



**Natural Resources  
Conservation Service**  
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# News Release

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## USDA Invests More Than \$7.3M in Partner-Driven Projects that Protect Natural Resources in Oregon

**PORTLAND, OR, April 16, 2020** – USDA’s Natural Resources Service (NRCS) today announced that it is investing \$7.3M in Oregon for a partner-driven conservation projects through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS will leverage an additional \$7.5M in partner contributions.

“I’m excited to announce the first RCPP awards under the 2018 Farm Bill,” said Ron Alvarado, State Conservationist in Oregon. “Through collaboration and aligning our resources toward a common goal, we’re making an impact for natural resource conservation that could never have been realized on our own.”

RCPP uses a partner-driven approach to fund innovative solutions to natural resource challenges. Through RCPP, NRCS and partners work together with private landowners and producers to implement a variety of conservation activities, including land management practices and systems, short-term land rentals, conservation easements and watershed structures. The mix of conservation activities carried out under each project is dependent on a project’s goals, objectives and conservation benefits.

These projects offer impactful and measurable outcomes. They will support diverse agricultural and natural resource objectives, from helping farmers and ranchers improve water quality, soil health and drought resiliency to protecting drinking water supplies and enhancing wildlife habitat.

USDA has selected three projects in Oregon:

- The **Lower John Day Canyons Restoration Initiative** led by the Gilliam Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will enhance over 40 miles of Mid-Columbia Steelhead habitat in the Lower John Day Basin. The project will include restoration activities, such as the installation of fences, manufactured beaver dam structures and riparian plantings to improve native fish habitat. In addition to USDA’s \$3.9M, the Gilliam SWCD will contribute over \$4M to the project.
- The **South Fork John Day Watershed Restoration** led by the South Fork John Day Watershed Council will engage producers in implementing a diverse set of land



management activities to improve and restore agricultural lands in the watershed. The South Fork John Day Watershed Council will match USDA's \$1.7M for restoration activities, which include invasive species removal, forest restoration and rotational grazing.

- The **Polk County Oak Habitat Restoration 2020** led by the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) will enhance and restore oak habitat and associated wildlife species on private lands in Polk County. The Polk SWCD will match USDA's \$1.7M to create habitat corridors across the county, adding increased wildlife forage and unobstructed travel routes between counties.

Nationally, NRCS is investing \$206 million for 48 partner-driven conservation projects across 29 states, while leveraging nearly \$300 million in partner contributions.

Though RCPP was first authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill, the 2018 Farm Bill made changes to strengthen the program and simplify its rules. RCPP is now a stand-alone program with \$300 million annually available for partner-driven projects. In addition to the general RCPP projects announced today, NRCS has already awarded more than \$50 million for 18 renewals of 2014 Farm Bill projects. A separate RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) funding announcement is currently open until May 18.

Since 2015, RCPP has combined \$1 billion in NRCS investments with close to \$2 billion in partner dollars to implement conservation practices nationwide. There are currently 341 active RCPP projects and close to 2,000 RCPP partners.

[Read more](#) about the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

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