



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Investing in Oklahoma - 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 Oklahoma. 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.

Improving Working Lands for Monarch Butterflies

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$6 million (National)

Lead Partner: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Number of Partners: 12

Participating State(s): Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas (**lead state**) & Wisconsin

Our partnership will restore, manage and conserve wildlife habitat for monarch butterflies on agricultural and tribal lands using four main strategies: conservation planning and assessment; habitat improvement and best management practices; building an adequate seed supply for milkweed and nectar plants; and, enhancing organizational coordination and capacity. To provide the greatest conservation outcomes, the project will focus work within two NRCS Critical Conservation Areas: Prairie Grasslands Region and Mississippi River Basin. Targeted areas will be identified through a US Geological Survey-led initiative examining fine-scale opportunities for the restoration of milkweed and other pollinator plants. This project will contribute to national goals in terms of habitat and increase the number of monarch butterflies. This in turn will represent the best opportunity to avoid future regulations related to monarch butterflies from being imposed on farmers and ranchers in the future.

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.

Native Grazing Lands Protection in the Plains

Proposed NRCS Investment: \$3.6 million (National)

Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy

Number of Partners: 7

Participating State(s): Kansas (**lead state**) & Oklahoma

Native grasslands of the central Great Plains are some of the most majestic yet least conserved landscapes in North America. The project area for this proposed effort encompasses the most intact native grazing lands remaining in Kansas and Oklahoma, which provide critical habitat for a number of rare and sensitive species, including the lesser prairie-chicken. By applying conservation easements and practices on native grazing lands, this project aims to prevent habitat fragmentation and conversion to non-grazing uses, improve wildlife habitat and reduce the spread of invasive species. One innovative component of this proposal will include working with Kansas State University to better quantify the changes in stream base flows following eastern red cedar removal in adjacent riparian areas and uplands. It is anticipated that approximately 12,000 acres of grazing lands will be protected via conservation easements and EQIP conservation practices will be delivered on over 40,000 acres.

