

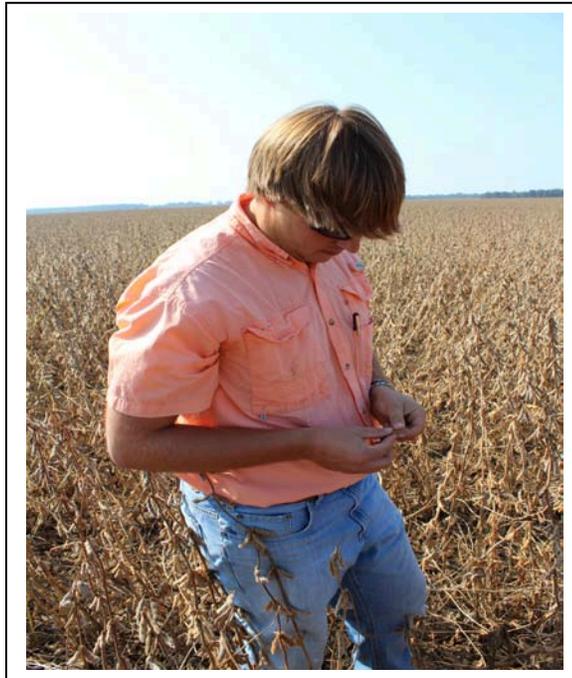


Natural Resources Conservation Service
United States Department of Agriculture

100 W. Capitol Street, Suite 1321
Jackson, Mississippi 39269
Jeannine B. May, Public Affairs Officer
(601) 965-4336, Ext. 134 or jeannine.may@ms.usda.gov
Fax (601) 965-4940, Cell Phone (601) 260-0298
www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Kurt Readus
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
601-965-5205, Kurt.Readus@ms.usda.gov



Funding Available for Delta Ag Producers in Four Key Watersheds

JACKSON, Miss., Feb. 27, 2012 – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is directing Farm Bill funding to four key watersheds in Mississippi's Delta region. NRCS is directing \$7 million to voluntary practices in Mississippi that prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

This funding is a continuation of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative (MRBI), one of NRCS' landscape initiatives that aim to reduce runoff to tributaries of the Mississippi River.

"USDA is working aggressively to improve the health of the Mississippi River basin," Acting State Conservationist Al Garner said. "The funding announced today will help producers implement a system of conservation practices that will control soil erosion, improve soil quality, and provide wildlife habitat."

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For 2012, the following watersheds were chosen for funding: Big Sunflower River, Cold Water, Deer Creek-Steele Bayou and Upper Yazoo.

The deadline for applying for assistance during the first application cut-off period is **March 9, 2012**.

Across the U.S., NRCS is dedicating \$22 million this year through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) to improve the water quality of streams and rivers in the basin. This money will be used to put conservation practices on the ground through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

Additionally, \$20 million will be distributed through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP). Partners will also contribute additional funds.

CCPI funds will go to all four watersheds; WREP funds will go to the Big Sunflower River watershed.

These multi-year watershed projects were selected through a competitive process. A listing of the projects by state, and additional information about the MRBI, are available at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_overview.html.

This initiative assists NRCS and partners expand their capacity to improve water quality throughout the basin. CCPI will use a conservation systems approach to manage nitrogen and phosphorous, which will minimize runoff and reduce downstream nutrient loading. WREP will encourage strategic placement of wetland restoration projects.

NRCS encourages landowners, farmers, and producers to visit their local conservation district office and apply for assistance. Find your local USDA Service Center at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=MS&agency=NRCS>.

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