



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in West Virginia - 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 one in West Virginia. 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.

WV Chesapeake Headwaters Conservation Partnership

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1 million (State)

Lead Partner: West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority

Number of Partners: 13

Participating State(s): West Virginia

The project will target the placement of perpetual conservation easements on lands that are the most critical for the protection of water quality in the Chesapeake headwaters of West Virginia. A substantial portion of the region is karst, with a direct connection between ground water and surface water. The conduit flow of water in the subsurface limestone can lead to rapid distribution of pollutants directly to streams, rivers and ground-water systems. This region is also an important source of drinking water for over four million people in the Washington DC metro area. By incentivizing permanent buffers around sinkholes in karst areas, as well as buffers in riparian corridors and protecting high-quality forests, this project will ensure better protection for these sensitive areas. Landowner applicants for a perpetual conservation easement will include any willing landowner with 20 acres or more in the eight-county Chesapeake headwaters region who makes a legal application. Landowners may also voluntarily implement buffer practices as a result of the education and outreach program.

