

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation Project



What to Know

- **Project Purpose:** *The Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation project implements climate-smart practices on preserved farms, and funds additional farmland and forest easement acquisitions.*
- **Project time frame:** 2023-2028
- **Lead Partner:**
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
- **Project Area:** PA - Statewide
- **NRCS Funding:**
 - \$3,771,300 - Land Management Climate-Smart BMPs
 - \$1,895,000 - New Agricultural and Forest Easements
- **Application cutoff dates:**
Nov 1, Jan 1, March 1, and May 1 of each year
- **Partner Contributions:** \$12,795,255
- **Other Partners:**



Background

Pennsylvania is a national leader in farmland preservation with 6,300 farms and 630,000 acres protected through permanent agricultural conservation easements. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), as lead partner, will leverage federal RCPP funds to match state, county, and local land preservation investments. This RCPP project will preserve farms and install climate smart practices on already preserved farms.

The benefit of these practices will be monitored throughout the life of the RCPP and reported back to NRCS, with the help of Rodale Institute. Priority will be given to individual farms that are owned by or leased to disadvantaged farmers or beginning farmers, with prioritized conservation treatment on already preserved farms.

In addition, technical resources will be provided to owners of preserved farms that are transitioning from conventional to organic production. The PDA Bureau of Market Development will work with Rodale Institute to educate producers on the soil health benefits of organic production, and will identify farms in need of assistance.

A portion of the RCPP funds will be reserved for easement purchases, since farms with best management practices will have a much greater carbon capturing benefit than farms that are converted to residential or commercial uses. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Clearwater Conservancy will focus on forestland easement acquisition.

What is RCPP? The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) program that follows a partner-driven approach to conservation. RCPP funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural and forest land. Through RCPP, NRCS cooperates with project partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements to resource concerns. RCPP projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers and landowners.

Examples of Available Core Practices

- **Soil Health:** Conservation Crop Rotation, Residue and Tillage Management, Cover Crops, Field Borders, Grass Waterways, Filter Strips, Stripcropping
- **Grazing and Pasture:** Brush Management, Herbaceous Weed Treatment, Pasture/Hay Planting, and Prescribed Grazing
- **Agroforestry, Forestry and Wildlife Habitat:** Alley Cropping, Critical Area Planting, Windbreaks/ Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation, Fuel Break, Woody Residue Treatment, Riparian Herbaceous Cover, Riparian Forest Buffer, Wildlife Habitat Planting, Hedgerow Planting, Tree-Shrub Establishment, Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities, Forest Stand Improvement
- **Energy Combustion and Electricity Efficiency:** Irrigation System and Pipeline, Combustion System Improvement, Sprinkler System, Pumping Plant, Energy Efficient Building and Lighting System
- **Wetlands:** Wetland Restoration



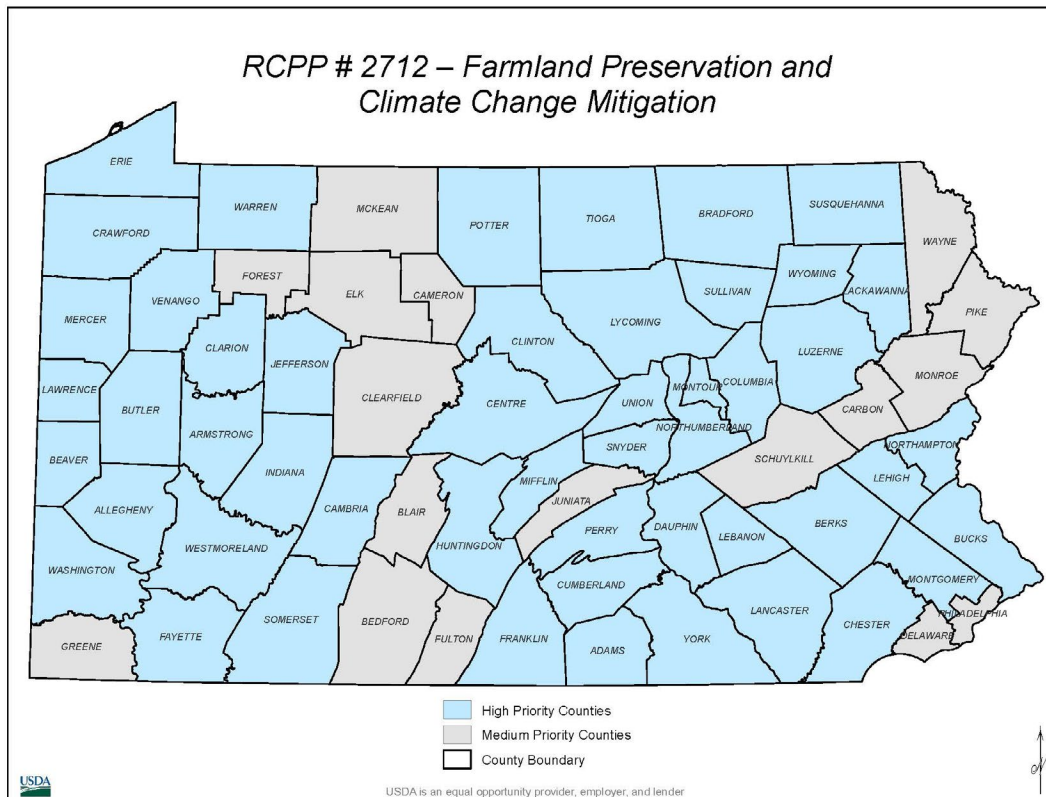
How to Get Assistance

For questions related to **Agland Easements**, please contact your County's Agricultural Preservation Board, or contact [Stephanie Zimmerman](#) at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) by phone at 717-705-7796 or via email at stzimmerman@pa.gov.

For questions related to **Forest Easements**, contact [Stephanie Zimmerman](#) at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), to be directed to the appropriate Land Conservancy. You can reach Stephanie by phone at 717-705-7796 or via email at stzimmerman@pa.gov.

Review the complete FY 2024 Climate Smart list [here](#) or by contacting your local NRCS field office.

For help with **Landowner Climate-Smart BMP contracts**, [you can contact your local NRCS office for assistance.](#)



RCPP Project Map: The project is available Statewide. The counties shown in blue are given highest priority.

