

NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

6013 Lakeside Boulevard
Indianapolis, IN 46278
www.in.nrcs.usda.gov

Six Indiana Watersheds Included in Mississippi River Basin Initiative

INDIANAPOLIS, November 24, 2009 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that 41 watersheds in 12 states will be part of a new initiative to improve water quality and the overall health of the Mississippi River Basin. The selected watersheds exceed 42 million acres. In Indiana, six watersheds made the list for participation.

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) will provide approximately \$320 million in USDA financial assistance over the next four years for voluntary projects in priority watersheds in Arkansas, Illinois, **Indiana**, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. MRBI will help producers implement conservation and management practices that prevent, control, and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the Initiative.

Indiana NRCS selected the six Indiana watersheds that are included in the Initiative, with guidance from the State Technical Committee and state water quality agencies. Selections were based on the potential for managing nitrogen and phosphorus—nutrients associated with water quality problems in the Basin—while maintaining agricultural productivity and benefiting wildlife.

"This Initiative will help Indiana reduce the amount of nutrients making their way to the Mississippi River system," said NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty. "This is an opportunity to work with our partners to get more conservation on the land, and I encourage our partners and landowners to join us in this targeted effort."

The next step will be for smaller watershed projects, within the six Indiana targeted watersheds, to be selected through a competitive process under three NRCS partnership opportunities. These include the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI), the Wetlands Reserve

Enhancement Program (WREP), and Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG). National requests for proposals for these three MRBI opportunities will be released in the coming weeks. NRCS assistance will be leveraged through these programs with contributions from partners, expanding the capacity available to improve water quality throughout the Basin. Farm Bill dollars for these targeted partnership projects will go directly to individual landowners.

Selected watersheds that include land in Indiana are:

State(s)	Watershed	Hydrologic Unit code (HUC)
Illinois/Indiana	Vermillion (Upper Mississippi River sub-basin)	05120109
Indiana	Eel	05120104
Indiana	Upper East Fork White	05120206
Indiana	Wildcat	05120107
Indiana/Ohio	Upper Wabash	05120101
Ohio/Indiana	Upper Great Miami	05080001

For information about the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative, including eligibility requirements, please visit the MRBI Web page at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_overview.html . A map of the project area is available at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_watersheds_maps_and_list_page.html .

#

Contacts:

Jane E. Hardisty, NRCS State Conservationist, (317) 290-3200

Michael McGovern, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, (317) 290-3200, ext. 324

Helping People Help the Land