitat for the Wild & Rare Phase 2**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $9,203,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Trout Unlimited
Number of Initial Partners: 46
Participating States: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin (Lead State)

The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and its partners will target areas in the Driftless Area where land restoration and land protection will have the most positive impact on water quality by implementing permanent conservation practices that reduce pollution and sediment runoff into streams. RCPP funding will provide a new comprehensive, targeted regional approach to restoring cold-water streams and their riparian areas for the benefit of the many at-risk species. The project will assist landowners implement conservation practices that will reduce pollution and sediment runoff. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funding will purchase agricultural conservation easements to install permanent conservation practices such as riparian buffers and filter strips.

**Otter Lake Source Water Protection**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $833,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Illinois Corn Growers Association
Number of Initial Partners: 21
Participating States: Illinois (Lead State)

Otter Lake lies in the heart of Illinois corn and soybean country, and its primary purpose is to provide drinking water for 19,000 rural residents. Every day, the lake provides the water supply for six towns, two villages and two rural water districts. Recently, nutrient-induced algae blooms have occurred, and the lake is also listed as impaired for phosphorus. Nitrogen loading is also a growing concern due to rapid expansion of tile drainage. This project will protect Otter Lake by reducing excessive levels of sedimentation and nutrient loading. A highly detailed watershed plan was just completed, enabling conservation practices to be micro-targeted to areas of greatest resource need. Additionally, farmers will receive an analysis of economic return at sub-field resolution paired with financially favorable conservation alternatives.

**Illinois Headwaters Conservation Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $436,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Headwaters Invasive Plant Partnership
Number of Initial Partners: 12
Participating States: Illinois (Lead State)

The Headwaters Invasive Plant Partnership (HIPP) was formed to address the threat of invasive plants in conservation areas across jurisdictional boundaries in east central Illinois. Healthy forests and prairies are essential for reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality and reversing pollinator decline. Much of the conservation land covered by HIPP is held for public use through ownership by government entities or non-profit organizations, but private landholders must be engaged in order to reduce the impact of invasive plants. By providing technical knowledge and financial assistance, this project will help ensure that private and public landowners are more effectively working together to implement best management practices across the landscape.

## Indiana

**Reversing Declines in Grassland Biodiversity**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,500,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Central Hardwoods Joint Venture
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee (Lead State)

The Central Hardwoods Joint Venture and its partners will use a multifaceted conservation program that will complement existing efforts to reverse the decline of grassland habitats in the Southeast U.S., especially near protected landscapes. The project seeks to recover populations of grassland bird species deemed in need of conservation attention by Partners in Flight, as well as the native biodiversity associated with the historic grassland landscapes of the Interior Low Plateaus ecoregion of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Indiana. Conservation efforts will include removal of woody cover and prescribed fire,

reconversion of cropland or fescue pastures to native grasses, increasing forb-to-grass ratios, changing grazing intensities, and altering haying regimes.

**Grasslands for Gamebirds & Songbirds Initiative**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,000,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Indiana Department of Natural Resources – Division of Fish & Wildlife
Number of Initial Partners: 33
Participating States: Indiana (Lead State)

The Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds Initiative will develop and manage grassland and pollinator habitat needed by at risk bird species, including the Henslow's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Bobwhite Quail, and Ring-necked Pheasant. The initiative will develop 2,250 acres of grassland habitat on private lands in five focal regions located strategically throughout Indiana.

## Iowa

**SmithfieldGro: Sustainable Grain Supply Chains**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,080,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Environmental Defense Fund
Number of Initial Partners: 16
Participating States: Iowa and North Carolina (Lead State)

This RCPP project expands an innovative collaboration between Environmental Defense Fund and Smithfield Foods to address nutrient management and soil health in the company's grain supply chain. In 2014 Smithfield created SmithfieldGro, a voluntary program that provides agronomic assistance and conservation incentives to grain growers in the company's sourcing region. In 2016, SmithfieldGro improved practices on about 300,000 acres in North Carolina and Iowa. This RCPP will launch new efforts in IA and expand efforts in NC. RCPP allows SmithfieldGro to engage new partners, incorporate strong science, and reach farmers who may not enroll in traditional conservation efforts.

**Driftless Area Habitat for the Wild & Rare Phase 2**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $9,203,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Trout Unlimited
Number of Initial Partners: 46
Participating States: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin (Lead State)

The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and its partners will target areas in the Driftless Area where land restoration and land protection will have the most positive impact on water quality by implementing permanent conservation practices that reduce pollution and sediment runoff into streams. RCPP funding will provide a new comprehensive, targeted regional approach to restoring cold-water streams and their riparian areas for the benefit of the many at-risk species. The project will assist landowners implement conservation practices that will reduce pollution and sediment runoff. Agricultural Conservation

Easement Program funding will purchase agricultural conservation easements to install permanent conservation practices such as riparian buffers and filter strips.

## Kansas

### Milford Lake Watershed RCPP Project

Proposed NRCS Investment: $2,880,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Kansas Water Office
Number of Initial Partners: 28
Participating States: Kansas (Lead State)

The frequency of harmful algal blooms within Milford Lake has created a concern among lake stakeholders that blooms will adversely impact public water supplies, their ability to provide safe potable water, and negatively impact wildlife and water-based recreation. This project will bring partners together to work with NRCS on implementation of conservation practices within the Milford Lake Watershed. These partnership efforts will help improve water quality by reducing the amount of nutrients entering Milford Lake.

### Doniphan County Road and Fields Sediment Reduction

Proposed NRCS Investment: $250,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Doniphan County Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 8
Participating States: Kansas (Lead State)

Steep slopes, loess soil and high rainfall amounts create erosion issues that have an impact on county roads. When soil washes out of fields into the road and road ditches, it carries sediment into the water supply. To protect the water and soil in the area, the Doniphan County Conservation District will collaborate with the Doniphan County Road and Bridge Department and NRCS to resolve these issues with landowners. Conservation plans will be developed that will address the drainage area contributing to erosion along the county roadways.

## Kentucky

### Advanced Precision Ag for Sustainable Conservation

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,489,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Mississippi River Basin)
Lead Partner: Security Seed & Chemical, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 30
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State) and Tennessee

The Cumberland River basin in Tennessee and Kentucky spans nearly 18,000 square miles and is home to nearly 2.5 million people. This project will occur in the Red River and Lower Cumberland watersheds, two of the 14 watersheds that make up the Cumberland River Watershed. Both surface water and

groundwater impairments are a concern in the watershed with nutrients, bacteria, and sediment being the primary issues. The partners will work with producers to improve water quality by maximizing fertilizer uptake, preventing sediment and nutrient losses, using science based precision agricultural practices, and implementing high nutrient reducing structural practices. The partners' goal is to advance the implementation of on-farm precision agriculture practice to help ensure the sustainability, resilience, and continued productivity of the area's working lands while simultaneously improving the producer's bottom line. The partners assembled for this project are some of the most advanced, cutting edge companies in the U.S., which assures that both producers and NRCS staff will have access to the most up-to-date technologies available today. Another goal of this project is to work with NRCS to improve and update practice standards and enhancements, so they work better for producers and achieve higher results for the environment.

**Reversing Declines in Grassland Biodiversity**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,500,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Central Hardwoods Joint Venture
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee (Lead State)

The Central Hardwoods Joint Venture and its partners will use a multifaceted conservation program that will complement existing efforts to reverse the decline of grassland habitats in the Southeast U.S., especially near protected landscapes. The project seeks to recover populations of grassland bird species deemed in need of conservation attention by Partners in Flight, as well as the native biodiversity associated with the historic grassland landscapes of the Interior Low Plateaus ecoregion of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Indiana. Conservation efforts will include removal of woody cover and prescribed fire, reconversion of cropland or fescue pastures to native grasses, increasing forb-to-grass ratios, changing grazing intensities, and altering haying regimes.

**Working Forests for Wildlife (KY, TN, VA)**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,990,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy, Kentucky
Number of Initial Partners: 12
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State), Tennessee and Virginia

Working Forests for Wildlife project seeks to conserve 25,000 acres of high priority forest in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. By connecting forestland owners with The Nature Conservancy's existing carbon markets, these forests can be managed to improve biological diversity and provide habitat for endangered species.

**Profitable Farms: Soil, Water and Plant Quality**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $485,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Pine Mountain Settlement School
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State)

The Profitable Farms: Soil, Water and Plant Quality project aims to bring conservation practices to the historically under-served region of Southeastern Kentucky. This partnership will provide access to cost share contracts for Seasonal High Tunnels in order to improve plant quality, extend the growing season and produce high value fruits, vegetables and value added goods for market. Micro-irrigation will also

be key in conserving water and improving water quality. Additionally, soil health and plant quality will be improved by the use of cover crops and reduced tillage. Implementation of these practices will help build the long term sustainability and profitability of these small farms while contributing greatly to the economic diversification of the region's economy. The project will provide a means for small farmers to tap into the tremendous opportunity for producing high-value agricultural products such as early and late crops, high quality organic heirloom vegetables, high quality organic small fruits and the resulting shelf-stable products created from this premium quality produce.

**Improving Wildlife and Pollinator Habitat on Farms**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $425,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Kentucky State University
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State)

Many agricultural producers focus on maximizing production acreage and their natural resource concerns receive less attention. This project will improve wildlife and pollinator habitats and water quality on eligible agricultural lands in Kentucky. The project partners will work together to train agricultural landowners on efficient and accurate implementation of conservation practices through a series of how-to workshops and demonstration projects. This innovative model combines financial assistance with supportive, on-the-ground training to ensure implementation is cost-effective and successful.

**Knox County RCPP**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $110,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Knox County Soil Conservation
Number of Initial Partners: 4
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State)

The Knox County Conservation District will be helping farmers and landowners through a local cost-share program--$20,000 in cash annually for five years and $10,000 in administrative and outreach services annually for five years—for a total of $150,000. Since the program began, the District has helped implement 44 livestock water facility practices, 15 heavy use area practices, 250 pasture renovation practices, and 15 fencing projects. The District offers equipment rentals to those implementing soil and water conservation practices on their farms.

## Louisiana

**Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife Conservation**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,430,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 15
Participating States: Louisiana (Lead State) and Texas

The Gulf Coast prairies, marshes and bays of Louisiana and Texas comprise one of North America's most productive land resource regions and are the most important migration/wintering areas for water birds. The landscape is threatened with more than 90% coastal wetland loss and a population forecast doubling

to 50 million by 2050. Project partners will assist NRCS in Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts and address water quantity and habitat concerns in the Gulf Coast.

**Improving Soil and Water Quality in Bayou Pierre**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $350,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Red River SWCD
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Louisiana (Lead State)

This project will manage natural resources to address soil quality degradation, water quality degradation and inefficient water use on the crop acres within the Bayou-Pierre watershed in Red River Parish, Northwest Louisiana. Conservation practices potentially implemented are expected to improve aquatic habitat, increase crop productivity, and provide economic benefit to the farmers. This project will serve as an example for other sites throughout the Louisiana's Red River Basin.

**Cultivating Water Conservation on Working Lands**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $450,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Louisiana (Lead State)

This project will restore degraded cypress-tupelo brakes in seven Parishes in Louisiana. The hydrological restoration of brakes on working agriculture lands to capture surface water and storm runoff from agricultural fields is an innovative practice to improve water quality, conserve and utilize water resources, and improve habitat for wildlife while reducing input costs from pumping groundwater from the substantially declining alluvial aquifer.

## Maine

**Conserving Farmland and Marsh Habitat in Maine**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,440,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Maine Farmland Trust
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Maine (Lead State)

Farms are often the largest remaining blocks of undeveloped land in coastal communities, and they often contain significant wildlife habitat in addition to their agricultural conservation values. Development pressure in these coastal communities is the highest in the state, and farmland and marsh habitat are disappearing rapidly. This project focuses on the protection of Maine farms that contain high value marsh habitat by preventing, eliminating or reducing stressors that degrade this habitat. Partners will seek to protect agricultural resources and habitat for fish and wildlife through easements, and they will work with producers to identify resource concerns and the conservation practices that could be implemented to support the health of marsh habitat.

**Little Kennebec Bay Farmland Protection**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $600,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Maine Farmland Trust
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Maine (Lead State)

The Little Kennebec Bay Farmland Protection project is located in coastal Washington County, Maine, where 17% of the population is considered to be food insecure. This project will focus conservation efforts on six farms and will place ACEP easements on properties landowners are eager to protect.

## Maryland

**Taking Soil Health to the Next Level**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,000,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Maryland Department of Agriculture
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Maryland (Lead State)

This project supports conservation practices that enhance soil health and improve both air quality through increased carbon sequestration and water quality through increased efficiency of nutrient use and water management. Conservation practices include adaptive nutrient management, cover crops, crop rotations, variable rate technology, residual and tillage management crop rotations, precision farming, edge of field tools, composting, forest and biomass planting and other practices supportive of soil health. These practices have production benefits including increased organic matter, reduced soil erosion, more efficient nutrient cycling, improved water retention, and reduced weed and pest competition. Increased soil health results in long-term soil productivity and the efficiency of production inputs. The project will include farmer to farmer workshops and three demonstrations at participating farms.

**Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $6,080,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Chesapeake Bay)
Lead Partner: Sustainable Chesapeake
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Delaware, Maryland and Virginia (Lead State)

The Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation project supports a diverse three state partnership to accelerate the adoption of precision nutrient management and soil health practices. Financial and technical assistance will be focused where: 1) practices will have the greatest impact on Chesapeake Bay water quality: 2) farmers have demonstrated enthusiasm for these practices; 3) partner outreach and education and technical assistance efforts support financial assistance delivery; and 4) prime farmland are located. Funds from this project will make significant contributions to reducing nitrogen and sediment loading to the Chesapeake Bay, helping the agricultural sector to meet Chesapeake Bay TMDL milestone goals.

## Massachusetts

### Connecting the Connecticut River Watershed

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,980,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 14
Participating States: Connecticut, Massachusetts (Lead State), New Hampshire and Vermont

This project addresses habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality and climate resilience in high priority aquatic and terrestrial sites across the four-state Connecticut River Watershed. Partners will work with land owners to improve and connect aquatic and riparian habitat; reduce sedimentation and nutrients; and identify and prioritize parcels of land that will safeguard water quality, protect riparian or wetland resources, and increase resiliency to climate change.

### Massachusetts Collaborative for Private Forestland

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,770,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Massachusetts (Lead State)

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife hopes to expand the successful model of the Habitat Management Grant Program to encourage private and municipal landowners to create adequate habitat for fish and wildlife and improve plant conditions. The program provides financial assistance to landowners for habitat management while fostering partnerships to encourage landscape scale habitat management.

### Saving Farmland in the Lower Merrimack Watershed

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,050,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Essex County Greenbelt Association, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Massachusetts (Lead State)

Essex County's watershed area harbors over 7,000 acres of unprotected working farmland. Rapid urbanization, high land values, and aging landowners render these farms vulnerable to conversion, with corresponding losses for water quality and habitat. This project will lead the effort to preserve 400 acres of the most critical farmland over the next 5 years through the acquisition of Agricultural Land Easements.

## Michigan

### Maple Watershed Fish Habitat Improvement

Proposed NRCS Investment: $890,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Great Lakes Region)
Lead Partner: Institute of Water Research
Number of Initial Partners: 13
Participating States: Michigan (Lead State)

The Maple River Watershed has experienced diminished fish habitat and degraded water quality as groundwater uses have expanded. Field crops in parts of the watershed require significant amounts of irrigation to produce maximum yields. Water withdrawals compete with subsurface flows feeding nearby streams impacting fish populations by changing stream temperature. Catchments in the Maple are in need of measures that offset the negative impacts of withdrawals on baseflow and temperatures. This project will improve fish habitat and water quality through a variety of conservation measures such as no till, buffer strips, and drainage management.

**Ann Arbor Greenbelt: Saving Michigan Farms**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,040,000 (State)
Lead Partner: City of Ann Arbor Greenbelt Program
Number of Initial Partners: 8
Participating States: Michigan (Lead State)

Located near the struggling Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) and southeast Michigan's rapidly growing Ann Arbor/Detroit metropolitan areas, the Ann Arbor Greenbelt: Saving Michigan Farms project provides an opportunity to protect agricultural lands key to food security and the local economies, preserve the agricultural heritage and quality of life of residents, and combat the NRCS resource concerns of water quality degradation, soil quality degradation and inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife.

## Minnesota

**Driftless Area Habitat for the Wild & Rare Phase 2**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $9,203,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Trout Unlimited
Number of Initial Partners: 46
Participating States: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin (Lead State)

The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and its partners will target areas in the Driftless Area where land restoration and land protection will have the most positive impact on water quality. RCPP funding will provide a new comprehensive, targeted regional approach to restoring cold-water streams and their riparian areas for the benefit of the many at-risk species. The project will assist landowners implement conservation practices that will reduce pollution and sediment runoff. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funding will purchase agricultural conservation easements to install permanent conservation practices such as riparian buffers and filter strips.

**One Watershed, One Plan Accelerated Implementation**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $2,530,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Minnesota Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Minnesota (Lead State)

Minnesota's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) program combines locally-led conservation and new tools to prioritize, target and measure non-point point source pollution reduction strategies and practices in priority sub-watersheds. The 1W1P program brings together MN's water authorities of its soil and water

conservation districts, counties, watershed districts and cities to work collectively through the locally-led process. Collectively, these partners have longstanding relationships with agricultural producers and forest landowners, within five major watersheds, to assure a high level of participation. This project advances an implementation framework that can accelerate the prioritized and targeted implementation of conservation practices to improve water quality faster than current efforts.

## Mississippi

**Pollinator Habitat and Cover Crops**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $75,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Mississippi Urban Forest Council
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Mississippi (Lead State)

This pollinator habitat project will include 16 pollinator habitat best management practice demonstration plots in eight urban/rural communities and eight specialty crop farms. These plots will demonstrate the connection between cover crops and pollinator health. The goal is to accelerate technology transfer and adoption of pollinator health practices within the target communities.

## Montana

**Montana Saline Seep Reclamation RCPP Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,310,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Montana Salinity Control Association
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Montana (Lead State)

More than 300,000 acres in Montana are affected by high soil saline levels, negatively impacting soil health, ground and surface water, wildlife, livestock and agriculture production. Saline seeps expanded rapidly in the late 1960s due to large scale crop-fallow farming. The MT Salinity Control Association (MSCA) provides efficient methods, on a farm-by-farm basis, to reclaim these saline seeps. MSCA completes groundwater investigations to determine the location and size of the recharge area to ensure land-use changes are planned where the highest impact can occur. Shallow groundwater monitoring wells are key to understanding the unique hydrogeology of each site before completing comprehensive saline seep reclamation plans for producers. This project will use Environmental Quality Incentives Program practices 512 and 610 to help offset income losses when recharge area acreage is converted from grain to water-use efficient perennial forage production. Perennial vegetation lowers ground water levels, eliminating saline discharge to surface waters and acres of productive cropland.

## Nebraska

**Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,460,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Prairie Grasslands Region)
Lead Partner: Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Number of Initial Partners: 1
Participating States: Nebraska (Lead State)

The Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District (NRD) seeks to amend the PL-566 Papillion Creek Watershed Work Plan to add flood control as a purpose of the D-31 site. The project will also fund the engineering and construction of the flood control and water quality control structure at the site located in Omaha, Nebraska. The proposed project site is in an area that is rapidly changing from an agricultural landscape to an expanding urban landscape of housing and industrial areas. The project partners identified this structure primarily to provide flood control benefits, with secondary benefits of grade stabilization, water quality improvements, recreation and wildlife habitat improvements. The proposed project meets the goals of multiple government agencies, including federal, state, county, and local governments to provide flood protection, maintain water quality, reduce streambed erosion, and provide recreational opportunities in an evolving watershed.

## New Hampshire

**Connecting the Connecticut River Watershed**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,980,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 14
Participating States: Connecticut, Massachusetts (Lead State), New Hampshire and Vermont

This project addresses habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality and climate resilience in high priority aquatic and terrestrial sites across the four-state Connecticut River Watershed. Partners will work with land owners to improve and connect aquatic and riparian habitat; reduce sedimentation and nutrients; and identify and prioritize parcels of land that will safeguard water quality, protect riparian or wetland resources, and increase resiliency to climate change.

**Upper Valley Farmland Protection Initiative**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,070,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Upper Valley Land Trust, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: New Hampshire (Lead State)

The Upper Valley Land Trust, a leader in land conservation for over 30 years, in collaboration with its partners, seeks to excel the pace of farmland conservation in the Upper Connecticut River watershed. The goal is to stem the conversion and loss of vitally important agricultural and forest land. This partner-driven effort seeks to increase producer participation in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easements program to permanently conserve viable farmland for protecting water quality and improving soil health. This project will priorities three areas: farms located near impaired waters, where there are low percentages of protected farms, and where historically underserved producers

lack resources for improvements. The overall goal of this initiative is to protect 5,000 acres in the next five years.

## New Jersey

**Columbia Dam Removal & Restoration on Paulins Kill**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $567,000 (State)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 3
Participating States: New Jersey (Lead State)

In 2011, the Columbia Dam was ranked in the top five percent of all Northeastern US dams prioritized for removal to protect migrating fish. Since 2013, TNC, American Rivers and NJDEP have been working with stakeholders on plans to remove the Columbia Dam and a downstream remnant dam to restore and reconnect habitat for diadromous fish species including American shad, blueback herring, alewife, American eel and native sea lamprey. Plans also include restoring 32 acres of floodplain habitat currently inundated by the Columbia Dam. Removal of the Columbia Dam will open 20 miles of streams in the Paulins Kill watershed for migratory fish and restore degraded in-stream habitat in the 1.5-mile impoundment upstream of the Columbia Dam. The project team is currently communicating with regulatory agencies and expects the project to be shovel ready by Spring of 2018.

**Black River Greenway – Soil and Water Protection**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $922,000 (State)
Lead Partner: New Jersey Conservation Foundation
Number of Initial Partners: 12
Participating States: New Jersey (Lead State)

New Jersey Conservation Foundation (NJCF) is the lead partner in this project to preserve farms in the Black River using the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE), and implement sound conservation practices through Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding. The partners will prioritize farms based on incidence of Prime and Statewide soils, proximity to C-1 streams, and critical threatened and endangered habitat, and will assemble funding packages to provide matching funds for high priorities for ACEP-ALE.

## New Mexico

**NRCS-NFWF Pecos Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,357,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Prairie Grasslands Region)
Lead Partner: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Number of Initial Partners: 10
Participating States: New Mexico (Lead State)

The Pecos River Watershed in New Mexico and Texas is home to the Permian Basin, one of the largest and most important oil and gas reserves in the country. NFWF and its partners will collaborate with at least four major oil and gas producers on the Pecos River Watershed Initiative to promote the conservation of the region's important rangeland and riparian features. NFWF will use Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program and PL-566 programs to support riparian restoration, grazing system improvements, water development and irrigation improvements, establishment of native riparian and rangeland species and removal of invasive species.

**North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $3,420,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Launch-Pinto SWCD
Number of Initial Partners: 19
Participating States: New Mexico (Lead State)

This regional watershed project, in the Rio Grande and Pecos River watersheds, will reduce wildfire risk while improving soils, hydrology, vegetation, and enhancing social/economic needs. This project expands on previous work to improve the forestry management in this critically important region. Montane coniferous forest watersheds and riparian areas, damaged by wildfires, have greatly diminished water storage capacity because the soils do not absorb or hold water. Rainwater runoff generated during storms has the potential to cause extreme flooding, sedimentation, and debris flows into the main tributaries of the burned watersheds. The large amounts of post-fire sediment diminish water quality and disrupt water delivery and storage. Wildlife, acequias, rural economies, tourism and outdoor recreation are all at risk from the associated impacts of watershed wildfires.

## New York

**East of Hudson Watershed Water Supply Protection**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $590,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Watershed Agricultural Council
Number of Initial Partners: 3
Participating States: New York (Lead State)

This project will address water quality degradation in the 13 reservoirs and three controlled lakes in NYC's East of Hudson watershed. The NYC water supply system delivers one billion gallons of drinking water to more than 9.5 million people daily, approximately half of the population of New York State. Along with its partners, Watershed Agricultural Council will use Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding to accelerate the implementation of animal waste management practices to reduce the risk of excess nutrients, pathogens, and sediment from leaving livestock farms and contaminating surface water. This project will expand and enhance the ongoing work with East of Hudson Program's 77 active farm partners to protect the NYC water supply.

# North Carolina

### NC Swine Floodplain Buyout

Proposed NRCS Investment: $2,490,000 (National)
Lead Partner: NC Division of Soil & Water Conservation
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: North Carolina (Lead State)

The Swine Farm Floodplain Easement Program was created in 1999 in the wake of devastation caused by Hurricanes Dennis, Floyd, and Irene. North Carolina again experienced devastating floods in 2016, renewing the concerns about the water quality risk associated with swine operations located in flood-prone locations. The objective of the proposed project is to voluntarily remove 7-10 operations from the floodplain. The project will use the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program -Agricultural Land Easements program and state funding to acquire voluntary perpetual conservation easements on swine operations in the 100-year floodplain. Partners will also use the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to decommission waste lagoons and install additional best management practices specified in conservation plans on the participating farms.

### SmithfieldGro: Sustainable Grain Supply Chains

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,080,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Environmental Defense Fund
Number of Initial Partners: 16
Participating States: Iowa and North Carolina (Lead State)

This project expands an innovative collaboration between the Environmental Defense Fund and Smithfield Foods to address nutrient management and soil health in the company's grain supply chain. In 2014, the company created SmithfieldGro, a voluntary program that provides agronomic assistance and conservation incentives to grain growers in the company's sourcing region. In 2016, SmithfieldGro improved practices on about 300,000 acres in North Carolina and Iowa. This RCPP will launch new efforts in IA and expand efforts in NC. RCPP allows SmithfieldGro to engage new partners, incorporate strong science, and reach farmers who may not enroll in traditional conservation efforts.

### NCSLHPPP for 2018

Proposed NRCS Investment: $7,000,000 (National)
Lead Partner: North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Number of Initial Partners: 21
Participating States: North Carolina (Lead State)

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) has partnered with the US Army, US Air Force, US Marine Corps, and others to develop the North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes High Priority Protect Program (NCSLHPPP) for 2018. This project will seek to place agriculture conservation easements on high priority parcels that provide compatible use by both the military and agriculture. Selection of these properties is vital, not only for these industries, but also for the preservation and conservation wildlife, natural resources, endangered species, and scenic beauty that is threatened by land use change due to increased population. The NCSLHPPP for 2018 focuses initially on approximately 8,000 acres of must-protect land parcels for the Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes (ENCSL) partnership. These land parcels were selected based upon a must-protect area for

the continuance of military training in North Carolina and its high conservation value as a natural resource for farming and agriculture in the defined 33-county ENCSL.

**Mills River Source Water Protection Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $730,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Mills River Partnership
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: North Carolina (Lead State)

This project will occur on the mainstem of the Mills River and on Foster Creek, a direct tributary in Henderson County, North Carolina. The goal is to help protect the source water for 85,000 people in the cities of Hendersonville, Asheville, and surrounding counties who depend on the Mills River for their drinking water. It focuses on completely restoring a mile-long stretch of a deeply incised eroding streambank, constructing an agrichemical handling facility along the mainstem of the Mills River, and on-farm work with cattle operations where bank sloping, riparian fencing, and off-channel watering tanks will be implemented. In addition to protecting drinking water, the project will also improve degraded fish and wildlife habitat, help ensure future agricultural productivity, foster locally produced foods, and expand a unique on-farm educational forum promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

## Ohio

**Jacoby Creek Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,440,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Mississippi River Basin)
Lead Partner: Tecumseh Land Trust
Number of Initial Partners: 12
Participating States: Ohio (Lead State)

Tecumseh Land Trust (TLT) and its partners aim to improve water quality in the Little Miami River's Jacoby Creek and Yellow Springs Creek sub watersheds, to demonstrate and document the benefits of best agricultural conservation practices for water quality, aquatic and wildlife habitat, and soil health. The Jacoby Creek Partnership also seeks to permanently preserve prime farmland and well-functioning stream corridors.

**Greater Cleveland Reforestation Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $77,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 4
Participating States: Ohio (Lead State)

The Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District and its partners will address water quality degradation and air quality impacts through the Greater Cleveland Reforestation Project. Every summer, Clevelanders lose beach days due to fecal bacterial contamination stemming from the antiquated combined sewer overflow system that discharges raw sewage into the lake after major rain events. In addition, Cleveland

tree canopy cover is down to 19 percent due to disease and other issues. Subsequently, Cleveland has been rated as the ninth worst metropolitan area for air quality. This project will use Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds for site preparation and tree/shrub establishment to address both water and air quality.

**Spotted Knapweed Treatment for Ohio Producers**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $563,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Morgan Soil & Water Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 18
Participating States: Ohio (Lead State)

The Spotted Knapweed Treatment for Ohio Producers (STOP) Project will focus on the treatment and control of spotted knapweed and other invasive weeds in four Appalachian counties in Southeastern Ohio. These counties have each experienced an exponential spread of spotted knapweed along state, county, township, and private roadways, which led to its severe invasion into surrounding privately owned pastures and hay lands. Through this project, the Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District and its partners will provide Environmental Quality Incentives Program financial assistance to producers to address soil erosion, water quality degradation, excessive plant pest pressure and degraded plant condition to restore degraded pastures and hay land.

## Oregon

**Wallow Lake Irrigation Modernization**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,730,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Columbia River Basin)
Lead Partner: Farmers Conservation Alliance
Number of Initial Partners: 2
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State)

The Wallowa Lake Irrigation Modernization Project will address water quantity, water quality, and inadequate habitat resource concerns in the Prairie Creek area of Wallowa County, Oregon. This project proposes to pipe 11.8 miles of private ditches, install water control structures/fish screens on newly piped ditches, and install up to ten new sprinkler systems to increase on-farm conveyance and application efficiency. These actions will improve water conveyance and application efficiency, reduce fish entrainment risk, decrease return flows into Prairie Creek and the Wallowa River, and decrease sediment, nutrient, and bacteria inputs into Prairie Creek and the Wallowa River. Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA), and its partners seek to benefit threatened or endangered populations of spring Chinook salmon, summer steelhead trout, and bull trout.

**Upper John Day River Flow and Protection Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,940,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Columbia River Basin)
Lead Partner: Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State) and Washington

The John Day River Flow and Protection Project seeks to improve irrigation efficiency to conserve water and increase flow while enhancing and improving overall watershed health. Additionally, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and its partners seek to address inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife. Planned project components include irrigation efficiency improvements, irrigation ditch piping, diversion and culvert replacements, instream leases, fish screens installations, water measuring devices, channel reconnections to the mainstem John Day River, riparian fencing and planting, and instream restoration work. Multiple working lands conservation easements are in development to protect critical habitat for fish and wildlife along with keeping agricultural production in operation.

**East Fork Hood River Watershed Restoration Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $2,033,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Columbia River Basin)
Lead Partner: East Fork Irrigation District
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State)

This project brings together a diverse set of partners in the Hood River Watershed, of the Columbia River Basin, to focus on a top-priority water conservation and fish habitat project in the Lower East Fork Hood River. Through this project, the East Fork Irrigation District and its partners will construct Phase 1 of the Eastside Lateral pipeline project, assist agricultural producers with approximately 400 acres of on-farm water conservation practices and educate producers and farm workers on the latest irrigation water management techniques. The project will also restore one mile of spawning and rearing habitat on the East Fork Hood River for threatened steelhead, spring Chinook, and coho. The project seeks to increase irrigation water reliability for high value food crops, improve resilience to drought, and restore instream habitat for ESA-listed species.

**Lower Crooked River Strategic Restoration**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $7,091,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Columbia River Basin)
Lead Partner: Crooked River Watershed Council
Number of Initial Partners: 8
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State)

Lower Crooked River Strategic Restoration (LCRSR) is a comprehensive project intended to address degraded fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and riparian plant communities over 17 miles of the Crooked River in Central Oregon. Proposed restoration activities include both instream and riparian restoration to improve habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality, and agricultural productivity. In addition, the project will reduce the threat of regulatory enforcement associated with the Federal Endangered Species Act and compliance with non-point source impacts from agriculture under Sections 303 and 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act.

**Wallowa Front Fuel Reduction Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $2,280,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Wallowa Resources
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State)

The Wallowa Front is characterized by significant wildfire risk in the Oregon Department of Forestry's Communities at Risk of Wildfire (CAR) and there is a great concern about the risk of catastrophic

wildfires. The project will create defensible space to assist in wildfire suppression between public and private forest land by thinning overstocked stands, manipulating fuels, and reducing fuel loads. Stand replacement fires have adverse impacts on watershed function including erosion, habitat loss, reduced water quality and commercial productivity. The current average fuel load is estimated to be 60-80 tons per acre of standing live trees, dead trees and slash on the ground. The target treatment level would be around 30 tons per acre on a typical treatment scenario.

**Stinkingwater Area Medusahead Management Plan**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $960,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Harney Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State)

The Stinkingwater Area Medusahead Management Plan project includes nearly 400,000 acres in northeastern Harney County, Oregon, which is known to have a rapidly expanding medusahead rye invasion. The partnership, led by the Harney County CWMA, has subdivided the project area into 5 phase areas to be inventoried and treated in a strategic and systematic manner. The partners will use Environmental Quality Incentives Program financial assistance to implement 3-year Integrated Pest Management plans on affected private lands in fiscal years 2018- 2022. These private lands treatments will be coordinated with work occurring on neighboring Bureau of Land Management and state lands within the project area to achieve landscape scale control and rehabilitation.

## Pennsylvania

**CCCD Partnership for Chesapeake Bay Water Quality**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $3,600,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Chesapeake Bay Watershed)
Lead Partner: Chester County Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 10
Participating States: Pennsylvania (Lead State)

The Chester County Conservation District (CCCD) and its partners will address a surplus in Farm Bill financial assistance applicants in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, by working closely with NRCS and private agricultural consultants to develop plans and installing conservation practices. As part of the RCPP ranking process, applicants will be given a higher score based on their willingness to implement or maintain a stream buffer, and commitment to work with one or more of the listed partners to develop plans and/or best management practices (BMPs). The CCCD's RCPP program will conduct site visits with each landowner after the contract is complete to discuss continued operation and maintenance of their conservation practices, and by incentivizing private consultants to assist in the contracting process by writing comprehensive nutrient management plans.

**Implementing BMP's & CNMP's on PA Preserved Farms**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $6,370,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Chesapeake Bay Watershed)
Lead Partner: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Farmland Preservation
Number of Initial Partners: 3
Participating States: Pennsylvania (Lead State)

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and its partners will identify producers, including dairy farms, to work with NRCS conservation planning staff for installing conservation practices and implementing comprehensive nutrient management plans. Highest priority will be given to farmland preservation program applicants who will complete conservation practices as part of an approved conservation plan. Second priority will include farms already preserved; third priority will include any farm located in the focus area regardless of farmland preservation status. This proposal builds on successful projects which invested in livestock manure management practices on farms in high-priority landscapes. The project will assist producers to ensure that livestock and crop production are compatible with natural resource protection.

## Rhode Island

**RI Farm Conservation Implementation**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $800,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Rhode Island State Conservation Committee
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Rhode Island (Lead State)

The Rhode Island State Conservation Committee and its partners will promote and encourage implementation of best management practices on statewide agricultural lands, and monitor the impacts on RI's surface water quality between 2018 and 2022. This project will: increase the implementation of agricultural best management practices statewide, improve water quality, expand the capacity of RI NRCS with focused technical assistance from CD Agricultural Technicians, emphasize under-utilized water quality and soil health practices for small-scale agriculture, pilot a one-on-one, on-site composting training for livestock owners in the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, and increase non-point source pollution mitigation throughout the state at a local level.

## South Carolina

**Upstate Land Preservation Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $770,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Upstate Forever
Number of Initial Partners: 1
Participating States: South Carolina (Lead State)

The Upstate Land Preservation Partnership project will lead a concerted effort, with the help of NRCS, to protect up to 930 acres of high priority farmlands through conservation easements. This area is the fastest growing area east of Texas, so project partners are seeking an effective solution for saving remaining farmland. The Oconee County Conservation Bank, the Keowee Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program, and the North Saluda Watershed Protection Fund, along with local foundations, represent sustainable grant sources engaged to match Agricultural Conservation Easement Program financial assistance and technical assistance funds.

# Tennessee

### Advanced Precision Ag for Sustainable Conservation

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,489,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Mississippi River Basin)
Lead Partner: Security Seed & Chemical, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 30
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State) and Tennessee

The Cumberland River basin in Tennessee and Kentucky spans nearly 18,000 square miles and is home to nearly 2.5 million people. This project will occur in the Red River and Lower Cumberland watersheds, two of the 14 watersheds that make up the Cumberland River Watershed. Both surface water and groundwater impairments are a concern in the watershed with nutrients, bacteria, and sediment being the primary issues. The partners will work with producers to improve water quality by maximizing fertilizer uptake, preventing sediment and nutrient losses, using science based precision agricultural practices, and implementing high nutrient reducing structural practices. The partners' goal is to advance the implementation of on-farm precision agriculture practice to help ensure the sustainability, resilience, and continued productivity of the area's working lands while simultaneously improving the producer's bottom line. The partners assembled for this project are some of the most advanced, cutting edge companies in the U.S., which assures that both producers and NRCS staff will have access to the most up-to-date technologies available today. Another goal of this project is to work with NRCS to improve and update practice standards and enhancements, so they work better for producers and achieve higher results for the environment.

### Reversing Declines in Grassland Biodiversity

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,500,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Central Hardwoods Joint Venture
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee (Lead State)

The Central Hardwoods Joint Venture and its partners will use a multifaceted conservation program that will complement existing efforts to reverse the decline of grassland habitats in the Southeast U.S., especially near protected landscapes. The project seeks to recover populations of grassland bird species deemed in need of conservation attention by Partners in Flight, as well as the native biodiversity associated with the historic grassland landscapes of the Interior Low Plateaus ecoregion of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Indiana. Conservation efforts will include removal of woody cover and prescribed fire, reconversion of cropland or fescue pastures to native grasses, increasing forb-to-grass ratios, changing grazing intensities, and altering haying regimes.

### Working Forests for Wildlife (KY, TN, VA)

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,990,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy, Kentucky
Number of Initial Partners: 12
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State), Tennessee and Virginia

Working Forests for Wildlife project seeks to conserve 25,000 acres of high priority forest in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. By connecting forestland owners with The Nature Conservancy's existing carbon

markets, these forests can be managed to improve biological diversity and provide habitat for endangered species.

## Texas

### Hill Country Headwaters Conservation Initiative

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,150,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Hill Country Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 19
Participating States: Texas (Lead State)

The Hill Country region in the heart of Texas faces extreme drought and extreme flooding with increasing intensity and frequency. Climate change, compounded by development pressures and ecological vulnerability, threaten permanent damage to the region's rich natural resources, including water quality degradation and wildlife habitat loss. Like much of the rest of Texas, 95 percent of the Hill Country is privately owned; yet another conservation challenge. This project seeks to implement a replicable model for people and nature to thrive through thoughtful growth. Partners will use a combination of Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funds to address the resource concerns innovatively by carefully vetting individual projects proposed through a structured application process.

### Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife Conservation

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,430,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Number of Initial Partners: 15
Participating States: Louisiana (Lead State) and Texas

The Gulf Coast prairies, marshes and bays of Louisiana and Texas comprise one of North America's most productive land resource regions and are the most important migration/wintering areas for water birds. The landscape is threatened with more than 90% coastal wetland loss and a population forecast doubling to 50 million by 2050. Project partners will assist NRCS in Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts and address water quantity and habitat concerns in the Gulf Coast.

## Utah

### Efficient Water Management for People and Wildlife (VR)

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,280,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Colorado River Basin)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Utah (Lead State)

Within five years, partners will implement three integrated, locally-led projects on the Virgin River in Utah, including modernization of Hurricane's water delivery systems and Washington City's return flow

system, and restoration of a key segment of river habitat for three federally-listed species (woundfin, Virgin River chub and southwestern willow flycatcher). The project will provide more efficient water management in a critically water-limited area with direct benefits to agricultural producers and the local community while also addressing vital habitat needs for wildlife.

**Restoring Watersheds in Box Elder County**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,440,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Utah Department of Natural Resources – Watershed Program
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Utah (Lead State)

This project will address the declining sage-grouse population in western Box Elder County, as well as other resource problems in this part of the state. Identified threats include habitat degradation due to Pinyon/Juniper encroachment and spread of exotic invasive species, risk and impacts from catastrophic wildfire. These threats also impact livestock operators. The actions proposed to address these threats include habitat restoration by removing encroaching Pinyon and Juniper trees and controlling invasive weeds, wet meadow enhancement and post-wildfire rehabilitation.

## Vermont

**Connecting the Connecticut River Watershed**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,980,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 14
Participating States: Connecticut, Massachusetts (Lead State), New Hampshire and Vermont

This project addresses habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality and climate resilience in high priority aquatic and terrestrial sites across the four-state Connecticut River Watershed. Partners will work with land owners to improve and connect aquatic and riparian habitat; reduce sedimentation and nutrients; and identify and prioritize parcels of land that will safeguard water quality, protect riparian or wetland resources, and increase resiliency to climate change.

**Nutrient Management Planning for Soil and Water**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $800,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Vermont Association of Conservation Districts
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Vermont (Lead State)

The Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) and its partners will extend its successful RCPP Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) program to help an additional 80 small farm operators enhance soil health, protect water quality, and improve farm viability. The program will primarily focus in the Lake Champlain Basin, where 35 percent of phosphorus loading has been attributed to cropland in the Lake Memphremagog and Long Island Sound watersheds. Livestock farmers will develop their own NMPs through the “Digging In” Nutrient Management Planning course offered by UVM Extension, utilizing the innovative goCrop software also developed by UVM. Approximately 16,000 acres will be

treated with NMP, resulting in an estimated 12,210-ton reduction in sediment and 12,848-pound reduction in phosphorus loading to Vermont's surface waters over four years

## Virginia

**Working Forests for Wildlife (KY, TN, VA)**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,990,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy, Kentucky
Number of Initial Partners: 12
Participating States: Kentucky (Lead State), Tennessee and Virginia

Working Forests for Wildlife project seeks to conserve 25,000 acres of high priority forest in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. By connecting forestland owners with The Nature Conservancy's existing carbon markets, these forests can be managed to improve biological diversity and provide habitat for endangered species.

**Franklin County Dairy Ag and Water Protection**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $850,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Virginia Cooperative Extension
Number of Initial Partners: 8
Participating States: Virginia (Lead State)

Franklin County is home to 41 dairy farms. Eighty percent of these farms are located less than 300 feet from streams that drains into two major TMDL waterways, the Pigg River and Blackwater River. Additionally, the average age of major on-farm structures is 60 years old furthering water quality and soil erosion concerns. Project partners will identify and rank farms based on proximity to water sources and water quality, soil erosion and health, ag viability and animal health, and wildlife protection. Funding will help support the relocation and building of manure storage, water runoff receptacles, and housing structures to an area outside the flood zone and away from stream banks.

**Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $6,080,000 (Critical Conservation Area – Chesapeake Bay)
Lead Partner: Sustainable Chesapeake
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Delaware, Maryland and Virginia (Lead State)

The Chesapeake Bay Farm Stewardship and Preservation project supports a diverse three state partnership to accelerate the adoption of precision nutrient management and soil health practices. Financial and technical assistance will be focused where: 1) practices will have the greatest impact on Chesapeake Bay water quality: 2) farmers have demonstrated enthusiasm for these practices; 3) partner outreach and education and technical assistance efforts support financial assistance delivery; and 4) prime farmland are located. Funds from this project will make significant contributions to reducing nitrogen and sediment

loading to the Chesapeake Bay, helping the agricultural sector to meet Chesapeake Bay TMDL milestone goals.

## Washington

**Upper John Day River Flow and Protection Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $4,940,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Columbia River Basin)
Lead Partner: Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
Number of Initial Partners: 7
Participating States: Oregon (Lead State) and Washington

The John Day River Flow and Protection Project seeks to improve irrigation efficiency to conserve water and increase flow, and ensure the future protection of these lands to enhance and improve overall watershed health, while maintaining agricultural practices throughout the landscape. Additionally, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and its partners seek to address inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife. Planned project components include irrigation efficiency improvements, irrigation ditch piping, diversion and culvert replacements, instream leases, fish screens installations, water measuring devices, channel reconnections to the mainstem John Day River, riparian fencing and planting, and instream restoration work. Multiple working lands conservation easements are in development to protect critical habitat for fish and wildlife along with keeping agricultural production in operation.

**Whatcom County Working Lands Conserving Watersheds**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,310,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Whatcom County
Number of Initial Partners: 4
Participating States: Washington (Lead State)

Whatcom County Working Lands Conserving Watersheds aims to protect working lands within identified priority watersheds in Whatcom County to help to stabilize the critical land base needed to maintain a long-term commercially significant agriculture industry. Many parcels within the priority watersheds are at risk of being developed to the degree where neither agriculture nor full ecosystem function can occur. Working Lands Conserving Watersheds will provide Whatcom County landowners financial incentives needed to keep their lands in production and will require actions are taken to address identified resource concerns.

## Wisconsin

**Baraboo River Watershed II**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,073,000 (Critical Conservation Area-Mississippi River Basin)
Lead Partner: Sauk County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department

Number of Initial Partners: 3
Participating States: Wisconsin (Lead State)

This project seeks to improve water quality within the Baraboo River Watershed in Sauk County and Juneau County in Wisconsin through the promotion and installation of soil and water conservation practices. The partners will target areas which contribute to phosphorus and sediment loading to surface waters. The Baraboo River has been identified as the second greatest contributor of total phosphorus loading to the Wisconsin River, which is a large tributary of the Upper Mississippi River.

**Driftless Area Habitat for the Wild & Rare Phase 2**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $9,203,000 (National)
Lead Partner: Trout Unlimited
Number of Initial Partners: 46
Participating States: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin (Lead State)

The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and its partners will target areas in the Driftless Area where land restoration and land protection will have the most positive impact on water quality by implementing permanent conservation practices that reduce pollution and sediment runoff into streams. RCPP funding will provide a new comprehensive, targeted regional approach to restoring cold-water streams and their riparian areas for the benefit of the many at-risk species. The project will assist landowners reduce pollution and sediment runoff through the adoption of key conservation practices. Agricultural Conservation Easement Program funding will purchase agricultural conservation easements to install permanent conservation practices such as riparian buffers and filter strips.

**Little Plover River Watershed RCPP Project**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $295,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Village of Plover
Number of Initial Partners: 5
Participating States: Wisconsin (Lead State)

This project will be the first in Wisconsin to apply groundwater modeling to help deliver conservation practices to the locations in the Central Sands region of Wisconsin which will most effectively address resource needs. The partners will use EQIP to install on-farm practices. Match funding will implement larger scale restoration and municipal and agricultural infrastructure improvements. Project outcomes will be improved instream flows and water quality, increased groundwater recharge, soil conservation, and improved fish and wildlife habitat.

**Tall Pines Conservancy Farmland Protection Program**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $524,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Tall Pines Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 6
Participating States: Wisconsin (Lead State)

This project, led by Tall Pines Conservancy (TPC), will use Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Agricultural Land Easements funding to acquire farmland easements at three different project sites in the watershed. Environmental Quality Incentives Program land practices will mitigate natural resource concerns at each project location. Additionally, Nutrient Management Plans will be developed as needed

to identify resource concerns at the project locations. The long-term project goals are to decrease soil reduction; improve habitat quality; and reduce loading of sediments, nutrients, and pollutants into tributaries and lakes in the Oconomowoc River watershed. This will be accomplished by implementation of practices that conserve soil and slow overland flow in agriculture, forestry, and urban areas.

## West Virginia

**WV Soil Health Partnership**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,000,000 (State)
Lead Partner: West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority
Number of Initial Partners: 19
Participating States: West Virginia (Lead State)

The West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority and its partners will focus this project in the 11 eastern counties in West Virginia. Characterized by long parallel valleys with numerous streams and exceptionally good soils, this region has 35 percent of the state's agricultural acreage and produces 75 percent of its agricultural income. In addition to water quality and soil health, farmland preservation is a key strategy for water and soil resource protection. The project seeks to establish easements on 600 acres of agricultural properties.

## Wyoming

**Popo Agie River Watershed Health**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $1,180,000 (State)
Lead Partner: Popo Agie Conservation District
Number of Initial Partners: 11
Participating States: Wyoming (Lead State)

The residents of Lander and the surrounding rural area rely on the Popo Agie River system as their primary source of drinking water, agricultural irrigation, stock water, fisheries, wildlife habitat and recreation. Some stream reaches in the watershed deemed impaired by the Wyoming DEQ and river flow in late summer slows to nearly a trickle in City Park. This project will build on the efforts of NRCS, Popo Agie Conservation District, the City of Lander, the USFWS Partners Program, Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribes, TNC, and others to accelerate project completion. Projects include innovative water use agreements, stream restoration, irrigation infrastructure improvement, off-stream water developments and other best management practices.

**Securing the Grass Highway for Wyoming Migrations**

Proposed NRCS Investment: $5,000,000 (National)
Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy
Number of Initial Partners: 17
Participating States: Wyoming (Lead State)

This project focuses on addressing the most critical threats in the Greater Yellowstone migration corridors within Wyoming. GPS collar data will enable the project to target conservation efforts to benefit

migratory species. The targeted corridors cross a complex web of private, state, and federal land managed by dozens of landowners and multiple agencies. Bottlenecks caused by habitat conversions; fencing and other obstructions; exploding populations of invasives; and the degradation of stopover areas are all putting the corridors at risk. Conservation easements, fence modifications, and habitat enhancements will be used to secure critical areas within the corridors and to protect the grass highway these animals depend upon.