



BELLE FOURCHE RIVER

WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

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USDA's NRCS Invests in Partner-Driven Conservation Project in the Belle Fourche River Watershed in South Dakota

Belle Fourche, SD, April 16, 2020 – The Belle Fourche River Watershed Partnership (BFRWP) in South Dakota has been awarded \$1.6 million of Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding that was announced by the USDA's Natural Resources Service (NRCS) Chief Matthew Lohr on Thursday, April 16, 2020. The BFRWP, the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SD DENR), and Belle Fourche Irrigation District (BFID) are contributing another \$1.6 million of partner funding to the project. More information will be available in May at the BFRWP's website at www.bellefourchewatershed.org.

The BFRWP is the lead partner for the project that includes the NRCS, SD DENR and BFID. The project will work with agricultural producers to convert flood irrigated fields to more efficient irrigation systems to continue improving irrigation efficiency and soil health. One way producers will be able to accomplish these efficiencies is to convert flood irrigated fields to irrigation under center pivots. By increasing the water efficiency at the field level, the project will have effects throughout the community. This project will invest \$3.2 million into the area's economy through local contractors and vendors, including supplies such as the irrigation pipe and center pivots. Besides economic benefits, there will also be environmental benefits, for example, the installation of center pivots will decrease agricultural demand for water, which will increase the water supply available in Orman Dam (Belle Fourche Reservoir) for wildlife and recreation.

The USDA's NRCS announced that it is investing \$4 million in SD through its Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). "I'm excited to announce the first RCPP awards under the 2018 Farm Bill," said Jeff Zimprich, State Conservationist in SD. "Through collaboration and aligning our resources toward a common goal, we're making an impact for natural resource conservation that could never have been realized on our own." RCPP uses a partner-driven approach to fund innovative solutions to natural resource challenges. Through RCPP, NRCS and partners work together with landowners and producers to implement a variety of conservation activities that offer impactful and measurable outcomes. These projects will support diverse agricultural and natural resource objectives, from helping farmers and ranchers improve water quality, soil health and drought resiliency to protecting drinking water and enhancing wildlife habitat.

[View this multimedia story for a full list of projects.](#)

RCPP is now a stand-alone Farm Bill program with \$300 million annually available for partner-driven projects. In addition to the general RCPP projects announced today, NRCS has already awarded more than \$50 million for 18 renewals of 2014 Farm Bill projects. A separate RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) funding announcement is currently open until May 18. Since 2015, RCPP has combined \$1 billion in NRCS investments with close to \$2 billion in partner dollars to implement conservation practices nationwide. There are currently 341 active RCPP projects and close to 2,000 RCPP partners.

[Read more](#) about the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.