



# Conservation Partners Program

## NFWF CONTACTS

### Bridget Collins

Program Director, Working Lands  
 bridget.collins@nfwf.org  
 612-564-7286

### Ernest Newborn

Coordinator, Regional Programs  
 ernest.newborn@nfwf.org  
 202-595-2444

## PARTNERS

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Cargill
- General Mills
- The J.M. Smucker Co.

## ABOUT NFWF

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 6,000 organizations and generated a total conservation impact of \$7.4 billion.

Learn more at [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

1133 15th Street, NW  
 Suite 1000  
 Washington, D.C., 20005  
 202-857-0166



Soybean field

## OVERVIEW

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Cargill, General Mills, and The J.M. Smucker Co. announced a new round of funding for the Conservation Partners Program. Twelve new grants totaling \$2.9 million were awarded. The 12 awards announced leveraged \$3 million in matching contributions from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of \$5.9 million.

Private landowners are stewards of nearly two-thirds of our nation's land, including some of the most important fish and wildlife habitats in the United States. Private working lands have an outsized impact on not only the country's food supply and economy, but also its carbon sequestration, water quality, and fish and wildlife populations. Voluntary partnerships with farmers, ranchers, and other landowners create win-win solutions for both natural resources and rural communities.

The Conservation Partners Program awards competitive grants that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices on private lands. With generous support from NRCS, Cargill, General Mills, and The J.M. Smucker Co., this program provides farmers and ranchers technical assistance for applying regenerative agriculture principles that enhance conservation values while improving their operational efficiency. Since 2011, this program has awarded 262 grants totaling more than \$54 million, which has been leveraged with more than \$98 million in matching contributions, for a total on-the-ground impact of more than \$152 million.

*(continued)*



Sandhill cranes landing in a field of cattle

Through this 2022 opportunity, the Conservation Partners Program awarded \$2.9 million to support 12 projects. Grantees are matching the grants awards with an additional \$3 million to generate a total conservation investment of \$5.9 million. Collectively, the 12 projects funded in 2022 will:

- Improve management and conservation on more than 295,000 acres of farmland and ranchland
- Offer technical assistance to more than 170,000 landowners or operators
- Reduce nutrient and sediment runoff to local waterways by more than 800,000 pounds per year
- Develop and support implementation of more than 700 working lands management plans

**Farmer to Farmer Soil Health Education (MN, IA)**

Grantee: Land Stewardship Project  
 Grant Amount:..... \$247,600  
 Matching Funds:..... \$249,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$496,600  
 Support the adoption of regenerative agricultural methods such as managed grazing, continuous living cover, and no-till on more than 20,000 acres of farmland in Southeastern and West Central Minnesota and Northeastern Iowa. Project will provide access to technical assistance for implementing regenerative methods and utilizing federal programs for financial support to 4,500 farmers.

**Enhancing Training to Address Identified Soil Health Needs and Barriers to Adoption (Multiple States)**

Grantee: Soil Health Institute  
 Grant Amount:..... \$194,600  
 Matching Funds:..... \$297,700  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$492,300  
 Establish a 15-month soil health training program to deliver in-person and virtual education programming that provides state and national commodity organizations, and growers and their advisers with the technical and practical knowledge necessary to successfully implement soil health management systems. Project will elevate existing programs, support ongoing state-level research and education priorities, and provide regional training and outreach tailored to local technical assistance needs.

**Cover Crop Education Programs to Advance the Farmers for Soil Health Initiative (Multiple States)**

Grantee: The Curators of the University of Missouri  
 Grant Amount:..... \$153,800  
 Matching Funds:..... \$163,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$316,800  
 Provide cover crop education programs, publications and farmer educational videos in support of the Farmers for Soil Health Initiative. Project will boost cover crop adoption by participating farmers.

**Using Regenerative Practices to Improve Water Quality and Habitat (IL)**

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited  
 Grant Amount:..... \$264,000  
 Matching Funds:..... \$264,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$528,000  
 Hire Agriculture Conservation Specialist to meet with private landowners, identify suitable regenerative agriculture practices, and promote and implement the Fall Covers for Spring Savings program throughout Illinois. Project will work with 600 agricultural producers and landowners to implement 100,000 acres of regenerative agriculture-focused practices, including cover crops, reduce nitrogen and phosphorous runoff, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide new wildlife habitat.

**Iowa Farmers for Soil Health Outreach and Technical Assistance**

Grantee: Iowa Soybean Association  
 Grant Amount:..... \$250,700  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$251,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$501,700  
 Provide technical assistance through a network of conservation agronomists working within ag retail organizations and advance a statewide, coordinated communications strategy to promote cover crops. Project will reach more than 20,000 Iowa farmers and follow up with 300 about conservation financial assistance opportunities.



Corn stalks

**Building Capacity for Regenerative Agriculture in Northeast Kansas**

Grantee: The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$467,500  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$481,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$948,500  
 Contract with an experienced conservation planner to provide training and oversight on conservation planning, standards and specification for technical assistance, and financial assistance options. Project will provide training and consultation on soil health strategies to include cover crop species mixes, soil testing for nutrient availability, livestock integration in cropping systems, and adaptive grazing strategies.

**Using Cover Crops to Improve Soil Health on Corn, Soybean, and Pork Farms (MI)**

Grantee: Corn Marketing Program of Michigan  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$161,500  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$162,300  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$323,800  
 Provide hands-on educational opportunities and outreach on cover crop implementation and overcoming barriers to adoption for Michigan farmers, including young and special emphasis farmers, and technical advisors. Project will couple farmer-led experiences with structured training, ultimately increasing long-term cover crop adoption on Michigan corn, soybean and pork farms, and thereby enhancing soil health and conservation outcomes.

**Using Prescribed Best Management Practices to Improve Water Quality in Chisago County, Minnesota**

Grantee: Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$150,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$150,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$300,000  
 Provide technical assistance to improve water quality by reducing phosphorus and sediment loading from agricultural and forestry lands by developing conservation plans with prescribed best management practices (BMPs) and through assistance to landowners in enrolling in Federal Farm Bill programs or other local funding opportunities. Project will engage a minimum of 400 people and at least 100 new conservation plans will be developed in the watershed over the three-year grant period.

**Launching a Producer Conservation Mentorship Network in the Southern Great Plains of Nebraska**

Grantee: Center for Rural Affairs  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$251,800  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$252,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$503,800  
 Establish a mentorship network to encourage implementation of rotational grazing, cover crops, and other regenerative agricultural practices to address priority resource concerns in Nebraska. Project will result in more producers becoming familiar with and taking steps to participate in Farm Bill conservation programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

(continued)



Wheat field

**Expanding Cover Crop Adoption to Improve Water Quality (OH)**

Grantee: Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$ 120,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$120,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$240,000

Utilize a network of soil and water districts throughout Ohio to engage farmers in programs to improve soil health, minimize erosion, improve water quality and encourage producers to adopt regenerative conservation practices. Project will result in a total of eight meetings annually, with incentives given to participating farmers.

**Enhancing Biodiversity on Grazing Land in the Prairie Pothole Region (SD)**

Grantee: Second Century Habitat Fund  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$374,400  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$399,300  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$773,700

Improve grassland health and forage quality, enhance wildlife and pollinator habitat, and increase biodiversity on grazing land in the Prairie Pothole region of South Dakota.

Project will provide technical and financial assistance to ranchers to drive adoption of conservation practices on their land, resulting in improved grazing management, soil health, water and air quality, and wildlife habitat on more than 9,900 acres.

**Expanding Agricultural Diversification and Habitat Enhancement (SD)**

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$216,400  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$221,100  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$437,500

Increase technical assistance capacity to reach farmers and ranchers to provide guidance on soil health practices like cover crop integration, crop diversification, tillage reduction, rotational grazing systems, and restoration and management of grassland wetland habitats. Project will connect agricultural producers to a variety of available public and private opportunities for financial assistance to implement desired management plans with an emphasis on grazing systems.