

[Billing Code: 3410-16]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Commodity Credit Corporation

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Partnership Initiative

AGENCY: Commodity Credit Corporation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Department of Agriculture (USDA).

ACTION: Notice of request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces the availability of up to \$1,000,000 through the Conservation Partnership Initiative (CPI), under authorities provided by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935. The CPI offers a mechanism to foster partnerships that will focus technical and financial resources on conservation priorities in watersheds of special significance or other geographic areas of environmental sensitivity. The CPI is administered in two phases. First, applicants apply through NRCS State Conservationists for project planning funds. Proposals are evaluated and selected for funding by the NRCS Chief. Following successful completion of the project planning phase, project implementation begins using funding secured or provided by project partners. CPI projects are expected to secure implementation funds from a wide range of potential partners from local, State, and Federal governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations that have a history of working with agricultural producers. Project implementation funding sources will be identified in the project plan.

This notice announces the availability of up to \$1,000,000 in FY 2004 for the planning phase of CPI projects. CPI awards will be selected through a nationwide competition. Applications are requested from State and local agencies, Indian Tribes, and non-governmental organizations that have a history of working with agricultural producers. This notice sets forth the applicant and project eligibility requirements, application procedures, and evaluation criteria for proposed projects.

DATES: Applications must be received in the NRCS State Office in the State where the proposed project is located by 5 p.m. (local time) on September 10, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Written applications should be sent to the NRCS State Conservationist in the State where the proposed project is primarily located. Multi-State proposals must be submitted to all relevant State Conservationists. See the Appendix for the list of NRCS State Conservationists, or consult the NRCS Web site at

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/organization/regions.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kari Cohen, Financial Assistance Programs Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 14th and Independence Ave. SW., Room 5239-S, Washington, DC 20250. Phone: (202) 720-2335; Facsimile: (202) 720-4265; Email: cpi@usda.gov Subject: Conservation Partnership Initiative RFP; or consult the NRCS Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cpi> .

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER: 10.902

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Background

Of the critical natural resource concerns facing agriculture and the environment, many require solutions that look beyond the borders of individual farms and ranches, or the common ways that natural resource conservation programs are implemented. Changes in land use, industry structure, and geographic concentration have led to environmental degradation in some locations that may be best addressed on a watershed or regional scale. CPI is established to encourage the formation of partnerships to devise and implement watershed or regional solutions to pressing natural resource concerns associated with agriculture and rural settings. Commonly, watershed or regional scale environmental problems are addressed using one or more natural resource conservation programs without the benefit of a well-planned partnership arrangement that identifies the resources that each partner will bring to the project. CPI is designed to encourage the formation of strong, defined partnerships to address watershed or regional scale conservation priorities. In this way, CPI fills a gap in the NRCS conservation program portfolio while maintaining NRCS' commitment to locally led, partnership-driven conservation efforts.

Section 1243(f) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3843(f)), as added by section 2003 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-171) (2002 Farm Bill) authorized a feature called Partnerships and Cooperation. Through Partnerships and Cooperation, the Secretary of Agriculture may “enter into stewardship agreements with State and local agencies, Indian tribes, and non-governmental

organizations and to designate special projects, as recommended by the State Conservationist, after consultation with the State technical committee, to enhance technical and financial assistance provided to owners, operators, and producers to address natural resource issues related to agricultural production.” NRCS believes it can fulfill the intent of the discretionary Partnerships and Cooperation feature of the 2002 Farm Bill, using its existing authorities, through the CPI. NRCS will evaluate the conservation partnership efforts conducted through the CPI to determine to what extent the discretionary Partnerships and Cooperation should be implemented through rulemaking in the future.

B. Availability of Funding

Effective on the publication date of this notice, NRCS announces the availability of up to \$1,000,000 for the Conservation Partnership Initiative. State and local agencies, Indian Tribes, and non-governmental organizations that have a history of working with agricultural producers may apply.

Selection of CPI projects in four conservation priority categories will be based on the criteria established in this notice. Applicants may request up to \$200,000 (but not less than \$100,000) in funding through this RFP. Applicants must provide a 1:1 match using non-NRCS funding. Up to 100 percent of the match may come from in-kind contributions.

CPI funds are to be used solely for the completion of the project planning phase, including the compiling of natural resource and environmental information, conducting public input and outreach efforts, development of a project plan, and the establishment of partnership agreements. The development of CPI plans must comply with all relevant

Federal regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as cultural resource preservation requirements. The intent is for the project plan to result in project implementation, to be carried out using funding secured or provided by project partners. CPI projects are expected to secure implementation funds from a wide range of potential partners from local, State, and Federal governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations. Project implementation funding sources will be identified in the project plan.

II. Definitions

For the purposes of this notice, the following definitions apply:

Beginning Farmer or Rancher means those producers as defined in 7 CFR 1466.3.

Chief means the Chief of NRCS, USDA.

CPI Review Board consists of the NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment, one Regional Assistant Chief, and one NRCS National Headquarters Division Director. The CPI Review Board scores proposals and makes recommendations for CPI project awards to the Chief.

Eligible Project means a project that meets the eligibility requirements as defined in this notice.

Indian Tribes means those tribes as defined in 7 CFR 1466.3.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher means those producers as defined in 7 CFR 1466.3.

Project Director means the individual responsible for the direction and management of a project as designated in the application.

State Conservationist means an employee of the NRCS delegated the responsibility for the NRCS programs and activities in a particular State, Caribbean Area, or Pacific Basin Area.

III. Overview of the Conservation Partnership Initiative

The purpose of CPI is to foster conservation partnerships that focus technical and financial resources on critical natural resource issues in watersheds of special significance or other geographic areas of environmental sensitivity. NRCS is soliciting applications from entities that would coordinate a CPI project, including State and local governments and agencies; Indian Tribes; and non-governmental organizations that have a history of working with agricultural producers. The initiative may be implemented and applications accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Basin Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

CPI applications must adhere to the CPI objectives and address one or more of four conservation priorities identified for this first year of the initiative. The four conservation priorities are: terrestrial and freshwater aquatic wildlife habitat, coastal resources, livestock nutrient management, and minor/specialty crop pest management (see Section IV for more details). NRCS intends to select as one of the CPI awards a proposal that addresses these conservation priorities as they impact limited resource or beginning farmers and ranchers, or Tribes.

Complete applications must be submitted to the appropriate State Conservationist. Within each State, the State Technical Committee (or a subcommittee thereof) will evaluate submissions based on the criteria for proposal evaluation found in this notice.

The State Technical Committee will make recommendations for proposal selection to the State Conservationist. The State Conservationist may concur with and forward up to two proposals to the Chief for funding consideration. The forwarding of a proposal to the Chief indicates the State Conservationist's intent to provide financial and technical assistance for project implementation, as described in the project application, following successful completion of the project planning phase. Future obligation of NRCS conservation program funds is contingent on availability of funds.

Because NRCS is encouraging proposals that will address significant conservation priorities in a watershed or geographic area, it is anticipated that some proposals will cross State or Tribal boundaries. In this situation, the application must be submitted to all relevant State Conservationists for consideration. The State Conservationists will coordinate their review and consideration of such applications and must jointly concur with an application before forwarding it to the Chief. A State Conservationist may be party to one multi-State proposal forwarded to the Chief, in addition to one proposal that a State Conservationist may select independently.

Applications forwarded by State Conservationists to the Chief will be evaluated by a CPI Review Board according to the criteria for proposal evaluation identified in this notice. The CPI Review Board will make recommendations for awards to the Chief. Final selections will be made by the Chief. For applications selected by the Chief, CPI funds will be allocated to the appropriate State Conservationist who will make the award to the Project Director through a grant agreement. Grant agreements awarding funds will be signed by the Project Director and the appropriate State Conservationist. For multi-

state proposals, NRCS will designate a sponsoring NRCS State Conservationist that will be responsible for administering the grant agreement.

The development of CPI plans must comply with all relevant Federal regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as well as cultural resource preservation requirements. Following successful completion of the planning phase, the Project Director submits the final project plan to the State Conservationist(s) and all other partners of the project. After approval of the plan by the project partners, project implementation begins using funding secured or provided by the partnership.

Because CPI is fostering partnerships to address significant natural resource and environmental concerns, it is anticipated that a variety of funding sources will be needed to implement the project plan and meet the goals of a project. Implementation funding may be secured from such sources as local, State, Tribal, or Federal governments, or from private organizations.

IV. CPI Objectives and Conservation Priorities

A majority of NRCS conservation program funding goes directly to producers or small groups of producers. NRCS recognizes the need for multiple approaches to natural resource conservation, and is committed to using various means to assist producers in meeting their natural resource objectives and in complying with local, State, and Federal environmental regulations. NRCS believes that fostering partnerships through a locally led process is critical to addressing natural resource concerns that are watershed-based or regional in scope. Establishment of the CPI is a reflection of this belief.

A. Objectives

Applications must describe projects that are consistent with the following four CPI objectives. CPI projects must encourage:

1. producers to cooperate in the installation and maintenance of conservation practices that affect multiple agricultural operations;
2. producers to share information and technical and financial resources;
3. cumulative conservation benefits in geographic areas; and,
4. the development and demonstration of innovative conservation methods.

B. Conservation Priorities

Following are the four conservation priorities for the initial year of CPI.

Applications must address one of these priorities.

1. Terrestrial and freshwater aquatic wildlife habitat. Projects under this natural resource concern should address at least one of the following sub-topics:
 - i. Freshwater aquatic habitat restoration;
 - ii. Protection and enhancement of habitat for species with declining populations;
 - iii. Creation of wildlife habitat corridors.
2. Coastal resources. Projects under this natural resource concern should address at least one of the following sub-topics related to our nation's coastal areas:
 - i. Eutrophication of coastal water bodies;
 - ii. Coral reef degradation;
 - iii. Fisheries habitat enhancement and restoration.
3. Livestock nutrient management. Projects under this natural resource concern should address at least one of the following sub-topics:

- i. Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) development and implementation;
 - ii. Sustainable animal agricultural systems;
 - iii. Animal waste utilization.
4. Minor/specialty crop pest management. Projects under this natural resource concern should address at least one of the following sub-topics:
- i. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) development and implementation;
 - ii. Integration of environmental stewardship with producer production objectives.
- C. Limited resource and beginning farmers and ranchers, and tribes

NRCS intends to select as one of the CPI awards a proposal that addresses the conservation priorities, as identified in paragraph B, of limited resource or beginning farmers and ranchers, or Tribes. NRCS encourages applications that address the natural resource conservation needs of these historically underserved farmers and ranchers. In the event that no proposal of this type merits selection, an additional award will be selected from the general pool of applicants.

V. Examples of Eligible Activities

Following are two examples of projects that would be eligible for funding through CPI. These examples are intended for illustration only, and do not represent any bias on the part of NRCS in soliciting for, or making awards to, any particular type of project:

1. Two State departments of natural resources prepare a project plan along with partners including two Indian Tribes, several Federal agencies, and two regional non-governmental organizations, to address declining wildlife habitat for two bird species with declining populations. The plan outlines a strategy to use various

local, State, and Federal conservation programs to engage producers in restoring wildlife habitat and purchasing conservation easements on lands valuable to wildlife.

2. A regional non-governmental organization facilitates development of a project plan that creates a partnership comprised of a State agriculture agency, a State environmental agency, a land-grant university, and numerous non-governmental organizations and Federal agencies, to address livestock waste issues in a geographical region with high soil nutrient levels. The plan outlines an implementation effort that would engage producers and use funds from various sources to implement innovative conservation practices to reduce livestock waste, employ feed management practices, and reduce air and odor emissions from livestock operations.

VI. Statutory Authority, Eligibility Requirements, and Timeline

A. Statutory Authority

The CPI is a component of the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) program established under authorities provided by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935, 16 U.S.C. 590a et seq.

NRCS conducts conservation planning at two scales: 1) areawide conservation planning; and, 2) farm- or field-level conservation planning. Areawide plans are comprehensive plans for a watershed or other large geographic area. Areawide plan development follows a locally led effort that considers all Federal, State, and local conservation programs, and private sector programs, singly and in combination, as tools to solve natural resource concerns. NRCS generally uses the CTA program to conduct

areawide planning. Farm- or field-level conservation planning generally occurs upon the completion of an areawide plan, and are performed for the farms (or fields) located within the scope of the areawide plan. NRCS may use the CTA program to conduct farm- or field-level conservation plans, except when a conservation program authorized under Title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985 (1985 Farm Bill), as amended, is used to implement conservation practices; in those instances, only technical assistance funds authorized by the 1985 Farm Bill conservation program are used. CPI will fund conservation planning efforts falling under the first category, the areawide (watershed) level, but not at the farm- or field-level. NRCS recognizes that CPI project plans may identify a need to use 1985 Farm Bill conservation program funding for the project implementation phase. CPI funding, however, may not be used for planning or technical assistance at the farm- or field-level when a 1985 Farm Bill conservation program is selected to implement conservation practices.

B. Eligibility requirements

CPI applicants must be a State or local agency, Federally-recognized Indian tribe, or non-governmental organization that has a history of working with agricultural producers. Individuals and Federal agencies, while not eligible to apply for CPI funds, are invited to participate as partners in CPI projects.

NRCS and the project partners are responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS encourages the use of technical service providers to assist with project implementation.

C. Timeline

The length of the project planning phase must be included in the application, and may not exceed 18 months. There is no limit on the duration of the project implementation phase, but applicants must include an anticipated timeline and a project completion date in the application.

VII. Application and Submission Information

A. Application materials

Applications must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for a CPI award. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. NRCS recognizes that information related to the project implementation phase will not be fully known until the project planning is completed; however, the applicant is asked to provide the projected or anticipated information, to the best of their ability, at time of submitting the application. Applications must be submitted in the following format:

1. Cover sheet: Applications must use Standard Form 424 as the cover sheet for each project proposal. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sf424.pdf> or obtained from a NRCS State Office [a list of NRCS State Offices is provided in the appendix of this announcement].

2. Project abstract: Each proposal must contain a summary of not more than two pages that provides the following:

- a. Project title;
- b. Project objectives and scope;

- c. Summary of the work to be performed during the project planning phase and anticipated in the project implementation phase;
- d. Name of the State Conservationist(s) cooperating on the project;
- e. Names and affiliations of project partners and collaborators, both in the planning phase and anticipated in the implementation phase;
- f. Estimated number of agricultural producers that are anticipated to be involved in the project implementation phase;
- g. Duration of project planning phase and anticipated duration of the project implementation phase (beginning and ending dates);
- h. Total cost of the project planning phase and the anticipated needs during the project implementation phase;
- i. Total Federal funds requested for the planning project phase; and,
- j. Name, address, telephone, email, and other contact information for the Project Director.

3. Project description: The CPI project must be completely and accurately described in no more than 15 typewritten, double-spaced pages, and include the following:

- a. Project background: Describe the history and need for the proposed project. Describe how this project will provide environmental benefits superior to those of past or current efforts and how the partnership established through the CPI will improve the likelihood for project success.
- b. Project objectives: Be specific, using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the purpose and objectives of both the project planning phase and

the project implementation phase. State how the project objectives are consistent with the four CPI objectives described above.

c. Project methods: Describe clearly how the planning phase of the project will be carried out. Detail the activities and partners required to complete the planning phase. List the conservation programs and describe the conservation practices required to implement the project.

d. Scope: Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, animal units, etc.) of the project area, including a description of the environmental degradation the project will address and the causes of the environmental degradation. Provide a map of the project area;

e. Project partnership: List all project partners and their roles in the project. Describe how the funds for the planning phase will be used to build and strengthen the project partnership. Estimate the number of producers whose participation will be required to successfully implement the project. Describe the outreach efforts that will be used to promote the project to producers and encourage them to participate;

f. Project milestones and timeline: Provide a table listing project milestones, timeframes, and significant actions through project completion. The milestones and timeline should reflect both phases of the project;

g. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project;

h. Anticipated results and benefits: Describe the anticipated natural resource conservation results and environmental benefits to be derived from the proposed

activities of the project implementation phase, and explain how the results will be measured. Be as specific and quantitative as possible. Describe anticipated environmental benefits and identify project beneficiaries, for example, agricultural producers by type or region or sector; rural communities; municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.

i. Limited resource and beginning farmers and ranchers, and tribes: To receive special consideration for selection in this category, describe how the project addresses one or more of the conservation priorities, as identified in paragraph IV.B., as it impacts limited resource or beginning farmers and ranchers, or Tribes.

4. Budget Information: The budget section of the application should be prepared in two components. For the project planning phase, use Standard Form 424A to document budget needs and provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project planning phase. Standard Form 424A can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sf424a.pdf>. Itemize the costs necessary for successful completion of the planning phase of the project, including the amount of CPI funds requested. Indicate the total amount (both cash and in-kind) of non-NRCS matching support that will be available for the planning phase. In the budget narrative, identify the source, the amount, and the nature (cash or in-kind) of the matching funds. In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel may comprise the entirety of the matching funds required for the project planning phase.

For the project implementation phase, provide a list of anticipated Federal, State, and local conservation programs that may be used to implement the project, the

anticipated level of funding from each program, and the anticipated level of funding from non-governmental partners. If possible, provide a breakdown by Federal fiscal year (i.e., October 1 through September 30).

The forwarding of a proposal to the Chief indicates the State Conservationist's intent to provide financial and technical assistance for project implementation. Future obligation of NRCS conservation program funds is contingent on availability of funds.

Certain costs, such as entertainment costs, may not be covered using CPI funds. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the contact indicated above. Indirect cost allowances will be governed by the following:

Non-profit entities—OMB circular A-122

Educational Institutions—OMB circular A-21

State and local governments—OMB circular A-87

Administrative requirements—OMB circular A-110

Grants and Agreements—OMB circular A-102 and 7 CFR 3015

5. State Conservationist's statement and signature: Provide a signed statement from the State Conservationist in support of the proposed project. The statement should indicate the State Conservationist's support for the project; a commitment to working collaboratively with project partners to achieve the project objectives; and, intent to provide financial and technical assistance funding for the project implementation effort, contingent on availability of funds. Future obligation of NRCS conservation program funds is contingent on availability of funds. Multi-State proposals must include the signatures and indication of concurrence of all State Conservationists involved in the

project. *NOTE:* This item must be added to the application after it is selected by the State Conservationist to be forwarded to the Chief.

6. Supporting documentation: Provide any additional information necessary or useful to describe the project. The applicant should present any information that would emphasize the value of the project, its merits, and its contribution toward fostering partnerships to further agricultural conservation.

7. Certifications: All applications must include a signed Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. SF 424B may be found at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/sf424b.pdf>, or contact a State NRCS office.

Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 Code of Federal Register (CFR):

a. Part 3017, Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3017_04.html);

b. Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3018_04.html); and,

c. Part 3021, Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance) (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3021_04.html).

B. Submission of Application

1. General submission information (the following information applies to submissions at both the State and National levels): Incomplete applications will not be considered. Applications are to be typewritten on 8.5" x 11" white paper, double spaced, and on one side only. The text of the proposal must be typewritten in a font no smaller

than 12-point, with one-inch margins. Applicants must submit one signed original and one copy of each project application. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left hand corner. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a 3.5-inch diskette or CD. Electronic files must be in either Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat (pdf) format. Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted. A proposal's postmark date is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS. Receipt of all applications forwarded to the Chief will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses. If the applicant's e-mail address is not indicated, NRCS will acknowledge receipt of the application by letter. If the applicant does not receive an acknowledgment within 30 days of the National Headquarters submission deadline, please contact the program contact listed above under For Further Information.

2. Submission to the State office: Applications must be received at the appropriate NRCS State Office(s) by 5 p.m. (local time) on September 10, 2004. A list of State Offices and addresses appears at the end of this notice and is available on the NRCS Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/organization/regions.html>.

3. Submission to National Headquarters: Proposals selected at the State level must be forwarded to the address listed above under "For Further Information" by 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on October 11, 2004. Submissions must include the signature of the appropriate State Conservationist(s) as indicated in paragraph VII.A.5. above.

VIII. Application Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt by the NRCS State Conservationist(s), applications will be evaluated and ranked by the State Technical Committee, or a subcommittee thereof, using the criteria for proposal evaluation identified in this notice. The State Technical Committee will forward the result of its review to the State Conservationist, who will choose up to two proposals to be forwarded to the Chief. A State Conservationist may sign on as a partner to one State proposal and one multi-State proposal. Multi-State proposals forwarded to the Chief must have the signature and concurrence of each State Conservationist who is party to the proposal.

All applications forwarded to the Chief will be screened for completeness. Incomplete applications, including those that do not meet eligibility requirements, will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

Applications meeting the requirements of this notice will be scored and ranked by a CPI Review Board using the criteria for proposal evaluation identified below. Ranked applications will be forwarded to the Chief with the recommendations of the CPI Review Board. The Chief will make final award selections. Applicants who have been selected will be notified by mail within 10 business days of the final selection. Applicants whose proposals have not been selected will be notified within 15 business days of the final selection.

IX. Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

The following four criteria will be used to evaluate project proposals at the State and National levels. Each of the four criteria carries equal weight.

A. Purpose and goals

1. The purpose and goals of the project are clearly stated;
2. The project adheres to the CPI objectives described in this notice;
3. The project addresses at least one of the CPI conservation priorities; and,
4. There is clear and significant potential for a positive and measurable outcome.

B. Soundness of planning phase

1. The planning phase is based on a locally led, watershed or geographic

approach that details a strategy for:

- i. collection of information from local individuals and communities;
- ii. inventorying and mapping of natural resource and environmental conditions;
- iii. assessing the appropriate conditions;
- iv. identifying the problems, concerns, and opportunities;
- v. determining the goals and objectives of the local individuals and communities;
- vi. formulating alternative solutions; and,
- vii. deciding on the alternative to pursue.

2. The outreach strategy will likely generate local interest and participation.

C. Soundness of implementation phase

1. The project will build on existing conservation efforts to enhance environmental benefits beyond those achieved using traditional methods.

2. The implementation strategy is consistent with the planning phase approach.
3. There is a good likelihood that the project will attain its goals and objectives.
4. The project leverages NRCS conservation programs with other partner

contributions to achieve enhanced environmental results.

D. Project management:

1. The proposal has clear milestones and timelines, designated staff, and demonstrates collaboration and partnership.
2. The project staff has the relevant expertise needed to do the work.
3. The budget request is reasonable and adequately justified.
4. Project partners provide cost-sharing matches and additional resources for project implementation that leverage the Federal investment.

X. Grant Agreement

NRCS will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in CPI. The agreement only applies to the planning phase and will include:

- A. The complete project proposal identifying all of the project partners, including the project director and the participating State Conservationist(s);
- B. Project timelines and expected project completion date;
- C. Project progress and budget reporting requirements;
- D. Project funding;
- E. Requests for advance of funds or reimbursement;
- F. The role of NRCS and all partners in the project;
- G. Reporting requirements;
- H. Procedures to make changes in project plans; and,
- I. Other requirements and terms deemed necessary by NRCS to protect the interests of the United States.

XI. Project Evaluation and Project Plan.

A. Project evaluation

CPI funding recipients will be required to provide a progress report midway through the planning phase, and to submit a project plan at the end of the planning phase. Following commencement of the project implementation phase, annual reports must be submitted and a final report must be submitted at the conclusion of the project. All reports and plans are submitted to the appropriate State Conservationist(s) and the NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs. The reports must include the status of the project, progress that is being made to meet the project goals and objectives, and an evaluation of the project, including lessons learned. These reports are intended to assist NRCS evaluate the CPI and to assess whether changes and improvements can be made in NRCS conservation programs and methods of delivering conservation programs.

B. Project plan

The project plan must be submitted to the appropriate State Conservationist(s) and the NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs upon completion of the project planning phase. The project plan must include an update to the information requested in paragraphs VII.A.2. through VII.A.6. of this notice, while incorporating the results of the planning phase.

Signed in Washington, DC, on _____

BRUCE I. KNIGHT

Vice President

Commodity Credit Corporation

Chief

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Appendix

Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservationists

Alabama: Robert N. Jones, 3381 Skyway Drive, Post Office Box 311, Auburn, AL 36830; phone: (334) 887-4500; fax: (334) 887-4552; robert.jones@al.usda.gov

Alaska: Shirley Gammon, Atrium Building, Suite 100, 800 West Evergreen, Atrium Building, Suite 100, Palmer, AK 99645-6539; phone: (907) 761-7760; fax: (907) 761-7790; sgammon@ak.nrcs.usda.gov

Arizona: Michael Somerville, Suite 800, 3003 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85012-2945; phone: (602) 280-8808; fax: (602) 280-8809 or 8805; msomervi@az.nrcs.usda.gov

Arkansas: Kalven L. Trice, Federal Building, Room 3416, 700 West Capitol Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72201-3228; phone: (501) 301-3100; fax: (501) 301-3194; kalven.trice@ar.usda.gov

California: Charles W. Bell, Suite 4164, 430 G Street, Davis, California 95616-4164; phone: (530) 792-5600; fax: (530) 792-5790; charles.bell@ca.usda.gov

Colorado: James Allen Green, Room E200C, 655 Parfet Street, Lakewood, CO 80215-5521; phone: (720) 544-2810; fax: (720) 544-2965; allen.green@co.usda.gov

Connecticut: Margo L. Wallace, 344 Merrow Road, Tolland, Connecticut 06084; phone: (860) 871-4011; fax: (860) 871-4054; margo.wallace@ct.usda.gov

Delaware: Virginia Murphy, Suite 101, 1203 College Park Drive, Suite 101, Dover, DE 19904-8713; phone: (302) 678-4160; fax: (302) 678-0843; ginger.murphy@de.usda.gov

Florida: T. Niles Glasgow, 2614 N.W. 43rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606-6611, or Post Office Box 141510, Gainesville, FL 32606-6611; phone: (352) 338-9500; fax: (352) 338-9574; nils.glasgow@fl.usda.gov

Georgia: Leonard Jordan, Federal Building, Stop 200, 355 East Hancock Avenue, Athens, GA 30601-2769; phone: (706) 546-2272; fax: (706) 546-2120; leonard.jordan@ga.usda.gov

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