



# Watershed Projects...

## Helping Communities Solve Natural Resource Issues

### Watershed Projects in Every State

There are over 2,000 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assisted watershed projects in the United States, with projects in every state. Some projects provide flood control, while others include conservation practices that address a myriad of natural resource needs such as water quality improvement, soil erosion control, animal waste management, irrigation, water management, water supply development, and recreation enhancement.

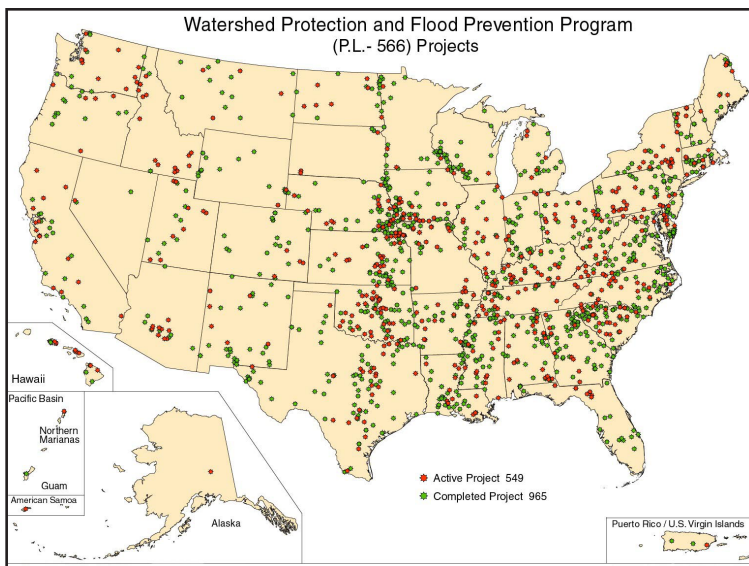
Whatever the primary purpose, watershed projects have multiple community benefits. Many projects have been providing benefits for decades, but people are often unaware that the projects even exist.

Watershed projects are planned and implemented by local people who serve as project sponsors, with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The projects are authorized and funded through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566) and the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-534). The program is a partnership between local units of government, state government, the federal government, and landowners.

The Watershed Program has been used by communities for over 50 years and the success stories can be found on the landscapes across the country. The authorizing legislation has been amended several times to address a broader range of natural resource and environmental issues and today the program offers communities the tools and assistance to address almost any kind of environmental and natural resource issue.



Eleven thousand watershed dams have been built by local project sponsors with assistance from NRCS. These dams, built primarily for flood control, also provide fish and wildlife habitat and recreation and fishing areas, improve water quality and some supply water for communities and for irrigation.



There are watershed projects in every state. Over 2,000 projects have been implemented since 1948. New projects are being developed each year by local people.

### Projects Provide Multiple Benefits

The 2,000 watershed projects have established a \$15 billion national infrastructure that is providing multiple benefits to over 48 million people.

#### Annual Watershed Program National Benefits

Agricultural flood damage reduction	\$266 million
Non-agricultural flood damage reduction	\$381 million
Agricultural benefits (non-flood)	\$303 million
Non-agricultural benefits (non-flood)	\$572 million
<b>Total monetary benefits</b>	<b>\$1.522 billion</b>
Number of bridges benefited	56,787
Number of farms and ranches benefited	154,304
Number of businesses benefited	46,464
Number of public facilities benefited	3,588
Acres of wetlands created or enhanced	210,865
Acres of upland wildlife habitat created or enhanced	9,140,741
Miles of streams with improved water quality	25,093
Number of domestic water supplies benefited	27,685
Reduced soil erosion (tons/year)	89,343,55
Tons of animal waste properly managed	3,910,10
Reduced sedimentation (tons/year)	49,983,696
Water conserved (acre feet/year)	1,763,472

# The Watershed Program in the 21st Century

Communities across the nation have utilized the watershed program to solve resource problems for over 50 years, and today's program offers even them even more kinds of assistance. Below are just a few examples showing the variety of projects being implemented across the nation.

## Providing Water Supplies



Communities are using watershed projects to help create and manage agricultural, municipal and industrial water supplies. The lake formed by this dam in the Deer Creek Watershed in Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma, provides municipal water for thousands of people, in addition to providing flood control and recreational areas.

## Managing Animal Waste



The Middle Suwannee River Watershed Project in Florida is helping dairy and poultry farmers apply conservation practices that will reduce the amount of animal nutrients that flow into the river. Financial incentives are being offered to landowners in the watershed project to help them build animal waste storage facilities and properly apply the waste to the land, thus improving water quality.

## Managing Agricultural Water



The Lower Hamakua Ditch Watershed Project on the island of Hawaii is helping to rebuild and repair a water distribution system that had been built by sugar companies between 1900-1910. The 15 miles of open ditch and 10 miles of tunnel provides irrigation water distribution to 8,000 acres of agricultural lands. This flume replaced an existing one that had deteriorated.

## Reducing Flood Damages

Most of the original watershed projects were organized to help control flooding. A series of dams were constructed in a watershed to temporarily store floodwater and then slowly release it over a period of several days through pipes in the dams.

Today, watershed project sponsors are also using other methods to help reduce damages caused by flooding. Flooding in the Neshaminy Creek Watershed in Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania, had been partially controlled by eight watershed dams, but local people were looking for an alternative to a ninth planned dam.

Local project sponsors, with NRCS assistance, chose the less costly alternative of flood proofing 90 houses and 35 other buildings, along with the acquisition and removal of 45 homes from the floodplain.



Before floodproofing

After floodproofing



## Controlling Soil Erosion



Conservation practices are a vital part of watershed projects. Practices such as terraces, waterways, grass buffers and grass plantings in this Tama County, Iowa watershed are preventing soil erosion, reducing sediment in streams and rivers, improving water quality and providing wildlife habitat.

For additional information about watershed projects and their benefits, visit the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service website at: [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) and select "Programs" and then "Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention" or visit a local NRCS or conservation district office.

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