



# **“The Greater Spokane River RCPP”**

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# Recap of RCPP?



- It is Not a **GRANT!**

## The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- It promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners.
- NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements.
- RCPP combines the authorities of four former conservation programs – the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative and the Great Lakes Basin Program. Assistance is delivered in accordance with the rules of:
  - **EQIP**
  - **CSP**
  - **ACEP and HFRP**



# Why RCPP?

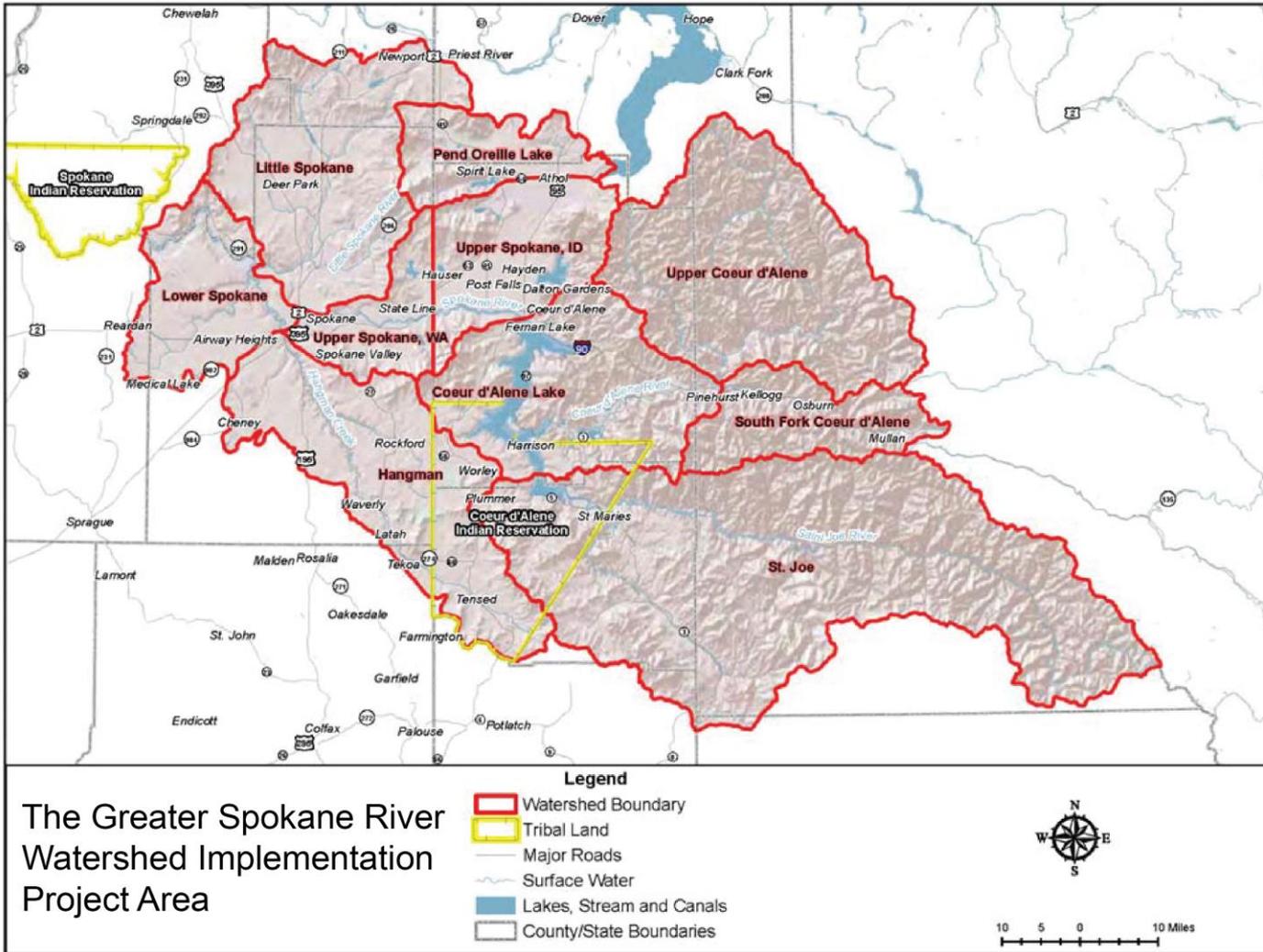
- Excellent opportunity to bring conservation dollars to our area.
- Address non-point source pollution issues in Spokane River Basin.
- Nationwide competition for funds (284 apps)
- We requested \$10 million and were awarded \$7.7 million.



# Partners

- Many partners from old watershed groups and several new ones (21 partners)
- Spokane and CDA Tribes
- Idaho Dept of Lands
- Conservation CDs
- Lands Council
- PNDSA, and many others
- No **New** Partners are allowed (match purposes)

# Project Area



6,640 sq. miles

- 2,295 – WA
- 4,345 – ID

4,249,600 acres

# Objectives



- Approximately 150,000 acres of conservation
  - 120,100 acres of conservation tillage
  - 20,000 acres of precision ag.
  - 750 acres of riparian buffer/filter strips (commodity)
  - 400 acres of conservation easements (ag and forest)
  - 8,750 acres of forest stand improvements
- Reduction of 600,000 tons of soil erosion by 2021.
- Improve water and air quality, soil health, and habitat.
- **Timeline**– 2016 through 2021



# Programs

- **Conservation Stewardship Program**

**CSP** provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other conservation purposes on tribal and private working lands. Contracts (five years in length with the option of extension) are based on meeting or exceeding a “stewardship threshold.”

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

**EQIP** provides financial and technical assistance to producers and land owners to plan and install structural, vegetative, and land management practices on eligible lands to alleviate natural resource problems.



# Programs

- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**
  - **ACEP** provides financial and technical assistance through two types of easements: agricultural land easements that limit non-agricultural uses on productive farm or grass lands, and wetland reserve easements that protect and restore wetlands.
  - *Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)*
  - *Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)*
- **Healthy Forests Reserve Program**
  - **HFRP** assists landowners in restoring and enhancing forest ecosystems using 10-year agreements, 30-year contracts, 30-year easements, and permanent easements.

**\* These are two new programs for both WA and ID**



# Commodity Buffer

- Currently there are less than 5% of the waterways in the region protected by good upland farming practices and/or buffers.
- Effort to change the thought process from “This is my most productive land” to “Why wouldn’t I buffer the stream?”





# Commodity Buffer

- Compensate producer annually for value of buffer area out of production.
- Using RMA Crop Insurance Projected Pricing models.
- Components of the model:
  - Compensation for most productive land
  - Reduction in payment to address variable costs of crop production.
  - Market participation for defined set of days.
  - Minimum rental payment guarantee.





# Commodity Buffer

- Buffer size requirements vary depending on type of upland farming practices used. Use Farmed SMART (FS) Buffer Matrix
- Seamless fit with FS Certification program.
- No impact on bottom line.



# Commodity Buffer Funding



- Commodity Buffer Program does not currently fit within NRCS Programs.
- Washington State Conservation Commission has agreed to assist in financial assistance for WA.
- We need \$ for Idaho Commodity Buffer Program.

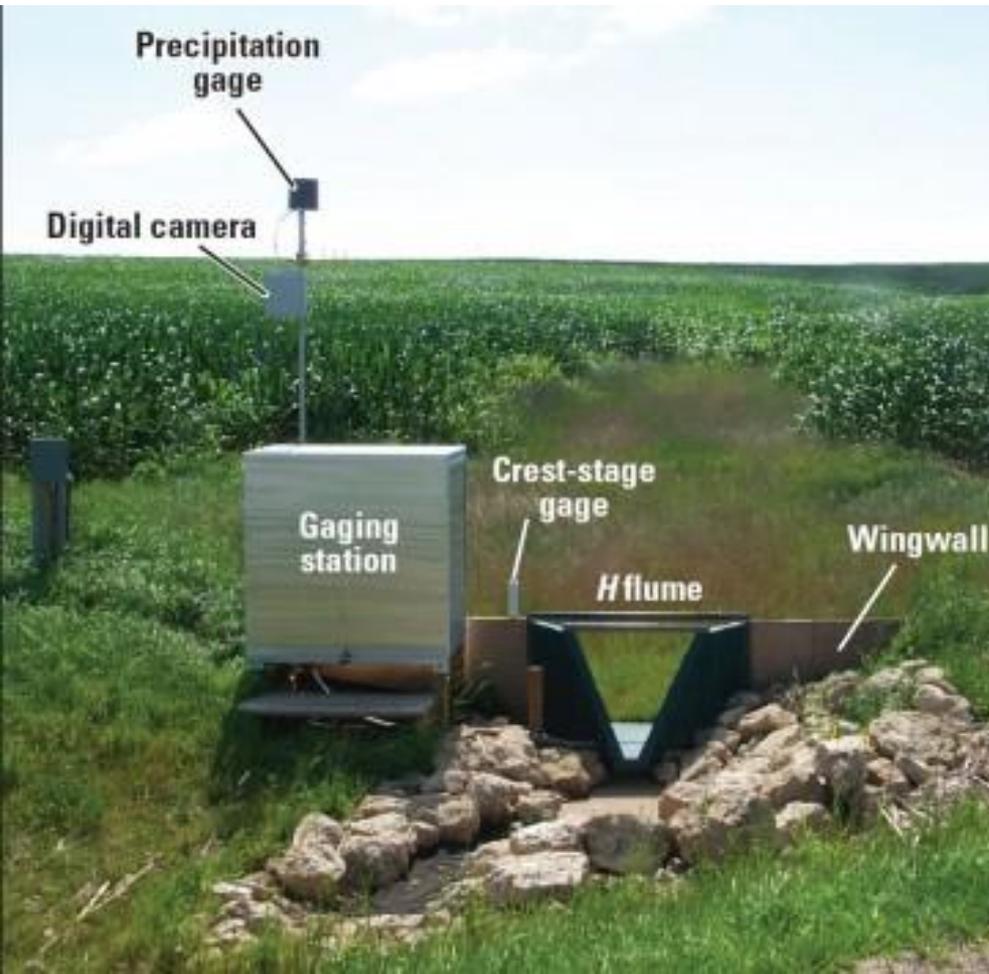


# Edge of Field Monitoring

- to evaluate crop nutrients leaving the field in water runoff. This program will help producers understand
  - when and how nutrients escape from the field.
  - How to tailor management practices that capture nutrients in the root zone for crop use.
- Costs: Conventional gauges provide good overall accuracy with a set-up cost of approximately \$20,000 per site and operational costs of approximately \$25,000 per year.
- The prototype gauge projected costs are significantly less (\$4,000 equipment and \$10,000 annual operating costs).



# Edge of Field Monitoring



- Research on farms provides an important link between plot and watershed scale research.
- Also a way to actively engage farmers in discussions on local water quality issues.
- Some of the critical issues are effective monitoring and identifying the best approaches to monitoring from individual farms.

# Next Steps



- NRCS Contract Completion – by June/July
- Meeting for working on local priorities, practice list, ranking criteria, hold downs, etc.
- Finish Commodity Buffer Program Criteria
  - Secure funding from WSCC
- Monitoring Plan Development
- Outreach Plan development
  - WA/ID efforts by partners to spread word and get people in for contract work.
- First sign up will be in November 2016.

# RCCP Website



<http://sccd.org/the-greater-spokane-river-watershed-project>

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