



**New Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife  
Regional Conservation Partnership Program  
Offers Special EQIP Funding for Texas Rice Growers  
To Improve Surface Water Irrigation, Water Quality, Wildlife**

*USA Rice, Ducks Unlimited and NRCS assistance available through RCPP*

HOUSTON – Feb. 4, 2019 - Rice producers in 12 Texas counties can apply for financial assistance to make on-farm improvements, thanks to the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), sponsored by USA Rice and Ducks Unlimited. Eligible counties include: Brazoria, Calhoun, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Jackson, Jefferson, Lavaca, Liberty, Matagorda, Waller and Wharton. A priority emphasis is placed on Colorado, Wharton, and Matagorda counties where surface water conservation is critical. In addition to the special funding opportunity through RCPP, supplementary EQIP funding is also available in all of these counties. All rice producers are encouraged to apply.

This Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife RCPP and Texas specific EQIP sign-up aims to address three natural resource opportunities related to rice production - water quantity, water quality and wetland habitat provided by rice. Water quantity is the top concern. Practices such as irrigation land levelling and water-control structures are the highest priority practices for rice farms using surface water. Elevated conservation planning efforts will be delivered by project partners.

"The main goal for Ducks Unlimited is to provide rice habitat for waterfowl, while also considering surface water demands in rice production areas. We are all focused on ensuring the sustainability of that water source for the future of rice, people and waterfowl," DU Outreach Biologist Kirby Brown said.

A total of \$1,000,000 in financial assistance to producers is anticipated for the Gulf Coast Water and Wildlife RCPP sign-up. In addition to the special funding opportunity through RCPP, supplementary EQIP funding is also available in all of these counties. Producers should visit their local [USDA service center](#) before the first application pool closes on March 15, 2019 to apply for this opportunity. If funding permits, a second application pool will close May 10, 2019.

The NRCS sets sign-up dates and specific deadlines for ranking, contracting, and funding. Other ranking pool deadlines may be established if additional funding becomes available. This special opportunity for rice producers is following the same dates and deadlines as the state's general EQIP sign-up.

"Interested rice producers need to visit their local NRCS office as soon as possible to apply," Brown said. "This partnership between USA Rice, Ducks Unlimited and NRCS is designed to help rice producers address water quantity and quality, as well as wildlife habitat on their farms."

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Additional information on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program can be found at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>.

Rice Stewardship funders include the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Walmart Foundation, the Mosaic Company Foundation, Nestlé Purina PetCare, Chevron U.S.A., Freeport-McMoRan Foundation, Irene W. and C.B. Pennington Foundation, RiceTec, BASF, American Rice, Inc. – Riviana Foods, Inc., Joe W. and Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation, Delta Plastics, Anheuser-Busch InBev, Corteva Agriscience, Wells Fargo, Farmers Rice Milling Company, Horizon Ag, Turner’s Creek & Bombay Hook Farms, MacDon Industries, Riceland Foods and Ducks Unlimited major sponsors.

