

Release No. 112012

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For Immediate Release

NRCS Funds Available for Water Quality Projects in Florida

Agricultural Producers located in priority watersheds will be able to participate

Gainesville, FL., May 08, 2012 — Florida agricultural producers in three watersheds will receive targeted funding to improve water quality through a new National Water Quality Initiative. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will manage the initiative by making \$741, 000 available to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners in the selected watersheds.

"This Water Quality Initiative is a focused approach to improve water quality in the Lower St Johns River and Choctawhatchee River watersheds and will further NRCS' partnership efforts in those areas," said Carlos Suarez, NRCS State Conservationist in Florida.

Through this effort, eligible producers in Deep Creek, Clarks Creek and Little Scurlock Creek watersheds will invest in voluntary conservation actions to help provide cleaner water for their neighbors and communities. The selected watersheds were identified with help from state agencies, partners, and the NRCS State Technical Committee.

Using funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, NRCS will provide funding and advice to producers to install conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips and terraces in watersheds with impairments where the federal investment can make a difference to improve water quality.

This targeted effort helps landowners in eligible watersheds to qualify for financial assistance by competing for funds with a smaller pool of applicants. Typically, NRCS receives a large number of applications statewide for EQIP funding each fiscal year.

Although NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis throughout the year, all applications for funding consideration for this initiative, during this fiscal year, must be received by June 15, 2012. Remember to check with your local NRCS office to see if you are located within the selected watersheds.

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Since 1935, NRCS's nationwide conservation delivery system works with private landowners to put conservation on the ground based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests.

Additional information on NRCS, conservation assistance, and programs is available on the web at www.fl.nrcs.usda.gov/programs or at your local USDA - NRCS office. To find the nearest office go to your telephone directory under "U. S. Government, Department of Agriculture", or <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

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