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Regional Conservation Partnership Program: Natural Resources Conservation Service Announces Grants for Alternative Funding Arrangements

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The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (“NCRS”) announced in a September 24th news release that it will fund nearly \$75 million for 15 partner-led projects to address natural resource concerns on private lands.

Projects are funded by the Regional Conservation Partnership Program’s (“RCPP”) Alternative Funding Arrangements (“AFA”) and will focus on:

- Climate-smart agriculture and forestry
- Conservation priorities
- Improving access for historically underserved producers

The NRCS characterizes the RCPP as promoting coordination between it and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. The NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and program contracts for easement arrangements.

The AFA is described as a component of the RCPP designed for:

. . . partners who are thinking outside of the box to address some of our most pressing natural resource challenges. . .

Projects prioritized are stated to have included those that supported smart strategies on working lands to:

- Sequester carbon
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change
- Included concrete plans for engaging producers from historically underserved communities

The 2021 awarded projects include:

- Climate Action and Reforestation in Northern Michigan (Michigan)
- Enhancing Hawaii’s Forests for Climate Resilience (Hawaii)
- Expanding Soil Health Through Carbon Markets RCPP (South Dakota)
- Great Plains Grasslands Conservation (South Dakota, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska)
- Gunnison River Drought Resiliency and Restoration (Colorado)

- Healing Mine-Scarred Landscapes via Reforestation (Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia)
- Illinois Climate-Smart Agricultural Partnership (Illinois)
- Iowa Partners for Natural Infrastructure (Iowa)
- Maryland Clean Water Commerce Outcomes Project (Maryland)
- Middle Rio Grande RCPP (New Mexico)
- Pilot Watershed Project (Ohio)
- Saginaw Bay Watershed ASSET Program (Michigan)
- Shasta Valley Farm and Fish Drought Resilience (California)
- Soil and Water Outcomes 2022-2023 (Illinois, Indiana, Missouri)
- Upper Arkansas Forest Fund (Colorado)

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