



- This USDA program is administered by the National Resource Conservation Service.
- The program was authorized through the 2014 Farm Bill.
- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners.





**Columbia
Soil & Water
Conservation District**

Lower Columbia Watershed Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: **\$3 million (CCA)**

Lead Partner: Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District

Number of Partners: 11

Participating State(s): Oregon

Through the Watershed Authority PL-566 and locally led contracting, this partnership will be able to involve more landowner participants and make measurable improvements to the health and viability of the Lower Columbia River Watershed. The **project will focus on water quality degradation**, with an emphasis on improving excessive sediment in surface waters by designing and implementing several stream bank protection projects as well as increasing vegetation to minimize excess nutrients and pesticides from getting into the stream systems. These actions would also assist in improving another resource concern - inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife. By bringing different expertise together in one specific regional area, this project can make significant strides towards improving the habitat and water quality in the Lower Columbia Watershed.

Vision and Goals of the Program



- **RCPP** is an **innovative approach** to investing in natural resource conservation that empowers partnerships to design solutions and deliver specific, measurable results. RCPP draws on local knowledge and networks **to accelerate progress on critical conservation projects**. Partners are in the “driver’s seat,” with technical and financial help from NRCS. Through RCPP, **NRCS seeks to achieve:**
 1. **Solutions.** Investing in projects that generate near-term results that are measurable from environmental, economic, and social perspectives.
 2. **Contributions.** Leveraging the Federal resources to at least double the total investment in conservation projects.
 3. **Innovation.** Promoting innovative projects that integrate multiple conservation approaches to deliver comprehensive and measurable solutions.
 4. **Participation.** Maximizing the number of partners and participants, including those with a proven track record and those new to NRCS-administered conservation programs, to participate in and contribute to projects.
- **Successful RCPP proposals** will bring an array of financial and technical capabilities to projects, will demonstrate **experience with working effectively and collaboratively with agricultural producers and private forest landowners** across the landscape, and will present innovative, sustainable, and measurable approaches to achieving important conservation goals

Overview of the RCPP Application and Selection Process

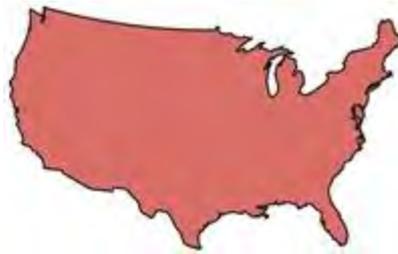
- RCPP project selection follows a two-phase application and evaluation process that includes a pre- and full-proposal application.
- Upon selection of final proposals for funding, NRCS will work with lead partners to develop and finalize Partnership Agreements for the project.
- Decisions for 2017 funding should be known in December 2017
- It is unknown if any future Farm Bill will continue this program.





Critical Conservation Areas

For projects in eight geographic areas chosen by the Secretary of Agriculture. These receive 35 percent of funding



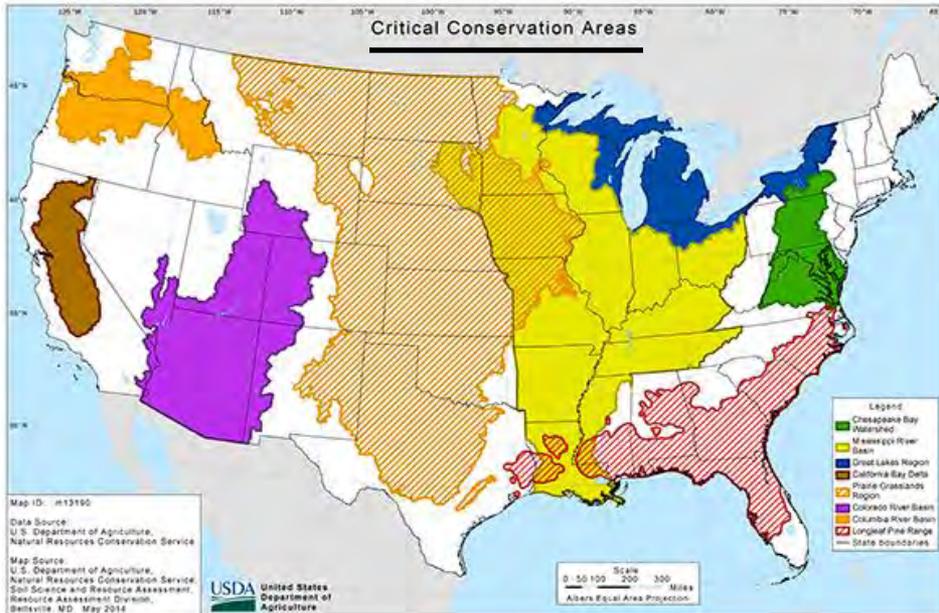
National

For nationwide and multistate projects. These receive 40 percent of funding



State

For projects in a single state. These receive 25 percent of funding.



The Columbia River Basin provides habitat for salmon and steelhead, essential components of a healthy ecosystem and critical to Indian tribes and local communities. Loss of quality habitat because of pressures from population growth threaten fish numbers and the overall health of the basin. With this Critical Conservation Area designation, **USDA will build on existing strong partnerships in the basin to work with agricultural producers to improve water quality and quantity in order to restore critical components of salmon habitat, aid in the recovery of Pacific salmon, and protect public health and the environment while maintaining a strong agricultural sector.**

Resource Concerns for RCPP Projects

Pre- and full-proposal applications submitted for consideration must identify the resource concern(s) to be addressed through the project. National resource concern priorities established under this notice include:

- Excess/Insufficient Water/Drought;
- Water Quality Degradation;
- Soil Quality Degradation;
- Inadequate Habitat for Fish, Wildlife, and invertebrates;
- Air quality impacts;
- Degraded Plant Condition (specific to certain CCA only);
- Energy; and
- Climate Change

Columbia River Basin (ID, OR, WA)

- Excess/Insufficient Water/Drought
- Water Quality Degradation
- Inadequate Habitat for Fish, Wildlife, and Invertebrates

Critical Conservation Areas Fund Pool

USDA has designated eight Critical Conservation Areas (CCAs) that represent an opportunity for partners at a regional level to address common natural resource goals while maintaining or improving agricultural productivity. Project applications submitted for consideration through the CCA fund pool must address the resource concern priority listed for the CCA. **In designating CCAs, priority was given to geographical areas with:**

- Significant agricultural production;
- An existing plan adopted by a Federal, State, or regional authority;
- Substantial need for water quality or water quantity improvements; and
- Producers that may have a need for assistance in meeting or avoiding a natural resource regulation.

B. Fund Pools and Funding Priorities

RCPP funding is allocated across three competitive fund pools as follows: **FY 2017 Funding**

Allocation Across Fund Pools

Fund Pool
Funding Allocation
FY 2017 Estimated Funding

Critical Conservation Areas
35 percent
\$ 92,085,000

National
40 percent
\$ 105,240,000

State
25 percent
\$ 65,775,000

Total
100 percent
\$263,100,000

Partner Eligibility

- An agricultural or silvicultural producer association or other group of producers;
- A State or unit of local government;
- An Indian Tribe;
- A farmer cooperative;
- A water district, irrigation district, rural water district or association, or other organization with specific water delivery authority to agricultural producers;
- A municipal water or wastewater treatment entity;
- An institution of higher education; and
- An organization or entity with an established history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land, as determined by NRCS, to address:
 - o Local conservation priorities related to agricultural production, wildlife habitat development, or nonindustrial private forest land management.

Covered Programs: The following private and Tribal lands are eligible for enrollment:

- Cropland;
- Grassland;
- Rangeland;
- Pastureland;
- Nonindustrial private forest land; and
- Other land incidental to agricultural production (including wetlands and riparian buffers) on which significant natural resource issues could be addressed under the program.

NRCS will rely on the partners to measure environmental successes of individual projects and is open to reasonable methods of measurement. NRCS will aggregate and analyze performance data to track trends and monitor progress. **Priority is placed on projects that generate near-term results that are measurable from environmental, economic, and social perspectives.**

