

Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture

Funding Available for SWCDs

BWSR is offering more than \$2.5 million in federal grant funding to soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) to support climate-smart agricultural practices including additional soil health-related technical assistance. BWSR anticipates selecting up to 10 districts for these grants.

This funding is available through the Alliance to Advance Climate Smart Agriculture, a national USDA-funded pilot program led by Virginia Tech University (formerly known as the RIPE100 program) to support landowner adoption of climate-smart practices. During the three-year pilot program, a total of \$80 million will be available to partners in Minnesota, Virginia, Arkansas and North Dakota for program administration and direct financial incentives for producers.

Program summary

Through the pilot program, farmers and ranchers in participating districts will be eligible to receive \$100 per acre or animal unit by voluntarily implementing practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve soil health and improve water quality. Up to \$13 million is expected to be available to producers in Minnesota for these practices. Producers can enroll up to 160 acres or animal units for a two-year period, and will receive payments directly from Virginia Tech, with technical assistance and support from the participating SWCDs.

By proving the value of climate-smart practices, this pilot program has the potential to serve as a national model. Awarded districts will have an opportunity to lead the state and the nation in implementing this one-of-a-kind pilot to compensate producers based on the multiple benefits of their stewardship practices.



Cover crops grow between rows of harvested corn on a Goodhue County farm.



Cattle graze on a family farm in southeast Crow Wing County.

Equity focus

Underserved producers will be eligible for additional equity payments. This category includes socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers, women producers, veteran producers, small producers and producers of specialty crops.

Conservation practices

Qualifying practices applicable to Minnesota will include:

- **Crop practices:**
 - Cover crops;
 - no-till;
 - reduced till;
 - nutrient management, including precision nutrient management;
 - conservation crop rotation;
 - silvopasture;
 - riparian forest buffer;
 - riparian herbaceous cover;
 - pasture and hay land planting;
 - tree and shrub establishment.
- **Livestock practices:**
 - Comprehensive nutrient and manure management planning and implementation;
 - roofs and covers;
 - waste separation facility;
 - feed management to reduce enteric emissions;
 - prescribed grazing;
 - nutrient management;
 - silvopasture.

Minnesota partners

BWSR will work closely with the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) and other partners, including the Environmental Initiative, the Minnesota Farmers Union, the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association, and the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition. National partners include the National Black Growers Council, the Keystone Policy Center, the Sustainable Food Lab, Supporters of Agricultural Research, and the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Contacts

Suzanne Rhees, Special Projects Coordinator

Suzanne.rhees@state.mn.us

651-539-2586

Jennifer Hahn, Federal Conservation Programs Coordinator

Jennifer.hahn@state.mn.us

651-396-6043