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USDA selects Alabama Farmers Federation 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 an Alabama high-impact 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 in Alabama will accomplish a wide diversity of agricultural and natural resource goals from helping to protect important water supplies in targeted watersheds statewide and 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 Alabama Farmers Federation project is a phenomenal example of this partnership approach for conservation that will leave an impact on the entire state.”

The \$1.7 million Alabama Farmers Federation project will focus on irrigation needs across the state. ALFA will lead an effort to partner with NRCS and other organizations to implement a statewide strategy that will allow partners to more effectively manage the growth of irrigation in productive cropland.

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Alabama has more than 2.7 million acres of cropland but only 112,000 acres of irrigated land. NRCS has awarded \$1.7 million to help the project fund construction of on-farm reservoirs along with other irrigation techniques with an emphasis on efficiency. These reservoirs will store surface runoff water to be available to farmers when other water resources are unavailable.

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“The ability to harness and better utilize Alabama’s abundant water resources will be pivotal in the agricultural and economic development of our state,” said Alabama Farmers Federation President Jimmy Parnell. “Doing so in a sustainable manner will ensure this resource for future generations. This program will help farmers overcome financial barriers to invest in the most efficient irrigation technologies available.”

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 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 or local USDA service center.

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