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Regional Conservation Partnership Program: U. S. Department of Agriculture Announces Availability of \$252 Million

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The United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) announced it will award up to \$252 Million to “locally driven, public-private partnerships that improve the nation’s water quality, combat drought, enhance soil health, support wildlife habitat, and protect agricultural viability.”

A number of Arkansas projects have been funded by the program.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (“RCPP”) was created by the 2014 Farm Bill and is intended to connect partners with producers and private landowners to design and implement voluntary conservation solutions that “benefit natural resources, agriculture, and economy.”

The RCPP is administered by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NRCS”) and is stated to currently have more than 2,000 conservation partners that have invested at least \$2.4 billion in high-impact project nationwide. In the January 12th USDA News Release, it was noted that potential conservation partners invited include:

“....private industry, non-governmental organizations, Indian tribes, state and local governments, water districts, and universities. ...”

The application process requires that the partners develop project applications as described in the annual “RCPP Application Program Funding,” that address specific natural resources objectives in a proposed area region. The partners and organizations design, promote, and implement and evaluate the project outcomes.

April 21, 2017, is the pre-proposal application due date for fiscal year 2018 funding.

NRCS Chief Jason Weller is referenced as encouraging partners to consider conservation finance and the environmental markets as they develop RCPP project applications. He is quoted as stating:

“...a growing field of conservation finance provides opportunities to inject significant investment capital in the projects that protect, restore, maintain and maintain our natural ecosystems. ...”

[A copy of the news release can be downloaded below.](#)