



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in Washington - 2016

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven, locally-led approach to conservation. It offers new opportunities for USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to harness innovation, welcome new partners to the conservation mission, and demonstrate the value and efficacy of voluntary, private lands conservation.

In 2016, NRCS is investing up to \$220 million in 84 high-impact projects that impact every state in the nation, including two in Washington. This investment, which builds on the \$370 million invested for 2014 and 2015, will help conservation partners and agricultural producers conserve natural resources, leading to cleaner and more abundant water, healthier soil, enhanced wildlife habitat and many other benefits.

Greater Spokane River Watershed Implementation

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$7.7 million (National)
Lead Partner: Spokane Conservation District
Number of Partners: 21
Participating State(s): Idaho & Washington (**lead state**)

Significant sources of sediments and nutrients are carried to the Spokane River watershed by its larger tributaries, and low dissolved oxygen levels and algae blooms threaten aquatic life in the Spokane River, Lake Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Lake. Reducing nutrients is key to resolving water quality degradation throughout the Greater Spokane River Bi-State Watershed. TMDL and lake management implementation plans stress the need to address agriculture and forestry within these watersheds. This project supports regional momentum towards adoption of conservation tillage operations and best management practices. Tens of thousands of agricultural and forestry acres, including a tribal farm, will benefit through voluntary NRCS programs. Wildlife and fish habitat will be protected and long-term easements will be developed for several forest and wetland acquisitions. In addition, this project will introduce a new program that involves using the Risk Management Insurance models to compensate producers for the loss of productive land entered into vegetative buffers. This new commodity buffer program is designed to bridge the financial gap in current cost-share programs and encourage producers to cooperatively implement these practices on their farms. Project success will be evaluated by extensive watershed based field monitoring to track improvements in water, soil and habitat.

WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality Improvement

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1 million (State)
Lead Partner: Whatcom Conservation District
Number of Partners: 10
Participating State(s): Washington

The Nooksack watershed is in the top three percent of agricultural producing counties in the nation and has threatened or endangered salmon species and imperiled shellfish harvest areas. Partners have recruited twenty-two landowners ready to implement priority projects remedying inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife in the Nooksack River watershed in North Puget Sound, Washington State. Partners will work with producers to: replace culverts on farm access roads, restoring fish passages in agricultural and rural areas; work with Tribes to construct instream wooden structures to provide habitat for salmon; and integrate and publicize NRCS programs into the rural, agricultural and Tribal communities. The result will be higher priority and more strategic projects to recover salmon and improve water quality in downstream commercial, ceremonial and subsistence shellfish beds operated by the Lummi Nation.

