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Regional Conservation Partnership Program Overview



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RCPP State Coordinator

Laura Williams



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RCPP Classic Programs - Purpose

- Address on-farm, watershed and regional natural resource concerns
- Projects address natural resource concerns via:
 - On farm NRCS conservation activities (NRCS funding)
 - On farm or associated, directly linked partner contribution activities
- Innovative solutions to Conservation Challenges
- Result in measurable improvements and outcomes tied to the resource concerns identified in the proposal



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RCPP Programs

- Two RCPP Programs – Distinct from other NRCS Programs
 - RCPP Classic
 - RCPP Grants (replacing RCPP Alternative funding arrangements)
- Projects are 5 years
- 2 Nation-Wide Funding Pools:
 - State/multi-state
 - Critical Conservation Areas
- Competitive and variable:
 - 2019- 2022 Average 49% of proposals submitted funded

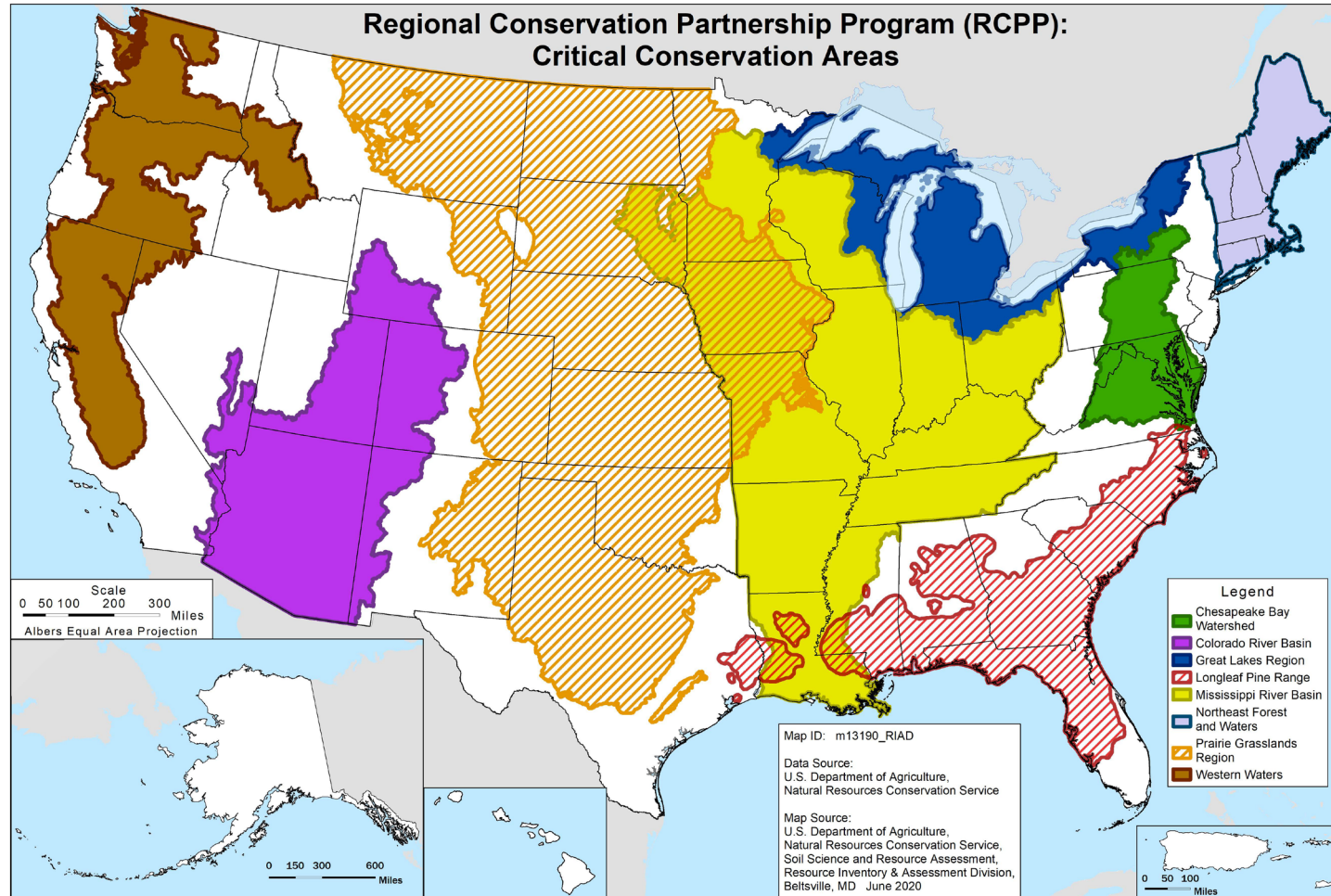


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RCCP National Critical Conservation Areas

- 8 CCA's
- Specific Resource Concerns



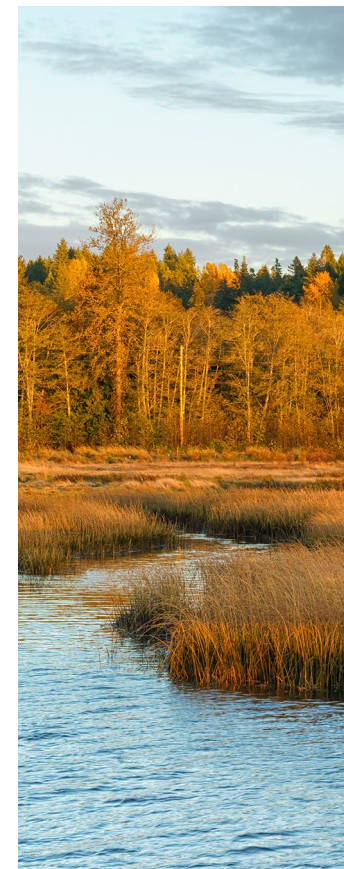
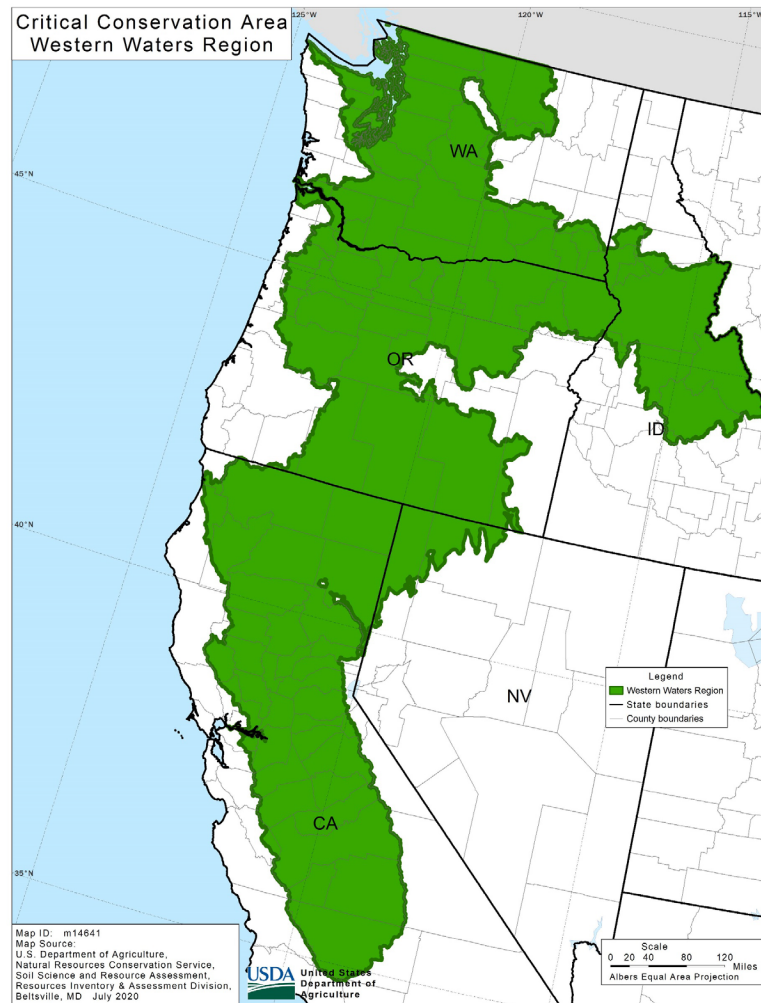
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Western Waters RCPP CCA

Required Resource Concerns:

- Excess/insufficient water/drought
- Water quality degradation
- Inadequate habitat for fish, wildlife, and invertebrates



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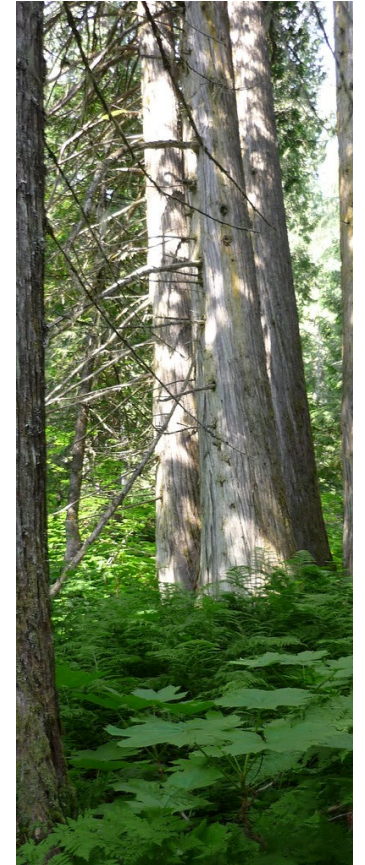
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RCPP Programs

- National Funding Opportunity (NFO) FY 23
 - \$500 Million Investment
 - Farm Bill 2018
 - Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) –will increase every year, for 4 years
- IRA specific resource criteria do not apply to RCPP
 - Proposal will be prioritized that address IRA identified resource concerns which:
 - *improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses, or reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide emissions.*



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RCPP Project Funding

- Project Funding Award Range:
 - Classic- \$250,000-\$10 Million
 - Grants - \$250,000-\$10 Million
 - Potential change \$500,000-\$20 million
- NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) – 70%
 - NRCS Financial Assistance
- NRCS Technical Assistance (TA)- 30%
 - Conservation Planning for NRCS Practices
 - Project management, Outreach, and Outcomes

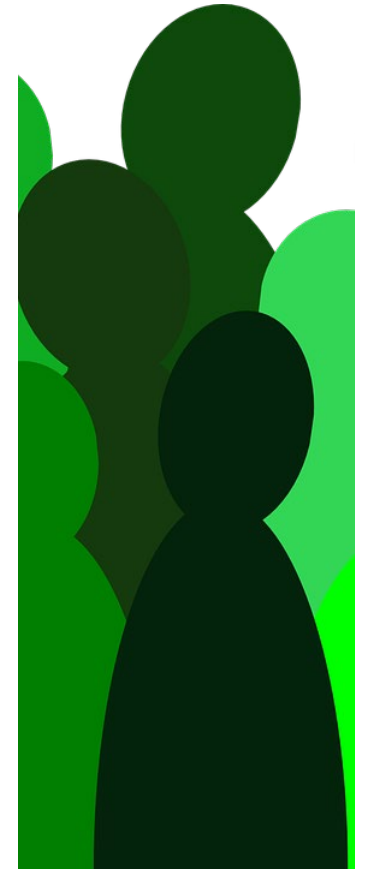


RCPP Project Funding

- Partner Contribution
 - FA and TA
 - Cash and in-kind
 - Coordinated with NRCS funding
 - Value added
 - Indirect Costs*



*Partners may not use NRCS Funding to pay for indirect costs, they may contribute as partner contribution.





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Eligibility



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Lead Partners

- A State or unit of local government
- An Indian Tribe
- A Conservation District
- A Farmer Cooperative
- A water district, irrigation district, acequia, rural water district or association, etc.
- A municipal water or wastewater treatment entity
- An institution of higher education
- An organization or entity with an established history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land



Contributing Partners

- Eligible Partners
- Third-party individuals or organizations
 - Producer contracts (developed under the RCPP) are NOT partner contributions

Lead Partners responsible for delivery of all partner contributions



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Eligible Land

- Same For All NRCS Program Funding
- Agricultural or Nonindustrial private forest land
- Associated Land (with eligible agricultural lands)
 - Single producer has ‘control’ of a patchwork of public & Private AND wishes to apply land management across all operation.
- Tribal Land
- Limited Public Lands
 - A watershed / public works structure which benefits SPECIFIC producers (farmers) during the project period.



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Eligible Producers

- Farm Bill Program Compliance & Eligibility for NRCS Programs
 - Provide Tax ID number
 - Comply with the Highly erodible land (HEL) & Wetland provisions of Farm Bill
 - Comply with Adjusted Gross Income provisions or **receive waiver**
 - Where applicable, provide % interest share of operations or ownership



[Get Started with NRCS WA](#)

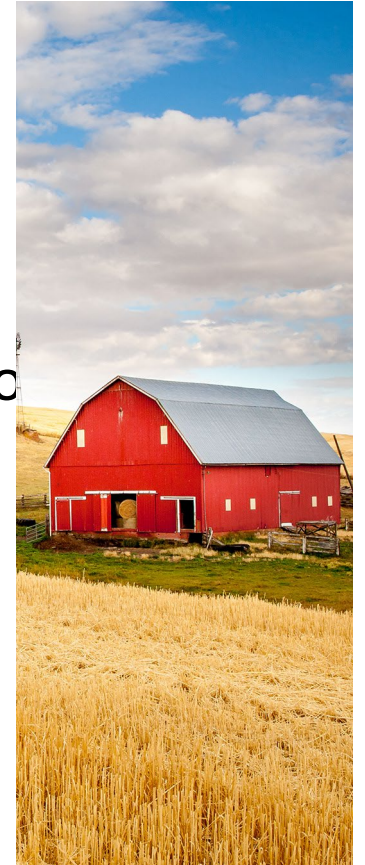
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AGI Eligibility

Adjusted Gross Income Waiver-for NRCS RCPP Programs

1. Programmatic project level. “AGI Applicability Waiver”
 - Project Lead partner can request the applicability of AGI be waived for the Project.
 - Must demonstrate required for project success.
 - Partners should include in proposal if able.
2. Individual project level. “AGI Limitation Waiver”
 - Applicability of AGI within an RCPP project.
 - Must demonstrate individual participation critical for success of project.



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Project Components & Evaluation Criteria



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The Four Pillars of RCPP

1. Impact
2. Partner Contribution
3. Innovation
4. Partnership & Management



Pillars are the Proposal Ranking Criteria



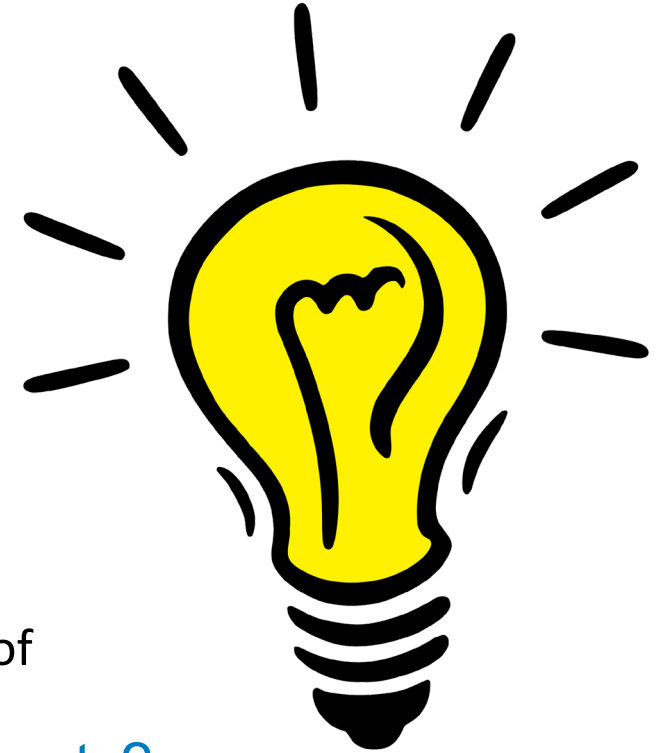
RCPP –The Four Pillars

1. Impact

- A critical environmental issue-documented
 - Resource concerns Identified

2. Innovation

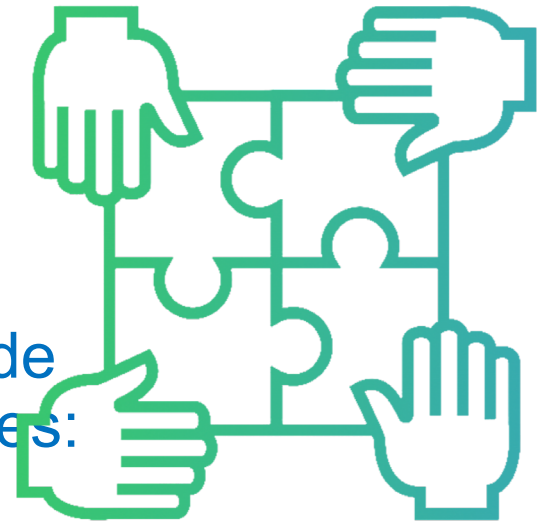
- The project propose innovative methods or approaches for conservation:
 - planning, implementation, or assessment, or propose the use of promising new technologies that have a demonstrated likelihood of success.
- Is the innovative approach best suited for RCPP Classic or Grants?
- Does the project take advantage of RCPP flexibilities



RCPP –The Four Pillars

3. Partner Contribution

- 1:1 with NRCS
- Obligated Funds
- Partner(s) contributions ‘value added’ expected to provide funding for specific significant meaningful project activities:
 - Unique and qualified expertise or resources
 - Coordinates with NRCS funding and is integral to the project goals and objectives
 - Contribution letters clearly delineate the deliverables, purpose and relationship to project
 - The value of the contribution is clearly documented



RCPP –The Four Pillars

3. Partnership & Management

- Partnership
 - Diverse partner group, manageable size
 - Experience and capacity with NRCS conservation planning
 - A history of working with NRCS and Agricultural producers
 - Clear roles of each partner – explain in narrative & include resume
 - Dedicated POC and staff
- Management
 - **A specific plan to reach historically underserved**
 - Developed and realistic project timeline
 - Experience managing similar projects
 - Self motivated – take project initiative
 - A specific outreach plan
 - Specialized experience and capacity as needed



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Project Outcomes



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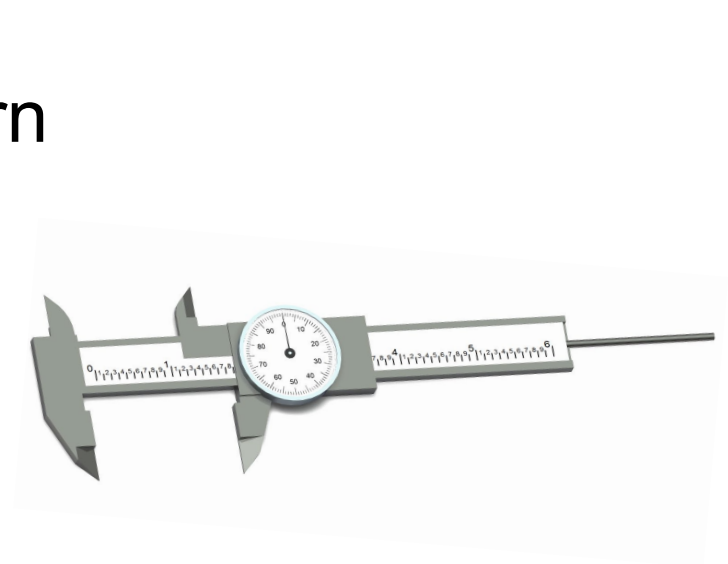
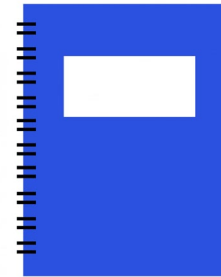
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Project Outcome

Measurable metric of the project resource concern

- An environmental metric
- Requires a baseline survey
- Requires monitoring
 - Can use modeling
- NOT # of contracts or Acres of practice (outputs)



Project Outcomes - Examples

- **Water Quality Effects**
 - Sediment, temperature, & nutrient monitoring
- **Aquatic & Terrestrial Wildlife**
 - Population or habitat surveys
- **Forest Inventory**
 - Canopy, ground cover, & species richness surveys





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RCPP Activity Types



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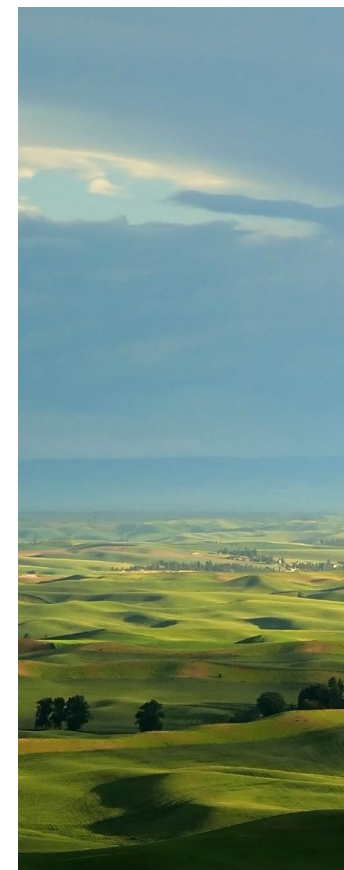
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RCPP Activity Types

CLASSIC	GRANT
Land Management – Producer Contract	Land Management
Rentals – Producer Contract	Entity Held Easements
Entity Held Easements-project purpose - Supplemental Agreement	NA
US held easements: like ACEP-WRE & HFRP	NA
Public Works/ watershed projects - Producer Contracts or Supplemental Agreement*	NA

* unique circumstance- NRCS specific definition and conditions



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RCPP Classic



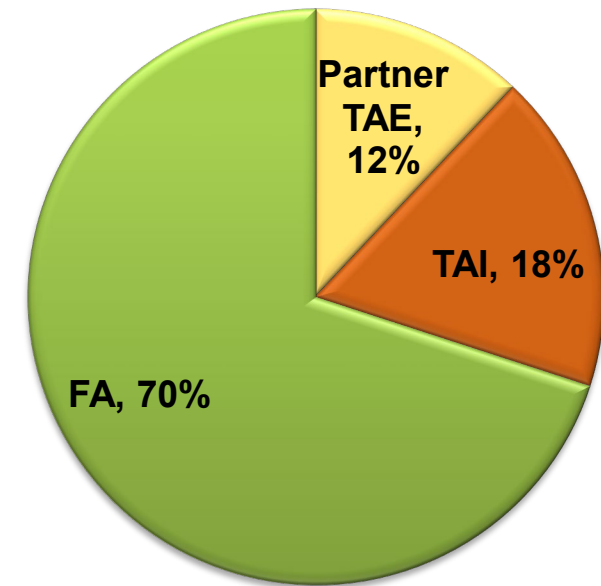
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RCPP Classic

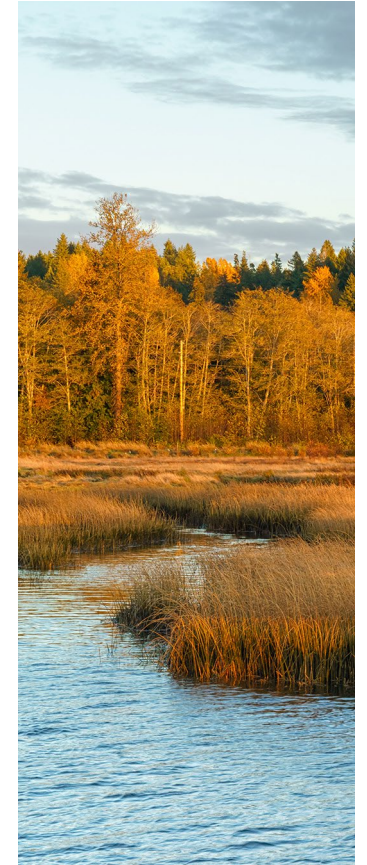
- Managed by NRCS
 - NRCS RCPP Portal for application, Agreement and Reporting
- \$250,000-\$10 Million
- 70% Financial Assistance (FA)
 - Delivered by NRCS directly to Producers
 - Producer Contracts
- 30% Technical Assistance (TA)
 - Implementation TA – (TAI) 18%
 - Enhancement TA- (TAE) 12% to Partners
- NRCS receives 5% Program TA separately





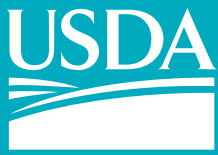
RCPP Classic

- Technical Assistance- **30% of Project Funding**
 - Implementation TA - 18%
 - Used only for NRCS Conservation planning supporting Producer contracts, implementing NRCS conservation practices
 - Partners with NRCS planning capacity may receive partial award
 - Negotiated between NRCS and partner if project funded
 - Partner proposal amounts subject to negotiation



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RCPP Classic

- Technical Assistance- 30% of Project Funding
 - Enhancement TA- 12% to Partners
 - Outcomes Plan
 - Developing a monitoring protocol, hiring consultants, data collection, analysis and reporting, paying partner staff.
 - Project Management
 - Annual Reports, managing partner project funding, partner meetings, partnership and supplemental agreement management, etc.
 - Outreach Plan
 - Hiring consultants or 3d party to execute, paying personnel to perform, supplies for outreach materials, contract printing, website, mailings, etc



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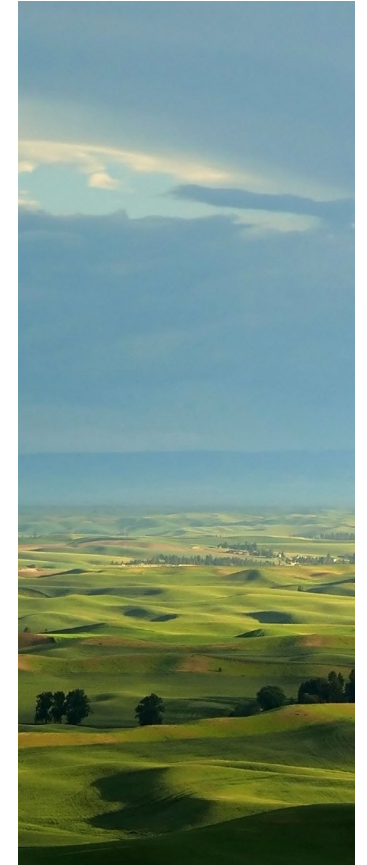


RCPP Classic

FA Activity Types :

1. Land Management – Producer Contract
2. Rentals – Producer Contract
3. Easements-project purpose -Supplemental Agreement
4. Entity held Easements: Supplemental Agreement (like ACEP-ALE).
5. US held easements: Like ACEP-WRE & HFRP
6. Public Works/ watershed projects -Producer Contracts or Supplemental Agreement*

* Unusual and narrow NRCS definition



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RCPP Classic Partnership Agreement

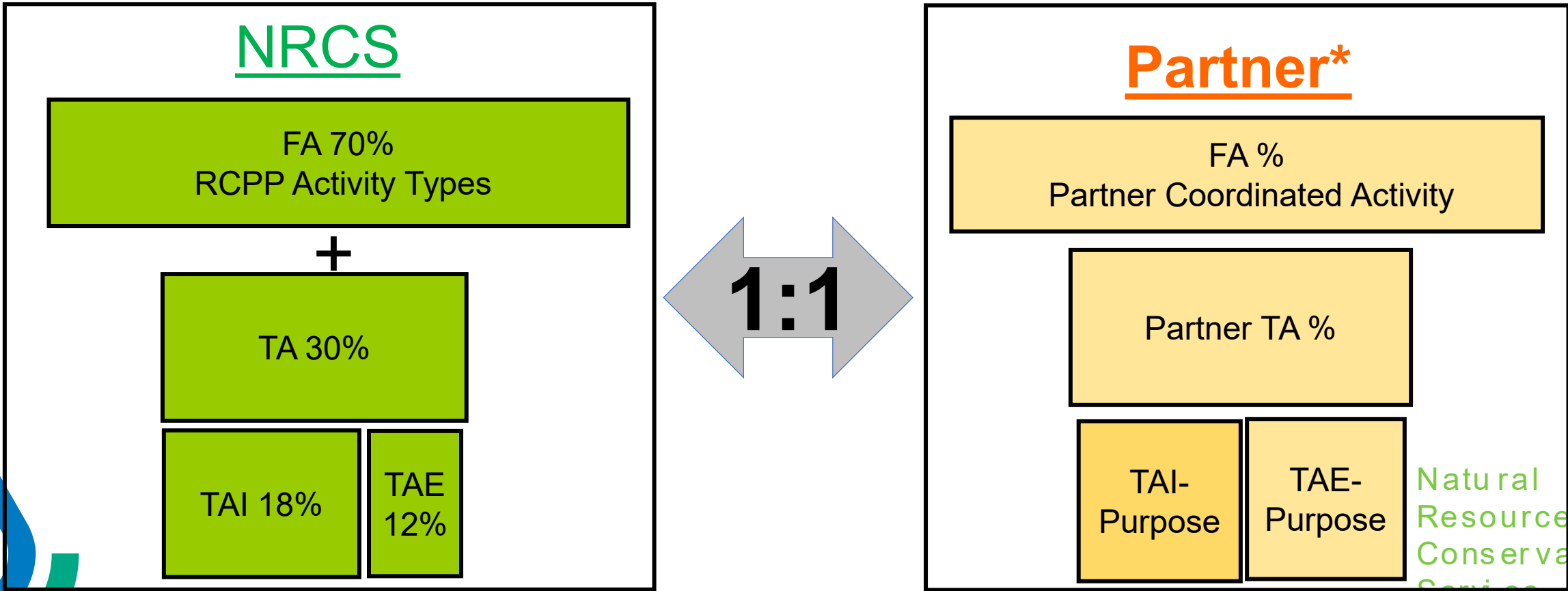


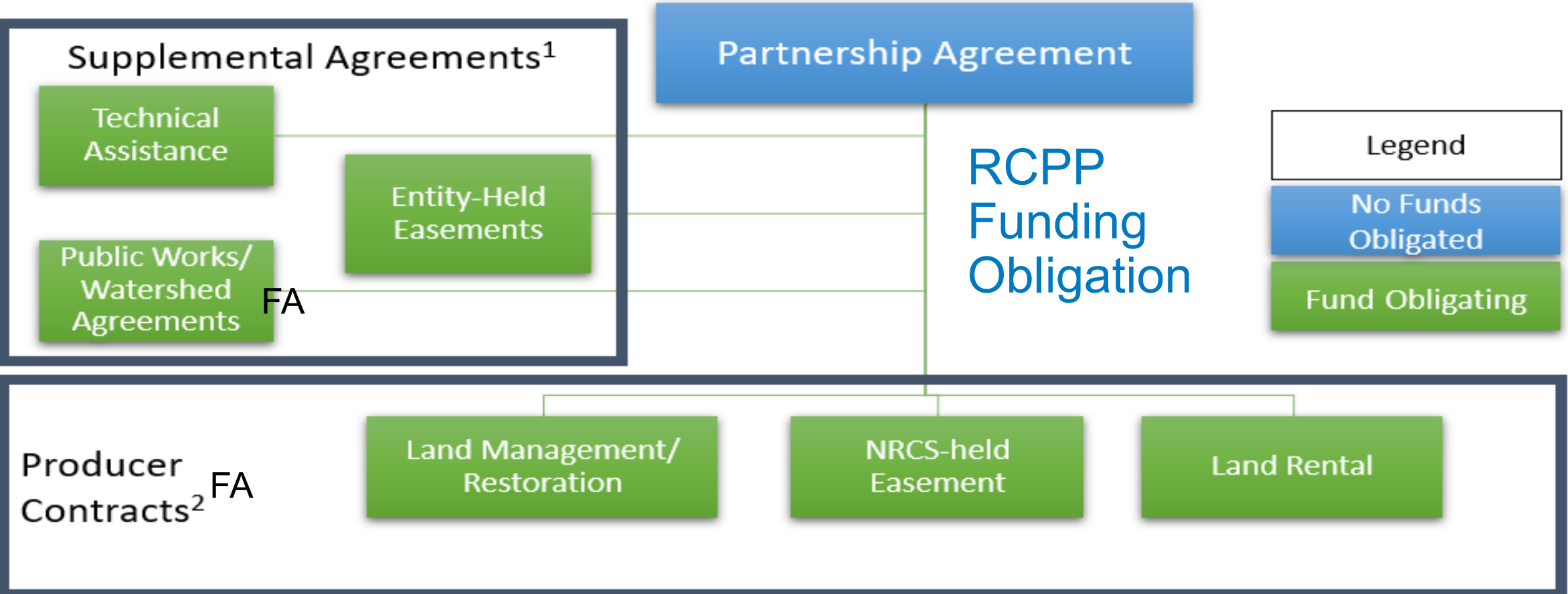
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RCPP Project Partnership Agreement Funding





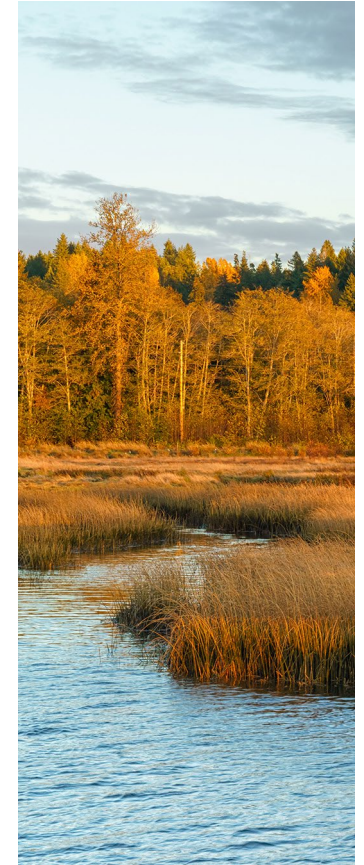
1 – Agreements with partners for public works/watershed activities, technical Assistance, and entity-held easement agreements.

2 – Contracts with a producer may contain one or more of the components listed in this section.

RCPP Funding - TA

30% Technical Assistance (TA)

- Implementation TA (TA-I) – 23%
 - Conduct **NRCS Conservation Planning** to implement FA Producer Contracts- 18%
 - Negotiated between Partner and NRCS
 - In most projects NRCS will require
 - NRCS Inherently Governmental Activities- 5%
- Enhancement TA (TA-E) – 7%
 - Project management
 - **Outcomes monitoring / data analysis**
 - Outreach



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RCPP Grants



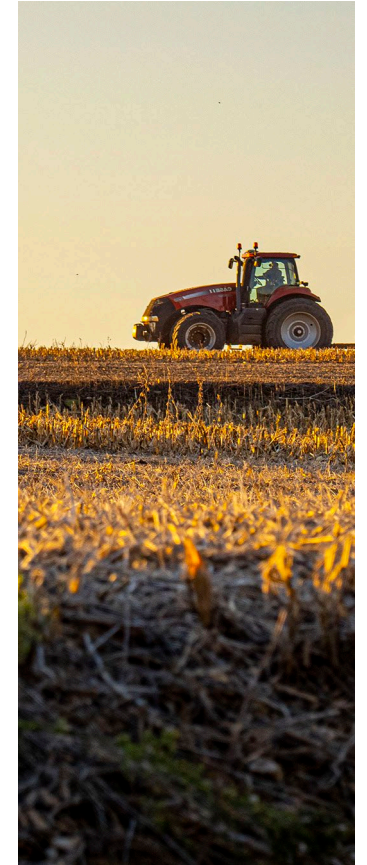
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RCPP Grants

- Managed by NRCS & Grants and Agreements
 - EZ fed Grants
- \$250,000-\$10 Million
 - **Proposed** \$500,000-\$20 Million
- 70% Financial Assistance
- 30% Technical Assistance (TA)
 - **Proposed**- No specific TA categories



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RCPP Grants

- FA Activity Types -**Proposed**
 - Land Management-Producer Contracts
 - Entity Held Easements
- Partners Conduct All Conservation Planning
 - Require Conservation Planning credentials
- Partners May Contract NRCS Practices
 - Must be have and maintain NRCS Job Approval Authority (JAA)
 - Necessary to Certify NRCS Practices as meeting standards and specifications
 - Must have a system for contracting or use NRCS Conservation Desktop (NRCS planning software)



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RCPP Grants

- Partners May use FA for other types of Conservation Activities
 - Must complete National Environmental Planning Act (NEPA) compliance:
 - EA or EIS

- If using NRCS established conservation practices NEPA is completed



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RCPP Grants

- NRCS conducts
 - NEPA thru a checklist form the CPA 52
 - NRCS EIS Record of Decision for Practices
 - NHPA and ESA
 - Program management-coordinating with partners/ RCPP Policy and Grants and Agreements policy

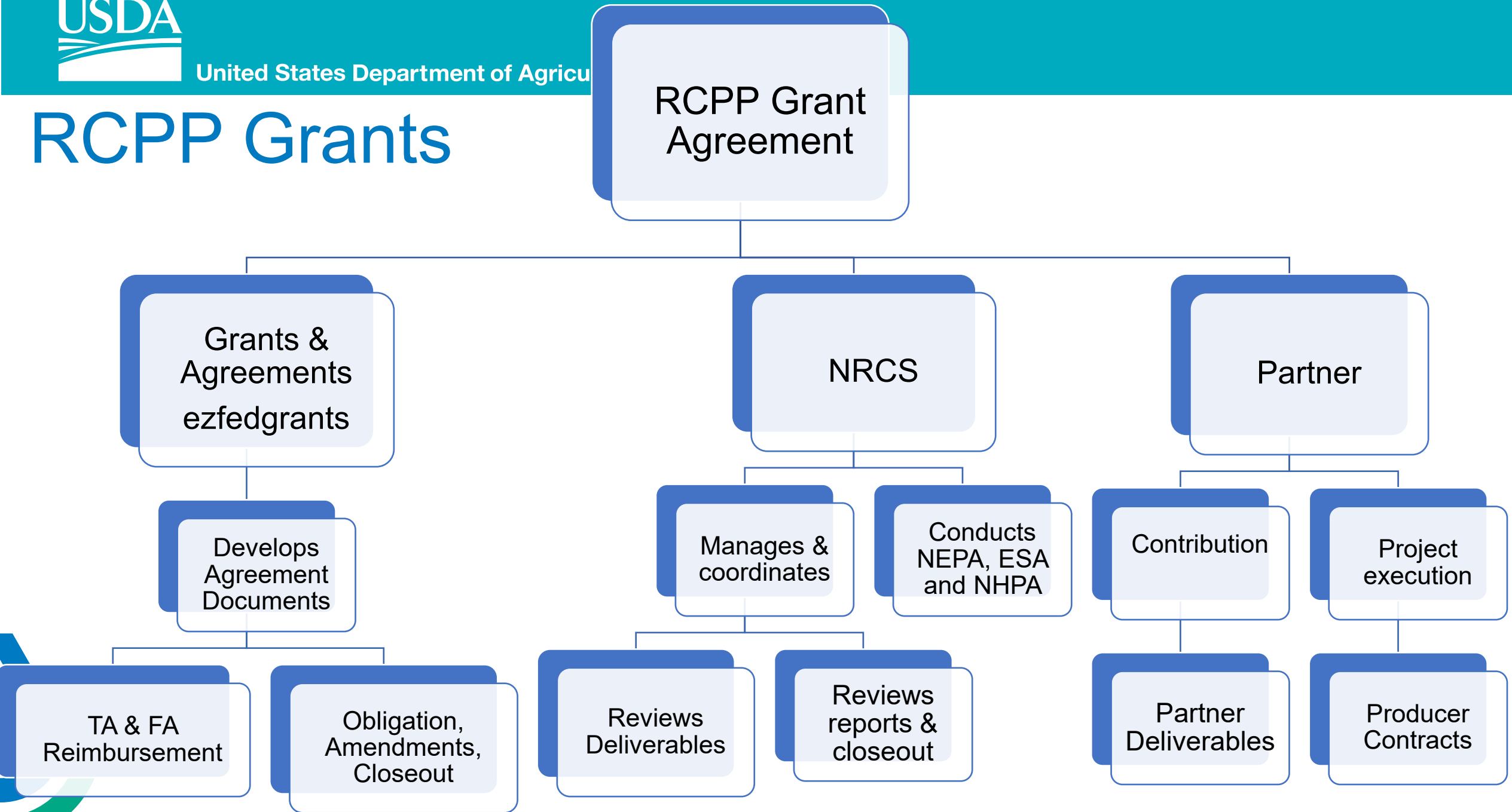


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RCPP Grants





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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality 2014 Farm Bill

Whatcom Conservation District



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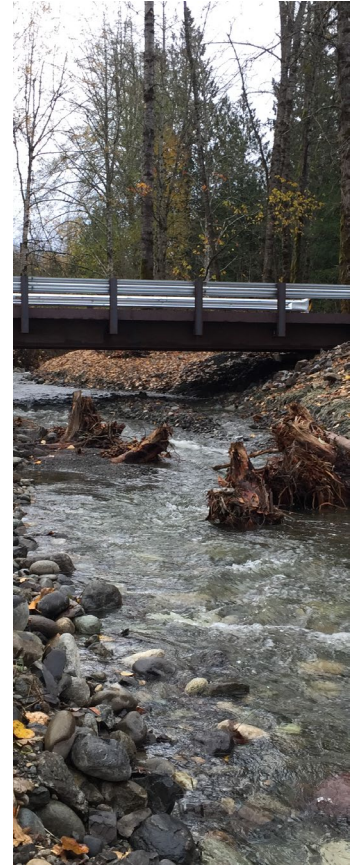
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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Conservation Challenge

- ESA listed Chinook and Steelhead essential habitat intersected by human created barriers,
- Agriculture in Whatcom County has led to degraded water quality through high temperatures and particulate load,
- Support the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda and the WRIA I Salmon Recovery Plan



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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Goals and Objectives

1. Improve water quality in fish bearing streams.

- Objective: Plant and maintain riparian buffers to shade the streams, provide cover and forage for fish species, and intercept contaminants before they reach the stream.

2. Improve fish access to quality upstream freshwater habitat

- Objective: Remove barriers to fish passage (primarily culverts) and replace with fish passable structures.



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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

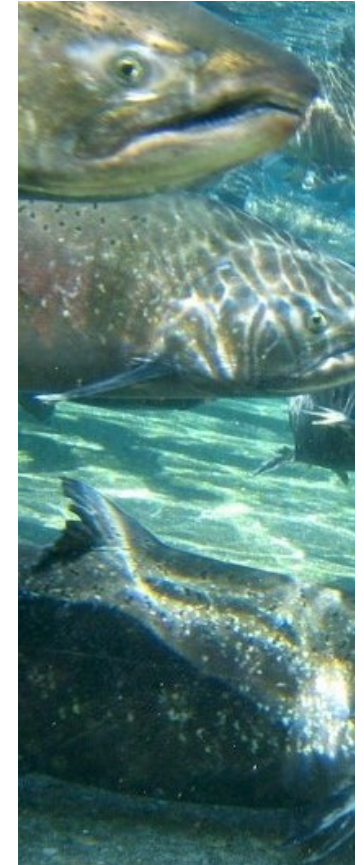
Goals and Objectives

3. Improve complexity of freshwater fish habitat.

- Objective: Place large wood pieces into the stream to provide cover, pools, sediment sorting and other natural functions. Primary resource concerns addressed

NRCS Resource Concerns

- Inadequate Habitat for Fish and Wildlife
- Water Quality Degradation



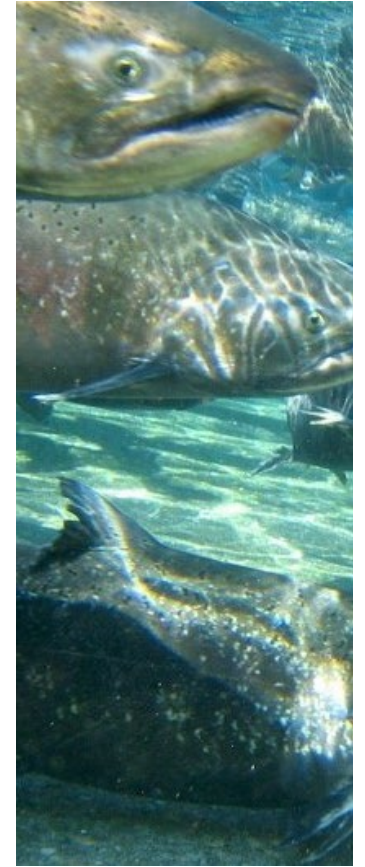
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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Execution:

- Partner and NRCS Planners executed producer contracts for specific NRCS practices for barrier removal, in stream habitat work, and some planting components.
- Partners funded staff to provide ‘contracting services’ to the producer/customer-
 - handled contracting the company(s) for barrier removal, bridge building and any instream earth moving
 - Coordinated/Project managed the work on each producer property
 - Handled obtaining all permits
 - Paid companies up front for producers



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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Execution:

- Partners provided habitat expertise for habitat restoration, wood and log jam placement
- Executed the majority of the riparian plantings
 - Coordinated obtaining and funded the native trees and shrubs
 - Coordinated actual planting



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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

NRCS Funding

FA \$1,416,000 for producer contract

- Construction of Bridges
- Log jams and wood
- Some Riparian Planting

Partner TA \$ 250000

- Partner Conservation Planning
- Partner Engineering



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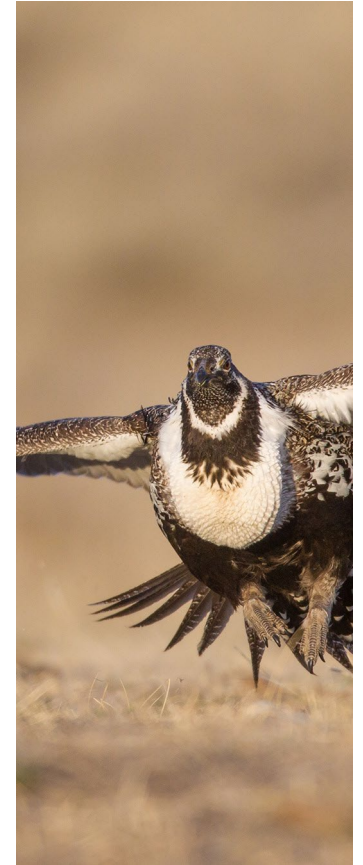
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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Partner Contribution

\$1,385,000

- Engineering
- Fish Habitat Technical Assistance
- Riparian Plantings, Material and Labor
- 'Contracting Services' for Producer
- Fish Surveys



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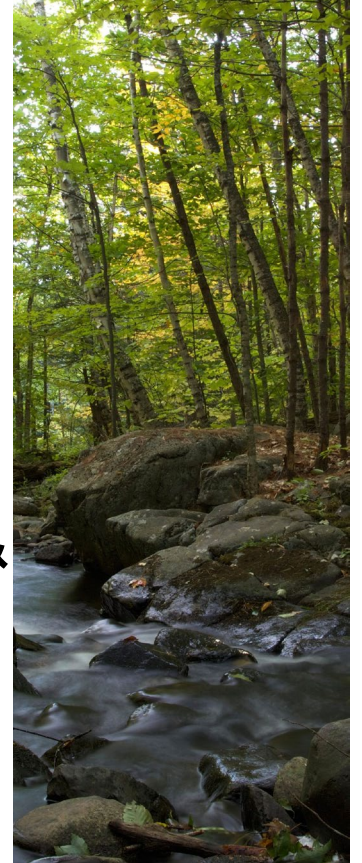
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WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Results:

Objective 1: Plant and maintain riparian buffers to shade the streams, provide cover and forage for fish species, and intercept contaminants before they reach the stream.

- 42 Miles of stream bank planted with 213,823 native trees & shrubs.



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Results:

Objective 2: Objective: Remove barriers to fish passage (primarily culverts) and replace with fish passable structures.

- 33.4 miles of upstream historically used fish habitat reopened by removing 18 fish passage barriers



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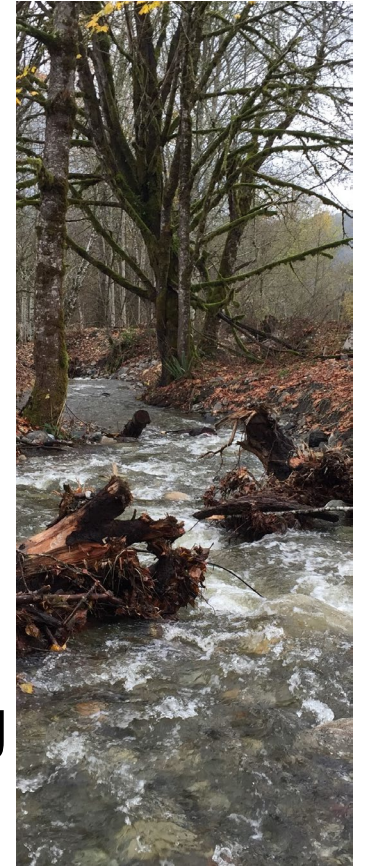


WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Results:

Objective 3 : Objective: Place large wood pieces into the stream to provide cover, pools, sediment sorting and other natural functions. Primary resource concerns addressed

- Completed 1 engineered log jam and installed 51 pieces of large wood in stream channels
- 1,850 linear feet of stream channel was re-meandered during the course of habitat restoration.

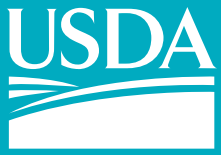


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Freysinger fish passage and habitat





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Freysinger fish passage and habitat



After Habitat Restoration

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Landing Strip Creek



Before



After



Schuler Creek

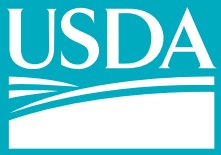


Before



During Construction





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Schuler Creek After log Jams



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Polinder Creek



Before

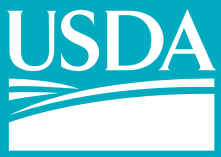


After Planting

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Polinder Creek

1-year post planting



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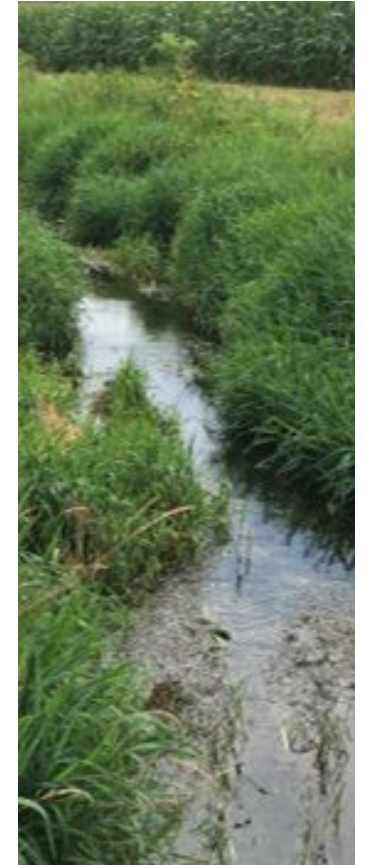


WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery & Water Quality

Outcomes

- Measure success of goals or objectives
- Not required in 2014 Farm Bill Project
- Current project, which is a renewal is conducting surveys on fish use and reproduction

- **Other outcomes that could be performed:**
 - Water quality monitoring
 - Habitat restoration photo plots or direct survey plots
 - Habitat restoration mortality rates



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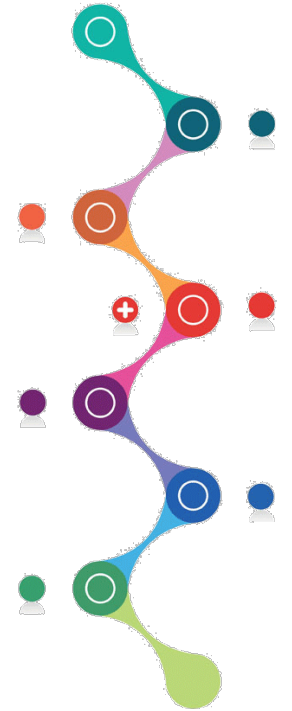


RCPP Program Timeline

1. Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO):
 - Spring 2023 for Classic and Grants
 - 90 day Proposal Period

2. Proposal State & National review: 3 months

3. Classic Agreement or Grant Agreement Development
 - 3 Months
 - Partner Presentation to NRCS





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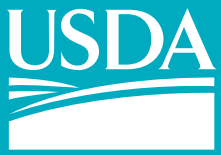
Resources



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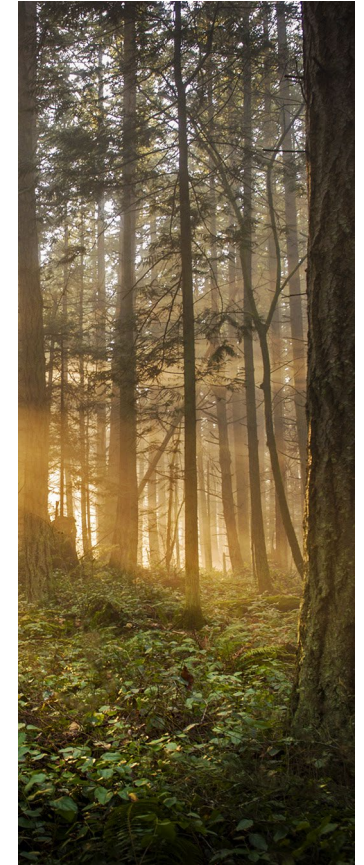
Skagit Conservation District
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RESOURCES

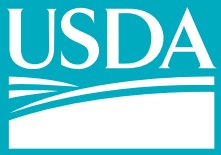
- [Washington RCPP Webpage](#)
 - General information
 - RCPP Informational Webinar Series
- [National RCPP Webpage](#)
- [RCPP In Action](#)
 - Success Stories from across the Nation
- [RCPP How To Apply Webpage](#)
 - Resources for Submitting a Proposal



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