

Summiting the Funding Mountain: Peaks and Valleys Using NRCS to Achieve Healthy Rivers

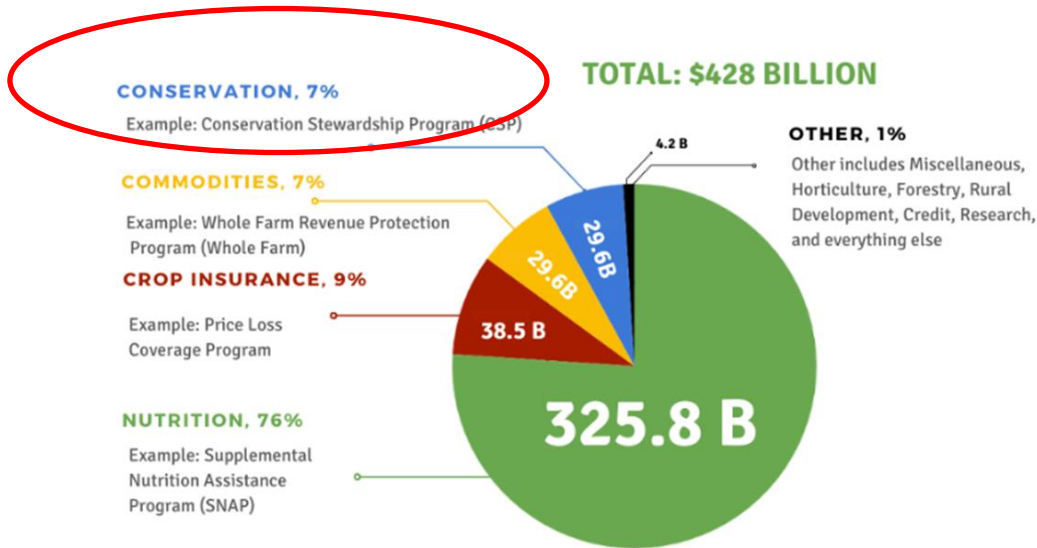
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FARM BILL PROJECTED FUNDING, IN BILLIONS 2019-2023



Source: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

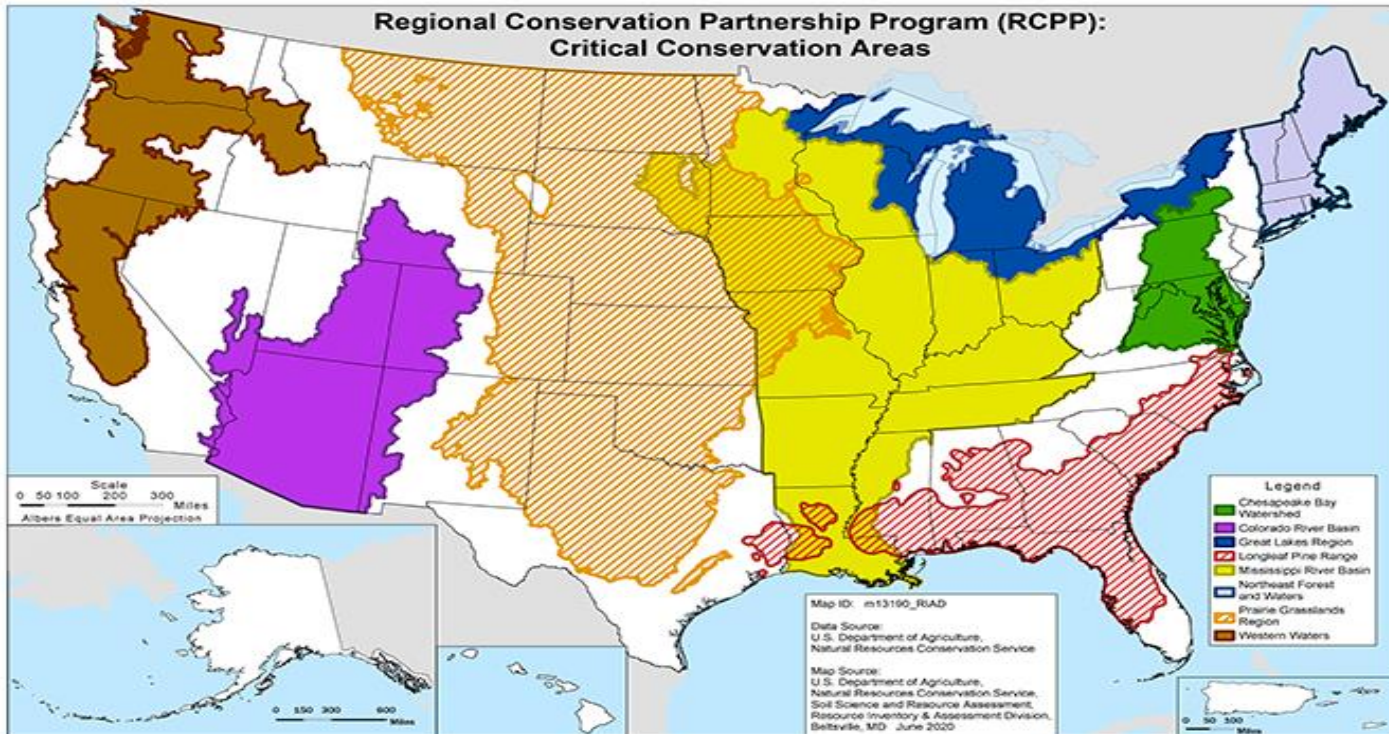
RCPP: Regional Conservation Partnership Program

CIG: Conservation Innovation Grants

Program Mechanics

- Authorized standalone program with \$300 million/year in dedicated funding (up from \$100 million/year in 2014 Farm Bill)
- “Program Contracts” between NRCS and producers rather than covered program contracts such as EQIP contracts, CSP contracts, etc.
- 2 Funding Pools: State/Multistate vs. Critical Conservation Areas
- 2 Award Types: Alternative Funding Arrangements vs. Classic

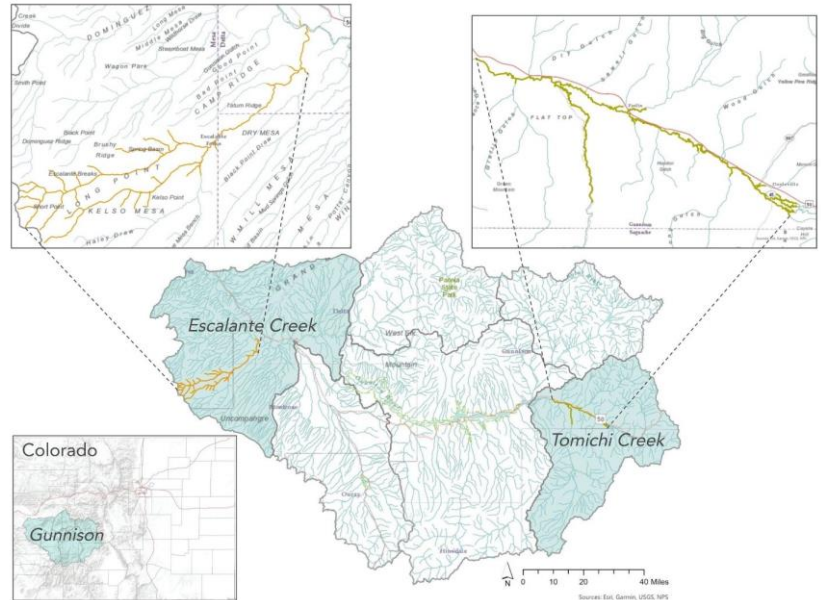
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP): Critical Conservation Areas



Gunnison River Drought Resiliency and Restoration



- 2021 RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangement Project
- Funding Amount: \$822,913
- \$576K FA / \$246K TA.
- Geography: Two Tributaries to the Gunnison River
- Coordination with local NRCS UGRWCD.



Gunnison River Drought Resiliency and Restoration



- Four Priority Resource Concerns
 - Insufficient water/drought
 - Inadequate habitat
 - Soil quality degradation
 - Water quality degradation
- Restore wetlands and riparian areas, improve infrastructure and irrigation water management
- Pay for performance (i.e., irrigation scheduling to support stream flows)
- Remote sensing, and ecological monitoring to report Project Outcomes



Conservation Innovation Grants



- Competitive grants to stimulate development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands
- Public and private sector grantees develop tools, technologies, and strategies to advanced conservation
- Component of the EQIP Program

- **Development and Adoption** of new approaches and technologies
- Yet to prove conservation benefit or prove feasibility they can be scaled-up
- Early-stage projects with no guarantee of project success

- Funding for projects that support innovative approaches that have a **Positive and Known** conservation impact
- Limited testing approaches that have not been adopted by producers but are **ready to be scaled-up.**
- Priority to projects that implement conservation approaches to a range of agricultural operation sizes and types
- NRCS seeks partners with access to producers, can handle technical assistance, get activities on the ground, and evaluate project outcome.

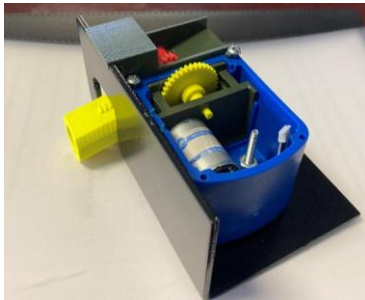
Regional LoRa Networks to Improve High Elevation Flood Irrigation Water Management



- CIG Classic On-Farm Trials Successfully funded in 2021, \$350k
- Work with 8-EQIP eligible participants in Gunnison and San Luis Valley during 2022, 2023, 2024.
- Flood irrigation scheduling, watershed and producer benefits.



Regional LoRa Networks to Improve High Elevation Flood Irrigation Water Management



- Deploy Long-Range Low Power Area Networks (LoRa) Low-cost, high-impact automated irrigation control structures that operate in conjunction with remote sensing networks
- Report on quantified benefits to participants:
 - Production, soil health, labor savings, water savings, increased knowledge



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Extra Slides Beginning

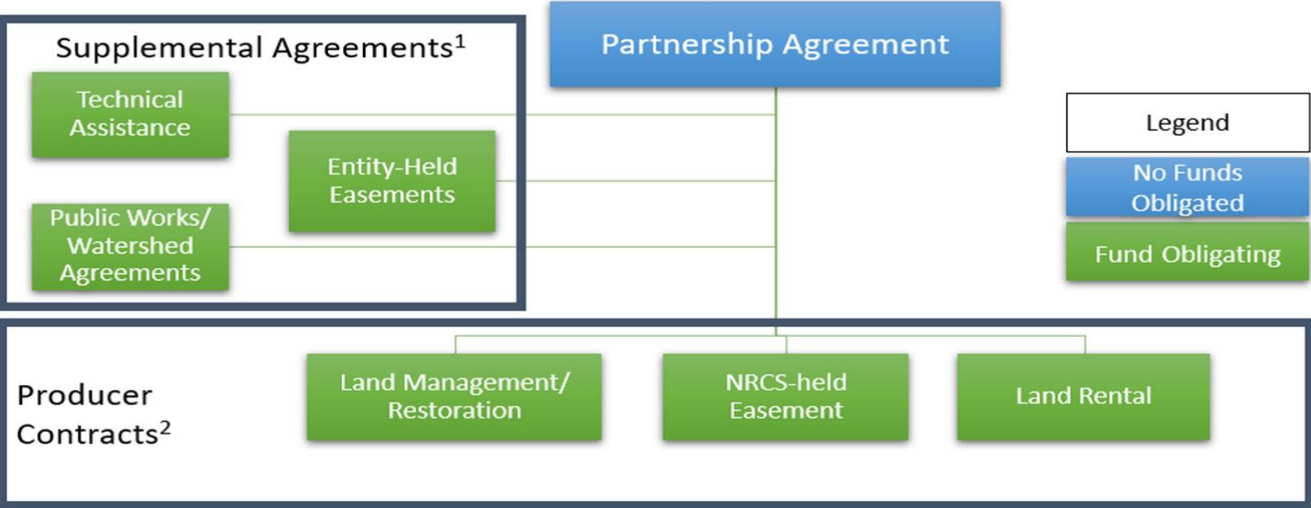


Where's the Money Coming From?



Farm Bill:

- Omnibus package of legislation passed once every 5 years
- 2018 Farm Bill = 12 Titles
 - **Title II- Conservation**
 - **Title VIII- Forestry**



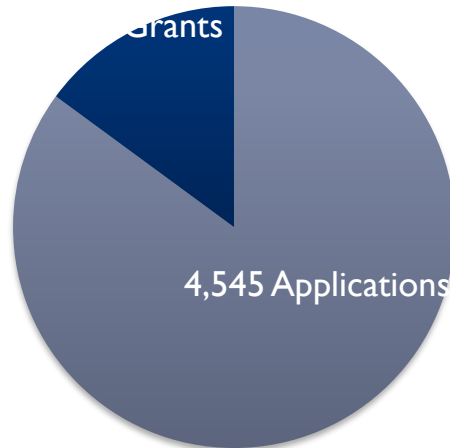
1 – Agreements with partners for public works/watershed activities, technical Assistance, and entity-held easement agreements.

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

Source: USDA NRCS

CIG Classic Proposals FY 2004-2021

17.5% Average
Proposal Success
Rate



■ Proposals Received ■ Proposals Funded

CIG On-Farm Trials Trends



Fiscal Year	Proposals Received	Grants Awarded	Proposal Success	Funding Requested (Millions)	Funding Awarded (Millions)	Funding Success
2019	74	16	22%	\$140.4	\$24.0	17%
2020	101	14	14%	\$183.6	\$24.3	13%
2021	-	18				
Total	175	48	27%	\$324	\$48.3	15%

Program Mechanics

- Partners must develop and report on environmental outcomes
- Funding divided evenly between “Critical Conservation Areas” and “State/Multistate”

RCPP Efficiencies and RCPP Challenges



What Works	Challenges to Navigate
Large, dedicated funding pool (\$300 million)	The portal- increased the burden on partners and NRCS staff
Encourages partnerships between producers and organizations across landscapes and watersheds	Finalizing funding award contracts between partners and NRCS, particularly for TA, is lengthy
Colorado River Basin Critical Conservation Area priorities	Renewal process is not as streamlined as had hoped to be
	Too prescriptive on practices

CIG OFT Efficiencies and Challenges

What Works	Challenges to Navigate
Funding directly to partners, which in turn provide technical assistant and payments to producers	Competitive grant program
Administrative burdens on NRCS staff, partners, and producers is low	Limited national funding
Strong track-record of successful conservation innovations	EQIP eligible producers, NEPA and Cultural resources clearances.

CIG On-Farm Trials vs. CIG Classic



	CIG On-Farm Trials	CIG Classic
Project Duration	3 to 5 years	1 to 3 years
Federal Funding Floor	\$250,000	\$300,000
Federal Funding Ceiling	\$5 million	\$2 million
Match	At least 25%	At least 50%
Funding Pool	\$25 million	\$15 million