



United States Department of Agriculture

2014

Farm Bill

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program
Overview of Announcement of Program Funding (APF)**

**Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service**

RCPV VISION

RCPV offers new opportunities for NRCS to work with partners to encourage:

- locally driven innovation
- create high-performing solutions
- harness innovation
- accelerate the conservation mission
- launch bold ideas
- demonstrate the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation.

All projects will be equally evaluated, regardless of size.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

For this new flagship program, NRCS will specifically measure environmental successes through the following four criteria:

1. Solutions
2. Contributions
3. Innovation
4. Participation



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

1. **Solutions**. NRCS will invest in projects that generate near-term results that are measurable from environmental, economic, and social perspectives. Both partners and NRCS staff will be involved with documenting the outcomes of these conservation investments.

2. Contributions. NRCS specifically will promote leveraging of other Federal and non-federal resources. The agency goal is to *at least double the total investment in conservation*, including cash and in-kind contributions from both Federal and non-Federal sources.

3. Innovation. NRCS will select innovative projects that integrate multiple conservation approaches to deliver comprehensive and measurable solutions

4. Participation. NRCS will seek to maximize the number of organizations that participate in and contribute to projects as compared with predecessor programs (such as the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative).

Unique to RCPP

Adjustments of Terms

- The rules of a covered program that may be adjusted include non-statutory, regulatory rules or provisions.

Alternative Funding Arrangements

- with multistate water resource agencies or authorities to deliver TA and FA

Direct Technical Assistance Funds to Partners

- through alternative funding arrangements or in partnership agreements



Announcement of Program Funding (APF)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Announcement for Program Funding

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and
Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.930

The purpose of this notice is to announce the availability of nearly \$400 million in CCC funding for RCPP and to solicit applications from potential partners who seek to enter into partnership agreements with NRCS under RCPP.

RCPP APF Timeline

- **May 27:** Announcement of Program Funding (APF) through grants.gov.
- **July 14:** (45 days after announcement: Pre-proposals applications are due
- **July 15-28:** Review of Pre-proposal applications are completed and partners are notified of acceptance and need to submit full proposal
- **September 26:** Full proposals due.
- **October 17:** Proposals selected and announced.
- **October -November:** All project agreements are executed.
- Once agreements are executed, partnership activities and obligations may begin.

- Information on Critical Conservation Areas
 - Maps, background, priority resource concerns, selection process
- Information on State priorities and processes and links to State websites
- Agreement template (may be multiple types)
- Examples of high performing partner agreements from CCPI and AWEPP
- Information on watershed- and regional-scale conservation planning, cost-benefit analysis, and water quality monitoring

Funding

Available Funding

- \$100 Million of direct RCPP funding each year
- 7 percent of funds from the four covered programs (ACEP, CStP, EQIP, HFRP) reserved annually through April 1st

Funding Pools

- 25 percent for State Projects
- 40 percent for National Projects
- 35 percent for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas

Projected Funding by Covered Program & Pool

Funding Year	2014/2015
EQIP / ¹	\$131,155,900
CSP / ^{2/3}	\$12,600,000
ACEP	\$55,391,280
HFRP / ^{4/5}	\$0
RCPP	\$195,680,000
TOTAL	\$394,827,180

Allocation Between National, State and CCA's

Funding Year	2014/2015
National (40%)	\$157,930,872
State (25%)	\$98,706,795
CCA (35%)	\$138,189,513
TOTAL	\$394,827,180

1/ excludes \$66,550,777 distributed to states for CCPI in Dec 2013

2/ acres will be secured based on recent sign-up in 2014

3/ 7 percent is projected at 700,000 acres at \$18/acre = \$12,600,000 in 2015

4/ no new funding in 2014

5/ funds not requested in FY15 budget



Projected Funding Allocations

Allocation Between National, State and CCA's					
Funding Year	2014/ ⁶	2015/ ⁷	2016	2017	2018
National (40%)	\$56,190,872	\$101,740,000	\$104,176,000	\$105,576,000	\$101,376,000
State (25%)	\$35,119,295	\$63,587,500	\$65,110,000	\$65,985,000	\$63,360,000
CCA (35%)	\$49,167,013	\$89,022,500	\$91,154,000	\$92,379,000	\$88,704,000
TOTAL	\$140,477,180	\$254,350,000	\$260,440,000	\$263,940,000	\$253,440,000

^{/6} Apportioned funding, net of sequester reductions and CHIMPS

^{/7} Authorized level; does not include anticipated sequester reductions or CHIMPS

Other Funding Considerations

FY 2014 and 2015 funds will be committed and allocated to states based on RCPP agreements awarded.

For the State Area funding pool: Pre-proposals will indicate State needs. Guidance will then be developed on individual State request or allocations process.

NRCS anticipates publishing an annual APF to award new projects each year. Each project would have up to a five year duration

National Funding Pool

- Priority will be given to multistate projects.
- National priorities for FY 2014/2015
 1. Water quantity
 2. Water quality
 3. Soil health
 4. At risk species habitat
 5. Air quality



State Funding Pool

Awarded to single states.

State Conservationists must collaborate with State Technical Committees in developing priorities and a process for reviewing and selecting proposals.

State Conservationists may choose to set state priorities and communicate those priorities to partners; however, all proposals must be reviewed and considered based on established criteria.

ACEP AND EASEMENT PROVISIONS

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) is one of the covered programs under RCPP.

Under RCPP, both components of ACEP are available:

- ACEP-Agricultural Land Easements (ALE), and
- ACEP-Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE)

ACEP AND EASEMENT PROVISIONS

ACEP-Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)

For Agricultural Land Easements, RCPP offers the option for an eligible entity to submit a proposal to enter into a cooperative agreement for specific parcels to be considered for funding or for a partner to propose a partnership agreement that could lead to cooperative agreements and enrollments with other eligible entities.

RCPP allows partners the flexibility to propose non-standard agreement and deed terms. These terms are subject to NRCS approval.

ACEP AND EASEMENT PROVISIONS

ACEP-Wetlands Reserve Easements (WRE)

The ACEP-WRE includes a Wetland Reserve Enhancement Option that is similar to Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP) previously available under the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

Under RCPP, partners may submit a proposal to enter into an agreement under the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Option of ACEP-WRE.

ACEP AND EASEMENT PROVISIONS

Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)

HFRP is a covered program under RCPP and proposals for HFRP projects are not limited to areas previously approved for HFRP.

Partnership Agreements

- NRCS will conduct a competitive process to select applications for partnership agreements.
- The criteria used in evaluating project proposals is listed in the APF and will be on the website.
- Multistate projects will have a lead state selected for each project to develop and enter into the partnership agreements, using a national template.

Partner Responsibilities

Partners are responsible for:

- **Defining the scope of the project** (accomplished through the project proposal and agreement);
- Conducting **outreach and education** to eligible producers for potential participation in the project;
- **Assisting landowners and producers with NRCS applications**, at their request;
- **Leveraging financial or technical assistance** provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives;
- Conducting and providing an **assessment of the project costs and conservation effects**;
- Other duties as specified in the partnership agreement.

Applications

- Applicants must identify **one** specific funding pool in which to compete in accordance with the criteria established in this notice.
- Project areas may be defined by geo-political boundaries, watershed boundaries, agricultural land uses, or regional natural resource concerns.
- The project area does not need to be contiguous, but the geographic boundaries need to be described.
- The project must address at least one identified priority.

Ranking

A ranking sheet with weighted criteria is being developed, and can be used by states for the state reviews.

Ranking Criteria	Weight
Solutions	25%
Contributions	30%
Innovation	20%
Participation	25%

FB REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. The number and types of eligible partners, landowners, and producers participating in the partnership agreements selected
2. The number of producers and landowners receiving assistance (provided by NRCS).
3. The number of new producers and landowners reached (i.e. those who have not previously participated in NRCS programs), and if any veterans farmers and ranchers, beginning farmers or ranchers, limited resource farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, or Indian Tribes received assistance.
4. Total funding committed to projects, including from Federal and non-Federal resources (Federal funding resources total provided by NRCS).
5. A description of how the funds are being administered under any alternative funding arrangement.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>



Questions?

