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News Release

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"Helping People Help the Land"

NRCS California Meets the Moment with Expanded Conservation Investments

More than \$20M in additional investments will be made towards climate-smart and forest health conservation in 2023

DAVIS, Calif – Beginning today, California’s agricultural-land stewards are set to benefit this year from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), signed into law in August 2022, and the historic investments it will make towards expanding on-farm conservation. This year, more than \$20 million will be invested towards climate-smart agriculture practices and forest resiliency in California – and hundreds of millions of dollars more will arrive over the next five years.

The deadline to apply for this NRCS California IRA funding is March 17, 2023. Please visit your local NRCS service center to apply, which can be found at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/find-a-service-center>.

IRA is not a new program for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) but instead authorizes focused funding of the USDA popular conservation programs to develop and implement conservation plans that improve carbon sequestration and/or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This year In California, this effort includes replacing old and polluting tractors with lower emissions alternatives and addressing forest health and fire resiliency on private, non-industrial forestland. These additional investments will be made above NRCS California’s annual \$125 million investment through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) program, and other NRCS programs.

“The Inflation Reduction Act provides a once-in-a-generation investment in conservation on working lands, and we want to work with agricultural and forest landowners to invest in climate-smart practices that create value and economic opportunities for producers,” said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. “We know that agriculture plays a critical role in the nation’s effort to address climate change, and we’re using this funding to bolster our existing programs, maximize climate benefits, and foster other environmental benefits across the landscape.”

Nationally the IRA funding includes an additional \$8.45 billion for EQIP, \$4.95 billion for RCPP, \$3.25 billion for CSP, and \$1.4 billion for the Agricultural Conservation Easements Program. The increased funding levels begin in Fiscal Year 2023 and rapidly build over four years. These additional investments are estimated to help hundreds of thousands of farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial forestland owners apply conservation to millions of acres of land. Additionally, the IRA provides \$300 million to quantify carbon sequestration and greenhouse gases (GHG) through the collection and use of field-based data to assess conservation outcomes. Information gained through this effort will be used to improve practices and technical assistance

to customers. Further guidance on this important work will be provided as the implementation of this portion of the IRA continues.

These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch, or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. To ensure we can quantify the benefits of these IRA investments, NRCS is working to support Department-wide work on Measurement, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MMRV). The IRA provides targeted funding to support this effort. In administering the Inflation Reduction Act climate investments, USDA will also support other environmental co-benefits, including – among other things – water conservation, wildlife habitat improvements, and reducing runoff.

Since its inception in 1935, NRCS has worked in partnership with private landowners and a variety of local, state, and federal conservation partners to deliver conservation based on specific, local needs. Please visit www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov for more information about NRCS.

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