



## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

### Investing in New Mexico - 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 three in New Mexico. 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.

### Innovative Tribal Conservation and GHG Management

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$1.8 million (National)

Lead Partner: Intertribal Agriculture Council

Number of Partners: 9

Participating State(s): Alaska, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma & South Dakota (**lead state**)

As the impacts of climate change become more pronounced in Indian country, Native nations and Indian landowners are faced with the challenge of implementing resource conservation land management systems that incorporate greenhouse gas management activities, also known as carbon farming practices. As greenhouse gas management services gain value in environmental markets, it is vital that historically underserved tribal conservation programs and American Indian farmers and ranchers develop conservation projects that demonstrate causal relationships between soil quality and ecosystem production functions such as carbon sequestration. This project will address the need for conservation stewardship projects on American Indian lands that integrate a carbon farming production possibilities frontier component. The project area will be national in scope covering a diversity of tribal rangeland landscape types including Southwest Alaska, prairie grassland and Colorado River Basin regions. The project includes developing and implementing soil amendment, forestry and grazing management Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) and Conservation Stewardship Plans (CSP) on pilot project sites. The CAP/CSPs will establish a framework for inventorying the existing baseline carbon sequestration rate and propose cost-effective conservation practices to achieve multiple environmental quality and economic development goals. One of the anticipated outcomes from this project will be the development of carbon offsets from soil amendment and grazing land and livestock management activities. We will engage private investment in those pilot project sites that both meet investors and credit buyers' interest in charismatic high-quality carbon offsets, and tribes' interest in promoting appropriate conservation practices and economic development on Indian lands.



## NM Acequia Revitalization on Historic Lands

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$3 million (State)

Lead Partner: New Mexico Acequia Association, NM Interstate Stream Commission, and NM Association of Conservation Districts

Number of Partners: 10

Participating State(s): New Mexico

New Mexico has a rich history of community acequias supporting agriculture with approximately 800 acequias and community ditch associations serving many farmers or “parciantes” who make all, or part of their livelihood from farming and ranching. The majority of these farmers depending are minorities in underserved communities. The objective of this project is to facilitate and promote surface water conservation, increase irrigation system efficiencies/effectiveness and improve water quality on agricultural lands and for downstream purposes. Water quantity and quality will also be improved by restoring historic acequias on agricultural lands supporting local families and communities.

## North Central NM Watershed Restoration Project

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$500,000 (State)

Lead Partner: Claunch-Pinto SWCD

Number of Partners: 15

Participating State(s): New Mexico

This regional watershed project extends from Taos (North) to Bernardo (South) and Gallup (West) to Santa Rosa (East), including all major tributaries and sub-watersheds of the Rio Grande and Pecos River in that region. Poor historic management of forest watersheds and riparian zones along with current and forecast climate change are creating a dire situation for the condition and availability of New Mexico’s forest, rangeland and water resources. Wildlife, acequias, rural economies, tourism and outdoor recreation are all at risk from the associated impacts of watershed wildfires. This project expands on previous work with established partners and aims to reduce wildfire risks, improve soils, hydrology and vegetation, and enhance social/economic needs.

