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NEWS RELEASE

USDA Makes \$1.5 Billion Available to Help Farmers Advance Conservation and Climate-Smart Agriculture as Part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda

Funding from the Inflation Reduction Act will help farmers save money, create new revenue streams, enhance natural resources, and tackle the climate crisis

NASHVILLE, April 5, 2024 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced the availability of an historic \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2024 to invest in partner-driven conservation and climate solutions through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting project proposals now through July 2, 2024, that will help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners adopt and expand conservation strategies to enhance natural resources while tackling the climate crisis. These projects in turn can save farmers money, create new revenue streams, and increase productivity.

The investments in climate-smart agriculture that USDA has made since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, and will continue to make through the Inflation Reduction Act and [Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities](#), are estimated to support over 180,000 farms and over 225 million acres in the next 5 years.

Today's investment is made available through the Farm Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest climate investment in history, which has enabled USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to boost funding for RCPP. Additionally, NRCS is announcing progress on its effort to streamline and simplify RCPP and improve processes and implementation.

"We had unprecedented demand for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program last year, showing the robust interest in conservation from farmers and ranchers," Secretary Vilsack said. "Through the increase in funding from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, we're able to invest even more this year in this important program, increasing our impact across the landscape. We're looking forward to seeing what the more streamlined and customer-oriented Regional Conservation Partnership Program can do to get more conservation on the ground in the coming months and years."

There are two separate funding opportunities being announced today: RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners, and communities in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFA, the lead partner works directly with agricultural producers to support the development of innovative conservation approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic. NRCS will set aside \$100 million for Tribal-led projects to be used between both funding opportunities.

The 2024 RCPP funding priorities are climate-smart agriculture, urban agriculture, conservation, and environmental justice. This funding advances President Biden's [Justice40 Initiative](#), which aims to ensure that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain climate, clean energy, and other federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. Today's action also advances President Biden's *America the Beautiful* initiative, a 10-year, locally led and nationally scaled conservation initiative that includes the voluntary efforts of farmers, ranchers and private landowners.

NRCS encourages proposals led by historically underserved entities or Indian tribes.

Project proposals for RCPP are being accepted through the [RCPP portal](#). Details on the [RCPP Classic](#) and [RCPP AFA](#) funding opportunities are available on Grants.gov.

NRCS will be hosting webinars to provide additional information. Learn how to participate at the [RCPP website](#).

More about RCPP

RCPP is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. By leveraging collective resources and collaborating on common goals, RCPP demonstrates the power of public-private partnerships in delivering results for agriculture and conservation.

In November 2023, NRCS announced more than \$1 billion for 81 RCPP projects across the country. [View the interactive map of awarded projects here.](#)

Since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, NRCS has invested a total of \$1.8 billion in 256 RCPP projects covering 49 states and territories.

More about the RCPP Improvement Effort

Through a concerted effort in 2023 using feedback and expertise from partners, employees, leadership and stakeholders, NRCS identified several improvements to RCPP that the agency has implemented and will continue to implement in the months and years ahead. In fiscal year 2024, NRCS is:

- Streamlining RCPP agreement negotiation to allow simultaneous execution of program partnership and supplemental agreements;

- Updating policy and business tools to streamline the development of RCPP agreement deliverables and reducing the need for nationally approved waivers;
- Conducting annual comprehensive training for state program managers and support staff; and
- Delegating additional authority to State Conservationists to support locally led projects.

NRCS will continue to invest in creating a new business tool to support greater automation of RCPP agreement development, obligating funding to partners, and quicker processing of payments.

NRCS is working on model easement deeds to streamline implementation of RCPP easements that use common deed terms for specific land uses.

This year, NRCS aims to reduce negotiation time from 15 months to 6 months, with the goal to reduce the time even further in future years.

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

In addition to improving RCPP, NRCS is also working to make improvements to its Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and Conservation Stewardship Program to make them function better for producers, partners and staff.

More about the Inflation Reduction Act

These two RCPP funding opportunities include Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act funds.

In total, the Inflation Reduction Act provides \$19.5 billion over five years to support USDA's oversubscribed conservation programs, including \$4.95 billion for RCPP over five years. The Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, represents the single largest investment in climate and clean energy solutions in American history. [Learn more about NRCS' Inflation Reduction Act investments in fiscal year 2023](#).

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov).

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