

HEALTHY WATERSHED CONSORTIUM GRANT PROGRAM GROWS
Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnership Expands Funding for 2017
Request for Proposals Released

U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC

For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (October 13, 2016)

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Inc. (Endowment) today released the [2017 Request for Proposals](#) for the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program. Additional grant funds are available in 2017-2018 through a new partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Up to \$2 million is available for the 2017 Healthy Watershed Consortium grant cycle. NRCS joins the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Endowment as Healthy Watershed Consortium Grant Program funders. The program's focus is to accelerate the strategic protection of healthy freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds across the country. The deadline for proposals is February 1, 2017 at 8:00 p.m. Eastern.

"We are delighted to welcome NRCS as a partner in the Healthy Watersheds Consortium," said Peter Stangel, the Endowment's Senior Vice President. "NRCS brings tremendous watershed protection expertise and experience to the Consortium. NRCS funding will allow us to support even more projects over the next two years." NRCS committed \$1.5 million to the Consortium through a Cooperative Agreement with the Endowment.

The Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program was conceived by the EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds to identify and protect healthy, aquatic ecosystems and their watersheds. Healthy watersheds are those in which the hydrological, biological, and land-based functions of the ecosystem are largely intact. The Program's goal is to conserve healthy aquatic ecosystems and the supporting natural and managed landscape and watershed processes, such as hydrology, that support them. Rather than waiting until a watershed is negatively impacted and attempting to restore it to health, the Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant Program seeks to protect and sustain healthy watersheds so that they will continue to provide ecological services such as clean water, habitat for fish and wildlife, recreation, and protection from natural hazards.

In 2016, the first year of the Healthy Watersheds Consortium, 169 proposals were received and nine projects were funded, committing \$1.4 million. These modest awards are expected to leverage tens of millions in additional funding that is projected to ultimately result in more than 200,000 acres of watersheds permanently protected.

"The Healthy Watersheds Consortium was also created to enhance collaboration among the many groups that will benefit from protected watersheds, such as drinking water and storm water, wildlife and fisheries, land conservation, and forestry and working lands," Stangel said. "We envision strong public/private partnerships that will protect watersheds and their benefits for generations to come."

A Request for Proposals and other information is available on the Endowment's [Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grant program website](#).

#

For more information contact:

Peter Stangel, 404-915-2763; peter@usendowment.org

The **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities – www.usendowment.org