



Bi-State Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Fact Sheet

Project Name: Livestock in Harmony with Bi-State Sage-Grouse
Nevada and California Natural Resources Conservation Service

September 2017

Background Information: What is RCPP?

- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was created as part of the 2014 Farm Bill. It is not itself a fund, but a national program that provides additional funding to specific regions and projects through existing funding sources.
- The purpose of RCPP is to demonstrate the power of well-designed, public-private partnerships to maximize the impact of federal conservation programs.
- RCPP provides assistance to willing agricultural producers who want to complete projects that address high-priority national concerns, such as: improving the nation's water quality, combatting drought, enhancing soil health, supporting wildlife habitat, and protecting agricultural viability.
- RCPP funding is voluntary, and must be applied for.
- RCPP is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- RCPP funding is entirely separate from funds allocated annually to each state by NRCS.
- In December 2016, the USDA announced that it will invest \$225 million in 88 conservation projects for fiscal year 2017 – of which “Livestock in Harmony with Bi-State Sage-Grouse” (awarded \$8 million) is one.
- Landowners can apply for RCPP funding through existing voluntary, incentive-based programs: in this case, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP).
- Funds provided to an approved RCPP partnership are available for five years.

What is the Livestock in Harmony with Bi-State Sage-Grouse RCPP?

- It offers ranchers financial assistance as they plan and adopt conservation practices that will restore sage-grouse and other wildlife habitat, improve agricultural water quality, conserve private ranchlands, and upgrade agricultural infrastructure.
- It can help cover the costs of conservation easements in the Bi-State area that will protect wetlands, conserve sage-grouse habitat, and safeguard productive lands against the threat of development or conversion of grasslands, including dryland range and irrigated pasture.
- RCPP partners will support outreach, education, and field trips that aim to increase participation in EQIP and assist landowners in preparing EQIP applications.
- RCPP activities related to Bi-State sage-grouse habitat will be prioritized based on Bi-State Action Plan recommendations.

What will the funding be used for?

- Of the \$8M in NRCS funding, \$7,235,000 will go to agricultural and wetlands conservation easement purchases. \$765,000 will go to Environmental Quality Incentives Program projects.

Who is eligible to apply for RCPP funding?

- Landowners in portions of Inyo, Mono, and Alpine Counties of California and portions of Douglas, Lyon, Carson City, Mineral, and Esmeralda Counties in Nevada are eligible.
- The project area for the RCPP is the same as that covered by the Bi-State Action Plan's Population Management Units for sage-grouse, an area of 7,000 square miles. (see map)
- Under some circumstances, ranchers with the authority to operate on public lands (e.g. a grazing lease or permit) are also eligible for funding.
- Financial assistance through RCPP will be awarded directly from NRCS to landowners who plan to carry out projects that will benefit the goals of this RCPP.

Who are the partners in this RCPP?

- The eleven partners are: Eastern Sierra Land Trust, Mono County, Eastern Sierra Audubon Society, the Nevada Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, Mono County Resource Conservation District, Nevada Department of Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, and U.S. Geological Survey.

What is the role of the eleven RCPP partners?

- The partners have pledged to more than double the \$8M RCPP investment to support the goals of the project.
- They will provide direct financial assistance to ranchers, technical assistance, and other in-kind services, such as outreach and education, monitoring, land stewardship, restoration, and administrative services.

Are groups able to participate in the RCPP if they aren't existing partners?

- Yes. Organizations that wish to pursue the goals of the RCPP are welcome to participate. For example, land trusts, producers' collaboratives, Conservation Districts, and other groups may propose, assist, and complete projects with NRCS, and may contribute towards the goals of the RCPP to increase project leverage.

What is the role of Eastern Sierra Land Trust?

- As the lead partner, Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) wrote and submitted the RCPP proposal.
- ESLT will coordinate work with the other partners and report annually to NRCS on progress towards the goals of the RCPP.
- In August, ESLT signed a memorandum of understanding with NRCS that includes a plan of work and budget detailing the roles of ESLT, the RCPP partners, and NRCS in implementing the RCPP.
- ESLT does not receive any NRCS funding to cover administrative, staff, or travel expenses associated with this partnership.

When will funding be available?

- The duration of the RCPP is August 2017-June 2022.
- The funding application schedule will be determined by NRCS, and will be announced later this fall. It is likely that the first opportunity for landowners to apply for funding under the RCPP will be in early spring 2018.

Interested landowners and organizations are invited to contact Susanna Danner, ESLT's Land Conservation Program Director, at (760) 873-4554 or susanna@eslt.org