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Biden-Harris Administration Invests in Watershed Infrastructure to Help Communities Recover from, Prepare for Natural Disasters as Part of Investing in America Agenda

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WASHINGTON, May 22, 2023 - The Biden-Harris Administration today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making investments, including from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, in watershed infrastructure to help communities recover from and prepare for natural disasters.

USDA is investing \$265 million through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 28 Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) infrastructure projects in 16 states impacted by extreme weather events. These projects include streambank stabilization, flood prevention and watershed restoration projects, and they are part of the \$925 million investment through the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

NRCS is also announcing the availability of up to \$135 million in financial assistance through EWP buyouts for property within Limited Resource Areas that have been impacted by constant flooding.



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nation's infrastructure to driving over \$470 billion in private sector manufacturing and clean energy investments in the United States, to creating good paying jobs and building a clean-energy economy that will combat climate change and make our communities more resilient.

“The Biden-Harris Administration is focused on ensuring that flood prone communities have every tool possible to prepare and to recover from the next extreme weather emergency,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Programs like Emergency Watershed Protection can help communities with recovery efforts and this historic investment, in tandem with the floodplain buyouts opportunity through Bipartisan Infrastructure Law investments, provides relief to communities impacted by natural disasters.”

EWP Projects

EWP offers vital recovery options for local communities to help reduce hazards to life and property caused by floodwaters, droughts, wildfires, earthquakes, windstorms and other natural disasters.

Some of the EWP projects funded in fiscal year 2023 include:

- **Arizona Pipeline Fire:** A wildfire followed by a monsoon in Arizona impacted several communities. Funding will be used to construct flood channels and debris basins to collect sediment to mitigate future flooding.
- **New Mexico Calf Canyon/Hermits Peak Fire:** Wildfire impacted several communities in New Mexico. Funding will be used to help with wildfire recovery efforts.
- **Southeast Kentucky - Flood:** In Kentucky, 14 counties were impacted by flooding. This assistance will protect roads that were damaged by extreme erosion, stabilize streambanks, and remove debris and sediment.
- **Florida - Hurricane Ian:** Hurricane Ian caused extreme damage in 75% of Florida's counties. Funding will be used to assist with debris and sediment removal, restore and stabilize streambanks, and build additional stormwater controls, diversions, and draining channels to reduce further flooding and limit damage from debris flow.

To learn more, you may visit a [full list of fiscal year 2023 projects](#). EWP projects are funded in response to a local community requesting assistance following a natural disaster.

EWP Buyout Option in Limited Resource Areas


In addition to the EWP projects announced today, NRCS is highlighting the availability of funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for EWP buyouts in Limited Resource Areas, which can help communities impacted by constant flooding or severe erosion due to a natural disaster.




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counties, towns, conservation districts or any federally recognized Native American tribe or tribal organization in a Limited Resource Area.

Compensation is based on land and easement value as determined by an appraisal or market analysis. These buyouts may be purchased on public or private lands, including residential properties damaged by flooding at least once during the previous year, or twice within the previous 10 years. EWP covers 90% of project costs in areas considered Limited Resource Areas.

To learn more, attend a [webinar on May 24 from 2 to 4 p.m.](#)  eastern. The webinar will provide valuable information on the opportunity, eligibility and reserve time to respond to participant questions.

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.

NRCS will continue to review additional requests and compile another round of watershed funding as funds are available. Fact sheets, trainings and other resources are available on the [NRCS website](#).

More Information

For more information, please contact your local program manager.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In 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 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 Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit [usda.gov](#).

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