

The Suwannee River Partnership - Receives Grant Funding

Two grant proposals submitted to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) –Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) earlier this year, will receive funding. The Partnership submitted proposals through the USDA Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG), and the Agriculture Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) programs to provide funds to help farmers continue to improve irrigation systems and irrigation water management.

The Partnership will receive \$75,000 as part of the State of Florida NRCS, CIG allocation. The proposal will help develop and demonstrate an “Advanced Irrigation Scheduling” package for farmers to use. The irrigation scheduling package recommendations will include tools such as easy to use guidelines and electronic equipment to help farmers maximize their irrigation system efficiency. This would save water and assist farmers saving on irrigation cost. Better irrigation scheduling could also help reduce the loss of fertilizers which effect water quality.

The AWEP grant will provide \$750,000 over a two year period to farmers to upgrade older irrigation system power units and pumps. These upgrades will allow farmers to save water and fuel while reducing air emissions. The funds will be administered similar to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding through NRCS in the Suwannee and Santa Fe Basins. The Partnership is working with NRCS to develop eligible practices and ranking criteria for the grant program.

These grant initiatives will build on successful Partnership programs. The Partnership has worked with crop farmers to improve irrigation system efficiency over the last five years by upgrading their irrigation system nozzle packages. Also, close to 75% of crop farmers in the basin have agreed to implement the State of Florida Vegetable - Agronomic Crops Best Management Practices Guide that helps protect and save water.