



# U.S. Department of Agriculture

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# Secretary Vilsack Highlights \$39 Million Investment in Watershed Infrastructure Projects on Rural Infrastructure Tour

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**FRANKLIN COUNTY, N.C., April 26, 2022** – As part of the Building a Better America Rural Infrastructure Tour, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack highlighted the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) investment of more than \$39 million in six watershed infrastructure projects in North Carolina, building on other USDA infrastructure investments in the state. The six projects include rehabilitating dams, flood prevention, and watershed restoration projects, and are funded by President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Vilsack visited Franklin County, North Carolina today, alongside U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Michael Regan, where they visited Franklin County Public Utilities as part of the Building A Better America Rural Infrastructure Tour to highlight historic infrastructure investments.

“President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild our infrastructure, create good-paying jobs and build new economic opportunity,” Vilsack said. “These projects illustrate this administration’s commitment to investing in rural America and these projects exemplify why this historic investment in our watersheds was needed and the adeptness of our agency to act swiftly.”



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caused areas of severe erosion, in some instances prohibiting maintenance access. Other issues include sedimentation and decreased water flow due to reduced channel volume. Resource concerns that correlate with these issues are: Aquatic Habitat- degraded aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms, Concentrated Erosion- bank erosions from streams or water conveyance channels, and Weather Resilience- ponding and flooding.

- **Meadow Branch Channel Watershed, Moss Neck Channel Watershed, Back and Jacob Swamp Watershed:** These 3 projects in Robeson County, NC would help restore crucial drainage by replacing failing culverts, clearing, and repairing ditch banks, restoring travel ways, and removing sediment. The project falls within the boundaries of the Lumbee Tribe, a state-recognized tribal and socially disadvantaged community.
- **Neuse River Basin:** The proposed project would repair a seawall (Hodges St. Bulkhead), road, connection between watershed from town (Duck Pond) and Neuse River, alleviate recurring flooding, alleviate recurring access issues, and repair wetlands in duck ponds. Also, it would improve public safety and water quality while integrating infrastructure improvements and rehabilitating coastal wetlands.

In total, NRCS received \$918 million of BIL funding to allocate through its watershed programs, which the agency began implementing earlier this year. A full list of projects is available on [NRCS' Bipartisan Infrastructure Law webpage](#).

### How Communities Can Get Help

NRCS encourages communities to engage with their local project sponsors, participate in developing a sound conservation plan that serves to protect and preserve local watersheds, and connect with their [local NRCS office](#) to learn more about Watershed Program assistance.

### More Information

Since 1948, NRCS' watershed programs have designed and built 11,850 dams, constructed water storage structures, flood management systems, stabilized stream banks, relocated residences, redirected stream flows, re-established wildlife habitat and more to save lives and protect watersheds.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the



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CONTACT:  
USDA Press

EMAIL:  
[press@usda.gov](mailto:press@usda.gov)

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