



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

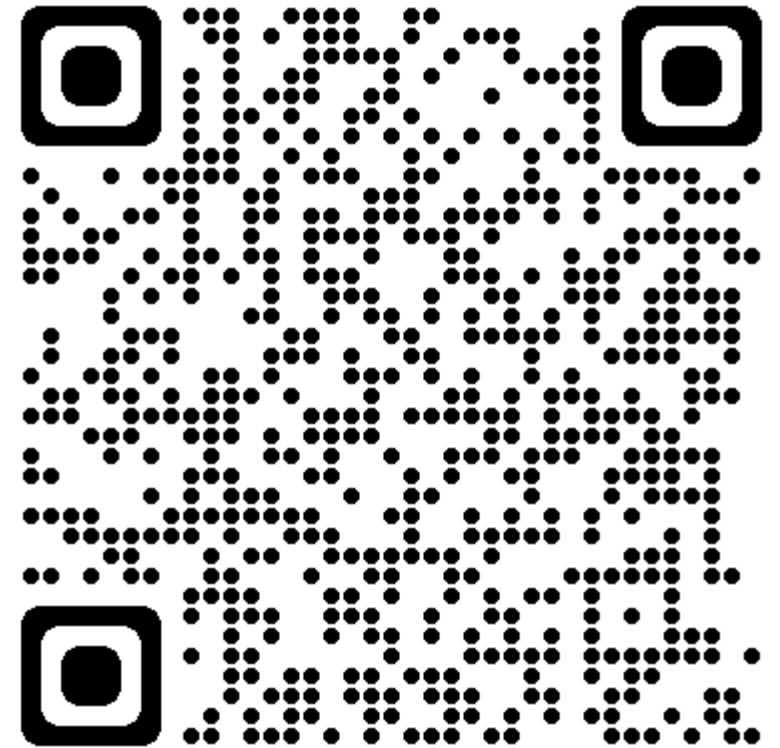


Regional Conservation Partnership Program Partner Training

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity

- Open through July 2nd, 2024!!!
- Updates to the NFO:
 - Critical Conservation Areas
 - TA Funds
 - Eligible partners
 - And more!
- NRCS anticipates announcing awards by October 2024
- Proposals should plan for a start date at or before March 2025



How does RCPP work?



What – RCPP helps producers protect working agricultural lands and forest lands with targeted resource concerns and areas



How – NRCS and partners co-invest in conservation activities



Where – Private or Tribal agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, or associated land on which an eligible activity would benefit



Duration – Typically 5 years

How can RCPP Funding be used?

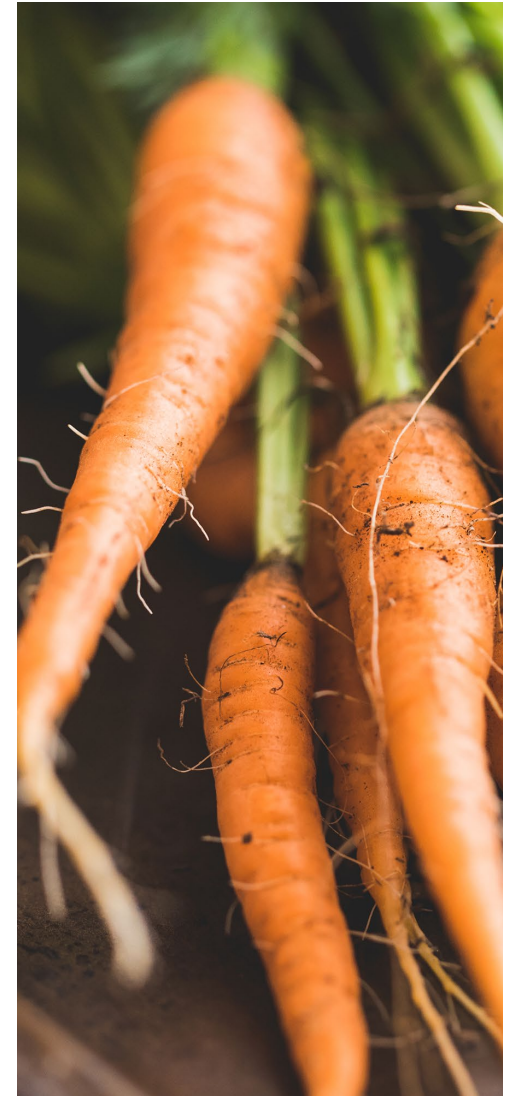
- **Financial Assistance (FA)**

- These funds are used to implement eligible activities on eligible land.
- Typically, this is 75% of an RCPP Project.

- **Technical Assistance (TA)**

- To support the implementation of conservation activities such as planning, design, installation, and checkout.
- To support the RCPP project by conducting outreach, evaluating and reporting on outcomes, and project management

Remember: RCPP funds pay for eligible activities, not people.



Covered Programs

RCPP Activity Type	Covered Program Authorities	Purpose/Notes
Land Management	EQIP & CSP Enhancements ACEP-ALE/WRE – restoration PL-566 – land treatment	Treatments to restore or improve the land
Rental	CRP	Temporary & based on foregone income
US-Held Easement	ACEP-ALE/WRE & HFRP – easement acquisition	Permanent protection of the land
Entity-Held Easement	ACEP-ALE/WRE & HFRP – easement acquisition	Permanent protection of the land
Watershed Project	PL-566	Infrastructure project requiring an approved watershed plan & design

Project Types

Classic

- NRCS reimburses producers directly for FA activities.
- NRCS often delivers a majority of TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- Partner's primary role is to provide outreach, measure impact, and deliver partner contributions to amplify NRCS funding.

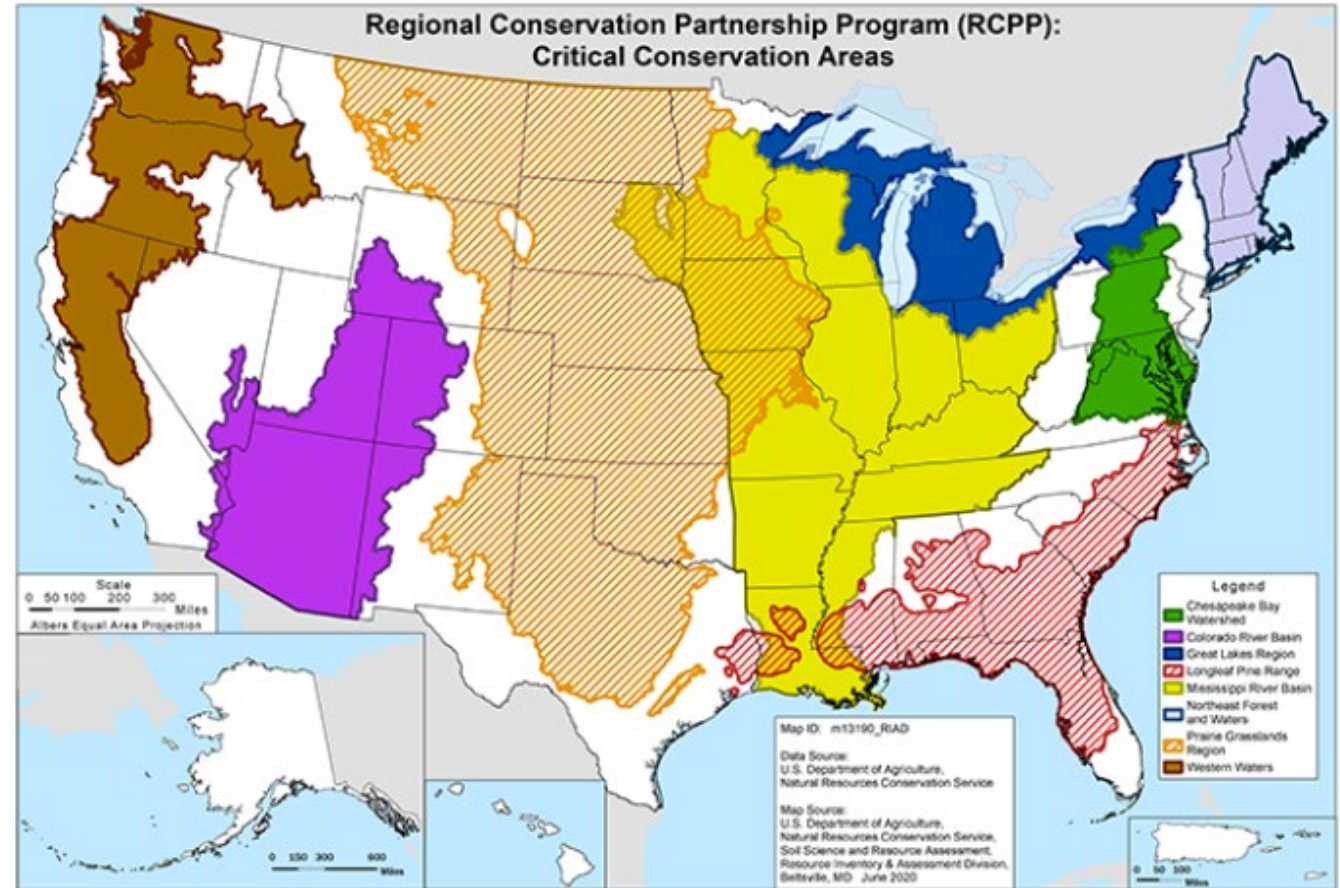
AFA's

- Partner installs practices for producers or reimburses producers for FA activities.
- Partner delivers all project TA in support of producer contracts and easements.
- NRCS support limited to nondelegable tasks such as confirming the eligibility of producers and land, AGI verification, and compliance with NEPA/HEL/WC.



RCPP Classic Funding Pools

- Funding is split evenly between two funding pools:
 - State and Multi State
 - Critical Conservation Areas



Critical Conservation Area

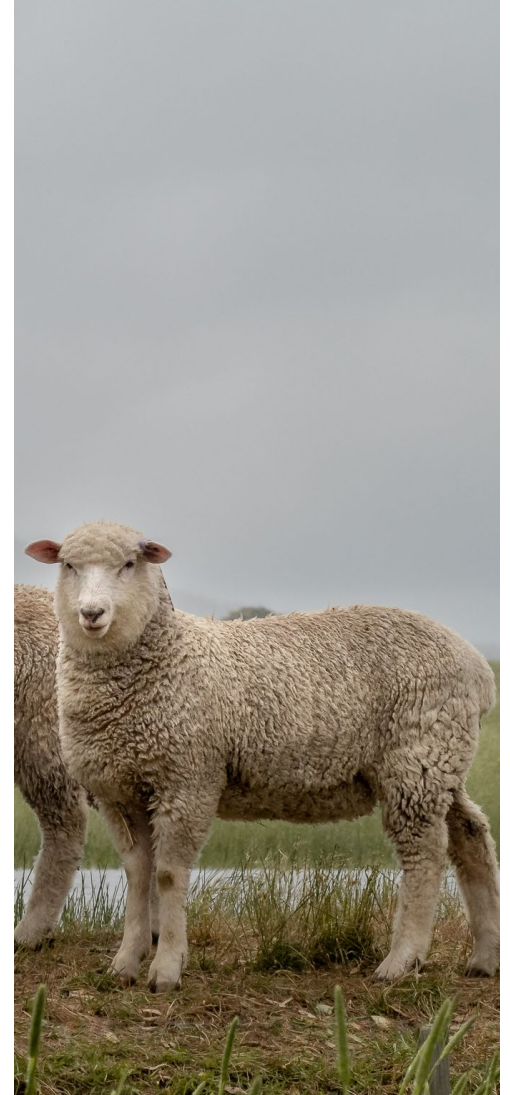
- Must be tied to one or more of the following resource concerns:

Northeast Forests and Waters	Degraded Plant Conditions	Degraded Plant Condition
		Pest Pressure
	Inadequate Habitat for Fish, Wildlife, and Invertebrates	Aquatic Habitat
		Terrestrial Habitat
	Water Quality Degradation	Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss
		Field Pesticide Loss

How FA Delivery Works in Classic

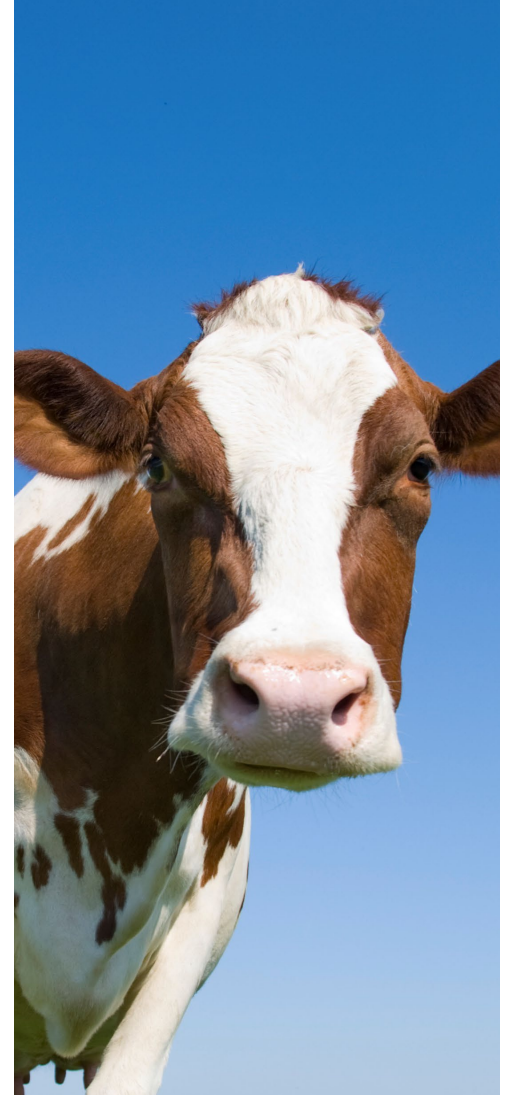
- LMR and easement FA follow the standard NRCS signup and ranking process
- Partners are allowed to bypass ranking if specific producers or parcels are identified in the proposal

Classic is a better fit for partners that want to influence where funding is directed, rather than deliver the financial assistance



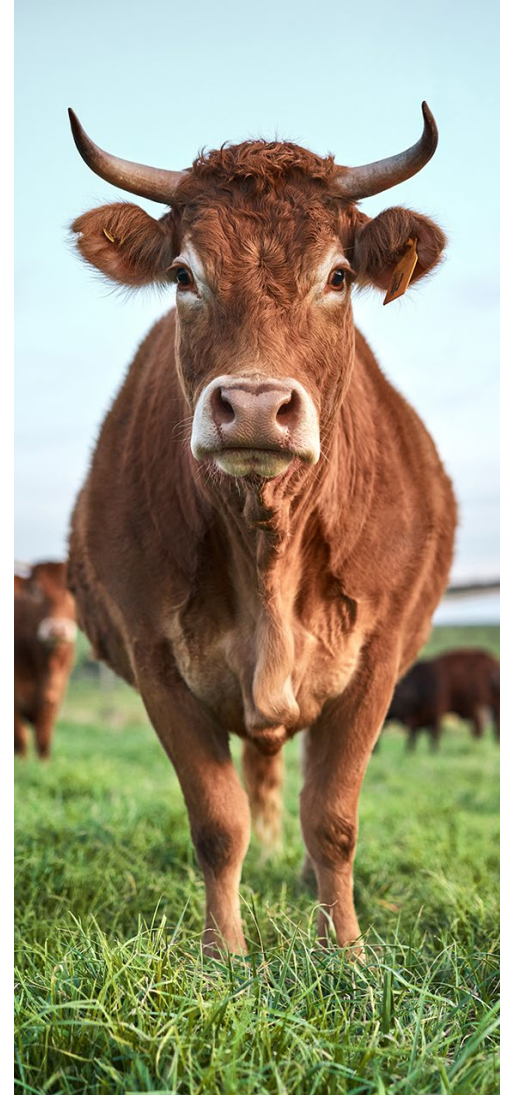
Land Management

- **What** – Land treatment practices including restoration of land in easements
- **Roles and Responsibilities**
 - In Classic FA is typically delivered by NRCS
 - In AFAs FA is delivered by the lead partner



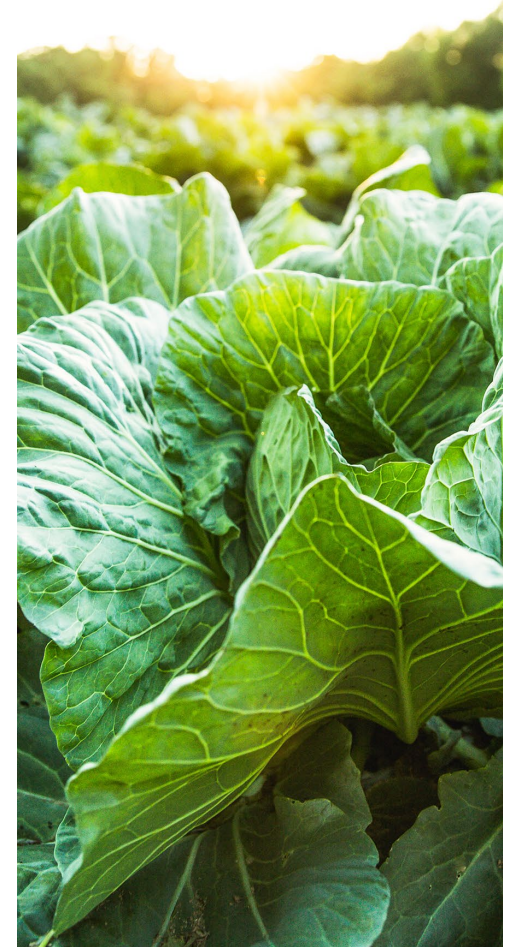
Land Rental

- **What** – Typically short-term payments to address a project resource concern
- **Roles and Responsibilities**
 - In Classic FA is typically delivered by NRCS
 - In AFAs FA is delivered by the lead partner



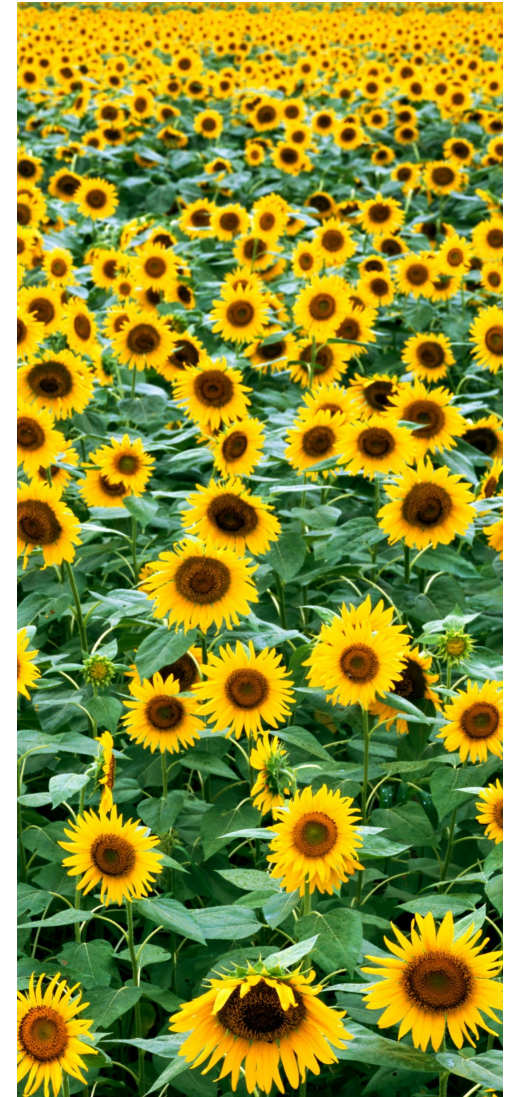
Entity Held Easements

- For Classic the maximum federal share is:
 - 75% for easements with HU producers and a U.S. right of enforcement
 - 50% for easements with HU producers or a U.S. right of enforcement.
 - 25% for easements without a U.S. right of enforcement
- For AFA the maximum federal share is:
 - 65% for easements with HU producers
 - 40% for all other easements



Entity Held Easements

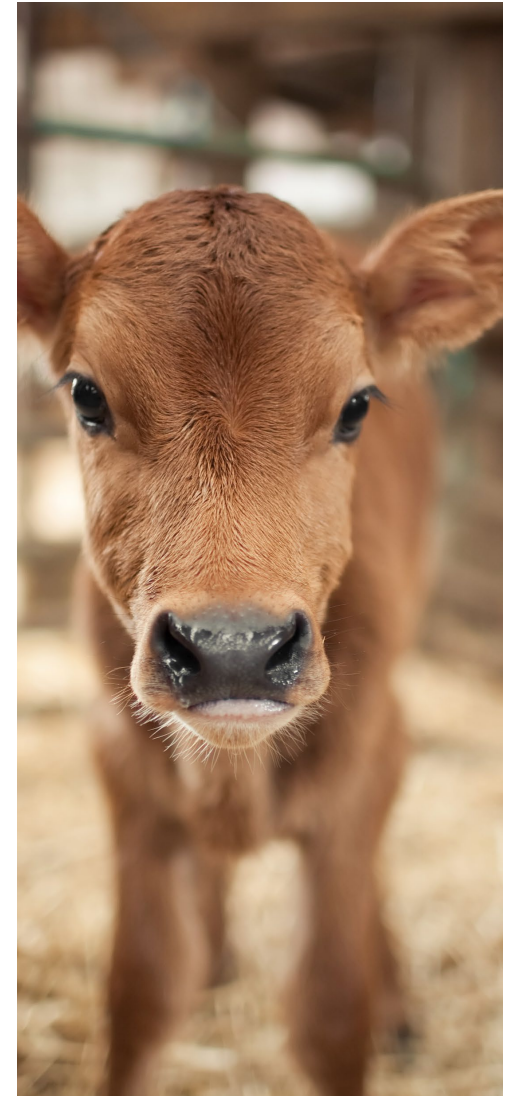
- Who conducts and pays for due diligence?
 - **NRCS Responsibilities** – Limited to hazard material search and appraisal technical reviews.
 - **Partner Responsibilities** – All other due diligence are a partner responsibility and not reimbursed by NRCS.
- Non-federal share of the easements:
 - Partner Contribution
 - Landowner donation – This may be included as a part of partner contributions



US Held Easement Deed Types

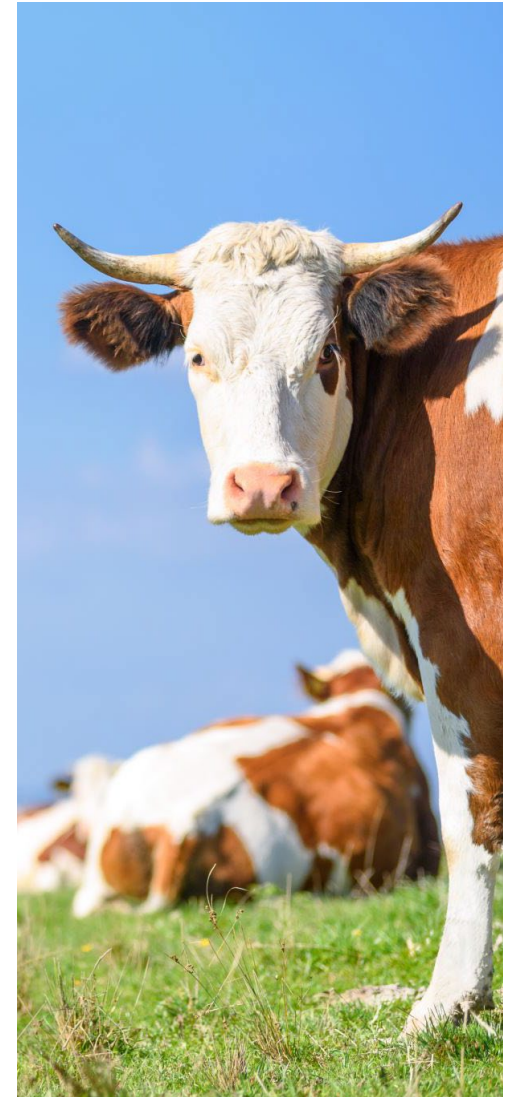
- Highly Restrictive
 - Restoration/protection of native habitats in natural/historic condition.
 - Minimal disturbance, no agricultural uses.
- Moderately Restrictive
 - Management of specific habitats to provide conservation benefits.
 - Conservation activities to manage/maintain conservation values.
- Minimally Restrictive
 - Protection of agricultural uses, including grazing uses. Rights related to agricultural use remains

Maximum federal share is up to 100%



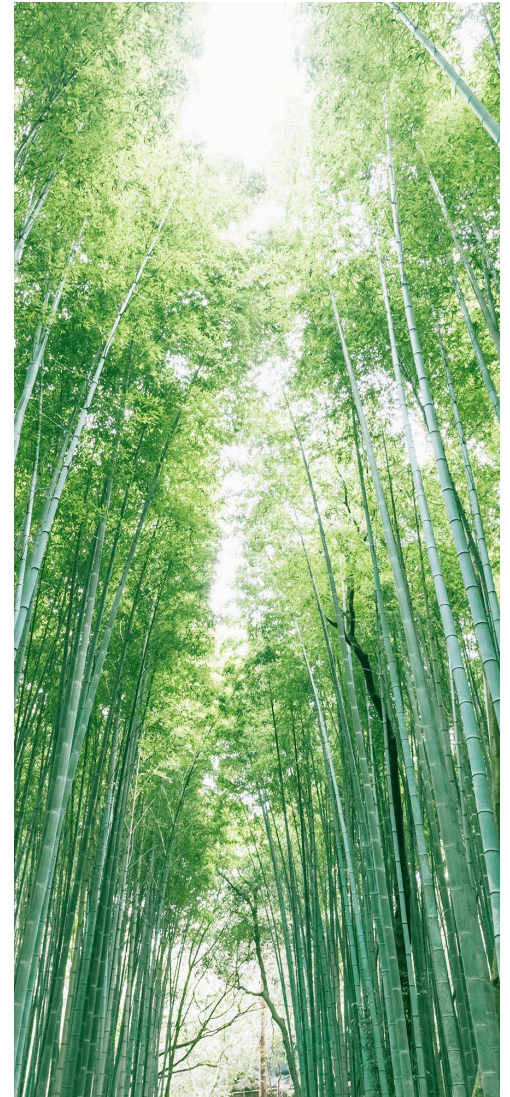
US-Held Easement Basics

- Who conducts and pays for due diligence?
 - **NRCS Responsibilities** – All due diligence such as appraisals, hazardous materials search, etc.
 - **Partner Responsibilities** – In limited situations partner may be able to support NRCS due diligence responsibilities.
- Non-federal share of the easements:
 - **Partner Contribution** – Cash or in-kind
 - **Landowner donation** – This may not be included in partner contributions



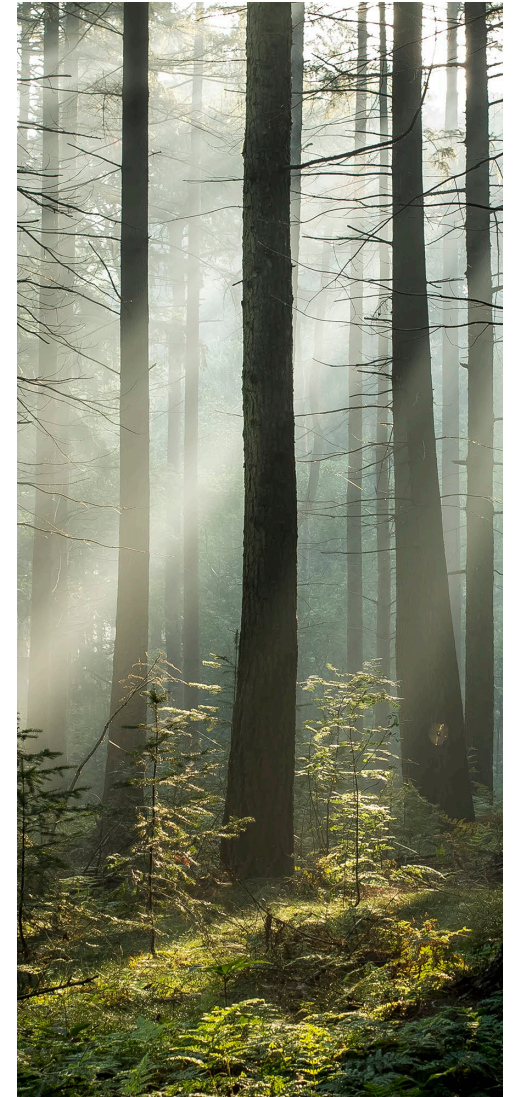
How Technical Assistance Works

- Maximum of 25% of NRCS funding.
- Proposal limits enhancement TA to 7%, this is negotiable if selected.
- Proposal will automatically add ~18% implementation TA based on the amount of FA requested.
- The final breakdown of TA, and how much will be performed by the partner is negotiable after selection.



How Technical Assistance Works

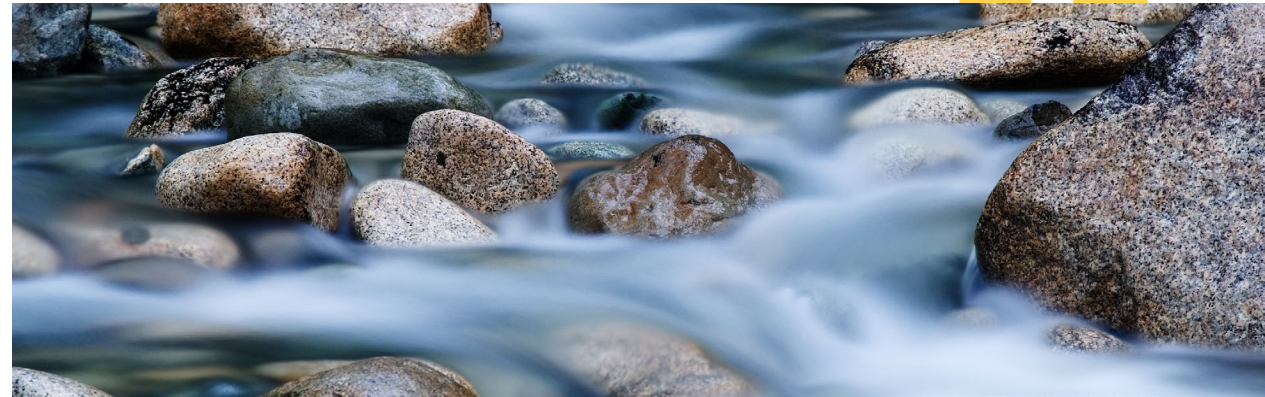
- **Enhancement TA** = Project-wide activities
 - Outreach
 - Project Management
 - Measuring & Evaluating Project Outcomes
- **Implementation TA** = Support for specific FA contracts.
 - For Classic follows the NRCS planning process.
 - Classic projects will require some amount of NRCS TA.
 - AFA projects typically have no NRCS TA.





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Submitting your RCPP Proposal



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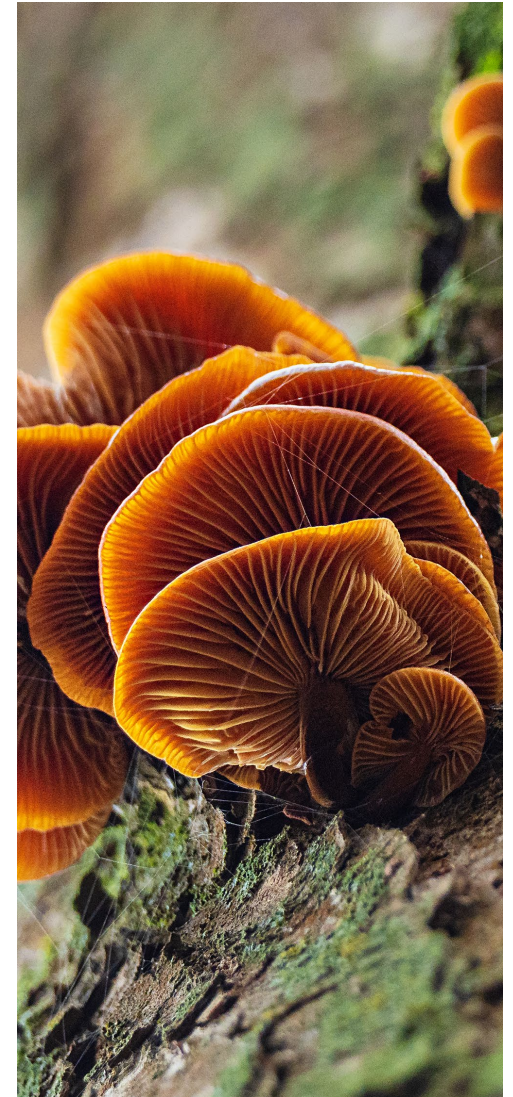
What's Included in an RCPP Proposal

- The geographic area of the project.
- The resource concerns to be addressed.
- A proposed budget for use of NRCS funding to address these resource concerns.
- A list of partner contributions and how they will amplify federal funding.
- Any specific work (parcels/easements) targeted by the partner that are potentially critical to the success of the project.



NRCS Funding Request Table

- Financial Assistance Request (75-82%)
 - Complete this section first, as it impacts the amount of TA that can be added.
 - Keep it simple, do you need to specify funds by year? Or can you simply input funds by activity type under the final year of the project?
 - For Classic, you don't need multiple rows for the same FA activity type unless you plan to work in multiple states.
 - If selected, you and NRCS can easily update deliverables to move funding between states based on actual need.



NRCS Funding Request Table

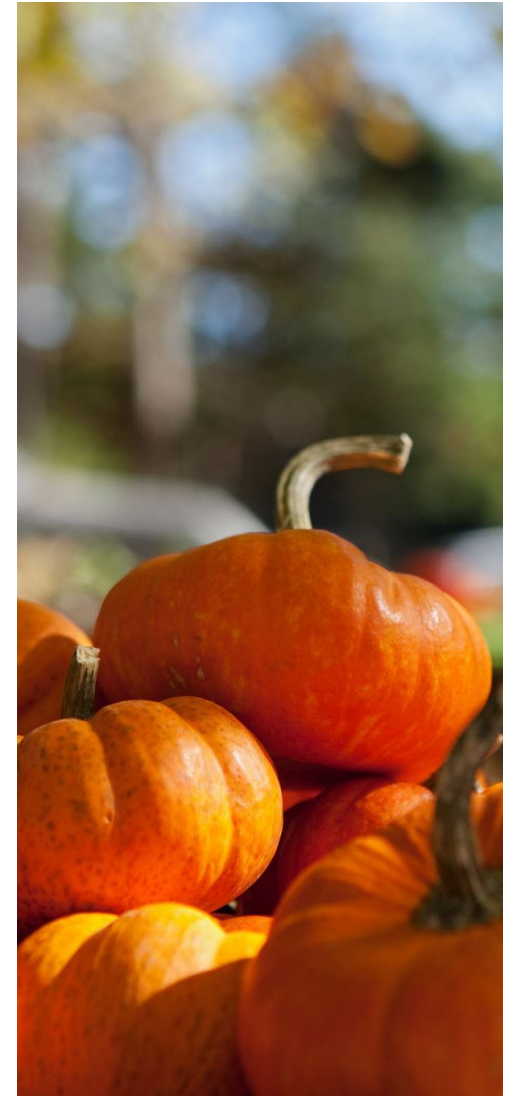
- Technical Assistance
 - Enter Enhancement TA first, as the amount of Implementation TA cap is based on the total amount of TA-E and FA request.
 - **You do not need separate rows for your different types of Enhancement TA**, create a single row but use the description field to tell us what potential activities are included.
 - For partner implementation TA, you only need a single row per FA activity type.

Note: Most partner implementation TA will be in support of land management or watershed projects. There are limited opportunities for Partner TA in support of Rental or Entity-Held Easements.



Partner Contributions

- One row per partner per activity type is sufficient.
- Do not add partners that are not providing any contributions.
- Every partner must submit a contribution letter, including the lead partner. The contribution letter has replaced deliverable-specific valuation methodologies.
- Letters of support will not be considered.
- No minimum contribution is required, evaluation criteria is more heavily impacted by the impact contributions have on addressing project resource concerns.



Reporting on Project Outcomes

- Partners are required to report on environmental outcomes.
- Each outcome included in the proposal will become a partner responsibility within the RCPP agreement.
- Social and economic outcomes are encouraged but not required.

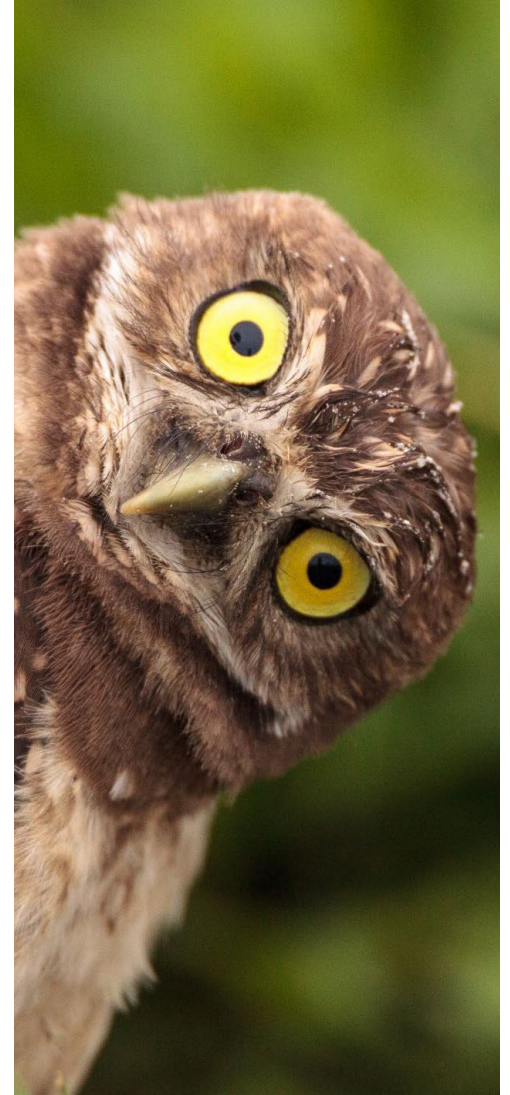


Template for Outcomes

- A = Total RCPP Funds Dispersed over C period of time
- B = Partner Contributions (Cash and In-Kind)
- C = Defined number of years
- D = Defined Geographic Area in the RCPP Agreement
- E = benchmark conditions developed for the outcome from the partnership agreement. Each outcome should have a benchmark against which to measure E and F.
- F = Acres of wildlife habitat improvement practices for the RCPP project
- G = to be modeled or estimated figures based on the best professional judgement of a scientific expert
- H = Connected to reference in F (define assumptions such as regeneration time, lifespan, population dynamics, etc.)

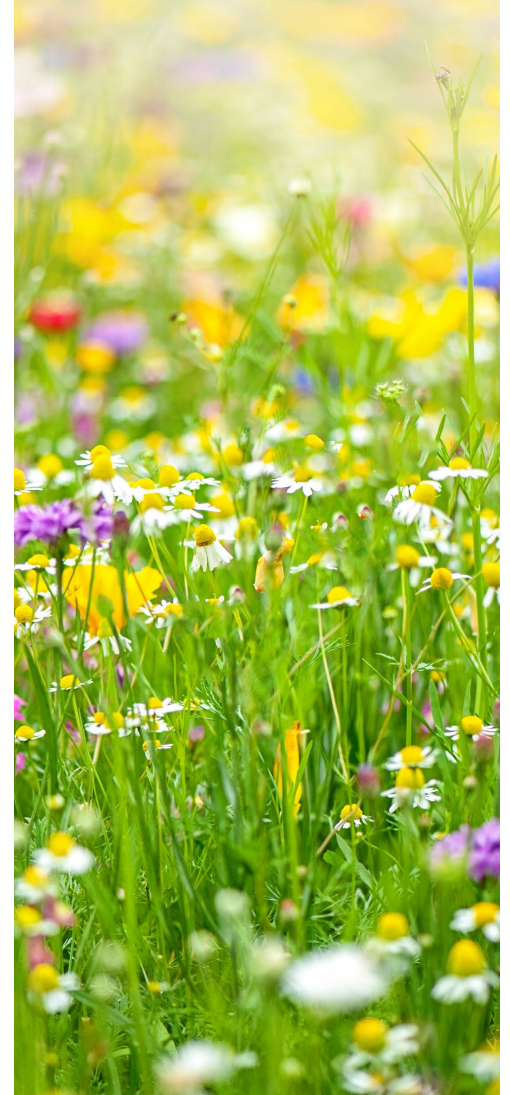
Wildlife Outcome Example

With the RCPP investment of **A** dollars matched by **B** partner contributions over **C** year (s) we have made a lasting improvement to the biodiversity of the **D** (geographic region) over initial benchmark **E**) by improving **F** acres habitat and increasing our {priority species} population by **G** to a naturally sustainable size that will benefit the region for **H** years.



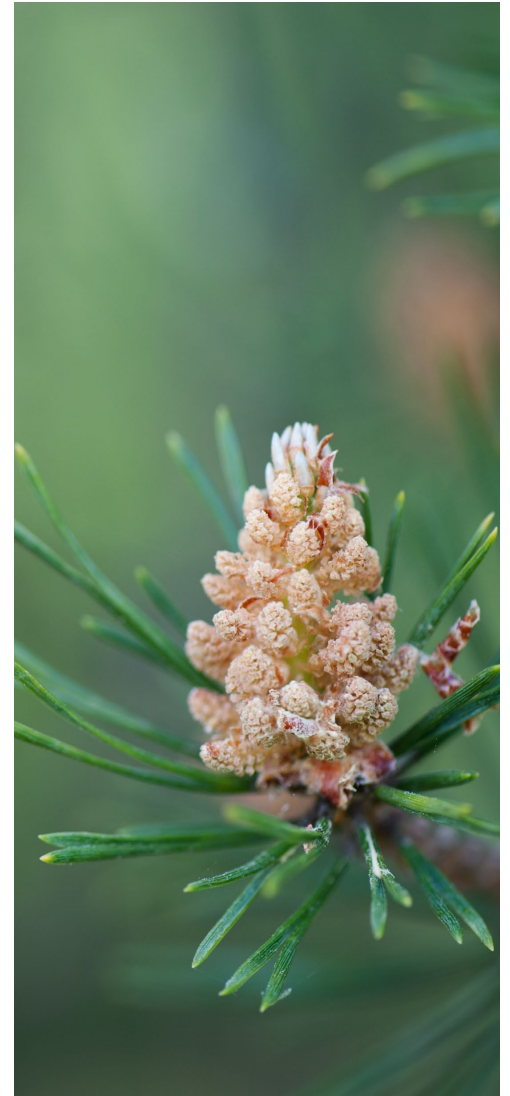
Proposal Evaluation Criteria

- **Impact (50%)** – How will the project address resource concerns in the proposed geographic area?
- **Partner Contributions (20%)** – How will contributions amplify the impact of NRCS funding?
- **Partnership & Project Management (30%)** – How effectively can the experience and resources of the partners support this project?



Inflation Reduction Act Funding

- To be considered for IRA funding proposals must receive an “A” or “B” for their climate smart index.
 - A – Projects that provide climate mitigation benefits such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions or carbon sequestration.
 - B – Projects that help producers and landowners adapt to the impact of climate change.
- For easements, NRCS will consider the potential carbon stored (e.g. grasslands and wetlands have greater storage potential).
- IRA funded projects, including producer contracts must be completed by FY 2031.





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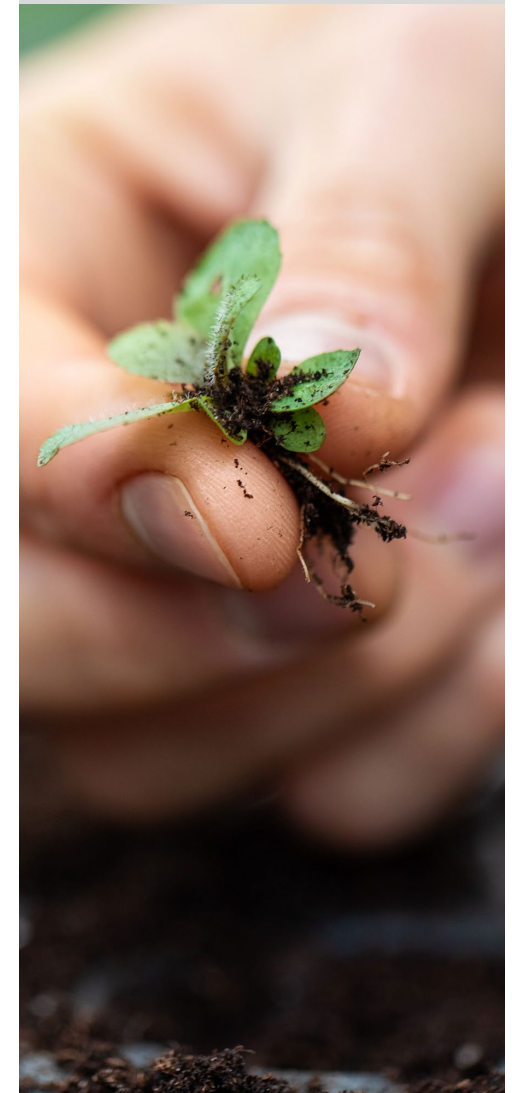
Things to Consider with an RCPP Proposal



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Flexibility vs Speed

Implementation Plan	Strengths	Challenges
Use a covered program process or model deed (covered program like)	Faster and easier	How is this meeting needs that aren't already covered by other Farm Bill programs?
Use a custom process or template	Addresses needs that other programs can't address, may bring in new customers	Is the partner prepared for a more challenging ramp up period?



How to Submit a Proposal

Step 1 – Obtain a Login.gov credential before requesting new portal account

Step 2 – Obtain Access to RCPP Portal

Step 3 – Schedule meeting with local RCPP Coordinator

Step 4 – Schedule the State Conservationist Interview meeting

Step 5 – Submit your proposal



State Conservationist Interview Times

- May 7 – 10am to 4:30pm
- May 9 – 10:30am to 1:30pm
- May 30 – 1pm to 4:30pm
- May 31 – 9am to 11am or 12pm to 3:30pm



Questions?

Contact Jessica Rock at
jessica.rock@usda.gov or 603-
923-3694 to discuss further

Also please reach out to
schedule follow up in-depth
discussions!



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