



Conservation Partners Program

NFWF CONTACT

Greg Pilchak

Program Director,
Working Lands
greg.pilchak@nfwf.org
202-938-0640

Minna Wong

Manager,
Working Lands
minna.wong@nfwf.org
202-595-2657

Ernest Newborn

Coordinator,
Regional Programs
ernest.newborn@nfwf.org
202-595-2444

FUNDING PARTNERS

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Cargill
- General Mills
- The J.M. Smucker Co.
- Nestlé

ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,800 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of more than \$10 billion.

Learn more at www.nfwf.org



Deer in a soybean field

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced the 2024-year round of funding for Conservation Partners Program projects in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Cargill, The J.M. Smucker Co., Nestlé, and additional support from a collaboration among General Mills, Walmart and Sam's Club. Seventeen new technical assistance grants totaling nearly \$10.2 million were awarded. The 17 awards leveraged more than \$4.9 million in matching contributions from grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$15.1 million.

Private landowners are stewards of nearly two-thirds of our nation's land, including some of the most important fish and wildlife habitats in the United States. Private working lands have an outsized impact on not only the country's food supply and economy, but also its carbon sequestration, water quality, and fish and wildlife populations. Every year, farmers, ranchers and forest landowners voluntarily participate in federal Farm Bill conservation programs designed to address some of the nation's most pressing conservation issues. Voluntary partnerships with farmers, ranchers and other landowners create win-win solutions for both natural resources and rural communities.

The Conservation Partners Program awards competitive grants that accelerate the adoption of regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices on private lands. Grant recipients will provide technical assistance to landowners and operators to help them develop management plans, design and implement best practices, participate in Farm Bill programs, and share their experiences and lessons learned.

Through this 2024 funding opportunity, funded projects will address resource concerns in the Great Lakes Basin, Prairie Pothole Region, Southern Great Plains and Upper Mississippi River Basin across 14 states. Collectively, the projects will improve management and conservation on more than 330,000 acres of farmland and rangeland across the United States.

(continued)



Upland sandpiper

GREAT LAKES BASIN

Focusing on the U.S. portion of the Great Lakes watersheds, projects will engage landowners in regenerative agriculture planning and peer-to-peer learning to improve soil health, water quality and biodiversity in the region.

Advancing Soil Health Practices with Partnering Farmers of Agricultural Retailers (IN, OH)

Grantee: American Farmland Trust
 Grant Amount:.....\$839,100
 Matching Funds:.....\$343,200
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,182,300

Partner with farmers in a multi-county area in Ohio and Indiana to build models of one-on-one farmer engagement, benchmark farm practices, develop continuous improvement plans and implement improved soil health management practices. Project will help farmer clients better understand the environmental, agronomic, and economic impact of combinations of conservation practices on soil health, water quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

Restoring Native Grasslands and Improving Grazing Systems through Technical Assistance (OH)

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited
 Grant Amount:.....\$663,400
 Matching Funds:.....\$65,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$728,400

Hire a Grazing Land Planner to facilitate the adoption of native forage and the improvement of grazing systems on private working lands in western Ohio. Project will provide

technical assistance to livestock producers covering an estimated 3,000 acres to foster sustainable agriculture and wildlife habitat conservation.

Technical and Financial Assistance to Implement Cover Crops in Lower Fox River Watershed (WI)

Grantee: Brown County Land & Water Conservation Dept
 Grant Amount:.....\$372,500
 Matching Funds:.....\$205,100
 Total Project Amount:.....\$577,600

Provide technical and financial assistance to help farmers overcome perceived barriers to cover crop or no-till planting in the Lower Fox River Watershed. Project will result in approximately 3,000 acres with cover crops, increase Environmental Quality Incentives Program participation and reduce phosphorus and sediment runoff from entering the watershed.

PRAIRIE POTHOLE REGION

The Prairie Pothole Region includes the region of historic tallgrass, mixed grass and shortgrass prairie spanning portions of Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota. Projects in this landscape will improve grazing management, crop management and habitat with a holistic, regenerative approach that will benefit the many wildlife species that depend on the grassland-wetland complexes of the region.

Building Outreach and Rancher Networks to Improve Grassland Ecosystems in South Dakota

Grantee: South Dakota Grassland Coalition
 Grant Amount:.....\$485,800
 Matching Funds:.....\$250,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$735,800

Work with ranchers to improve grassland ecosystems through increased education and outreach efforts promoting regenerative agricultural principles that align with and complement Farm Bill programs and Climate-Smart agricultural practices including prescribed grazing. Project will develop Best Management Practices and ultimately encourage retention of grasslands in conservation priority areas of South Dakota.

Facilitating Regenerative Grazing Practices through Community Outreach and Education in Montana

Grantee: World Wildlife Fund
 Grant Amount:.....\$731,100
 Matching Funds:.....\$731,100
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,462,200

Increase capacity of two Sustainable Ranching Initiative partners in the Prairie Pothole region of Montana and the Northern Great Plains. Project will facilitate regenerative grazing practices and foster more opportunities, community education and outreach for ranchers including support to the local NRCS office and implementation of cost-share projects impacting an estimated 100,000 acres.



Cattle grazing in Montana

Leveraging Grassland Conservation for Rangeland and Wildlife Resiliency (MT, ND, SD, WY)

Grantee: American Bird Conservancy
 Grant Amount:.....\$213,300
 Matching Funds:.....\$213,400
 Total Project Amount:.....\$426,700
 Provide technical assistance, management plans and outreach to address grassland conservation concerns in the Northern Great Plains/Prairie Pothole region and support infrastructure to enhance vegetative cover and associated root systems. Project will restore and improve more than 30,000 acres of grassland bird habitat to positively impact soil health, water infiltration and carbon sequestration.

Providing Technical Assistance for Regenerative Agriculture and Water Quality Practices (IA)

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited
 Grant Amount:.....\$893,500
 Matching Funds:.....\$894,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,787,500
 Support the delivery of tile drainage wetlands, oxbow wetlands, saturated buffers, bioreactors, cover crops and field borders in Iowa. Project will promote and deliver technical assistance on 6,000 acres needed to install in-field and edge-of-field conservation practices that address multiple resource concerns in the region such as improving water quality and wildlife habitat.

Regenerating Lands for Native Producers in the Northern Great Plains (MN, MT, ND, NE, SD)

Grantee: Intertribal Agriculture Council
 Grant Amount:.....\$759,700
 Matching Funds:.....\$195,100
 Total Project Amount:.....\$954,800
 Expand programming to help Native producers in the Northern Great Plains and Prairie Pothole Region maintain

or improve their operations through sustainable practices for long-term success of future generations. Project will increase Native producer participation in Farm Bill programs, increase adoption and implementation of Best Management Practices and advance capacity development of Native producers and Tribes.

SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS

The Southern Great Plains includes the Plains portions of Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. Emphasizing a systems approach that integrates regenerative agriculture principles and peer-to-peer learning, projects in this landscape will engage farmers and ranchers to improve soil health, water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife habitat, and carbon storage on croplands and grazing lands.

Applying Grazing Management Plans on Rangelands for Resiliency and Habitat Management (CO)

Grantee: Colorado Cattlemen’s Association
 Grant Amount:.....\$563,800
 Matching Funds:.....\$260,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$823,800
 Develop, implement, monitor and evaluate individualized grazing management plans on working rangeland in eastern Colorado. Project will apply grazing management principles to support climate resilience, improve rangeland health and biodiverse working landscapes, and introduce efficient management for economically sustainable ranching.

Equipping Women Landowners to Implement Regenerative Farming Practices (IA, KS, MO)

Grantee: The Curators of the University of Missouri
 Grant Amount:.....\$568,300
 Matching Funds:.....\$30,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$598,300
 Increase capacity of programming to target women non-operating landowners to work with tenants to implement conservation practices on their farmlands in Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. Project will engage women landowners and facilitate peer-to-peer learning to promote adoption of cover crops and conservation tillage.

Integrating Crop and Livestock Production through Innovative Cover Crop Grazing (MO)

Grantee: The Curators of the University of Missouri
 Grant Amount:.....\$943,600
 Matching Funds:.....\$144,900
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,088,500
 Provide technical assistance and peer-to-peer networking among farmers on use of virtual fencing and other fencing methods. Project will catalyze cover crop grazing on an estimated 50,000 acres in Missouri to improve soil health, sequester carbon, improve biodiversity, and provide other ecosystem services such as improved water quality and reduced soil erosion.

(continued)

Managing Easements to Support Innovative Conservation Solutions on Working Lands (CO)

Grantee: Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust
 Grant Amount:..... \$236,300
 Matching Funds:..... \$0
 Total Project Amount:..... \$236,300

Increase capacity of conservation easements programs and leverage Farm Bill programs to directly support landowners with grassland health and grazing efficiency, water infrastructure, and fire mitigation. Project will support sustainable agriculture and innovative solutions to the environmental and economic challenges facing Colorado’s grasslands and working lands.

Providing Technical Assistance for Regenerative Agriculture and Wildlife in Nebraska

Grantee: Pheasants Forever
 Grant Amount:..... \$311,100
 Matching Funds:..... \$312,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$623,100

Provide technical assistance to farmers in Nebraska focused on soil health, implementing Best Management Practices utilizing cover crops, and eligibility toward Farm Bill programs. Project will increase available habitat on 6,000 acres of private working lands by supporting regenerative agriculture practices benefiting both producers and wildlife such as grassland birds and pollinators.

UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN

The following projects will engage farmers and the broader agricultural sector in Best Management Practices that benefit water quality, fish and wildlife in the Upper Mississippi River basin. Projects are focused in NRCS’s priority watersheds and subwatersheds as identified for the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative and priority areas for the Driftless Area Initiative.



Henslow’s sparrow

Conserving Critical Watersheds through Integrated Livestock Grazing (IA, MN, WI)

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy
 Grant Amount:..... \$459,500
 Matching Funds:..... \$87,100
 Total Project Amount:..... \$546,600

Hire a grazing professional to provide technical assistance on integrated livestock grazing management in the Kickapoo, Coon-Yellow, Root, Grant-Little Maquoketa, and Upper Iowa watersheds of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Project will provide technical assistance and education to grazers for grazing management, including cover crop grazing management, covering approximately 30,000 acres to improve soil health and water quality.

Delivering Technical Assistance for Agroforestry Practice Adoption (IL, IA, MN)

Grantee: Savanna Institute
 Grant Amount:..... \$876,600
 Matching Funds:..... \$980,300
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,856,900

Provide technical assistance to landowners adopting agroforestry and other climate-smart agriculture and forestry practices in Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota. Project will enable landowners to transition at least 2,000 acres to agroforestry and other conservation practices to participate in federal cost-share programs and improve soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat.

Enhancing Grassland and Savanna Habitat through Prescribed Burn Technical Assistance (WI)

Grantee: Pheasants Forever
 Grant Amount:..... \$739,400
 Matching Funds:..... \$159,600
 Total Project Amount:..... \$899,000

Coordinate prescribed burn association in Wisconsin and increase landowner engagement in grassland and savanna management and prescribed burning in the southern driftless landscape of Wisconsin. Project will deliver streamlined training, hands-on demonstrations and program support to overcome barriers to prescribed burns on nearly 4,000 acres.

Enhancing Regenerative Agriculture for Wetlands and Working Lands in Illinois

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited
 Grant Amount:..... \$509,200
 Matching Funds:..... \$100,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$609,200

Provide technical assistance to producers enrolled in Illinois Department of Natural Resources agriculture leases to design and implement cover crop plans, promote Farm Bill program participation and target marginal agriculture acres for wetland restorations across Illinois. Project will develop cover crop implementation plans impacting seasonal wetland restorations and approximately 22,000 acres of cover crops.