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.

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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.

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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.
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.