



## National Watershed Coalition Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Request USDA Small Watershed Program

The Watershed Program established through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (sometimes referred to as PL-566) authorizes the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to work with local sponsors to implement watershed protection and improvement projects. The Watershed Program is a critical tool for helping rural communities adapt to increasing weather volatility and reducing risk against catastrophic weather events. These projects provide communities with flood prevention and mitigation, water quality or water quantity protection, agricultural water management, municipal water supply management, fish and wildlife habitat protection and public recreation development.

Watershed projects create and protect vital infrastructure while conserving and protecting natural resources and contributing to local economies. The Watershed Program focuses on both the design and construction of structural measures and on land treatment measures. Watershed planning provides a basis for partnering at State and local levels to identify and co-invest in projects reflecting the highest priority needs. This critical infrastructure program:

- Protects lives and property
- Builds community resiliency to volatile weather events
- Reduces the need for federal disaster assistance
- Improves water quality and quantity
- Provides reliable/high quality drinking water
- Creates and preserves jobs
- Broadens the economic base

The National Watershed Coalition (NWC) supports funding for current documented needs for these federally authorized projects. Along with the continued support from the 2018 Farm Bill, we request the following funding levels for Fiscal Year 2025:

- **\$200 million for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations**
- **\$75 million for Watershed Rehabilitation**

## The Watershed Program is an important and unique natural resource conservation and infrastructure tool.

### **Protects Lives, Property and Rural Infrastructure**

Flood and drought prevention and reliable water quality created by the Watershed Program are essential to creating and maintaining strong rural communities. Watershed projects not only protect lives, property and reduce flood damages but also well managed water resources create economic growth and strengthen local economies. Flood protection is essential to prevent the unnecessary loss of infrastructure and capital to economies in rural America.

### **Addresses a Wide Range of Natural Resource Issues**

The Watershed Program allows NRCS and local sponsors to address a wide range of natural resource issues, including flood control, water quality, drought, sediment and erosion control, water supplies, and water-based recreation. Watershed projects also build resilience and reduce the risk and costs associated with the impacts of weather volatility. It is a proven, cost-effective program with thousands of success stories across the nation.

### **Locally-Led**

The Watershed Program is federally-assisted, but locally-planned and implemented. Local project sponsors use local resources to maintain constructed project measures which contribute directly to a stronger national economy and a responsible national environmental future.

### **Economic Engine**

Investment in the Watershed Program represents expanding opportunities for natural resource conservation coupled with important national economic and environmental dividends for all Americans. There are countless successful examples that prove investing in the Watershed Program in rural areas brings the water supply, recreation and flood protection benefits of the Program to bear on sustainable economic development opportunities. Watershed Program projects make the participating communities more productive places to live, work and play.

### **Important to Agricultural Economy**

The Watershed Program also plays an important role in protecting resources vital to the agricultural economy as well. Agricultural water management includes measures that help to manage water supply for agriculture and rural communities. Measures include drainage management, ground water recharge, irrigation management, water conservation, water quality improvement, and rural water supply.

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