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New National Water Quality Initiative Targets Three Watersheds in Mississippi

JACKSON, May 7, 2012 — Acting State Conservationist Al Garner announced the launch of a new National Water Quality Initiative committed to improving three impaired waterways in Mississippi. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will manage the initiative by making funds available to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners in the selected watersheds.

“Water is our greatest natural resources and nothing can survive without it,” Garner said. “The Water Quality Initiative will further NRCS’ partnership efforts to improve water quality using voluntary actions on private lands. This initiative is a focused approach in areas facing significant natural resource challenges. It bolsters the positive results of landscape conservation initiatives NRCS and its partners already have underway.”

Through this effort, eligible producers in select watersheds of the Pearl, Big Sunflower and Tippah rivers will invest in voluntary conservation actions to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities. The selected watersheds were identified with help from state agencies, partners and the NRCS State Technical Committee.

Using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS will provide funding and advice to producers to install conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces in watersheds with impairments where the federal investment can make a difference to improve water quality.

“American farmers are good stewards of the environment, especially when they have the tools they need to protect or improve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality,” NRCS Chief Dave White said. “We look forward to collaborating with producers in key watersheds to help them have a positive impact on streams with impaired water quality.”

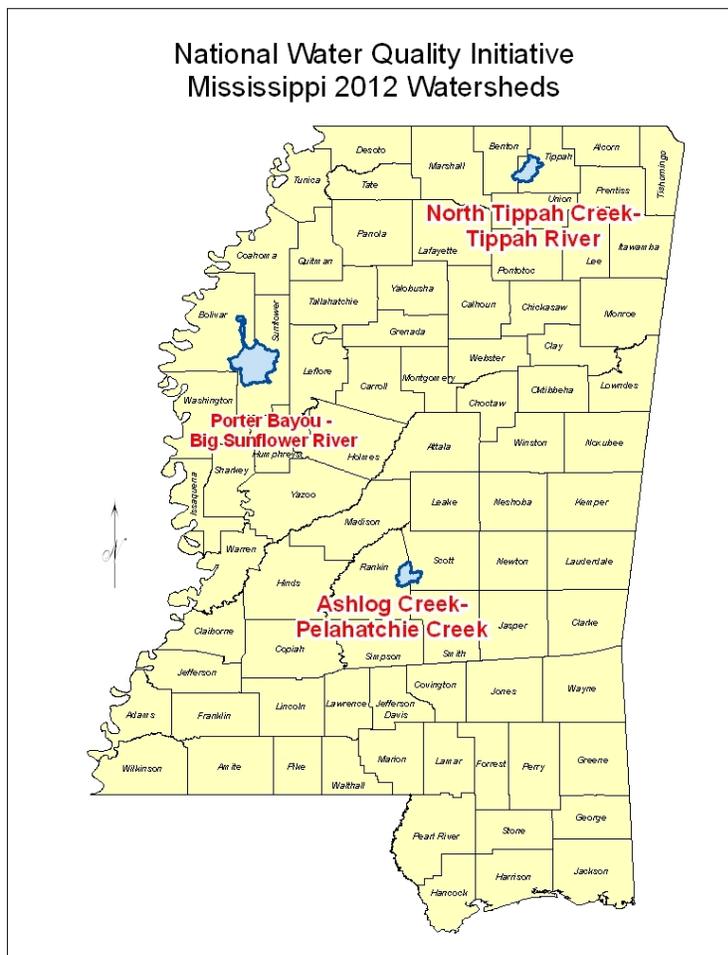
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The three watersheds chosen in Mississippi include Ashlog Creek, a tributary of the Pearl River; Porter Bayou, a tributary of the Big Sunflower River; and North Tippah Creek, a tributary of the Tippah River.

NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance on a continuous basis throughout the year. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located in a selected watershed. All applications for funding consideration, during this fiscal year, must be received by June 15, 2012. This summer, NRCS will notify all applicants of the results and begin developing contracts with selected applicants.

Since 1935, NRCS's nationwide conservation delivery system works with private landowners to put conservation on the ground based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests. For more information about NRCS' programs, initiatives and services in Mississippi, visit us online at www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov.



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