



# WASHINGTON

# Partner Activity Report

Nov. 2023

## We got this!

By **Roylene Comes At Night**  
NRCS-WA State Conservationist

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** – What an incredible year for NRCS and our conservation partners! We were able to provide more than \$66 million in assistance to landowners and producers across the state!

While it was not easy, doing great work often isn't, and I could not be prouder of my team, and all the partners who helped us achieve this. I want to thank all of you for a job very, very well done.

Now, all eyes are on the future! I was a bit shocked a few weeks ago. Initially, all indications predicted that the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) would add on a bit more than \$9 million in funding in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24). Then, I received the notification that we received

an additional \$28 million this year above our normal Farm Bill allocation! That's not all, either. Five projects in Washington will receive \$74.3 million through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and six Equity in Outreach Cooperative Agreements were awarded across the state totaling \$2.3 million! This is all an amazing amount, and it is a bit scary to be honest, but I know we can do this.

How? I've laid out three primary goals for my staff: Communications & Outreach, Staffing, and Training. My staff is busy refining and implementing statewide strategies to address each of these areas. The goal? Getting producers through the door while having lots and lots of fully trained staff ready, willing, and excited to help them improve their stewardship.

Also, we're always looking for new and creative ways to utilize our partnerships, and to empower them to help us get this money on the ground. So far, we've signed 15 new agreements for \$17 million and three new contracts totaling \$1.9 million. Each and every one of these is a partner or company stepping up to the plate to help us hit this funding out of the park! If you have any ideas, please share them! Now is the time to think creatively and act boldly!

The Chief of NRCS, Terry Cosby, has directed all of us to see every IRA-penny on the ground, every year. While it will definitely stretch us to the limits, throughout history NRCS has always achieved its goals, and this time will be no different.

**We got this!**



**Washington**  
**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

[www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov)





# East Area

By **Aubrey Hoxie**

*East Area Conservationist*

It's hard to believe the snow is already starting to fly and accumulate in some areas. I'm just not quite ready for it. And just like the changing of our seasons, another fiscal year has ended, and a new one is already underway. I'm looking forward to the changes that are headed to us in fiscal year 2024. NRCS hasn't quite seen anything like this, in my relatively short 15 years with the agency. We're in an unprecedented time that includes historic dollar amounts to put conservation on the ground! Reflecting on FY2023, here is a snapshot of the East Area, **which includes \$28 million in Financial Assistance!**

## EQIP-IRA

We obligated 44 contracts for \$2,646,643, and contracted on over 26,249 acres.

Included within these EQIP numbers:

- 63% of the contracts were Historically Underserved Participants

## EQIP-Farm Bill

We obligated 102 contracts for \$8,960,504, and contracted on over 85,087 acres.

Included within these EQIP numbers:

- 38% of the contracts were Historically Underserved Participants

## CSP-IRA

We obligated 34 contracts for \$4,564,331 and contracted on over 86,467 acres.

Included within these CSP numbers:

- 29% of contracts went to Historically Underserved Participants

## CSP-Farm Bill

We obligated 74 contracts for \$12,124,101 and contracted on over 190,824 acres.

Included within these CSP numbers:

- 21% of contracts were Historically Underserved Participants

## RCPP

With the Palouse WRIA 34 Watershed project:

- Seven Contracts totaling \$1.3 million contracted on over 5,000 acres.

## CTA

We reported over 231,756 acres, with the help of partners and the conservation accomplishments that were completed.

## Staffing

We're looking forward to adding to the East Area this next year with the following positions:

- Area Resource Conservationist will be starting in December; selection has been made
- West Palouse DC will be starting in December; selection has been made
- Area Agronomist-TBD
- Area Range Specialist-TBD
- Cultural Resource Specialist-TBD
- Range Specialist in Colville FO
- Natural Resource Specialists across the area (several new ones have already started)
- Soil Conservationists in several offices
- Partner planner positions-TBD

## Partnership Activities

This last month I got the opportunity to attend 3 of our conservation district area meetings. It was fun getting to hear all the great conservation that is going on across the East and Central area. It always amazes me the size, scale, and complexity of projects that our partners continue to work, and the great conservation that's being completed.

**Thank you for all the work you do!**





## West Area

By David Rose  
West Area Conservationist

### Staff Actions

- We are working to fill the following vacancies: Area Forester in Olympia; Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Planner position in the Area Office located in Olympia; Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) position in Chehalis.
- We have made selections for the following positions: RC positions in Port Angeles and Olympia; NRS in Bremerton. All names will be shared once they've arrived.
- New employees in the area include Chris Clark as CNMP Engineer position in Olympia, Erin Gutierrez as RC in Puyallup, Kari Gordon as RC in Longview, John Larsen as RC in Renton, and Dillon Sprague as Civil Engineer in Lake Stevens.

### Program Update

The final FY23 Financial Assistance Programs tally for the West Area shows the following: EQIP - 147 contracts for over \$5.3 million, CSP - 20 contracts for over \$484 thousand, RCPP - 9 contracts for over \$289 thousand, **which is more than \$6 million in Financial Assistance!**

It's way too early to have any judgments about FY24, however we do currently have 353 applications for EQIP and 38 for CSP.

### Project: Pheasants Forever

"I haven't ever really seen a pheasant around here!" is the first thing that a biologist working for Pheasants Forever in Western Washington hears at most introductions. Fortunately, this non-profit goes so much beyond upland game birds, and has really extended itself into fish and wildlife habitat conservation in general. From forestry projects in the mountains, to South Puget Sound prairie farmers and to cranberry bogs out on the coast, Pheasants Forever partner biologist Wyatt Wood has helped improve many of the diverse habitat types that you can find in the Evergreen State west of the Cascades. He works out of the NRCS office in Olympia but has worked in almost every county in the West Area, from Whatcom in the North to Clark County in the south.

Wyatt works primarily to administer and support Farm Bill programs for the USDA NRCS, his work has also partnered with so many other wonderful players in conservation work here in Washington. He has worked with many different conservation districts, even acting as a guest lecturer to talk about some of the incredible habitats and species present in the state with the public. The US Fish and Wildlife Service often partners with NRCS to implement conservation practices on the ground and have welcomed Pheasants Forever involvement in many of their projects. Wyatt regularly works with Service staff during site visits and meetings about the endangered fish and wildlife species that call Western Washington home. He has also been fortunate enough to work with some of the Native American Tribes, including consulting on a large-scale project with the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe ranging from forestry concerns to small-scale agriculture and oyster aquaculture.

One of the best things about working in conservation is how many different players are involved in its implementation. So many passionate people from so many diverse backgrounds dedicate their careers and lives to helping the environment and our natural resources, and having more people involved in conservation is never a bad thing! Wyatt has been a great addition to the Western Washington conservation community, and he looks forward to what future opportunities and projects he might be involved in.





# Central Area

By Austin Shero

East Area Conservationist

## Washington NRCS is HIRING!!

Washington is overseeing the largest hiring effort we've had since 1986! How exciting! Recently, hiring managers across the state have reviewed applicant pools for Soil Conservationists, Range Management Specialists, and Natural Resources Specialists. We are seeing fantastic applicants, and have been able to extend offers to quite a few applicants!

To date, we have offered and received verbal commitments from:

17 Natural Resources Specialists in 11 locations across the state

2 Range Management Specialists in 2 different locations

3 Soil Conservationists in 3 locations across the state

We are excited to invest in these positions. This will allow us to better serve our fantastic producers and put more high quality conservation on the ground!

Look forward for more hiring in the coming months with similar positions and more! We're also excited to be working with critical groups to bring partner employees onboard to accomplish our conservation mission. These agreements are still being finalized, but should be ready to implement in early Fiscal Year 2024.

# Ecological Sciences

## NRCS Small Acreage and Urban Agriculture

By Rebecca Anderson Bellanca

Small Farms & Urban Ag Specialist

Washington NRCS Small Acreage and Urban Agriculture has always been a key component of our state's approach to conservation agriculture. When the National Office announced Urban Agriculture as a national priority, major shifts to better help our smaller acreage participants germinated quickly.

Newer practices available to smaller acreage clients include Low Tunnels (821), Raised Beds (812), Soil Carbon Amendment (336), Annual Forages for Grazing Systems (810), Soil Liming (805), and Organic Management Systems (823). An important new practice scenario for smaller scale grazing operations is the new Fence (382) scenario that allows participants to utilize temporary electric fence to better adapt their grazing operation to

facilitate greater stocking densities in smaller paddocks.

Almost all practices available to participants now have a small-scale payment scenario, reimbursing the participant on the per square foot, per thousand square feet, per linear foot, or for each instance of a practice installed.

Training for Field Office Planners has been increasing across the state. More and more, the new planners coming into our offices are keenly interested in small scale agriculture and are seeking training in how to best serve our smaller acreage participants. On the job training requests have come in from across the state, offering training for the planners while assisting landowners. State trainings on Basic Organic Systems and Small Farm Crop Systems are being created to provide formal training to planners, new and experienced, as well.

As urban and small-scale agriculture continues to proliferate across the state, NRCS Washington will keep an ear to the ground, truly hearing what producers and planners need to best get conservation on the ground, and seek to facilitate tools and training to best help them accomplish their goals.





# Programs

## Five projects in Washington to receive \$74.3 million through RCPP

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** (Nov. 3, 2023) – Five projects in Washington will receive \$74.3 million in funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP).

RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Historic funding is made possible by both the Inflation Reduction Act and the Farm Bill. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced improvements to RCPP as well as an unprecedented \$1 billion investment to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 projects across the nation.

“NRCS is honored to partner with these wonderful organizations to enhance stewardship across the state,” said Roylene Comes At Night, the state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington (NRCS-WA). “Through strong partners in Washington, at the same time as this incredible level of investment through the Inflation Reduction Act, together, I’m proud to say we’re taking full advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance our natural resources across the state.”

Five projects were funded in Washington:

### Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program EL 84.7 Landowner Extension Mainline

**Lead Partner:** Grant County Conservation District

**Total Funding Request:** \$19,666,600.00

This project will complete one of the nine lateral systems in the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program located in Central Washington. The finished EL 84.7 lateral will replace groundwater irrigation with Columbia River surface water for a total of 7,138 acres currently relying on rapidly declining groundwater wells, thereby helping to prevent source water depletion. Drilling deeper wells or converting to dryland crops are economic risks and won’t sequester as much

carbon as irrigated production can through biomass accumulation. By reducing the extraction from deep groundwater wells, the aquifer can recharge naturally over time, maintaining its long-term viability. This benefits the local communities who rely on it for their drinking water supply by ensuring a stable and reliable water supply for future generations.

### Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program EL 80.6 Landowner Extension Mainline

**Lead Partner:** Grant County Conservation District

**Total Funding Request:** \$13,100,000.00

This project is part of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program located in the heart of the Columbia River Basin in Central Washington, with the goal to replace groundwater irrigation with Columbia River surface water for 5,222 acres of high-value irrigated farmland currently relying on the rapidly declining Odessa Subarea Aquifer, thereby helping to prevent source water depletion. Once constructed, this project would deliver Columbia Basin Project water from the East Columbia Basin Irrigation District’s canal to a total of 10 farms effectively removing 11 wells from pumping groundwater and conserving 15,888 acre-feet (5.1 billion gals) of water in the aquifer each year.

### Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program EL 86.4 On-Farm Project

**Lead Partner:** Grant County Conservation District

**Total Funding Request:** \$7,200,000.00

This project is part of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP) located in the heart of the Columbia River Basin in Central Washington. The goal of the Grant County Conservation District’s project is to replace groundwater irrigation with Columbia River surface water for 5,426 acres of high-value irrigated farmland currently relying on the rapidly declining Odessa Subarea Aquifer, thereby helping to ... (cont.)



# Programs *(continued)*



prevent source water depletion. Without more reliable surface water, farmers will continue to be impacted by declining groundwater levels. The goal is to conserve as much of the remaining aquifer as possible for the 25 communities that rely on it for their drinking water supply. This project will build upon funding through the Washington State Legislature to build the EL 86.4 mainline, utilizing RCPP to complete on-farm infrastructure.

## Upper Yakima River Water Supply and Fish Habitat Improvements

**Lead Partner:** Kittitas County Conservation District

**Total Funding Request:** \$17,804,878.00

The Upper Yakima River Water Supply and Fish Habitat Improvements project will address critical needs for integrated conservation and restoration of watersheds in the Upper Yakima River of Central Washington. This supports the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, a 30-year water resiliency plan to protect and enhance fish and natural resources, improve water availability and reliability, establish more efficient water markets, manage the variability of water supplies, and prepare for the uncertainties of climate change through operational and structural changes throughout the watershed. The Kittitas County Conservation

District will assist producers with on-farm and delivery irrigation practices and habitat practices to improve water use efficiency, water quality and fish habitat availability. This project will replace 6 irrigation diversion structures with fish friendly structures opening up 2 miles of habitat, install 3 acres of riparian habitat; realize over 1,000 acre/feet of annual water savings.

## Absolute Enteric Methane Reductions in Washington State Dairies: A New Frontier on the Journey to Net Zero

**Lead Partner:** AGSPIRE INC.

**Total Funding Request:** \$16,500,000.00

Agspire Inc's Absolute Enteric Methane Reductions in Washington State Dairies project will help producers reduce and avoid greenhouse gas emissions. This project will generate a reduction of approximately 225,000 MTCO<sub>2</sub>e from enteric methane production in the NDA milkshed - lowering the GHG impact in the region, while providing producers in the milkshed with approximately \$23 million in additional revenue from their use of 3-NOP. This reduction is equivalent to the carbon implications of taking 50,069 cars off the road, and it will come at no cost to production for the NDA milkshed, which produces over 9 million lbs. of milk annually and supplies over 1,900 jobs.



# Management & Strategy

## NRCS Washington Hiring Actions

By Chas Scripser

ASTC for Management & Strategy

During Fiscal Year 23 NRCS-WA filled 41 positions, some of which were backfills. So far in FY24 we have filled 8 positions, plus there are 9 more positions where selections have been made and staff will enter on duty over the next weeks and months.

Currently there are 80 positions in process to be filled. Those 80 positions include new NRCS staff identified as needed to implement Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) activities as well as backfill positions. In addition, 50 IRA Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions are planned to be filled using agreements or contracts with partners. There are also other positions targeted to be added but not yet in the process of being filled.

With these additional staff hires comes the need for additional office space. We are working to find additional space in current locations, by potentially acquiring un-needed space from partner agencies, and we will look for new office space opportunities as current leases expire.

## Positions Filled in FY23

Position	Location
Civil Engineering Technician (CET)	Chehalis
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Chehalis
Soil Conservationist	Clarkston
Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Soil Conservationist	Davenport
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Davenport
Administrative Assistant	Ephrata
Cultural Resources Specialist	Ephrata
District Conservationist	Ephrata
Soil Conservationist (1890 Scholar)	Lake Stevens
Resource Conservationist	Montesano
Administrative Assistant	Olympia
Area Program Specialist	Olympia
Urban Team Soil Conservationist	Olympia

Area Civil Engineering Technician (CET)	Olympia AO
Cultural Resources Specialist	Olympia AO
Civil Engineer	Pasco
Soil Conservationist	Pasco
Soil Conservationist	Port Angeles
Biological Science Technician	Pullman PMC
District Conservationist	Puyallup
Program Support Assistant	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Puyallup
Soil Conservationist	Renton
Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
Administrative Assistant	Spokane SO
Administrative Program Specialist (HR Specialist)	Spokane SO
Cultural Resources Specialist Archeologist - State	Spokane SO
Engineer (Design Engineer)	Spokane SO
Forester (State Forester)	Spokane SO
Program Specialist (Easements)	Spokane SO
Public Affairs Specialist (now vacant)	Spokane SO
Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley
Soil Conservationist	Spokane Valley
Soil Conservationist	Vancouver
Resource Conservationist	Waterville
Resource Conservationist	Wenatchee
Resource Conservationist	Wenatchee
Area Easement Position	Yakima

## Positions Filled in FY24 (Current as of Nov. 3)

Position	Location
IRA Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Natural Resource Specialist	Colfax
Rangeland Management Specialist	Colville
Natural Resource Specialist	Davenport
Natural Resource Specialist	Davenport
Resource Conservationist	Longview
Resource Conservationist	Puyallup
Resource Conservationist	Renton



# Management & Strategy *(continued)*

## Hiring Actions in Process

Position	Location
Natural Resource Specialist	Bremerton
Soil Conservation Technician	Colfax
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Colfax
CET / ENG	Colville
Forester	Colville
Natural Resource Specialist	Colville
Natural Resource Specialist	Colville
Program Support Assistant	Colville
Natural Resource Specialist	Davenport
Program Support Assistant	Davenport
Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Davenport
Area Agronomist	Ephrata
Area CET	Ephrata
IRA Soil Conservationist	Ephrata
Natural Resource Specialist	Ephrata
Natural Resource Specialist	Ephrata
Natural Resource Specialist	Ephrata
Program Support Assistant	Ephrata
Resource Conservationist	Ephrata
CET / ENG	Ephrata
RCPP Coordinator	Ephrata, Ellensburg, Wenatchee, Yakima
Engineer	Ephrata or Yakima
IRA Soil Conservation Technician	Everson
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Lake Stevens
Soil Conservation Technician	Montesano
Natural Resource Specialist	Mt. Vernon
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Okanogan
Area Forester	Olympia
IRA Program Admin	Olympia
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Olympia
CNMP Ag ENG	Olympia WAO
CNMP Specialist	Olympia WAO
IRA Soil Conservation Technician	Pasco
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Pasco
Forester	Pomeroy
IRA Soil Conservationist	Pomeroy
Resource Conservationist	Port Angeles
IRA Soil Conservationist	Prosser
Natural Resource Specialist	Prosser

Biological Science Tech	Pullman
Biological Science Tech	Pullman
Biological Science Tech	Pullman
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Pullman
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Puyallup
Natural Resource Specialist	Republic
Soil Conservation Technician	Republic
Natural Resource Specialist	Ritzville
Natural Resource Specialist	Ritzville
Rangeland Mgmt Specialist	Ritzville
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Ritzville
Area CET	Spokane EAO
Area Range Specialist	Spokane EAO
Area Resource Conservationist	Spokane EAO
CNMP Specialist	Spokane EAO
Cultural Resources Specialist	Spokane EAO
Engineer (Pathways)	Spokane SO
Geologist	Spokane SO
Geologist (Pathways)	Spokane SO
IRA Area Programs Admin	Spokane SO
IRA Program Admin	Spokane SO
IRA Public Affairs Specialist	Spokane SO
Management Analyst (Grants and Agreements Specialist)	Spokane SO
Public Affairs Specialist	Spokane SO
Realty Specialist	Spokane SO
District Conservationist - Yakama Tribal Team	Toppenish
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Vancouver
IRA Soil Conservation Technician	Walla Walla
IRA Agronomist	Waterville
Natural Resource Specialist	Waterville
Soil Conservation Technician	Waterville
IRA Program Admin	Wenatchee
IRA Irrigation lead (planner)	Yakima
IRA Soil Conservationist	Yakima
Natural Resource Specialist	Yakima
Program Support Assistant	Yakima
Soil Conservationist (Pathways)	Yakima





# Management & Strategy *(continued)*

## FTE Positions Identified to be filled via Agreements with Partners

Partner	Position Type	Location
Specific CD Agreement	IRA Cultural Resources Specialist	Area Office
Tribes	IRA Tribal conservation planner (East/Central Floater)	East Area Office
Specific CD Agreement	IRA Cultural Resources	Ellensburg
Pheasants Forever	IRA-Easement Habitat Specialist	Ephrata
Pheasants Forever	IRA-Easement Habitat Specialist	Mt Vernon
Pheasants Forever	IRA-Easement Specialist	Mt Vernon
Washington Dairy Federation	IRA West Area Outreach Specialist	Olympia
Tribes	IRA Tribal conservation planner	Olympia
Tribes	IRA Tribal training coordinator and outreach	Olympia
Tribes	IRA TEK Agronomist	Olympia
Washington Wheat Growers	IRA East Area Outreach Specialist	Pasco
NFWF	IRA Forester	Puyallup
Tribes	IRA Forester	Quinalt Nation
NFWF	IRA Forester	Republic
NFWF	IRA Area Forester	Spokane Valley
Pheasants Forever	IRA-Easement Habitat Specialist	Spokane Valley
NFWF	IRA Fish Biologist	Walla Walla
Washington Cattlemen's Association	IRA Central Area Outreach Specialist	Wenatchee
NFWF	IRA Area Forester	Wenatchee
NFWF	IRA Forester	Wenatchee
NFWF	IRA Area Biologist	Wenatchee

## FTE Positions Identified to be filled via Contracts

Entity	Position Type	Location
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Chehalis
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Chehalis
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Colfax
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Colfax
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Colville
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Davenport
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Ellensburg
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Ephrata
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Planner/Irrigation Planner	Ephrata
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA CNMP Planner	Everson
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Lake Stevens
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Mt. Vernon
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA General Sciences	Okanogan
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Olympia
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Con Tech	Pomeroy
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Prosser
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Ritzville
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	South Bend
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Spokane EAO
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Spokane EAO
Contractor	IRA-RCPP Program Analyst	Spokane Valley
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Walla Walla
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Walla Walla
Contractor	IRA Programs Assistant	Waterville
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA RMS	Waterville
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA CRP Planner	Wenatchee
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA Soil Conservationist	Wenatchee
WSCC / Conservation Districts	IRA CNMP Planner	Yakima



# Partnerships

# LWVG Update

*(Local Working Group)*

By Nick Vira

NRCS-WA Partnership Liaison

In October NRCS hosted a kickoff meeting for Local Work Group Chairs to announce new changes to the local work group processes for this year and to discuss new and emerging opportunities for work groups to get more involved. This year LWGs will have an accelerated timeline and are requiring all LWGs to set their meeting date by December 8, 2024 and to hold the meeting by May 10th, 2024.

This year, LWGs are primarily responsible for determining their local EQIP fund pools. Additionally, LWGs may recommend new needed conservation practices, recommend priority watersheds for the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI), submit local initiatives, or develop Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funded project proposals for EQIP and/or CSP.

## IRA Project Proposals

In FY24, NRCS awarded over \$4 million in additional funds to support IRA Project Proposals submitted by LWGs. LWGs may submit additional project proposals this year, and proposals must be submitted by the LWG chairperson by May 24, 2024. IRA project proposals must align with at least one of the overall priorities of the IRA: Soil Health; Livestock & Grazing; Energy, Combustion & Electricity Efficiency; and Agroforestry, Forestry, and Upland Wildlife Habitat. Only approved Climate Smart practices can be utilized to support these proposals, so proposals will need to select from the suite of IRA practices that directly improve soil carbon; reduce nitrogen losses; reduce, capture, avoid, or sequester carbon dioxide, methane, or nitrous oxide emissions associated with agricultural production. Proposed activities should align with IRA data layers

that have been provided to LWGs, which reflect practice suitability and priority across geographic areas of the state. All proposals must provide significant evaluation and demonstration of workload (landowner participation) to justify the amount of their financial request.

## NWQI

The purpose of NWQI is to reduce sediment, nutrients and pathogens within 12 digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) watersheds. In Washington State, NWQI watersheds are proposed by LWGs. When an opening for new enrollment becomes available (following completion of an existing watershed project) NRCS works with State and Federal partners to select which watershed(s) will be selected for the “planning phase” of NWQI which is when a comprehensive watershed inventory and plan is developed. Once the watershed plan is developed and approved, that watershed is moved to the “implementation phase” at which time it is eligible to receive dedicated EQIP and CSP funds for a multiyear period until established goals have been met. Currently Washington has three active watersheds: Crab Creek in Grant County, Mill Creek in Walla Walla County, and Spring Creek/Union Flats in Whitman County.

Anyone seeking additional information on LWGs can contact their chairperson or Nick Vira, or follow the QR code.





# Engineering

## PL-566 | Small Watershed Program Activities

By Larry Johnson

NRCS-WA State Conservation Engineer

### NRCS National Contract for A&E services - Status Report

NRCS relies heavily on a national NRCS contract to support watershed program activities ranging from Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Reports (PIFRs), Watershed Planning, engineering planning and design and more. Without an active contract, all work for the Small Watershed Program essentially comes to a complete halt. The most recent contract expired spring of 2023 and NRCS has been without an active contract for 6 months. Our NRCS national office announced an opportunity to be considered for a contract January 2023 and have been diligently reviewing proposals and awarding contracts around the country. It was anticipated that an award would be completed for our region by the time the existing contract expired, which isn't the case. It is anticipated that an award will be completed by the end of the December 2023, at which time we can move forward with Small Watershed Program activities.

### Congressional Directed Spending

Clallam County received Congressional Directed Spending (Earmark) for the Dungeness Off-Channel Reservoir. The County requested an appropriation from Senator Patty Murray's office in the amount of \$2,728,000 to cover the estimated construction cost for piping the main Highland Irrigation District irrigation ditch. The funding was delivered to NRCS through the Small Watershed Program. Since the funding was delivered to NRCS through the Small Watershed Program, all programmatic requirements must be met. If we are required to

follow all programmatic requirements, we will not be able to pass the funding to the County for nearly 2 years. NRCS WA is discussing options with our national office to determine potential streamlining opportunities for the project. Our goal is to find the most efficient way to deliver the construction funding to the County.

### Odessa Groundwater Aquifer Replacement Project

NRCS announced our intent to adopt the USBR FEIS for the Odessa Subarea Special Study and was announced November 2, 2023. Please follow the link for details. [NRCS intends to adopt Reclamation's Odessa Subarea Special Study Final Environmental Impact Statement \(govdelivery.com\)](https://www.govdelivery.com).

Once the USBR FEIS is fully adopted, NRCS and the East Columbia Irrigation District (ECBID) will be able to move forward with the development of a watershed plan to include all the remaining and pumping structures that area awaiting funding for construction. Preliminary watershed planning activities have already commenced. Full adoption will pave the way for NRCS to begin Tribal and Public scoping meetings. We anticipate that our tribal and public outreach activities will be initiated this month (November 2023).

The ECBID subcontracted with the Columbia Basin Conservation District (CBCD) to develop the watershed. A contract was awarded by the (CBCD) to the Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA) to provide 100% technical support for all related watershed planning needs.

### Clallam County Off Channel Reservoir

Clallam County has decided not to pursue funding through the NRCS Small Watershed Program.



# Engineering *(continued)*

## City of Brewster

FEMA has been working with the City of Brewster to developing new floodway zones through the city. The city is very interested to know if the Small Watershed Program can help them address the flood impacts that have been identified through the FEMA model. NRCS has completed initial screening the of project needs and have concluded that the project needs fall well within scope of the Small Watershed Program. NRCS has developed a Statement of Work (SOW) to complete a Preliminary Investigation Feasibility Report (PIFR) and have requested funding to complete a PIFR for the City or Brewster. The PIFR will be used to determine overall program eligibility for the Small Watershed Program. Update: No further action is possible until after the National Engineering Services Contract has been awarded.

## Chelan County

The Chelan County Natural Resource Department (CCNRD) aims to coordinate watershed efforts to increase watershed resiliency through the implementation of projects designed to

restore river ecosystem processes, enhance floodplain connection, reduce erosion and sediment input, enhance water quality and quantity, improve water delivery systems, and promote the long-term viability of sustainable agriculture in the Wenatchee Watershed.

NRCS is planning on initiating a PIFR once the National Engineering Services Contract has been awarded.

## Gardina Farms Irrigation - District Walla Walla County

This project was developed as part of a Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plan (CIDMP) funded by Washington State Department of Agriculture. The plan uses a voluntary incentive-based approach that provides a means for irrigation districts to meet requirements under the Clean Water Act (CWA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and continue supplying water to meet local irrigation needs. The

GFD is actively improving the efficiency of their

irrigation system and have completed several irrigation efficiency projects over the past 20 years. The proposed project is to replace the degraded Pine Creek Siphon and convert 11 miles of earthen canal to pipe.

NRCS is planning on initiating a PIFR once the National Engineering Services Contract has been awarded.

## WA State Wildfires

**Update:** NRCS has completed evaluations a number of wildfires across the state for eligibility for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP).

**Newell Road Fire** (Klickitat Co.)- Review completed, eligible for EWPP assistance.

**Gray Fire** (Spokane Co.) - Review completed, ineligible for EWPP assistance.

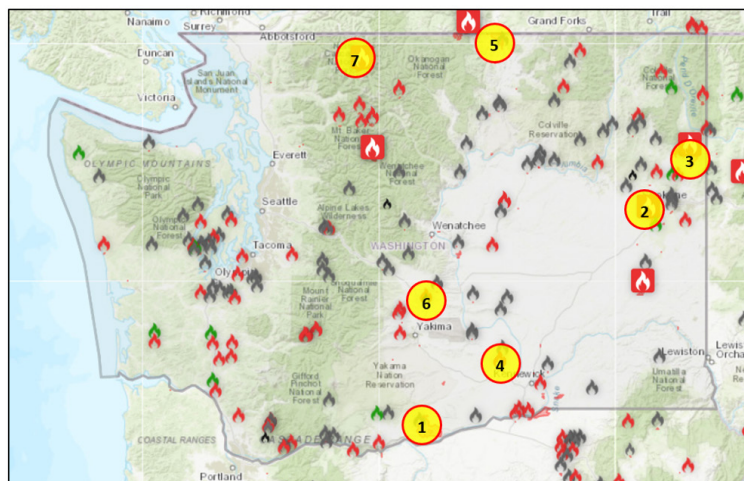
**Oregon Fire** (Pend Oreille Co.)- Review completed, ineligible for EWPP assistance.

**Hanson Road Fire** (Benton Co.) - Review completed, ineligible for EWPP assistance.

**Eagle Bluff Fire** (Okanogan Co.) - Review completed, eligible for EWPP assistance.

**Baird Springs Fire** (Grant Co.) - Review Completed, ineligible for EWPP assistance.

**Sourdough Wildfire** (Skagit Co.) - Review completed, eligible for EWPP assistance.





# Public Affairs

## Things are looking *great!*

By Nate Gallahan

*NRCS-WA State Public Affairs Specialist*

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** — It has been a busy few months and things are looking great!

We've recently hired on a new administrative assistant to my team, Macayla Leyden, who is a real rockstar! Her primary duties will be to help our small team with the more than 100 events we represent NRCS at. This not only includes preparing materials, but also helping with coordinating the financing and such. She's also excited to help with publishing our news releases and other communications products. I'm extremely excited to get her trained up!

Then, we've finalized our cooperative agreement with the Washington Dairy Federation, who hired on Alicia McCarthy as an area outreach coordinator. She'll be working hard to both assist dairy producers across the state and producers in the West Area connect with our agency to help them improve stewardship of their land.

We are also working similar cooperative agreements with the Washington Cattlemen's Association and the Washington Wheat Growers. WCA will be hiring an outreach coordinator to help raise awareness of our agency with the beef industry statewide, and producers across the central area. The Wheat Growers will be hiring an outreach coordinator to assist the small grain industry statewide connect with us, and producers across the east area.

Then, six other organizations have signed Equity in Outreach Cooperative Agreements with our National Headquarters. While each one is unique in its goals and methods of achieving them, each one is amazing and will help us get the word out to historically underserved producers.

These all represent a huge increase in our ability to reach out to producers and hopefully raise awareness of all the programs and opportunities we harbor.

This isn't everything though! Hopefully over the next few months, we'll be advertising two Public Affairs positions. One will concentrate on traditional and social media, and marketing. Then, the second will concentrate on story-sharing and product development. Once these two positions are filled, my team will finally be complete, and the sky will be the limit!

All of this is with the intent of implementing our comprehensive, synergistic, and streamlined Communications & Outreach strategy. The goal: raise awareness of who we are and how we can help everyone with the incredible capacity afforded us through the Inflation Reduction Act funding. I'll be sharing our Communications & Outreach strategy in the next Partner Activity Report, as I am a true believer in organizational listening, and I sincerely hope to receive some feedback on how it all looks from outside our agency and how I can make it the best it can possibly be.





# NRCS-WA News



## NRCS intends to adopt Reclamation’s Odessa Subarea Special Study Final Environmental Impact Statement

**SPOKANE VALLEY, Wash.** (Nov. 1, 2023) – The Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is adopting the Bureau of Reclamation’s (Reclamation) 2012 Odessa Subarea Special Study Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) produced in cooperation with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology).

With the NRCS adoption of the FEIS and issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD) that concurs with Reclamation’s selected alternative, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID) — in partnership with Reclamation, Ecology, and NRCS — will streamline the development of a Watershed Plan under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program authorized by Public Law 83-566 by utilizing the FEIS environmental compliance document already produced. With an Authorized Watershed Plan, ECBID will be eligible to pursue NRCS federal funding to support the phased implementation of the Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program.

Located in Central Washington, ECBID is the largest irrigation district in the state, with authorization to irrigate 472,000 acres. Currently, 169,000 acres are developed and managed by 4,500 landowners within the federal Columbia Basin Project (CBP). The FEIS analyzed the potential to replace groundwater irrigation on up to 102,600 acres of land in the Odessa Subarea with surface water from the CBP.

The Odessa Subarea aquifer is experiencing significant declines in groundwater levels. Domestic, commercial, municipal, and industrial uses, as well as water ... *(Continue reading via the QR code.)*





# RCPP News



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

**WE'RE WORKING  
TO IMPROVE THE  
REGIONAL CONSERVATION  
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

## **USDA Streamlines Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Invests Unprecedented \$1 Billion in 81 Conservation Projects**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making historic investments to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and streamlining the program to make it work better for producers and partners. This combination will deliver conservation at a scale never before achieved through RCPP. This year, more than \$1 billion is being invested to advance partner-driven solutions to conservation on agricultural land through 81 projects.

RCPP leverages a voluntary approach to conservation that expands the reach of conservation efforts and climate-smart agriculture through public-private partnerships. Historic funding is made possible by both the Inflation Reduction Act, part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda, and the Farm Bill.

### **RCPP Improvements**

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has identified ways to streamline and simplify RCPP, ease the burden on employees and partners, and help maximize flexibility for partners to leverage their investments with NRCS resources and capabilities.

Through a concerted effort over the past eight months, using guidance, feedback and expertise from partners, employees, leadership and stakeholders, NRCS has identified several improvements that the agency will implement in the months and years ahead.

### **Improvements include:**

- Streamlining RCPP agreements for fiscal year 2023 awards and moving to one programmatic agreement to begin implementing the RCPP projects awarded under the fiscal year 2024 notice of funding opportunity. This will allow partners to more quickly begin implementation of their RCPP projects.



*(Read more via the QR code.)*





# RCPP News

## Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP) EL 80.6 and 84.7 On-Farm Project RCPP Applications Deadline Announced

### SPOKANE, Wash.

(Nov. 3, 2023) - The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will accept applications starting immediately, until December 8, 2023 for the “Odessa Groundwater Replacement Program (OGWRP) EL 80.6 and 84.7 On-farm Project” Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project. This RCPP includes Adams County.



*(Read more via the QR code.)*

## Cascadia Conservation District now accepting Fuel Break and Forest Resilience RCPP applications

Landowners interested in improving forest health, wildfire, and drought resilience, along with helping protect critical infrastructure, are encouraged to apply for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) before November 15th 2023.

Cascadia Conservation District is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation ...



*(Read more via the QR code.)*

## Middle Columbia Steelhead Partnership RCPP Applications Deadline Announced

### SPOKANE, Wash.

(October 18, 2023) - The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will accept applications starting immediately, until November 17, 2023 for the “Middle Columbia Steelhead Partnership” Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project. This RCPP includes lands in Kittitas, Yakima, Klickitat and Skamania Counties.



*(Read more via the QR code.)*

## Clark Conservation District to start accepting RCPP Poop Smart Clark applications

### VANCOUVER, Wash.

- Clark Conservation District and USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service will start accepting applications for their Poop Smart Clark Regional Conservation Partnership Program funding beginning October 9, 2023, until January 19th, 2024.

This RCPP covers all of Clark County, but the focus areas are the East Fork Lewis River and Lacamas Creek Watersheds. Primary Resource Concern ...



*(Read more via the QR code.)*





# RCPP News *(continued)*



## Palouse CD to start accepting RCPP Palouse River Watershed applications

### PULLMAN, Wash. -

Palouse Conservation District and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service will start accepting applications for their Palouse River Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding starting Oct. 2, 2023, until Nov. 3, 2023. This RCPP covers land within the Palouse River Watershed (WRIA 34) and includes land in Whitman, Spokane, Adams, and Lincoln counties.

The Palouse River Watershed RCPP is a partnership program led by Palouse Conservation District that provides technical assistance and funding for land management activities. Funding is available for practices that improve Soil Health, Water Quality, and Habitat. Common practices include: No-Till, Reduced Till, Cover Crop, Nutrient Management, Field Border, Filter Strip, Riparian Forest Buffer, Conservation Cover, and Conservation Crop Rotation.



### Primary Resource Concern Categories are:

- Wind and Water Erosion
- Concentrated Erosion
- Soil Quality Limitations
- Field Sediment, nutrient, and pathogen loss
- Terrestrial habitat
- Aquatic habitat

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air, and related natural resources on agricultural ground. Eligible producers and entities interested in applying for financial assistance through this special RCPP sign-up may apply now.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service will work with partners through the RCPP to provide financial and technical assistance for landowners and producers wanting to address natural resource concerns in the Palouse River Watershed.

RCPP funding is limited, and applications will be subject to a ranking system. To be eligible, it is important that interested parties visit their local Farm Service Agency offices as soon as possible to ensure that their farm records are established.

All applicants must have their farm records established and their eligibility paperwork ...

*(Read more via the QR code.)*





# NRCS News

## USDA Increases Minimum Annual Payment for Conservation Stewardship Program

USDA is increasing the minimum annual payment to producers in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) from \$1,500 to \$4,000 in fiscal year 2024. The increase will address inflation and other challenges faced by small scale, underserved, and urban producers and improve equity in the program by making participation more financially beneficial for smaller operations. The new minimum payment amount will be available for new and renewed CSP contracts.

## Farmers.gov Local Dashboard Now Available for Producers in Washington

Access local data to assist with your farming operation including weather forecasts and up-to-date commodity pricing

Farmers in Washington can now access county specific farming data and USDA resources all in one place via the new farmers.gov local dashboard. Your new farmers.gov local dashboard includes farming data and USDA resources including USDA news, commodity pricing, weather forecasts, historical climate data, past storm events, USDA service center locator and additional state resources for Washington and your county. The dashboard transforms complex data sets into easy-to-read charts and graphs to help you quickly find information that matters to you.



## Share Your Harvesting Experience for Farmers.gov's #Harvest2023 campaign

As America's farmers harvest the crops that feed, clothe, and fuel our world, let's fill the Farmers.gov social media feed with their stories about this year's harvest season. We'd also like to see how it's going for farmers that participated in our #Plant2023 campaign in the spring.

To share your experience on @FarmersGov social media, follow these steps:

1. Collect photos of what's happening on your operation as you harvest. If you're comfortable, we'd love to see the people that make it happen, like friends and family.
2. Write an email to [FP.Social@usda.gov](mailto:FP.Social@usda.gov), attach your photos/video, and tell us:
  - Your name, the location of your operation, and the name of your operation
  - Your operation's Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter pages, if you have them.
  - What are you harvesting this year?
  - Where does your harvest go? How is it used?
  - What are your personal thoughts on this year's harvest season?

Please note that by submitting your photo/video, you are granting USDA permission to use these materials for outreach and education purposes.

Remember to follow @FarmersGov on [Facebook](#), [X](#) (formerly known as Twitter), and [Instagram](#), and we look forward to sharing your story!



# NRCS News



## Learn How Keeping the Stubble Can Help Your Farm Throughout No-Till November 2023

**Keep the stubble and help your farm by adopting no or reduced tillage**

This November, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is again playing off the popular awareness campaign, "No-Shave November" with our very own campaign, "#NoTillNovember." No-till (also called zero tillage or direct seeding/drilling) is a way of growing crops or pasture year over year with minimal soil disturbance through tillage. Disturbing your soil through tillage reduces water infiltration, increases runoff, and can make the soil less productive. Tillage also disrupts the soil's natural biological cycles, damages soil structure, and increases erosion.



## USDA Announces 2024 Tribal Scholarships and Fellowships

*The application deadline is December 1, 2023.*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced two tribal higher education opportunities to train the next generation of agricultural professionals and strengthen ties with tribal higher education institutions. The USDA 1994 Tribal Scholars Program offers a fast-track career path with USDA, and the Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Faculty Fellowship engages tribal college faculty with USDA resources and research. These programs reflect USDA's commitment to advance equity and remove barriers to service for tribal nations and encourage tribal workforce development. Today's announcement also marks the 29th anniversary of the day legislation was signed to give tribal colleges land-grant status.



## Urban Producers, Public Invited to Attend November Meeting of Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

Meeting will take place November 29, 10 a.m. to noon PST

We're inviting urban producers, innovative producers, and other stakeholders to virtually attend a public meeting of the Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on November 29 from 10 a.m. to noon PST.

