



Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act Opportunities for Fiscal Year 2024

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR NRCS PARTNERS

NRCS partners, we need your help getting the word out! Between the Inflation Reduction Act and the Farm Bill, we have about \$5 billion available – a historic amount of funding – for producers to adopt conservation practices in fiscal year 2024.

As you know, to strengthen our implementation of this unprecedented amount of funding for conservation, we're building capacity by hiring additional staff, streamlining programs like the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and strengthening our partnerships with organizations like yours.

We'd appreciate your help in promoting our funding opportunities as well as other NRCS updates with your organization's members. In this toolkit, you'll find:

- Newsletter articles
- Social media posts

Many of our programs have state-specific dates to apply for fiscal year 2024 funding. If your communications are tailored to a particular state, you can find [state-specific dates here](#).

Also, we wanted to share some links to a few of our other resources, including:

- [Webpage on Inflation Reduction Act](#)
- [Webpage on Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions on Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#)
- [Fact Sheet on Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#)
- [Fact Sheet on Greenhouse Gas Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification](#)
- [Fact Sheet on RCPP Investments and Improvement Effort](#)

Please contact Michele Altemus at m.altemus@usda.gov if you have any questions or are looking for other products.

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Article 1: Funding Opportunities

Producers Encouraged to Apply Now for USDA Conservation Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging agricultural producers and forest landowners to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024 as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which help a wide variety of producers, including urban and organic producers.

For fiscal year 2024, NRCS has \$3 billion in Inflation Reduction Act funds to invest in [climate-smart mitigation activities](#). This year, NRCS expanded the list of those activities as well as expanded priority areas for ACEP for grasslands, wetlands and farmlands at risk of conversion. Learn more about those expansions in our [Sept. 28, 2023, news release](#).

Additionally, for fiscal year 2024, NRCS has over \$2 billion in Farm Bill funding available to producers for priorities like organic and urban agriculture, soil health, water quality and quantity and wildlife habitat development. This extensive amount of funding will be used to meet producer demand for our oversubscribed programs, maximize climate benefits and help producers address their natural resource challenges.

NRCS accepts producer applications for its conservation programs year-round. To apply for fiscal year 2024 funding, apply by your [state's ranking date](#) by contacting your [local NRCS office](#).

Article 2: Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Mitigation Activities

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Expansion of Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Activities supported by the Inflation Reduction Act

As part of implementing the [Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate and conservation investment in history](#), USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is increasing [Climate-Smart Agricultural and Forestry Mitigation Activities](#) eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for fiscal year 2024 through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP) and [Conservation Stewardship Program](#) (CSP).

These in-demand activities are expected to deliver reductions in greenhouse gas emissions or increases in carbon sequestration as well as significant other benefits to natural resources like soil health, water quality, pollinator and wildlife habitat and air quality.

In response to feedback received from conservation partners, producers and NRCS staff across the country, NRCS considered and evaluated activities based on scientific literature demonstrating expected climate change mitigation benefits. To learn more, view the [list of practices](#), [fact sheet](#), and [frequently asked questions](#).

Article 3: RCPP Investments and Improvement Effort

USDA Streamlines Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Invests Unprecedented \$1 Billion in 81 Conservation Projects

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The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making historic investments to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and streamlining the program to make it work better for producers and partners. This combination will deliver conservation at a scale never before achieved through RCPP. This year, more than \$1 billion is being invested to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 projects.

RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Historic funding is made possible by both the Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, and the Farm Bill.

RCPP Improvements

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has identified ways to streamline and simplify RCPP, ease the burden on employees and partners, and help maximize flexibility for partners to leverage their investments with NRCS resources and capabilities.

Through a concerted effort over the past eight months, using guidance, feedback and expertise from partners, employees, leadership, and stakeholders, NRCS has identified several improvements that the agency will implement in the months and years ahead.

Improvements include:

- Streamlining RCPP agreements for fiscal year 2023 awards and moving to one programmatic agreement to begin implementing the RCPP projects awarded under the fiscal year 2024 notice of funding opportunity. This will allow partners to more quickly begin implementation of their RCPP projects.
- Entrusting program management and negotiation to the State Conservationists, who lead NRCS programs in each state, further encouraging the locally led process and ensuring the necessary technical needs and costs are realized before project proposal submission.
- Establishing parameters and expectations for easement negotiations, including availability of easement deed templates and established program processes to reduce partnership agreement negotiation and implementation timeframes.
- Improving RCPP guidance and training, ensuring RCPP policies and procedures are communicated in a uniform and consistent manner.
- Enhancing existing business tools to improve the user experience while beginning development of new business tools that, through integration and automation, will reduce the time required for agreement negotiation, processing obligations and making payments to partners.

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For the full list of RCPP improvements NRCS has identified for future implementation, [visit our website](#).

The RCPP improvements are coming at a critical time, as they will strengthen NRCS' ability to implement the Inflation Reduction Act, which provided \$4.95 billion in additional funding for the program over five years.

Unprecedented RCPP Funding

The Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act provided funding for this year's RCPP projects. With this more than \$1 billion investment, NRCS has more than doubled the initial allocation for 2023 to capitalize on the unprecedented demand for RCPP and ensure project partners have the maximum amount of time to successfully implement conservation activities before funds expire in fiscal year 2031.

Of the awarded projects:

- 77 climate-focus projects (\$1.02 billion in funding).
- Twenty-two projects focused on water quantity and conservation (more than \$338 million in funding).
- Three RCPP Classic projects are led by Tribes (more than \$58 million in funding).
- Sixteen projects support the protection and restoration of wildlife corridors (\$216 million in funding).
- Ten projects focus on urban agriculture (\$123 million in funding).

For a full list of selected projects [visit our website](#).

Since inception, RCPP has made 717 awards involving over 4,000 partner organizations.



Article 4: ACEP Expansion

Expansion of Agricultural Conservation Easement Program National Priority Areas

As part of implementing the [Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate and conservation investment in history](#), USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is expanding the national priority areas eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funding for [Agricultural Conservation Easements Program](#) (ACEP) easements in fiscal year 2024.

For ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ALE), NRCS is prioritizing:

- Grasslands in areas of highest risk for conversion to non-grassland uses to prevent the release of soil carbon stores.
- Agricultural lands under threat of conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- State-specific priorities including rice cultivation on subsiding highly organic soils.

For ACEP Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE), NRCS is prioritizing:

- Land with soils high in organic carbon.
- Eligible lands that will be restored to and managed as forests like bottomland hardwood forests.
- Eligible lands in existing forest cover that will be managed as forests.
- Several geographically specific priorities (i.e., former cranberry bogs, wet meadows, and ephemeral wetlands in grassland ecosystems).

To apply for fiscal year 2024 funding for ACEP, apply by your [state’s ranking date](#) by contacting your [local NRCS office](#).

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Social Media Posts

Below are social media posts for use on your social media platforms. Our channels are:

- *Twitter -- @FarmersGov, @USDA_NRCS*
- *Facebook – @FarmersGov*
- *Instagram – @FarmersGov*

Producers encouraged to apply now for USDA conservation programs.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ranking-dates>

A historic amount of funding is currently available from @USDA_NRCS for conservation and climate-smart practices. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ranking-dates>

As part of implementing the historic Inflation Reduction Act, @USDA_NRCS expanded the list of climate-smart agriculture and forestry mitigation activities.

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/priorities/inflation-reduction-act>

Based on feedback from producers and partners, @USDA_NRCS expanded the national priorities areas for conservation easements eligible for Inflation Reduction Act funds. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/priorities/inflation-reduction-act>

@USDA_NRCS is investing an unprecedented \$1.1 billion in 81 Regional Conservation Partnership Program project. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/rcpp-regional-conservation-partnership-program/kentucky/regional-conservation>

Graphics

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