



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

Room 3416 Federal Building
700 West Capitol Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72201
Web: <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov>

News Release

Release No.:010622-01

Contact: Reginald Jackson, State Public Affairs Specialist
(501) 301-3133(w) 501-352-7761(c)
reginald.jackson@usda.gov

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Accepting 2022 Applications for Financial Assistance with Four Arkansas RCPP Projects

LITTLE ROCK, Jan. 12, 2022 – Farmers and landowners in four USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects in Arkansas can apply to receive assistance to implement conservation activities. The projects will offer financial assistance to landowners in fiscal year 2022.

Farmers and landowners in Arkansas who submit applications to their local NRCS office by Feb. 18 will be considered for this round of funding. Applications received after Feb. 18 will be considered in later funding periods, subject to funding availability.

“RCPP is a unique program that leverages non-federal investments brought by conservation partners to accelerate conservation in selected project areas,” said Arkansas NRCS State Conservationist Mike Sullivan. “This approach helps us maximize use of our collective resources to address locally identified concerns.”

The RCPP projects and associated counties with projects are:

- **Buffalo River Partnership Project** (portions of Baxter, Boone, Madison, Marion, Newton, Pope, Searcy, Stone, and Van Buren counties): The project is designed to collaborate with interested farmers and landowners to increase agricultural sustainability by implementing voluntary conservation practices within the Buffalo River Watershed. Partners seek to collaborate with local farmers, landowners and community leaders in priority watersheds to identify resource concerns and conservation practices to improve farm sustainability and water quality, reduce sediment and nutrient loads to the Buffalo River by providing technical and financial assistance to implement practices that improves pasture and nutrient management, restore eroding streambanks to prevent loss of pastureland and reduce maintenance costs and sediment loads from erosion of unpaved roads, and assist interested landowners conserve key conservation lands to prevent future erosion and nutrient loads in the Buffalo River watershed. (Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy)

more-

Helping People Help the Land

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

- Conservation Delivery Network (CDN) Open Pine Land Restoration Project (portions of Ashley, Bradley, Calhoun, Clark, Drew, Lincoln, Nevada, Ouachita counties): The AR-LA Conservation Delivery Network Open Pine Landscape Restoration partnership will advance the recovery of species of conservation concern by implementing Desired Forest Condition management practices across 30,000 acres of private lands in Arkansas and Louisiana. American Bird Conservancy and 19 partners plan to use several innovative tools and approaches to target funding to lands critical for the protection of species such as Northern Bobwhite, Henslow's and LeConte's sparrows, Louisiana Pine Snake, and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Partnerships with the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff and other entities will help ensure that Historically Underserved farmers participate meaningfully in the project. (Lead Partner: American Bird Conservancy)
- Mid-South Graduated Stewardship Program (Arkansas, Ashley, Chicot, Clay, Conway, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Desha, Drew, Faulkner, Greene, Independence, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lee, Lincoln, Lonoke, Mississippi, Monroe, Phillips, Poinsett, Pope, Prairie, Pulaski, Randolph, St. Francis, White, and Woodruff counties): The economically distressed Lower Mississippi River Valley region of the United States has long been fighting an uphill battle to retain groundwater levels, improve water quality, and provide a suitable habitat for the diverse array of wildlife that inhabit the region. The Mississippi River Alluvial Aquifer serves as a vital and valuable irrigation source for rice farmers throughout the region. Decades of annual withdrawals in excess of the aquifer's recharge capabilities have resulted in severely declining water levels that threaten the entire region's viability and could result in regulation for farmers. To address this, USA Rice partnered with Ducks Unlimited and more than 20 other partners in the original RCPP that targeted all levels of producers across the conservation spectrum, from those who are just beginning their conservation efforts, to those who are on the cutting edge of conservation innovation and incentivized them to increase conservation efforts at every level. This renewal will be doing the same with a primary focus on source water depletion, and additional resource concerns of terrestrial habitat, inefficient energy use, and field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss. (Lead Partner: USA Rice)
- Little Red River Water Improvement Project (White County): The Little Red River Regional Irrigation Water District was formed in 1991 with a goal of creating sustainable sources of irrigation water throughout parts of White County Arkansas. The district obtained funding through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the purpose of encouraging irrigated cropland producers within project boundaries to install water quality and quantity practices through the RCPP. The district has a successful history of working with landowners to achieve substantial results. Previous conservation efforts have helped producers address aquifer depletion, water quality and related resource concerns in the project area; however, many resource concerns remain in need of treatment. The RCPP funding received will greatly enhance previous works and will help move the project forward. (Lead Partner: The Little Red River Regional Irrigation Water District)

Individuals and other entities actively engaged in agricultural production are eligible to participate in RCPP. RCPP offers a continuous application sign-up. However, to be considered for funding, applications must be received by Feb. 18. Applicants can sign up for the 2022 program year by contacting their local USDA NRCS field service center.

All applications will be evaluated for funding based on how well they align with project priorities using procedures to optimize environmental benefits. Applications ranking highest in a funding category will be funded according to priority and is subject to availability of program funds.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment.

Online services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in. Online NRCS services are available to customers through the Conservation Client Gateway link which can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents.

RCPP promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address.

For more information, visit <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov/> or contact by phone your local USDA/NRCS Field Service Center.