



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

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Regional Conservation Partnership Program

- 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.
- Makes available a variety of NRCS conservation activities to help partners, ag producers and private landowners address local and regional natural resource challenges.



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RCPP Vision and Goals

Successful RCPP projects embody the following core principles:

- Impact
- Partner Contribution
- Innovation
- Partnerships and Management

All projects are equally evaluated, regardless of the size.



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Impact

- RCPP applications must propose effective and compelling solutions that address one or more natural resource priorities to help solve natural resource challenges.
- Partners are responsible for evaluating a project's impact and results.



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Partner Contribution

- Partners are responsible for identifying any combination of cash and in-kind value-added contributions to leverage NRCS's RCPP investments.
- It is NRCS's goal that partner contributions at least equal the NRCS investment in an RCPP project.
- Substantive and sizable partner contributions are given priority consideration as part of the RCPP application evaluation criteria.



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Innovation

- NRCS seeks projects that integrate multiple conservation approaches, implement innovative conservation approaches or technologies, build new partnerships, or effectively take advantage of program flexibilities to deliver conservation solutions.



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Partnership and Management

- Partners must have experience, expertise, and capacity to manage the partnership and project.
- Provide outreach to producers, and quantify the environmental (and when possible, economic and social) outcomes of an RCPP project.
- RCPP ranking criteria give priority consideration to applicants that meaningfully engage historically underserved farmers and ranchers.



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Program Funding Availability

Farm Bill 2014

- 25 % for State Projects
- 40 % for National Projects
- 35 % for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas (CCA)
- \$100 million/year
- %7 set aside from covered programs

Farm Bill 2018

- 50 % for State/Multi-state
- 50 % for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas (CCA)
- \$300 million/year



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RCPP Application Process

1. Applicants submit full project application following the guidance in section V of the funding announcement.
2. FY 18/19 application period is now open until **December 3rd, 2019**.
3. Application will be submitted through the RCPP Partner Portal.



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Applications

- Applicants must identify a primary specific **funding pool** in which to compete in accordance with the criteria established in the APF notice. (CCA or State/Multistate)
- Project areas may be defined by geo-political boundaries, watershed boundaries, agricultural land uses, or regional natural resource concerns.
- Project areas does not need to be contiguous, but the geographic boundaries need to be described.
- The project must address at least a primary resource concern.



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Who is eligible?

- Only eligible organizations interested in partnering with NRCS on conservation projects can develop applications for RCPP competition.
- The lead partner for an RCPP project is the entity that submits an application, and if selected for an award is ultimately responsible for collaborating with NRCS to successfully complete an RCPP project.
- RCPP Projects must be carried out on agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land or associated land on which NRCS determines an eligible activity would help achieve conservation benefits.
- Refer to Section III of the RCPP funding announcement for additional details and guidance on eligibility.



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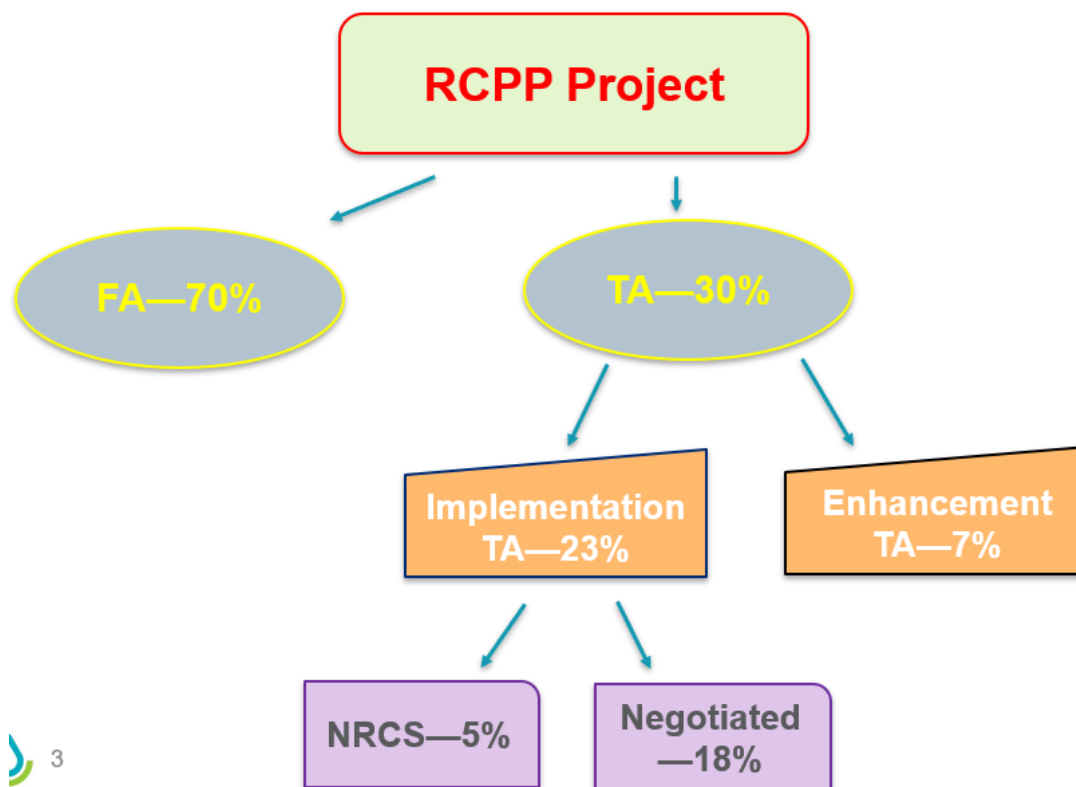
RCPP Partner Portal Webinar

- **TODAY**, October 17 at 3:00 pm ET
- Step 1: Dial into the conference
 - Dial-in: 1-877-369-5243 or 1-617-668-3633
 - Access Code: 0908198##
- Step 2: Join the conference on your computer.

Entry link: <https://ems8.intellor.com/login/818277>

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RCPP Project Funding





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Enhancement TA

(7% maximum of total project cost)

- Example: \$2 million project, \$140k maximum
- Partners may request TA funding for project enhancement activities.
 - RCPP outreach and education
 - Project related communications and coordination activities
 - Development and calculation of quantifiable project outcomes
 - Development of innovative conservation approaches
 - Project management and partnership development to accomplish project goals

** See table in pages 12-13 of the APF for full list of eligible activities.*



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Enhancement TA Cont.

- Subject to negotiation during agreement development.
- Partners must identify means of justifying expenses as part of their Portal application.
- If not requested, total project TA maxes out at 23%/



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Implementation TA

(23% of total project cost)

- 5% retained by NRCS, non-negotiable, for required implementation activities.
- 18% retained by NRCS unless requested and justified by partners and approved by NRCS.
- Requests must be accompanied by partner or 3rd party qualifications in Portal application.
- TA rates of partners or 3rd parties must be competitive with NRCS rates.

**See table in pages 12-13 of the APF for full list of implementation TA activities.*



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Partner Contributions

- Stated goal of contribution at least equal to the NRCS investment
- Value-added, substantive, elevating, amplifying, etc.
- Lead partner assumes full responsibility for delivery of contributions.



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What have made RCPP Projects successful in Maryland?

- Coordination between partners and NRCS early in the process of project development, to identify conservation priorities, funding gaps, staff needs, etc.
- Researched for costs items associated to NRCS Partners TA that was being requested.
- Engagement of Conservation Districts, and MDA in the project.
- Clear understanding of NRCS policies and how these may impact the partners agency's requirements.
- Maintained good communication with NRCS.



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RCPP Coordinators in the Chesapeake Bay

- Emily Armstrong, **New York**
- Pamela Yost, **West Virginia**
- Susan Marquart, **Pennsylvania**
- Carol Rivera, **Maryland**
- Timothy Garrahan, **Delaware**
- Stacey Bradshaw, **Virginia**



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RCPP National Website

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/>



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Questions?

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