

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2015

NRCS and University of Tennessee Extension Sign RCPP Agreement in Knoxville

KNOXVILLE, TN – On Thursday, May 21, 2015, Kevin Brown, NRCS Tennessee State Conservationist, and Dr. Tim Cross, Dean, UT Extension, signed a Regional Conservation Partnership Project agreement to that will seek to increase row crop sustainability in the Obion River watershed. The Obion River watershed is located in North-West Tennessee.

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture was one of two RCPP agreements funded in Tennessee. The other successful candidate was the State of Tennessee Department of Agriculture for a project titled “Providing financial and technical assistance services to address soil and water resource concerns in 303(D) listed watersheds of Tennessee.” USDA Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced these projects in January as part of 100 high-impact projects across all 50 states that will receive more than \$370 million as part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

RCPP’s historic focus on public-private partnership enables private companies, local communities and other non-government partners a way to invest in efforts to keep our land resilient and water clean, and promote tremendous economic growth in agriculture, construction, tourism and outdoor recreation, and other industries.

This year’s projects in Tennessee will accomplish a wide diversity of agricultural and natural resource goals that seek to minimize impacts from siltation/sedimentation, nutrients and pathogens and reduce the amount of nutrients and sediment from degrading the quality of our state’s and ultimately the Mississippi River Basin’s surface waters.

“Partners are seeing the value of conservation and investing in their future,” Vilsack said. “These partnerships are forging a new path for getting conservation on the ground and are providing opportunities for communities to have a voice and ownership in protecting and improving our natural resources. The Regional Conservation Partnership

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Program ushers in a new era of conservation, and we're excited about the down-the-road benefits from this new Farm Bill program.”

Nationally, this year's projects will engage hundreds of partners with wide-ranging interests, including communities, conservation districts, agribusiness, non-government organizations, for- and non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies and Tribal governments. In addition to USDA funds, partners' will contribute an estimated \$400 million, more than doubling USDA's investment.

“RCPP puts our partners in the driver's seat,” said Kevin Brown, USDA'S Natural Resources Conservation Service state conservationist in Tennessee. “Projects are led locally, and demonstrate the value of strong public-private partnerships that deliver solutions to tough natural resource challenges.”

More than 600 pre-proposals were submitted for RCPP in 2014. Of those, more than 200 were invited to submit full proposals. “With so many strong project proposals, the project selection process was extremely competitive. RCPP is a 5-year \$1.2 billion USDA commitment; projects not selected in this first year may be eligible in subsequent years,” Brown said.

For more information on Tennessee RCPP projects, visit the [Tennessee NRCS webpage](#) or [view the National RCPP webpate](#).

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps America's farmers and ranchers conserve the Nation's soil, water, air and other natural resources. All programs are voluntary and offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment.



Front row: Tim Cross, Dean of UT Extension; Kevin Brown, NRCS Tennessee State Conservationist
Back row: Lori Duncan, Row Crop Sustainability Specialist; Kurt Simon, Area Conservationist
Taken at Morgan Hall on the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture campus.

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