



# Conservation Partners Program

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## PARTNERS

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- General Mills
- The J.M. Smucker Co.
- Bezos Earth Fund

## 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)

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American black ducks

## OVERVIEW

Accounting for more than half of the contiguous United States' land base, private farm and ranch lands have a huge influence on not only the country's food supply and economy, but also its soil health, water quality, and fish and wildlife populations. Implementing conservation on those lands at scale is one of the most important ways to generate benefits for species, water quality, carbon storage, and human communities. That vital work can be achieved only by engaging and assisting the farmers, ranchers and other landowners who serve as stewards of most of our nation's land.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) manages the Conservation Partners Program to help address this need. With essential funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), General Mills and The J.M. Smucker Co., with additional support this year from the Bezos Earth Fund, this program helps farmers and ranchers apply regenerative agriculture principles and adopt practices that maximize conservation values while improving the bottom lines of their operations. Since 2011, the Conservation Partners Program has awarded 251 grants worth more than \$51 million and leveraged an additional \$94 million in matching contributions, generating a total conservation investment of more than \$145 million.

In 2022, the Conservation Partners Program awarded \$6.9 million to support 24 projects. Grantees are matching the grants awards with an additional \$8.1 million to generate a total conservation investment of \$15 million. Collectively, the 24 projects funded in 2022 will:

- Improve management and conservation on more than 2 million acres of farmland and ranchland
- Offer technical assistance to 60,000 agricultural producers
- Reduce nutrient and sediment runoff to local waterways by over 450,000 pounds per year
- Develop and implement more than 1,500 working lands management plans

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**PRAIRIE POTHOLE REGION**

The Prairie Pothole Region includes the region of historic tallgrass, mixed grass, and shortgrass prairie spanning portions of Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Projects in this landscape will improve grazing management, crop management, and habitat with a holistic, regenerative approach that will benefit the many wildlife species that depend on the grassland-wetland complexes of the region.

**Expanding Regenerative Grazing in the Prairie Pothole Region of Montana**

Grantee: World Wildlife Fund

Grant Amount: ..... \$259,800  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$259,800  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$519,600

Engage ranchers in the Prairie Pothole region of Montana to facilitate regenerative grazing practices that improve soil organic carbon and wildlife habitat. Project will enhance grazing management and grassland conditions through the application of wildlife-friendly grazing practices and infrastructure on 75,000 acres in this premier grassland bird and waterfowl nesting region.

**Keeping Livestock on the Prairies through Diversified Agriculture (ND)**

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Grant Amount: ..... \$216,100  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$249,500  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$465,600

Integrate livestock grazing onto cropland by developing holistic management plans for interested producers. Project will hire two new agronomist technicians and one new soil health intern to provide technical assistance, collect soil health data, and advance adoption of regenerative principles on 7,000 acres.

**Advancing Regenerative Agriculture in the Buffalo-Red River Watershed (MN)**

Grantee: Wilkin Soil and Water Conservation District

Grant Amount: ..... \$299,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$300,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$599,000

Provide technical assistance to accelerate landowner adoption of regenerative agriculture practices in high priority areas identified in the Buffalo-Red River Comprehensive Water Management Plan. Project will support Farm Bill program enrollment and promote peer to peer learning opportunities for farmers resulting in improved grazing management, soil health, water quality, irrigation efficiency and habitat enhancement on 15,000 acres.

**Promoting Conservation Grazing to Enhance Minnesota's Grasslands**

Grantee: National Audubon Society

Grant Amount: ..... \$418,500  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$563,500  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$982,000

Improve grazing practices through technical assistance, outreach, and the launch of Audubon Conservation Ranching in Minnesota.

Project will enhance over 8,000 acres of grasslands in western and central Minnesota benefitting priority grassland bird, duck, and shorebird species.

**Northwest Minnesota Livestock Grazing Assistance and Planning Program**

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Grant Amount: ..... \$295,200  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$295,200  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$590,400

Facilitate the improvement of grazing systems on private working lands that foster sustainable agriculture while promoting wildlife habitat conservation. Project will hire a Range, Pasture and Grassland Planner to work with NRCS field staff to provide technical assistance to 150 private landowners and livestock producers on an estimated 6,000 acres.

**Accelerating the Adoption of Regenerative Practices on Prairie Pothole Working Grasslands (SD)**

Grantee: South Dakota Grassland Coalition

Grant Amount: ..... \$408,900  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$606,200  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$1,015,100

Promote regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices with ranchers in the Prairie Pothole Region of eastern South Dakota. Project will improve grassland health, promote long-term ranch sustainability, promote water conservation, improve water quality, enhance soil health, increase carbon storage and enhance wildlife habitat on an estimated 75,000 acres of grassland.

**SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS**

The Southern Great Plains includes the Plains portions of Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas. Emphasizing a systems-approach that integrates regenerative agriculture principles and peer-to-peer learning, projects in this landscape will engage farmers and ranchers to improve soil health, water quality and quantity, fish and wildlife habitat, and carbon storage on croplands and grazing lands.

**Ranchland Conservation in the Southern Great Plains (CO)**

Grantee: Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust

Grant Amount: ..... \$200,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$200,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$400,000

Deliver technical assistance, develop and implement conservation projects, and support restoration, mitigation, or ecosystem services opportunities. Project will conserve 50,000 acres with grassland easements and improve critical working lands and habitat in the Southern Great Plains region of Colorado.

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Bobolink

**Enhancing Nutrient Management in the Blue River Watershed (NE)**

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$232,600  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$356,100  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$588,700  
 Partner with farmers in the Lower Big Blue River watershed to implement nutrient management practices on their operations. Project will deliver financial and technical assistance to 30 area farmers to improve nutrient management regimens on 4,800 acres based on best available science and each farm’s operational realities.

**Iowa Tribe Conservation Partnership Program (KS, NE)**

Grantee: Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$400,000  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$50,100  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$450,100  
 Provide a series of educational events, conservation planning, and technical assistance to the agricultural producers of the Iowa Reservation and surrounding communities. Project will expand regenerative agriculture strategies that ensure a lasting impact on soil health, water conservation and quality, and carbon storage and sequestration.

**Kansas Wetland Conservation Initiative**

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$399,900  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$400,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$799,900  
 Provide technical assistance to private landowners to maximize the benefits of Farm Bill and other conservation programs on working lands in central and western Kansas. Project will facilitate delivery of wetland, grassland, and cropland conservation programs on private lands in this landscape.

**UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN**

The following projects will engage farmers and the broader agricultural sector in best management practices that benefit water quality, fish, and wildlife in the Upper Mississippi River basin. Projects focus in NRCS’s priority watersheds and subwatersheds as identified for the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative and priority areas for the Driftless Area Initiative.

**Providing Technical Assistance to Promote Adoption of Grazing Conservation Practices (IA)**

Grantee: Practical Farmers of Iowa  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$361,800  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$362,000  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$723,800  
 Provide outreach, education, and technical assistance through a range of farmer-led on-farm events, virtual events, and direct one-on-ones to producers to overcome social and technical barriers to conservation adoption across Iowa. Project will accelerate the implementation of managed grazing across 15,000 acres and adoption of wildlife conservation practices.

**Providing Technical and Financial Assistance to Support Regenerative Agriculture Practices (MN)**

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy  
 Grant Amount: ..... \$262,200  
 Matching Funds: ..... \$281,400  
 Total Project Amount: ..... \$543,600  
 Provide technical and financial assistance to increase crop retailer offerings of conservation practices and services, while also supporting farmers with technical and financial tools to manage risk while transitioning to regenerative soil health systems. Project will provide training for retail agronomy staff, develop soil health management plans, and implementation of at least 8,000 acres of cover crops in central, southwest and southeastern Minnesota.

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Upland sandpiper

**Farmer to Farmer Mentoring to Improve Soil Health and Conservation Grazing**

Grantee: Minnesota Soil Health Coalition  
 Grant Amount:.....\$281,100  
 Matching Funds:.....\$282,800  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$563,900  
 Facilitate farmer-led mentorships and workshops in the Minnesota River Valley watershed to increase understanding and adoption of Farm Bill programs and NRCS practices, targeting corn and bean farmers and livestock producers with special emphasis on tenant farmers and non-operating landowners. Project will expand a network of peer mentorships to educate about conservation grazing to improve water quality and soil health.

**Improving Grazing Practices to Benefit Grassland Birds in the Upper Mississippi River Region (IA, MO, WI)**

Grantee: National Audubon Society  
 Grant Amount:.....\$398,200  
 Matching Funds:.....\$424,600  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$822,800  
 Increase capacity for the Audubon Conservation Ranching program to accelerate voluntary, on-the-ground adoption of managed grazing practices to benefit birds, biodiversity, and soil health on working lands in priority areas of Iowa, Missouri and Wisconsin. Project will improve grazing practices across 12,590 acres to benefit wildlife of tallgrass prairie ecosystems including focal grassland birds such as the bobolink, Henslow’s sparrow, and upland sandpiper.

**PACIFIC SALMON**

The following project will improve the efficiency of on-farm irrigation practices and provide quantifiable benefits to instream flows through state-approved transfers or other forms of enforceable agreements. The project is located in priority anadromous salmonid streams in California and will benefit stream reaches where insufficient instream flows are identified by a state or federal agency as a key limiting factor for fish survival.

**Planning and Development to Enhance Stream Flows for Salmon in the Scott River Watershed (CA)**

Grantee: Scott River Water Trust  
 Grant Amount:.....\$195,800  
 Matching Funds:.....\$328,600  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$524,400  
 Develop and negotiate voluntary, permanent water dedications in the upper portion of the Scott River system. Project will conserve 2,000 acre feet of water in the highest quality salmonid spawning and rearing habitat in the Scott River basin.

**WORKING LANDS FOR WILDLIFE**

The following projects will advance priorities under the NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife program. Projects include planning and partner coordination, building staff capacity, and targeted outreach and technical assistance to engage private landowners in developing and implementing practices that benefit priority species under the Working Lands for Wildlife program.

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**Building a Regenerative Ranching Economy in the West (ID, NV, OR)**

Grantee: Sustainable Northwest  
 Grant Amount:.....\$281,100  
 Matching Funds:.....\$688,000  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$969,100  
 Launch and enroll producers in a voluntary regenerative ranching program across Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada to provide customized regenerative management plans, technical assistance and establish baseline data and monitoring for each ranch to measure impacts. Project will implement regenerative ranching practices to benefit core sage grouse habitat, soil health, carbon sequestration and water conservation.

**Increasing Technical Assistance to Improve Habitat for Gopher Tortoise and Bobwhite Quail (FL)**

Grantee: Alachua Conservation Trust  
 Grant Amount:.....\$345,100  
 Matching Funds:.....\$379,200  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$724,300  
 Increase staff capacity to provide technical assistance on engaging in conservation practices and Farm Bill programs to agricultural producers in areas that contain gopher tortoise and bobwhite quail in north and central Florida. Project will protect 1,500 acres under an easement and implement 15 best practices management plans.

**Leveraging Grassland Conservation for Birds and Rangeland Resiliency (MT, ND, SD, WY)**

Grantee: American Bird Conservancy  
 Grant Amount:.....\$205,100  
 Matching Funds:.....\$205,100  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$410,200  
 Leverage two NRCS partner positions to increase the impact of Working Lands for Wildlife initiatives for greater sage-grouse and the Northern Plains Grassland in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Project will provide technical assistance and planning on NRCS practices to improve management on at least 15,500 acres of land, while fostering landowner interest in grassland conservation to enhance habitat and build rangeland resiliency.

**Enhancing Habitat to Benefit Golden-Winged Warbler, Bobwhite Quail, American Black Duck and Bog Turtle (NJ)**

Grantee: New Jersey Audubon Society  
 Grant Amount:.....\$425,500  
 Matching Funds:.....\$450,000  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$875,500  
 Work directly with private landowners across focal areas for golden-winged warbler, bobwhite quail, American black duck, and bog turtle in New Jersey to deploy best management practices and improve habitat. Project will restore 10 acres of wetlands, develop ecological forest management plans, and implement at least 15 Best Management Plans.

**Increasing Technical Assistance on Working Wetlands for Louisiana Shorebirds**

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited  
 Grant Amount:.....\$200,000  
 Matching Funds:.....\$200,000  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$400,000  
 Increase technical assistance for Farm Bill programs through an established partnership with the NRCS to benefit the Working Lands for Wildlife Shorebirds of Louisiana Initiative. Project will enhance approximately 20,000 acres of ricelands through implementation of best management practices and provide critical habitat for Louisiana shorebirds and other species that benefit from working wetlands.



Gopher tortoise in Florida



Burrowing owl

### Improving Habitat Management on Working Lands to Benefit Grassland Birds in Western Wyoming

Grantee: National Audubon Society

Grant Amount:.....\$172,400  
 Matching Funds:.....\$172,400  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$344,800

Expand the Audubon Conservation Ranching program to increase technical assistance delivery targeting western Wyoming including migration corridors. Project will improve habitat management on 50,000 acres of rangeland to benefit wildlife species such as the greater sage-grouse, sage thrasher, sage sparrow, bobolink, upland sandpiper, long-billed curlew, ferruginous hawk, and burrowing owl.

### Accelerating Wetland Conservation for Black Duck on the Delmarva Peninsula (DE, MD, VA)

Grantee: Ducks Unlimited

Grant Amount:.....\$100,000  
 Matching Funds:.....\$100,000  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$200,000

Support a Working Lands for Wildlife Farm Bill Biologist to continue and expand outreach efforts such as workshops and publications to reach a broader range of agricultural producers including those identified as historically underserved. Project will extend an existing partnership with the NRCS to maximize landowner participation in NRCS wetland conservation program to benefit black ducks on the Delmarva Peninsula.

### Expanding Inclusive Outreach on Working Lands Conservation for Monarch Butterflies (IN, OH)

Grantee: Pollinator Partnership

Grant Amount:.....\$320,000  
 Matching Funds:.....\$353,700  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$673,700

Provide hands-on technical assistance paired with a series of in-person and virtual activities to help a variety of landowners learn about the Working Lands for Wildlife and Farm Bill programs and how to enroll. Project will expand landowner outreach and increase implementation of Farm Bill programs to help accelerate adoption of conservation practices that support habitat for monarch butterflies and other species of concern in Indiana and Ohio.

### Enhancing Grasslands by Promoting Regenerative Practices in the Northern Plains Grassland (SD)

Grantee: South Dakota Grassland Coalition

Grant Amount:.....\$181,300  
 Matching Funds:.....\$600,700  
 Total Project Amount:.....\$782,000

Promote regenerative agriculture principles and conservation practices utilizing cost share programs on working grasslands by working with ranchers in western South Dakota. Project will promote long-term ranch sustainability, protect grasslands from conversion, improve grassland and soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat for priority species of concern including chestnut-collared longspur, Baird's sparrow and Sprague's pipit on 75,000 acres of grasslands.