

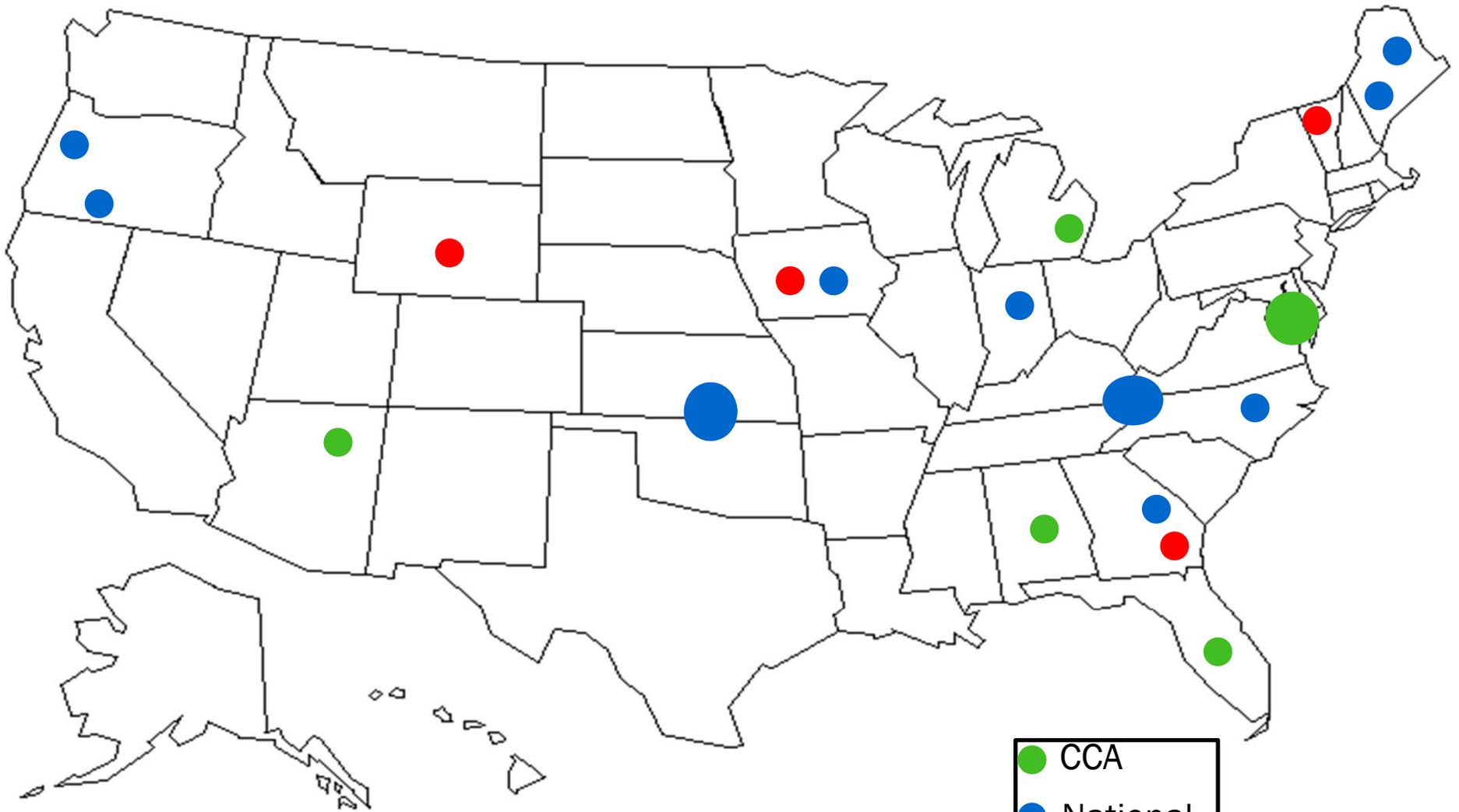
The Nature Conservancy and RCPP

USDA Agriculture Outlook Forum
February 23rd, 2017

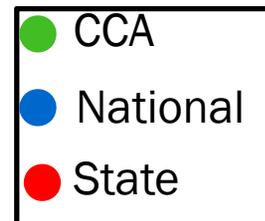
Jenny Conner Nelms

*Senior Policy Advisor, Agriculture
The Nature Conservancy*





RCPP Projects / TNC Lead Partner



RCPP Feedback from the Field

- Overall widespread support for the program.
- Partnerships are critical for landscape scale conservation.
- Successful at bringing new partners to the table (support from commodities, state and local government agencies, water utilities, forest industry)

2018 Farm bill planning = Opportunity to review and refine the program



Chesapeake Delmarva Whole System Conservation Partnership - From Field to Stream

CCA Project (Chesapeake Bay Watershed)



Steve Droter

Summary

- Awarded \$5M FY15 for priority conservation practices to Delmarva
- A unique public-private collaboration that brings together over 30 groups including conservation organizations, agribusiness, government agencies, and the scientific community
- Improving water quality and habitat in a way that sustains a thriving agricultural industry on Delmarva
- Demonstrate a collaborative approach and new partnerships for outreach
- **Target practices for the greatest outcomes**

Partner Organizations



Early Outcomes

What's working:

- Getting additional conservation on the ground in priority areas,
- Growing a diverse partnership among ag and conservation groups

Key Accomplishments:

- 312 ac of **wetlands restored**
- 551 ac of **wetlands protected**
- 98 ac of **buffers restored**
- 344 ac of **buffers protected**
- 424 ac of **other lands protected**
- 8,200 ac enrolled in **NRCS programs to implement advanced nutrient management**



Work with NRCS

Relationship with State Conservationist:

- Very supportive
- Discussed project with both State Cons (DE and MD) before submission

Recommendations moving forward:

- Would like to direct TA funds from NRCS to Conservation Districts without going through TNC or lead partner
- Better communication between all levels of NRCS and states involved in project
- Streamlined reporting



Maine Aquatic Connectivity Restoration Project
National Project (ME)

Summary

- First RCPP connectivity project
- 5-year project funded for \$6 million FY17
- Supports an innovative collaboration with NGO's, agencies, tribes and large landowners
- Restores some of our highest-value habitat for Atlantic salmon, a suite of other searun fish, as well as Eastern brook trout
- Short-term benefit of construction jobs; long-term benefits of increased road stability, safety, and improved movement of materials more quickly
- Restores ~250 miles of brooks, streams, and rivers, and increases connectivity of over a dozen prime watersheds
- Bigger, better culvert replacements have longer design life, are more flood resilient, and provide 100% passage for fish and other aquatic organisms

Partner Orgs

MAINE 



AUDUBON



+ ten private large landowners



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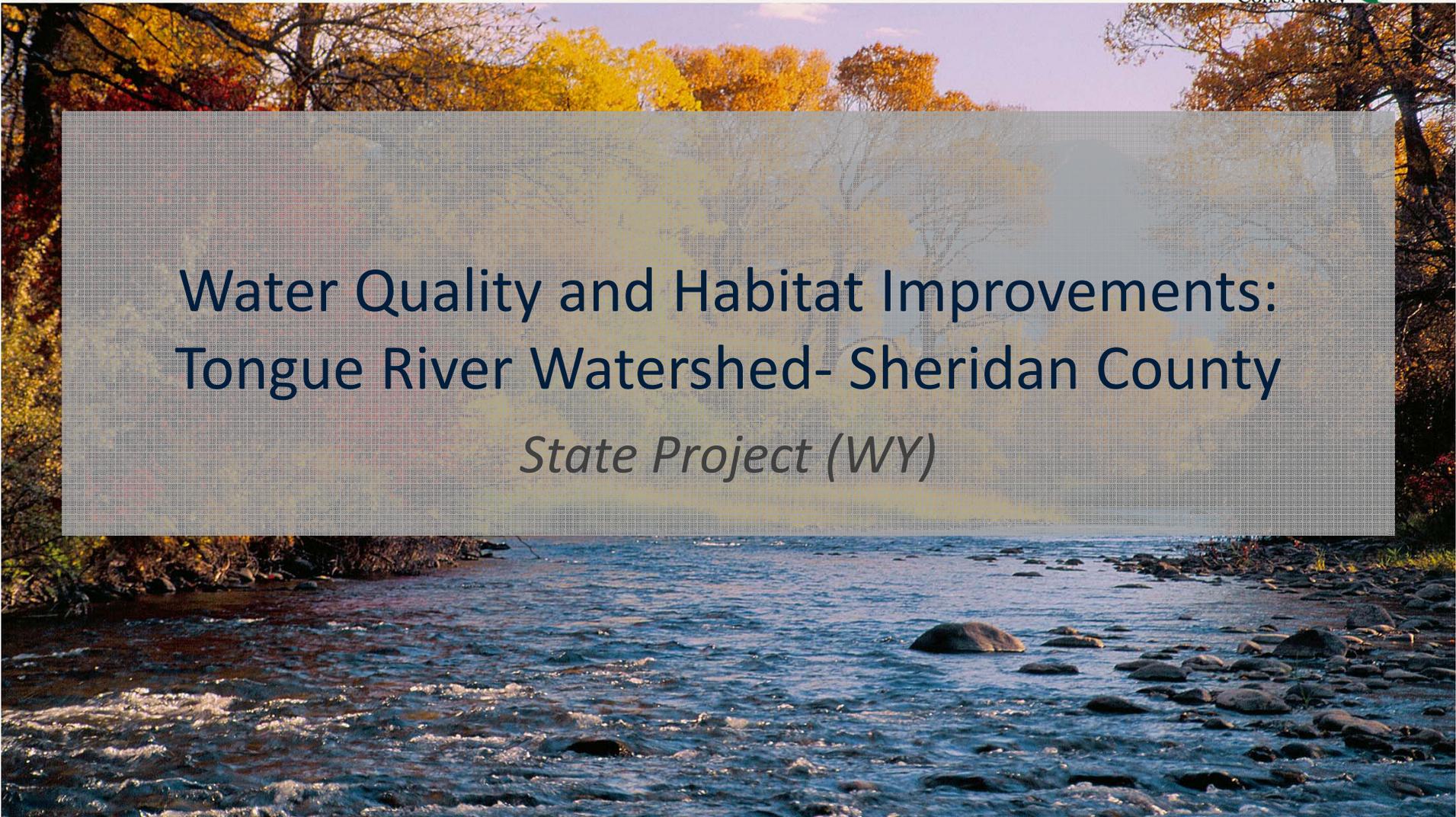
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Transferrable Lessons / Expected Outcomes

- Project will engage landowners who manage roads to greatly expand aquatic habitat availability while lessening flooding and road infrastructure problems
- Project will improve coordination and communication between the partners and serve as model for other states in the NE Region, the Great Lakes, and the Pacific Northwest embarking on similar partnerships
- Over 25 tribal, state, federal, NGO, and large private landowner partners have pledged to more than double the investment in roads from the \$6 million award
- TNC and NRCS continue to lead project together, State Conservationist very engaged and supportive.

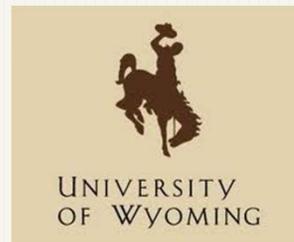
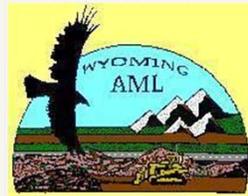
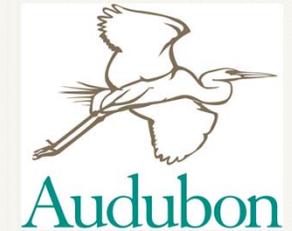


Water Quality and Habitat Improvements:
Tongue River Watershed- Sheridan County
State Project (WY)

Summary

- Tongue River Initiative Partners awarded \$1.9 million in FY15 funding
- Project addresses landscape wide conservation issues related to water quality /quantity concerns in the Tongue River Drainages in WY
- Large project list includes conservation easements, aquatic habitat restoration, irrigation diversion remediation, corral and septic system remediation, whole ranch planning, invasive plant removal

Partner Orgs



Project Update

What's working:

- Bringing partners together to address common challenges
- Leveraging funding more efficiently (Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust)
- Accomplishing more targeted conservation on the ground
- Projects ready to go and already on the list for EQIP and ALE

Upcoming Goals:

- Restore fish passage to ~35 miles of river for native fishes and trout.
- Mitigate septic systems at 10 or more projects per year.
- Restore 8 miles of riverine habitat on the upper reaches of the Tongue River.

Work with NRCS

Relationship with State Conservationist:

- Overcame several administrative hurdles together during application process and ultimately the successful awarding of the grant.
- NRCS District Manager was able to demonstrate ~\$5 million dollars in unfunded conservation need in the watershed.
- Awarded \$1.9 million over a four year span

Recommendations moving forward:

- Lower load of budgeting and paperwork control for the Conservation District and NRCS office
- Focus more on “putting partners in the driver’s seat”

Lessons Learned

Two most important things to consider as we develop RCPP projects:

- Conservation outcomes (not practices, but outcomes).
- Partnerships needed to reach those outcomes.



Best advice:

Relationship with State Conservationist is key to successful project.

Thank you!

Jenny Conner Nelms
The Nature Conservancy
jconner@tnc.org