

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Members of the State Technical Advisory Committee

RE: Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative

Greetings:

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that 41 watersheds in 12 states, known as Focus Areas, will be part of a new Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative. Through this new initiative, NRCS and its partners will help producers in the selected watersheds voluntarily implement conservation practices that avoid, control, and trap nutrient runoff; improve wildlife habitat; and maintain agricultural productivity.

There are three approved Focus Areas in Louisiana, including Bayou Macon Watershed (08050002), Boeuf River Watershed (0805001), and Mermentau Watershed (08080202). A map of the project area is available at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_watersheds_maps_and_list_page.html.

Over the next several weeks, three requests for project proposals will be announced, including the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP), and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). Funding for CCPI projects will be offered through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative is a landmark conservation effort, therefore, it is very important that conservation partner organizations in Louisiana are aware of the opportunities that will be offered to producers. Please take a moment to visit the USDA News Room at <http://www.usda.gov> to read and download the Secretary's news release, then forward the news release to your network of conservation partners.

If you have any questions, please contact Scott Edwards, Mississippi River Basin Initiative Coordinator, at (337) 291-3066 or by e-mail at scott.edwards@la.usda.gov.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin D. Norton".

Kevin D. Norton
State Conservationist

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