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# News Release

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## **USDA selects Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin project for new, innovative program**

**Auburn, AL, Jan. 22, 2015** – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, Dr. William Puckett today announced that a regional high-impact irrigation project will be one of 115 nationwide projects that will receive more than \$370 million as part of the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

RCPP’s historic focus on public-private partnership enables private companies, local communities and other non-government partners a way to invest in efforts to keep our land resilient and water clean, and promote tremendous economic growth in agriculture, construction, tourism and outdoor recreation, and other industries.

This year’s projects impacting Alabama will accomplish a wide diversity of agricultural and natural resource goals from helping to protect important water supplies in targeted watersheds statewide to providing essential habitat for many at-risk species along the Gulf Coast. Alabama will be involved in three projects totaling nearly \$11 million.

“RCPP puts our partners in the driver’s seat,” said Dr. William E. Puckett, USDA’S Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationist in Alabama. “Projects are led locally, and demonstrate the value of strong public-private partnerships that deliver solutions to tough natural resource challenges. The Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin project is a phenomenal example of this partnership approach for conservation that will leave an impact on the entire Gulf ecosystem.”

The Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District will lead the \$4 million ACFR Basin project. The partnership will aim to use appropriate conservation tools to change the course of persistent drought and long-term landscape changes that have reduced the ACFR Basin’s capacity to balance human use with ecological demand.

The ACFR Basin covers 13 million acres in western Georgia, eastern Alabama and the Florida panhandle. This partnership will assist producers and landowners in implementing NRCS conservation practices. The ACFR Basin project will utilize \$4 million in NRCS funds to meet its conservation goals.

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"The Flint River Soil and Water Conservation District will lead an innovative RCPP project with USDA-NRCS and over 30 partners that will significantly enhance conservation on-the-ground in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin," District Chairman Marty McLendon said. "This landscape-scale conservation partnership is an investment for the future of all three states of Alabama, Florida, and Georgia and the critical watershed and natural resources we share. Through USDA-NRCS, producers and landowners throughout the watershed will have the opportunity to implement conservation practices that enhance natural resource management."

More than [600 pre-proposals](#) were submitted for RCPP nationwide in 2014. Of those, more than 200 were invited to submit full proposals. "With so many strong project proposals, the project selection process was extremely competitive. RCPP is a 5-year \$1.2 billion USDA commitment; projects not selected in this first year may be eligible in subsequent years," Puckett said.

For more information on RCPP, visit [www.al.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov) or [click here](#). The next announcement of program funding for fiscal year 2016 is expected to be announced later this year.

To learn about technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted) or local USDA service center.

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