



NEWS

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PRITZKER ADMINISTRATION SECURES \$13.3 MILLION IN NEW FUNDING TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION PLANNING

SPRINGFIELD, IL- The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) announced today the approval of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) and Conservation Planning Assistance grant agreement.

The IDOA/NRCS partnership leverages \$3.5 million Illinois state NLRS funds with \$9.8 million of federal funds from the USDA/NRCS to deliver over \$13.3 million in new funding to support conservation planning and NLRS staffing and programming.

The project will allow the addition of up to 40 conservation planners across the state of Illinois. The conservation planners will be recruited and supervised by IDOA and hired by a subcontract hiring agent the Sangamon County Soil and Water Conservation District. The conservation planners will increase Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) technical assistance for planning, implementation, and maintenance. They will increase capacity to develop new conservation plans and to conduct conservation implementation follow-up to improve conservation successes.

“This historic funding increases investments in agricultural conservation and nutrient management rest on human capacity,” **said Governor J.B. Pritzker.** “Illinois like other states across the nation have noted, we need strong individual, organizational and societal capacity to design and implement conservation measures, adapt them and sustain their impact over time.”

"Governor Pritzker and the Illinois legislature have taken an important, momentous step towards reducing nutrient losses across Illinois' 27 million acres," **said IDOA Director Jerry Costello.** “From increased human capacity, to supporting healthy farmland and conservation initiatives, to cost-share programs like the fall covers for spring savings cover crop program, the Illinois Department of Agriculture stands ready to serve the states over 72,000 producers with significant leveraged resources to continue to lead the charge.”

The conservation planners will also support the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) efforts as the latest bi-annual report indicates an increase in overall nutrients being lost

to Illinois streams and rivers. In addition, the new planners will be able to assist with the IDOA conservation programs to increase overall producer opportunities to participate in State and Federal conservation programs.

“NRCS is pleased to be a part of this partnership effort to get more technical boots on the ground in Illinois,” **said Ivan Dozier USDA-NRCS State Conservationist.** “We’ve recently experienced staff shortages on both the State and federal side while our natural resource concerns continue to elevate. It’s great to be able to work together on strategic solutions that better prepare Illinois farmers to address these increasing resource concerns and take advantage of conservation practice implementation funding that will be coming our way.”

“The Association of Illinois Soil and water Conservation Districts commends Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of agriculture for taking the initiative to use existing state funding resources to leverage additional federal funding resources,” **said Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts Executive Director Grant Hammer.** “This effort will support climate-smart agricultural practices, as well as helping to improve water quality across the state of Illinois.”

Through this partnership with the USDA NRCS conservation programs, Illinois producers and landowners will have increased opportunities to improve their nutrient management planning, advance soil health and contribute to the reduction in nutrient losses to Illinois streams, rivers and lakes.

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