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USDA Invests More Than \$2 Million in Partner-Driven Projects that Protect Natural Resources in Georgia

ATHENS, GA, April 16, 2020 – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) today announced that it is investing \$2,077,922 in Georgia for a partner-driven conservation project through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). NRCS will leverage an additional \$2,200,000 in partner contributions from the project lead, the Georgia Conservancy.

“I’m excited to announce the first RCPP awards under the 2018 Farm Bill,” said Terrance O. Rudolph, state conservationist in Georgia. “Through collaboration and aligning our resources toward a common goal, the Georgia Conservancy and NRCS is 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.

View this [multimedia story](#) for a full list of projects.

In Georgia, the Georgia Conservancy and partners plan to protect up to 1,500 acres with conservation easements and expand prescribed fire efforts to improve management of the longleaf pine ecosystem. The project, which collectively invests almost \$4.3 million complements Department of Defense Sentinel Landscape activities in Georgia will also support the goals of [Georgia’s Gopher Tortoise Initiative](#).

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Sentinel Landscapes are critical geographies located where valuable working and natural lands also present a strategic value to the national defense mission. These are places where preserving the working and rural character of communities also strengthens the economies of farms, ranches, and forests; conserves habitat and natural resources; and protects vital test and training missions conducted on the military installations that anchor such landscapes.

The [Georgia Sentinel Landscape was designated as one such place in 2017](#), where nine military installations anchor a unique landscape that spans traditional agricultural communities, invaluable longleaf savanna, critical watersheds, and a coast of unparalleled biodiversity.

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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