

Grant to benefit Palouse River drainage project

By [Andy Porter](#)

- As of Friday, January 23, 2015

A project to restore land and improve water quality along the Palouse River is among five conservation efforts in Washington state to be funded by a new federal program.

The Palouse River Watershed Management Plan and four other projects will receive \$23 million as part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The program will provide \$370 million in federal funding for 115 conservation projects in 50 states and Puerto Rico.

The grants were announced Friday by federal and state officials.

Led by the Palouse Conservation District, the Palouse River project will involve 15 public and private partners. Half the money for the \$11 million project will come from Natural Resources Conservation Service and half from contributions from the regional partners.

“This grant will allow us to start real restoration along the Palouse river aimed at water quality issues,” said Mike Denny, riparian restoration coordinator for conservation districts in Whitman County.

Denny, who helped write the grant proposal, said the Palouse River drainage encompassing 3,300 square miles and 6,000 miles of shoreline.

The river drains into the Lower Snake River, which borders northern Walla Walla County.

“Up until now any restoration work was very restricted due to the rules,” Denny said. “Now, this grant opens all of the Palouse river drainage up for voluntary riparian restoration work.”

Another portion of the grant is to help farmers adopt direct seed practices, which significantly reduces erosion and runoff that carries silt and farm chemical residues, Denny said.

Another part of the grant will be used for outreach and education.

The remaining four projects are the Upper Columbia Irrigation Enhancement Project, Precision Conservation for Salmon and Water Quality in the Puget Sound, the Yakama Nation On-Reservation Yakima Basin Restoration Project, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation Water Quality and Habitat Improvement Project.

A complete list of the projects is available [here](#).

Andy Porter can be reached at andyporter@wwub.com or 526-8318.