

Watershed Projects

Helping Communities Solve Natural Resource Issues

Every State has a Watershed Project

There are 2,100 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assisted watershed projects in the United States with projects in every state and two territories.

Many of the projects include dams for flood control, but they also provide fish and wildlife habitat, livestock water, recreation and in some cases municipal water. Most projects include conservation practices for erosion control and may address issues such as animal waste management, ground water recharge and water quality.

Whatever the primary purpose, watershed projects have multiple community benefits. Many of the projects have been providing benefits for decades; some for more than the planned evaluated life.

NRCS Watershed Programs were authorized by Congress with passage of the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-534) and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566).

Watershed projects are planned and implemented by sponsoring local units of government such as conservation districts, cities, counties, or special watershed districts with assistance from NRCS.

Funds for planning and implementation of project measures are appropriated by Congress. Local sponsors provide easements and land rights and are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the works of improvement. Sponsors may also provide for a portion of the cost of installation of practices.

Projects Provide Multiple Benefits

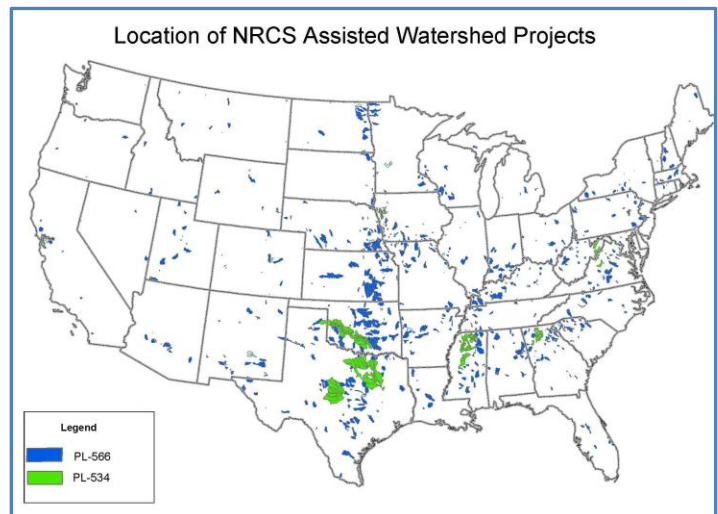
The 2,100 watershed projects provide over \$2.2 billion in average annual benefits to over 48 million people.

Many of these “benefits” are actually damages that would have occurred had the watershed projects not been implemented.

Average Annual Watershed Program National Benefits

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| Agricultural flood protection benefits | \$385,824,825 |
| Non-agricultural flood protection benefits | \$479,824,325 |
| Agricultural benefits (non-flood) | \$458,202,145 |
| Non-agricultural benefits (non-flood) | \$994,044,928 |
| Total average annual monetary benefits | \$2,297,896,224 |
| Number of bridges benefited | 61,702 |
| Number of farms and ranches benefited | 181,551 |
| Number of homes benefited | 611,093 |
| Number of businesses benefited | 46,586 |
| Number of public facilities benefited | 3,663 |
| Acres of wetlands created or enhanced | 282,037 |
| Ac. of upland wildlife habitat created or enhanced | 9,427,086 |
| Miles of streams enhanced or protected | 47,770 |
| Number of domestic water supplies benefited | 27,874 |
| Reduced soil erosion (tons/year) | 92,341,221 |
| Tons of animal waste properly managed | 4,801,640 |
| Water conserved (acre feet/year) | 1,851,387 |

Location of NRCS Assisted Watershed Projects



The Watershed Program is Being Utilized to Solved a Variety of Natural Resource Issues

Communities across the nation have utilized the watershed program to solve resource problems for over 70 years. Below are a few examples showing the variety of projects that have been implemented.

Flood Control, Municipal Water Supplies, Water-Based Recreation and Protection of Homes and Businesses



This flood control dam near San Antonio, Texas is providing flood protection for a major highway and hundreds of homes and businesses. Other dams across the nation provide municipal and industrial water, and water-based recreation areas.

Controlling Soil Erosion and Improving Water Quality



Conservation practices are a vital part of all watershed projects. Practices such as terraces, waterways, grass buffers and grass plantings were installed in this Tama County, Iowa watershed to prevent soil erosion and reduce sediment. Entrapment of sediment upstream from the dam increases the service life of the dam and its ability to provide flood control.

Managing Agricultural Water



Local sponsors developed the Lower Hamakua Ditch Watershed Project on the island of Hawaii to rebuild and repair a water distribution system that had been built by sugar companies in 1900-1910. The 15 miles of open ditch and 10 miles of tunnel provide irrigation water distribution to 8,000 acres of agricultural lands. This flume replaced an existing one that had deteriorated.

Creating or Enhancing Wildlife Habitat



This 38-acre wetland area was created during the construction of the Airlie Dam in Fauquier County, Virginia. It is important resting and feeding area for waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway.

For additional information about watershed projects and their benefits, visit the USDA NRCS website at: www.nrcs.usda.gov and select "Programs", then "Landscape Planning" and then "Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention" or visit your local NRCS office.