



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. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- General Mills
- The J.M. Smucker Co.

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



Soybean and corn crops

OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced 27 new awards from the Conservation Partners Program 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, The J.M. Smucker Co., and additional support from a collaboration among General Mills, Walmart and Sam's Club. The 27 technical assistance awards total \$14.7 million and leverage more than \$7 million in matching contributions from grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$21.7 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 other 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 the second 2024 funding opportunity, projects will address resource concerns in the Great Lakes Basin, Great Plains, Upper Mississippi River Basin and Western Grazing Lands across 20 states. Collectively, projects will develop at least 3,000 management plans to improve conservation on more than 700,000 acres of farmland and ranchland across the United States.

(continued)



Deer in a wheat field in Kansas

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.

Leveraging Local Partnerships to Streamline Agriculture Conservation in Mason and Lake County (MI)

Grantee: Mason-Lake Conservation District
 Grant Amount:.....\$236,800
 Matching Funds:.....\$240,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$476,800
 Support implementation of Farm Bill conservation practices through technical assistance, contract management and practice implementation throughout Mason and Lake counties. Project will improve soil health, enhance wildlife habitat and improve water quality on pasture, crop and forested lands across 31,000 acres of actively managed private working lands.

Technical Assistance for Managed Grazing and Regenerative Agriculture in Central Wisconsin

Grantee: Golden Sands RC&D
 Grant Amount:.....\$428,100
 Matching Funds:.....\$0
 Total Project Amount:.....\$428,100
 Sustain a regenerative agriculture specialist position to provide technical assistance predominantly supporting managed grazing in central Wisconsin, and equip a growing

Sustainable Agriculture team with additional assistance for strategic outreach, event planning and promotion activities. Project will increase acres with managed grazing, adoption of conservation practices, and utilization of Farm Bill programs in the Great Lakes Basin and Upper Mississippi River Basin.

Technical Assistance for Regenerative Agriculture in Ottawa County (MI)

Grantee: Ottawa Conservation District
 Grant Amount:.....\$224,600
 Matching Funds:.....\$56,100
 Total Project Amount:.....\$280,700
 Sustain a Soil Conservationist position to provide technical assistance to farmers in Ottawa County in southwestern lower Michigan. Project will develop management plans, help implement conservation practices including cover crops on 2,000 acres, and enroll farmers in Farm Bill programs.

GREAT PLAINS

The Great Plains includes the Plains portions of Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. Emphasizing a systems approach that integrates regenerative agriculture principles and peer-to-peer learning, projects across 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.

Advancing Precision Agriculture for Pollinators and Holistic Farm Management (MN)

Grantee: Monarch Joint Venture
 Grant Amount:.....\$390,800
 Matching Funds:.....\$0
 Total Project Amount:.....\$390,800
 Advance the adoption of precision agriculture technologies in Minnesota to enhance farm decision-making for pollinator conservation and producer profitability. Project will work with diverse operations, including grazing, row-crop, and urban producers, to reverse pollinator decline, build resilience and ensure the long-term viability of rural and urban agricultural communities across Minnesota.

Enhancing Sustainability of Wheat-Based Cropping Systems in Kansas

Grantee: Kansas Wheat Commission Research Foundation
 Grant Amount:.....\$999,200
 Matching Funds:.....\$28,700
 Total Project Amount:.....\$1,027,900
 Build and coordinate existing crop consulting and extension networks for conservation on Kansas croplands including acres with winter wheat in rotation. Project will coordinate programming and peer-to-peer networks to promote adoption of conservation practices and increase enrollment in Farm Bill programs on at least 100,000 acres in the state.

Enhancing Partnerships and Technical Assistance to Improve Soil Health in South Dakota

Grantee: South Dakota Soil Health Coalition

Grant Amount:..... \$400,800
 Matching Funds:..... \$957,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,357,800

Expand partnerships, enhance technical assistance and grow outreach efforts to new audiences to increase adoption of soil health practices on an estimated 20,000 acres in South Dakota. Project will help producers develop and implement economically sound management practices that yield positive environmental outcomes emphasizing increased soil health.

Expanding Technical Assistance for Private Landowners on North Dakota Grasslands

Grantee: National Audubon Society

Grant Amount:..... \$460,100
 Matching Funds:..... \$461,600
 Total Project Amount:..... \$921,700

Hire and sustain Range Ecologist positions and a Working Lands Program Manager to deliver and promote conservation programs addressing resource concerns in eastern North Dakota. Project will sustain technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to develop grazing management plans, improve managed grazing on an estimated 12,000 acres and enroll in financial assistance programs.

Sustaining and Expanding Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Across the Great Plains (CO, SD)

Grantee: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory dba Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Grant Amount:..... \$749,100
 Matching Funds:..... \$250,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$999,100

Sustain wildlife habitat biologist positions in Colorado and add a position in South Dakota to increase Farm Bill delivery and host community events to promote wildlife-friendly grazing management. Project will engage landowners to enroll 40,000 acres in conservation programs and enhance migratory bird habitat in partnership with NRCS.

Technical Assistance to Accelerate Regenerative Agriculture in Kansas

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Grant Amount:..... \$1,000,000
 Matching Funds:..... \$1,000,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$2,000,000

Support staff capacity to accelerate adoption of regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices on private lands focusing in the Southern Great Plains of Kansas and surrounding river and playa systems. Project will provide technical assistance to landowners to develop management plans, implement conservation practices on an estimated 30,000 acres and participate in Farm Bill programs.

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 focus 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.

Accelerating Managed Grazing and Native Grassland Restoration in Missouri

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Grant Amount:..... \$992,700
 Matching Funds:..... \$68,400
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,061,100

Employ Grazing Specialists to provide technical assistance and management planning to private landowners and livestock producers in Missouri for native grassland restoration and managed grazing. Project will support implementation of conservation practices on an estimated 6,000 acres to improve wildlife habitat, soil health, agricultural sustainability and access to cost-share programs.

Advancing Regenerative Agriculture Management Planning in Wabasha County (MN)

Grantee: Wabasha Soil & Water Conservation District

Grant Amount:..... \$230,000
 Matching Funds:..... \$31,500
 Total Project Amount:..... \$261,500

Provide planning and technical assistance to implement best management practices throughout Wabasha County in southeast Minnesota. Project will engage farmers to advance regenerative agriculture principles such as minimizing soil disturbance, enhancing wildlife habitat, maximizing crop diversity and integrating livestock on at least 6,000 acres.

Empowering Farmer-Led Technical Assistance for Long-Term Soil Health (IN)

Grantee: Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Grant Amount:..... \$496,400
 Matching Funds:..... \$70,800
 Total Project Amount:..... \$567,200

Launch FarmAdvisors, a farmer-led and farmer-designed mentoring program, to enhance the adoption of soil health practices across Indiana. Project will provide training and resources for both mentor and mentee farmers to increase the long-term success of implementing conservation practices in Indiana.

Enhancing Diversity on Marginal Acres through Precision Agriculture (IL)

Grantee: Pheasants Forever
 Grant Amount:..... \$598,700
 Matching Funds:..... \$66,700
 Total Project Amount:..... \$665,400
 Fund one existing and one new Precision Agriculture Conservation Specialist to work within Illinois’ farmland to enhance wildlife habitat, soil health, water conservation and carbon storage through technical assistance. Project will impact 1,350 acres through conservation plans and further impact 15,390 acres by reducing nutrient and sediment loss.

Expanding Continuous Living Cover and Silvopasture in Minnesota

Grantee: Great River Greening
 Grant Amount:..... \$496,200
 Matching Funds:..... \$575,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,071,200
 Implement farmer outreach to expand acres of continuous living cover and silvopasture in Southern Minnesota and the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Project will lead to more than 1,000 row crop acres with spring flowering species and convert hundreds of degraded woodland acres into thriving oak savanna ecosystems for grazing livestock, pollinators and other wildlife.

Expanding Precision Conservation Management in Missouri and Kentucky

Grantee: Illinois Corn Growers Association
 Grant Amount:..... \$768,200
 Matching Funds:..... \$615,100
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,383,300
 Expand the Precision Conservation Management Program to corn, soybean and wheat farmers in north central Missouri and Kentucky to increase adoption of cover crops, no-till and strip-till, and nitrogen reductions. Project will deliver technical assistance to farmers to enroll in NRCS programs, increasing water quality and soil health on an estimated 60,000 acres in Kentucky and Missouri.

Expanding Regenerative Grazing in the Upper Mississippi Watershed (IA, MN, WI)

Grantee: Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota
 Grant Amount:..... \$260,800
 Matching Funds:..... \$18,600
 Total Project Amount:..... \$279,400
 Provide personalized, on-farm technical assistance to farms and ranches to implement regenerative grazing practices covering more than 17,000 acres in the Upper Mississippi River Basin of Minnesota and bordering areas of Wisconsin and Iowa. Project will improve soil health, reduce runoff, enhance wildlife habitat and reach more than 2,500 additional people through case studies and educational events showcasing regenerative grazing best practices.



Upper Mississippi River

Improving Water Quality through Conservation Drainage in the Illinois River Basin

Grantee: National Association of Conservation Districts
 Grant Amount:..... \$996,300
 Matching Funds:..... \$242,000
 Total Project Amount:..... \$1,238,300
 Engage local soil and water conservation districts to conduct outreach and education, and utilize qualified technical assistance to complete site assessments and develop plans for drainage water management, saturated buffers and denitrifying bioreactors. Project will plan and design conservation drainage practices on more than 5,900 tile-drained cropland acres in the Illinois River Basin to reduce nutrient loading, improve water quality and enhance climate resilience.

Increasing Technical Support for Priority Conservation Practices in Illinois Watersheds

Grantee: American Farmland Trust
 Grant Amount:..... \$571,200
 Matching Funds:..... \$152,700
 Total Project Amount:..... \$723,900
 Support Farmer Consultant and Watershed Coordinator to accelerate adoption of conservation agriculture and maximize outcomes of Farm Bill funding in eastern Illinois watersheds. Project will assist with Farm Bill contracting, and support farmers to implement practices in cropping operations that reduce sediment and nutrient losses improving water quality.



Western meadowlark

Regenerating Agricultural Landscapes through Whole Farm Technical Assistance (IA, IL, IN, MO, OH)

Grantee: Rodale Institute
 Grant Amount:.....\$843,700
 Matching Funds:.....\$135,900
 Total Project Amount:.....\$979,600
 Providing personalized technical support to grain and dairy farmers to expand acres under organic management and tree and shrub plantings in the Midwest. Project will advance whole farm conservation outcomes and farmers’ revenue by accelerating the adoption of sustainable practices, improving wildlife habitats, boosting carbon sequestration and increasing Farm Bill program participation.

Sustaining Regenerative Agriculture Partnerships to Prevent Soil Erosion and Nutrient Runoff (IL)

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited
 Grant Amount:.....\$388,600
 Matching Funds:.....\$145,600
 Total Project Amount:.....\$534,200
 Continue work with Illinois Department of Agriculture to meet with private landowners, identify suitable regenerative agriculture practices, and promote and implement the Fall Covers for Spring Savings program throughout Illinois. Project will work with agricultural communities to implement 150,000 acres of regenerative agriculture focused on practices, including cover crops, to reduce

nutrient runoff, improve water quality, and provide new wildlife habitat.

WESTERN GRAZING LANDS

The following projects will sustain and enhance conservation and economic values associated with working grasslands, pasturelands, and shrublands, improve soil health and maximize soil carbon on grazing lands, and enhance habitat quality and connectivity for birds, pollinators, and other species that depend on grassland complexes in the Western United States.

Empowering Northeastern Oregon’s Ranching Community through Management Planning and Education

Grantee: Wallowa Resources
 Grant Amount:.....\$285,400
 Matching Funds:.....\$238,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$523,400
 Deliver high-demand ranching skill sets to livestock operators, convene rangeland managers and stakeholders via an in-person summit for peer-to-peer learning, and support delivery of NRCS initiatives to private landowners engaged in whole ranch management planning. Project will increase the number of rangeland properties operating with best management plans in an imperiled grassland landscape of Wallowa County, northeast Oregon.

Enhancing Agricultural Resilience in the Deschutes Basin (OR)

Grantee: Deschutes Soil and Water Conservation District
 Grant Amount:.....\$220,000
 Matching Funds:.....\$604,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$824,000
 Provide technical assistance to agricultural producers in Deschutes and Jefferson counties to voluntarily improve irrigation systems, crop management and habitat enhancement. Project will increase Farm Bill participation, foster community learning and generate environmental benefits to improve wildlife habitat, soil health, and water quantity and quality in the Deschutes Basin on more than 5,000 acres of irrigated land.

Enhancing Audubon Conservation Ranching on Working Aridlands (AZ, NM)

Grantee: National Audubon Society
 Grant Amount:.....\$676,700
 Matching Funds:.....\$0
 Total Project Amount:.....\$676,700
 Provide technical assistance to grazing land managers in the Chihuahuan Desert grasslands of southern New Mexico and Arizona to employ grazing practices improving habitat for grassland birds. Project will address ecosystem health, ranch productivity and climate resilience on approximately 200,000 acres of working aridlands.



Colorado grasslands

Expanding Audubon Conservation Ranching in California and Columbia Plateau (CA, ID, OR, WA)

Grantee: National Audubon Society
 Grant Amount:.....\$780,000
 Matching Funds:.....\$141,800
 Total Project Amount:.....\$921,800
 Sustain capacity of the Audubon Conservation Ranching program in California and expand capacity to the Columbia Plateau. Project will expand outreach through workshops and meetings, provide technical assistance on financial programs to landowners, restore 1,500 acres of ranchland habitat and support managed grazing across 36,000 acres all to improve habitat for grassland birds.

Increasing Technical Assistance to Benefit Gunnison Sage Grouse on Private Working Lands (CO) - IV

Grantee: Gunnison Conservation District
 Grant Amount:.....\$151,100
 Matching Funds:.....\$92,100
 Total Project Amount:.....\$243,200
 Sustain staff to build landowner partnerships and support habitat enhancement on private lands within the range of the federally threatened Gunnison sage-grouse in the Gunnison Basin on approximately 30,000 acres. Project will assist the NRCS Gunnison Field Office in fulfilling contracts that align with the NRCS Sagebrush Biome Framework for Conservation Action.

Increasing Technical Assistance for Conservation on California’s Working Rangelands

Grantee: California Rangeland Trust
 Grant Amount:.....\$626,000
 Matching Funds:.....\$325,000
 Total Project Amount:.....\$951,000
 Create two new positions to help landowners apply for Farm Bill programs, conservation easements and communicate conservation opportunities to ranchers. Project will increase participation in conservation programs and implementation of regenerative practices on more than 26,000 acres of California rangelands.

Integrating Grazing Management and Riparian Ecosystem Restoration in the Upper Snake (ID)

Grantee: Friends of the Teton River
 Grant Amount:.....\$443,000
 Matching Funds:.....\$512,900
 Total Project Amount:.....\$955,900
 Expand the capacity of partner organizations to provide technical assistance to ranchers in the Upper Snake River in southeast Idaho to develop conservation and management plans integrating grazing management and riparian restoration efforts. Project will develop plans on 3,000 acres and support implementation and integration of improved grazing and riparian habitat enhancement practices on 1,000 acres.