



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

3381 Skyway Drive
Auburn, Alabama 36830
Voice: 334-887-4581
Email: Amelia.hines@ga.usda.gov
Web: <http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov>

News Release

Release No.: 0000013.15

Contact:
Amelia.Hines, (334) 887-4581
Amelia.Hines@ga.usda.gov

USDA invests \$73 million in critical infrastructure projects and assessments to provide public safety through watershed rehabilitation

New assessments to focus on expanding water supply in drought-stricken West

Auburn, Ala., April 10, 2015 – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA is investing \$73 million to rehabilitate dams across the nation in an effort to protect public health and safety and evaluate the expansion of water supply in drought stricken areas. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is investing in approximately 150 projects and assessments in 23 states

“Millions of people depend on watersheds and dams for protection from floods and providing clean drinking water,” Vilsack said. “By investing in this critical infrastructure, we are helping to ensure a safe, resilient environment for rural America.”

NRCS Assistant Chief Kirk Hanlin unveiled this round of watershed rehabilitation funding on Thursday near Alpine, Utah, where work is planned on Tibble Fork Dam to increase water supply and flood damage protection for the surrounding communities.

This investment follows the Obama Administration's announcement last year, which called on federal agencies to increase investments in infrastructure to accelerate economic growth, create jobs and improve the competitiveness of the American economy.

There are nearly 12,000 dams across the United States. Investing in this critical infrastructure protects lives and property, builds community resilience to extreme weather, provides quality drinking water, creates jobs and reduces the need for federal disaster assistance.

-More-

In addition to nearly 50 rehabilitation projects, NRCS is conducting 100 dam assessments in 13 states through the [Watershed Rehabilitation Program](#). Last year, NRCS made changes to the watershed rehabilitation program to allow for projects that also help increase water supply. Half of this year's dam assessments, including 15 in drought-stricken California, will assess the feasibility of using watershed rehabilitation funds to mitigate drought.

“USDA continues to look for new ways to mitigate the impacts of drought across the West, and this change to the Watershed Rehabilitation Program allows us to use existing infrastructure to address water quantity issues,” Vilsack said.

Watershed projects across the nation provide an estimated \$2.2 billion in annual benefits in reduced flooding and erosion damages, and improved recreation, water supplies and wildlife habitat for an estimated 47 million Americans. For more information on NRCS conservation assistance, visit www.al.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted or a local USDA service center.

#

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).