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NASDA Foundation Empowers Environmental Stewardship on Farms

Farmers and ranchers have long been stewards of the land, feeding the world while also protecting natural resources. Today, when confronted by unprecedented natural disasters and other environmental challenges, their role as stewards has never been more important. The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation recognizes this responsibility and encourages the use of technology and climate-smart practices in supporting agricultural conservation efforts across the U.S.

As testament to the organization's commitment to environmental conservation, the NASDA Foundation launched a \$3 million cooperative agreement last year with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The organizations will use the funding to benefit ecosystems within the [Gulf of Mexico watershed](#).

The goal of the cooperative agreement is to empower historically underserved farmers in implementing conservation-led practices. This cooperative agreement serves as an important example of how federal government agencies and state agriculture organizations can support economic development among underserved farmers while also recognizing their role in enhancing water quality, ensuring habitat resilience and promoting information exchange.

The Foundation recently [announced](#) a list of 14 sub-awardee organizations, who represent a diverse network across the Gulf of Mexico watershed. These organizations will work directly with underserved farmers on implementing innovative practices on their farms to reduce non-point source pollution and promote sustainability. The sub-awardees will also integrate expertise from regional partners to support information-sharing and ensure that educational and other resources are readily accessible among historically underserved communities.

The funded organizations will each focus on water quality, habitat restoration or sustainable forest management initiatives. Together, these programs will address long-term sustainability across the watershed, from protecting wildlife corridors to more effectively leveraging nitrogen inputs in cropland operations. Following the program's conclusion in 2026, local communities across the watershed will be offered access to the program's results and data collection resources to help inform sustainable management practices for the future.

As these projects begin to be implemented this year across the Gulf of Mexico watershed, they are already showcasing the importance of equipping farmers with the resources and tools they need to lead as environmental stewards. With natural resource conservation at the forefront of these programs, the

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NASDA Foundation is demonstrating how organizations like ours can support regional economic development that is rooted in climate-smart, sustainably-focused management practices.

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NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA grows and enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.

The NASDA Foundation is the only educational and research organization that directly serves the nation's state departments of agriculture. The NASDA Foundation's mission is to enhance American food and agricultural communities through education, outreach and research. The NASDA Foundation works with states to nourish people and communities while serving as the stewards of the environment and public trust. To learn more about the NASDA Foundation, please visit nasda.org/nasda-foundation/.

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