



Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NEWS RELEASE

NRCS Tennessee announces an additional sign-up opportunity for Aquatic Habitat for at Risk Species in Eastern Tennessee

New Deadline to apply is Friday, June 9, 2023

NASHVILLE, May 5, 2023 – NRCS Tennessee is offering a second sign-up for the Joint Chiefs Aquatic Habitat for at Risk Species in Eastern Tennessee Project, which is entering the third year after the USDA announced the program in February 2021. **The new application cut-off period is Friday, June 9, 2023.**

NRCS and the U.S. Forest Service has partnered to invest more than \$10 million, including more than \$1.7 million in FY2023. In FY2023, NRCS Tennessee is funding more than \$900,000. The project goal is to apply multiple small-scale restorations strategically to achieve landscape scale conservation. It will do this by focusing efforts on high-priority catchments within the Cherokee National Forest as well as private lands within three miles of the forest boundary, in nine counties: Polk, McMinn, Monroe, Blount, Washington, Unicoi, Carter, Johnson, and Sullivan in eastern Tennessee.

“This additional sign-up time will give participants in the project area an opportunity to work with their local district conservationist to help address aquatic habitat resource concerns on their property,” said Told Reed, the area resource conservationist in the Knoxville Area Office. “Some of the most recognizable aquatic species can include both Hellbenders and Brook Trout. This project could help with removing stream barriers that may prevent aquatic organisms from migrating up and down the stream or with eroding creekbanks that may prevent good breeding habitat.”

Applying restorations in those areas improves habitat and restored reaches are connected directly to at-risk source populations. Priority streams occur in both the North and South zones of Cherokee National Forest. The project aims to support Brook Trout, hellbenders, Tennessee Dace, and other at-risk aquatic species.

Agricultural producers and forest landowners interested in the Aquatic Habitat for At Risk Species in Eastern Tennessee Joint Chiefs’ Landscape Restoration Partnership Project should contact their local [USDA service center](#) in Polk, McMinn, Monroe, Blount, Washington, Unicoi, Carter, Johnson, and Sullivan counties to see if their land is eligible. Interested producers should apply by 4 p.m.

June 9 to be considered for funding in the current cycle. However, Tennessee NRCS accepts producer applications for its voluntary conservation programs year-round. Funding is provided through a competitive process and will include an opportunity to address the unmet demand for aquatic habitat.

For more information about the USDA Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership or other NRCS Farm Bill programs, contact EQIP Program Manager [Robert Boettcher](mailto:Robert.boettcher@usda.gov) at Robert.boettcher@usda.gov or (615) 277-2544.

Please visit the NRCS Tennessee website [here](#).

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