

## ***Economic and Environmental Benefits***

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### **The American Recovery and Reinvestment**

**Act** (Recovery Act) funds Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) projects that provide the greatest public and environmental benefits through floodplain easements and investments in watershed infrastructure improvements. Watershed rehabilitation projects mitigate the risks of failure and threats to public safety posed by aging flood control infrastructure.

Over 2,100 jobs directly related to Recovery Act funding are estimated in the engineering and biological fields, additional specialized equipment operators, construction crews and many other diversified skilled laborers. NRCS estimates that more than 6,700 jobs both directly and indirectly involved in its Recovery Act projects will be created.

NRCS received \$340 million from the Recovery Act; funding is directed to cost-effective projects that provide public safety and flood protection, as well as economic and environmental benefits.

Benefits include reduced threats and damage from flooding; erosion control; improved water quality; enhanced fish and wildlife habitat; created and retained jobs; and improved quality of life through expanded recreational opportunities and added community green space.

The Recovery Act funding for NRCS is under the following three programs:

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### **1 Watershed Rehabilitation** Funding Provided: \$50,000,000

Many dams built under USDA authorities are nearing the end of their 50-year design life, and rehabilitation is needed to address critical public health and safety issues in these communities. Funding of projects is based on a priority ranking system that considers the condition of the dam and number of people at risk if the dam should fail. NRCS may provide technical assistance and 65% of the total rehabilitation project cost.

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### **2 Watershed Operations** Funding Provided: \$145,000,000

NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to States, local governments and Tribes (as project sponsors) to implement authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of watershed protection; flood mitigation; water quality improvements; soil erosion reduction; rural, municipal and industrial water supply; irrigation water management; sediment control; fish and wildlife enhancement; and wetlands and wetland function creation and restoration.

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### **3 Floodplain Easements** Funding Provided: \$145,000,000 (\$30,000,000 maximum for any one state)

In restoring the natural functions of floodplains, we can conserve and improve fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground water recharge, and open space; reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and erosion. NRCS may purchase easements on floodplain lands that meet program criteria; purchases are based upon established priorities. The easement provides NRCS with the authority to restore and enhance the floodplain's natural functions. Landowners retain several rights to the property, including quiet enjoyment, control of public access, and undeveloped recreational use such as hunting and fishing.

For more information on these and other NRCS programs, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)