

National Water Quality Initiative Includes Three Watersheds In Missouri

COLUMBIA, MO.

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced the availability of additional funding for an initiative to improve water quality in three watersheds in Missouri.

Landowners in the three watersheds have until June 21 to apply for assistance through their local NRCS offices. The watersheds include: Lower Little Medicine (Grundy and Sullivan counties in northern Missouri); Upper Troublesome (Knox and Lewis counties in northeastern Missouri); and Opossum Creek-North Fork Spring River (Jasper and Barton counties in southwestern Missouri).

NRCS will make \$837,000 available this year to help farmers, ranchers and forestland owners in those watersheds install conservation practices that manage nutrients, pathogens and sediments. Funding comes through the agency's National Water Quality Initiative.

Eligible producers will receive assistance for installing conservation systems that may include practices such as nutrient management, cover crops, conservation cropping systems, filter strips, terraces, and in some cases, edge-of-field water quality monitoring.

"This initiative focuses on small watersheds where conservation systems can provide bene-

fits to locally important bodies of water," says Karen Brinkman, acting state conservationist. "The efforts that farmers and ranchers make to improve the quality of water that leaves their land helps provide cleaner waterways, safer drinking water and healthier fish and wildlife habitat."

Brinkman said that NRCS worked closely with its key partners to select watersheds where on-farm conservation investments have the best chance to improve water quality.

Through this water quality initiative, NRCS is also piloting its new Water Quality Index for Agricultural Runoff. The tool will help landowners determine how alternative conservation systems they are considering will impact water quality improvement. Additionally, state water quality agencies and other partners will do in-stream and watershed-level monitoring to track water quality improvements in the project watersheds.

NRCS accepts applications for financial assistance on a continuous basis throughout the year, but applications for funding consideration during this fiscal year must be received by June 21.

For more information about NRCS' programs, initiatives and services in Missouri, visit www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov. △



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