

# USDA Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566) has been used as an effective tool to conserve natural resources by thousands of local communities for over 60 years. The watershed program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).



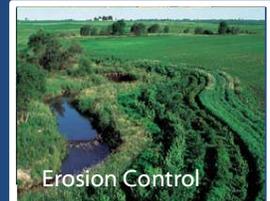
Flood Control



Water Supplies



Recreation



Erosion Control

## Watershed Program

There are 2,000 watershed projects in the nation, with projects in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Pacific Basin. Forty-seven states have projects that include flood control dams. Watershed plans have been carried out in these projects that have included installation of thousands of conservation practices and the construction of 11,800 flood control dams that provide multiple benefits to thousands of citizens including:

- ◆ Reduced flooding
- ◆ Erosion control
- ◆ Reduced sediment in streams and rivers
- ◆ Reduced agricultural related pollutants
- ◆ Municipal and rural water supplies
- ◆ Water quality protection
- ◆ Recreational areas
- ◆ Wildlife habitat
- ◆ Groundwater recharge

## Watershed Plans

A watershed plan is developed for each project that includes environmental impacts, costs and benefits, planned conservation practices and the responsibilities of involved parties. A variety of agencies and organizations can assist local project sponsors in plan development.

## Local Leadership

Watershed projects are planned and carried out jointly by local, state, and federal agencies with support of land owners and citizens in the watersheds.

Local units of government, usually conservation districts, cities or tribes, identify resource problems to be addressed and practices to be installed.

These local project sponsors carry out major portions of a watershed plan, such as obtaining easements, rights of ways and permits, and providing cost-share funding.



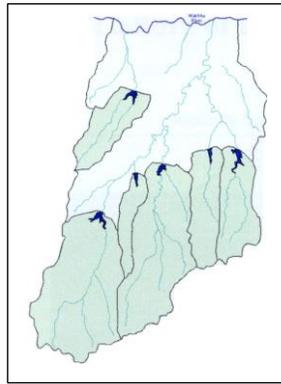
Local units of government such as conservation districts and cities serve as project sponsors for watershed projects.

Project sponsors obtain public comments and input throughout the planning process. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to local project sponsors.

NRCS assistance is available for engineering and construction costs of flood control measures, conservation practices for water quality, erosion and sediment control and for municipal and industrial water supplies and recreation facilities.

## Everyone Lives in a Watershed

Everyone lives in a watershed. Watersheds are the area of land drained by a particular surface stream system and that drains into a larger stream.



Watershed projects are developed for watersheds 250,000 acres or smaller.

Some have flood control dams built on tributaries to larger streams or rivers. Other projects may only have land and water conservation practices.

A series of flood control dams are usually constructed in a watershed that store water during heavy rainfall events and release it through a pipe through the dam over a period of days or weeks. This reduces the amount of water that flows into larger streams or rivers downstream and reduces flooding.

## Conservation Measures

A project can consist of a combination of conservation practices such as flood control dams and conservation practices like terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, animal waste management, and wetlands restoration.

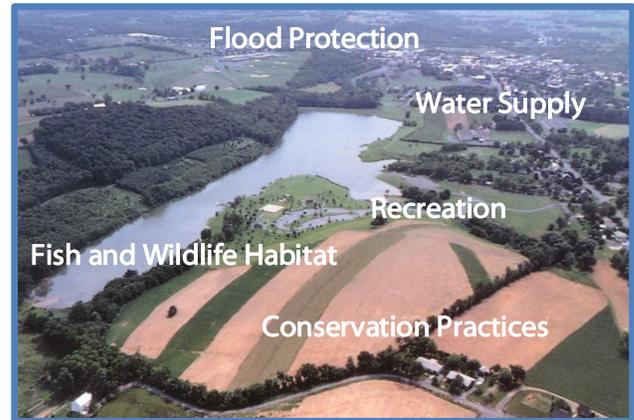
Other measures can also be used such as zoning, enforcing building codes, land acquisition, and emergency flood warning systems.

## Water Management

Management of both agricultural and nonagricultural water supplies can be a significant component of watershed projects.

Measures to increase or conserve present and future water supplies in rural areas, improve water quality impacted by pollutants, and ground water recharge can be part of a watershed plan.

Management for nonagricultural uses such as municipal and industrial uses, recreational uses and improved fish and wildlife habitat represent other opportunities found in watershed projects



## Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCCP)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCCP) is a new, comprehensive and flexible program that mobilizes partnerships to multiply conservation investments and reach common conservation goals on a regional or watershed scale.

The program is available in critical conservation areas and assistance is available using the Watershed Program and other USDA program authorities.

RCCP applicants (local organizations) may request to use the Watershed Program authority in designated Critical Conservation Areas (CCAs).

## For More Information

For more information about the Watershed Program contact any local NRCS field office or visit the NRCS web page ([www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)), click on Programs, then Landscape Planning, and then on Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention.

