



Conservation Agronomist – Overview of the Request for Application

Spencer Herbert

Conservation Agronomist Coordinator

June 6, 2024

Agenda



Overview of Truterra's USDA Climate SMART Grant



Conservation Agronomist Overview



Request for Application (RFA) Details & Evaluation



Getting Started: Resources & FAQs



Next Steps & Timelines



Overview of Truterra's USDA Climate SMART Grant

**Submit your
questions!**

Truterra's USDA Climate SMART Grant Vision



Truterra's USDA Climate SMART Grant

**Conservation
Agronomist**

**Retailer
Services**

**Financial
Assistance
Program**

**Early Adopter
Program**

USDA programs



■ Conservation Agronomist

- \$6M of total funding available
- \$2.4M allocated in RFA #1
- \$3.6M available in RFA #2



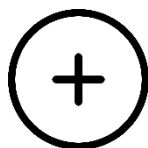
■ Retailer Services

- \$2.5M of funding available in 2025
- Will create new service adoption in ag retail as it relates to scaling regenerative agriculture



■ Financial Assistance (first time adopter incentive)

- 15,000 acres launched Dec 2023
- 80,000+ acres launching in Aug 2024



■ Early Adopter

- 800,000 acres total; regional rollouts beginning in Aug 2024

■ Demo Plots

- 30 awards for transition plots to ag retailers/partners

Conservation Agronomist Funding Overview

**Submit your
questions!**

Conservation Agronomist Funding

- Truterra intends to provide up to \$6M for conservation agronomy services across two separate Request for Application (RFA) periods
- Conservation agronomy services will be catalyzed by retailers hiring a Conservation Agronomist
- The maximum award will be \$200,000 over the course of a 3-year term, with approximate 1:1 co-investment by the ag retailer
- Competitive process (RFA)
- Applications are limited to funding one position per ag retailer. *Retailers awarded in RFA #1 are not eligible to apply again in RFA #2.*
- Retailers develop an application that fit their needs and provide **milestones** for growers reached, technical assistance provided, educational events, etc
- Truterra evaluates applications based upon investment and impacts, makes award decisions



Value of Conservation Agronomist



Bridge the gap between agronomic expertise and sales offerings of ag retail with a deep knowledge and understanding of conservation and public sector programs



Increase farmer awareness, understanding and participation in the ecosystem marketplace and conservation programs



Seamlessly implement climate smart practices as part of a whole acre agronomic plan.



Provide outreach to farmers, rural communities and educational organizations

Ultimately, Conservation Agronomists may help you expand your service offerings and unlock cost-share and ecosystem service market opportunities for your farmers, allowing you to come to the farm gate with a point of difference that can help drive income while reducing risk.

What sets this Conservation Agronomist partnership apart?



This grant provides ag retailers within the Truterra network with a unique opportunity to receive funding assistance to employ a Conservation Agronomist and provide conservation agronomy services.



Most importantly, the ag retailer assumes ownership of the vision, strategy, and goals of the Conservation Agronomist. This autonomy is vital to seamlessly integrate a Conservation Agronomist within the ag retailers' overall business model.



Join an engaged network of Conservation Agronomist peers.

Conservation Agronomist Vision

- 1. OUR VISION:** We want conservation agronomy to be profitable. We believe that to be sustainable in the long term, conservation services need to have **profit potential**. While the conservation agronomist support provided **under this funding opportunity** is structured to not generate revenue in the short term, our hope and intention is that you will be able to **develop ag retailer-to-farmer connections that enable you to provide revenue-generating conservation services and product sales in the future.**
- 2. THE REALITY:** As this is a USDA-funded initiative, restrictions exist surrounding how this role is leveraged:
 - If revenue is made off a service funded by the US government, there are additional reporting requirements. This initiative is structured to prevent the pain points of revenue reporting and instead focuses on catalyzing relationship building in your supply shed through the Conservation Agronomist, ultimately driving long-term value and revenue-generating opportunities in the future.
 - The Conservation Agronomist can still be used for revenue generating activities. However, these activities cannot be funded as part of the USDA award.

Role of the Conservation Agronomist:

This RFA exclusively covers providing support to farmers who want to adopt conservation agronomy practices. Your conservation agronomists are your employees and you can use a percentage of their time on sales (revenue generating) activities; however, that time should not be charged to the award.

ACTIVITIES IN SCOPE ✓

- Assist farmers transitioning to climate smart agricultural practices (cover crops, reduced tillage, precision nutrient management) by providing technical and agronomic expertise through a climate-smart commodities plan
- Increase farmer awareness of carbon market, practice incentive and other ecosystem marketplace opportunities
- Develop and deploy targeted outreach and marketing efforts to encourage climate-smart practice adoption
- Plan and execute educational opportunities, like field days and workshops, that highlight climate-smart practices and considerations
- Develop peer networks to facilitate farmer-to-farmer learning opportunities
- Identify and assist historically underserved farmers with support from Truterra's Outreach and Partnership Liaison
- Train ag retailer staff on climate-smart practice opportunities and revenue streams

ACTIVITIES NOT IN SCOPE ⚠

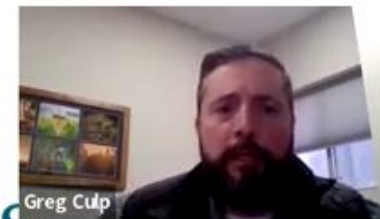
- Full-service data management responsibilities for sustainability program enrollment (Truterra commercial program data collection. Truterra Retailers have separate contracts for data collection in connection with USDA and Truterra commercial programs.)
- Traditional agronomy sales (seed, fertilizer, crop protection, etc). When doing work under this award, Conservation Agronomists can't promote products and services that are not aligned with the USDA award.
- Day to day operational activities (delivering seed, fertilizer or crop protection products, operating application equipment, etc).

The budget template shared will help you easily isolate revenue generating activities from award covered-non revenue generating activities.

Conservation Agronomist Role Key Takeaways

1. This funding opportunity is structured to not generate revenue in the short term.
2. Our hope and intention is that you will be able to develop ag retailer-to-farmer connections that enable you to provide revenue-generating conservation services and product sales in the future.
3. Your conservation agronomists are your employees and you can use a percentage of their time on sales (revenue generating) activities; however, that time should not be charged to the award.
4. When doing work under this award, Conservation Agronomists can promote products and services that align with the climate-smart practice implementation, for example:
 - a. Cover crop seed, application, and chemical termination
 - b. Custom strip till service
 - c. Precision nutrient management practices like nitrogen stabilizers, variable rate application, etc
5. We will walk through resources at the end of the presentation including the budget template which will help you easily isolate revenue generating activities from award covered-non revenue generating activities.

The Impact of a Conservation Agronomist



- How and why Mercer hired a Conservation Agronomist
- Background of Michael Watercutter – Conservation Agronomist at Mercer
- Benefits of Mercer bringing on a Conservation Agronomist
 - Unique technical skills in conservation have:
 - Opened up potential service / product sales opportunities, driving customer loyalty and stickiness
 - Given customers a chance to earn more for their efforts in sustainable agriculture. Example: the Truterra® Field Data Management Program for wheat
 - Tips for integration of Conservation Agronomist into team
 - Role structure: Drive connection with sales team to provide opportunities to engage with growers on the farm and make CA a true part of the team
 - Drive visibility: Invitation to weekly roundtable meetings and leadership meetings drives knowledge sharing
- Potential traits to target for your Conservation Agronomist
 - Technical expertise in conservation
 - Firsthand experience with conservation practices



RFA Overview

**Submit your
questions!**

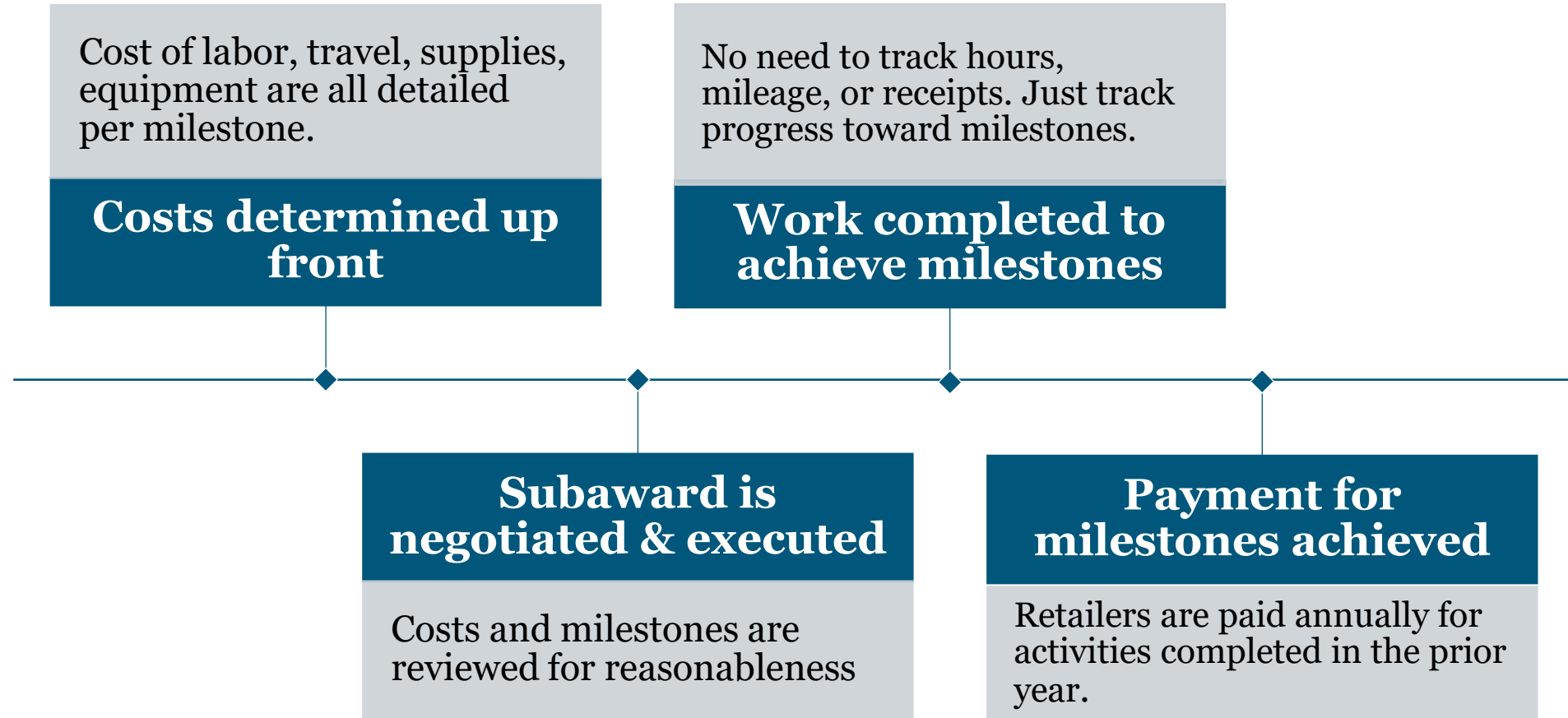
Why an RFA?

- The purpose of the Conservation Agronomist request for application (RFA) is to invite Truterra retailers to develop and submit applications for a Conservation Agronomist funding opportunity through a call for applications.
- The RFA provides Truterra ag retailers with a fair opportunity to submit applications to Truterra for funding opportunities in the conservation agronomy sector.
- Retailers develop an application that fit their needs and provide measurable goals for growers reached, acres transitioned, educational events



Fixed-amount subawards

How Retailers get paid



Application Instructions

**Submit your
questions!**

Crafting your Application

- 1. Eligibility criteria:** Truterra seeks applications from active Truterra retailers who wish to employ a Conservation Agronomist that will provide the technical support described previously. Applicants may only apply for one grant; the grant will only cover costs associated with one Conservation Agronomist per retailer providing this support. ***Retailers awarded in RFA #1 are not eligible to apply again in RFA #2.***
- 2. Program duration:** A total of up to \$6 million of funding for Conservation Agronomy support will be funded through Truterra's Climate SMART grant program. Up to \$3.6 million of quality applications will be funded through this RFA. The Conservation Agronomy awards under this RFA will last up to three (3) years.
- 3. Technical application requirements:** 4 pages or less. Page limit does not include cover page or milestone/budget worksheet.

Crafting your Application

Technical Requirements

a) Cover Page (1 page) including:

- Truterra retailer name and contact person
 - Retailer's name
 - Individual's contact name
 - Title or position within the organization
 - Email address
 - Telephone number
- State(s) and counties(s) serviced by retailer
- Number of agronomy locations and approximate acres serviced
- Average annual acres where you are providing service on corn, soybeans, wheat and/or cotton (approximate)
- The organization's headquarters location

Crafting your Application

Technical Requirements

b) Milestone and Budget Workbook

Conservation Agronomist - Milestones Worksheet				
Retailer Name:				
Use the shaded cells in the table below to enter deliverables for each of the outlined activities and timeframes. These deliverables represent the retailer's commitment to complete these activities and report progress to Truterra for the given				
Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Number of farmers reached via campaign 1: [Name]				
Number of farmers reached via campaign 2: [Name]^				
Number of farmers reached via campaign 3: [Name]				
Number of farmers reached via campaign 4: [Name]				
Field days and workshops (educational events)				
Number of farmers engaged via peer network deployment				
Number of individualized Climate Smart Commodities plans delivered				
Number Historically Underserved farmers engaged				
Number rural community and/or educational groups engaged				
Truterra event participation*	8	8	8	24
Participation in Advanced Soil Health Training**	2	2	0	4
Participation in WFU Professional Agronomy Training course#	1	0	0	1
Number of farmers educated on Climate Smart programs^^				
Cross-functional retailer trainings				

If you plan to reach the same farmers in year 3 that you reach in year 1, your Year 3 total will be the same as your life of project total. If you plan to reach a different set of farmers each year, then add your Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 numbers to yield your life of project total. This applies to all cells shaded in green.

Retailer is required to report on number of unique farmers reached and total number of

Crafting your Application

Technical Requirements

- c) **Technical Narrative:** 4 pages or less. Page limit does not include cover page, milestones template or budget. Information to include:



Duties and role



Growth opportunities



Education, outreach and monitoring

Application Evaluation

**Submit your
questions!**

Evaluation

Technical and Budget Application Requirements:

- **Minimum selection criteria:** Applications that do not meet the eligibility, minimum co-investment contribution requirements and clearly articulate a commitment to attend at least 75% of the Truterra meetings (both in person and virtual formats) designed for the Conservation Agronomist network will not be considered. Applications that do not clearly articulate a commitment to attend the Advanced Soil Health Training and Professional Agronomy Training course will not be considered.
- **Other selection criteria:** All compliant applications that meet the minimum selection criteria will be evaluated by the Truterra Grant Evaluation Committee against the following criteria:

Design and Plan for Execution of Proposed Activity
(50 points)

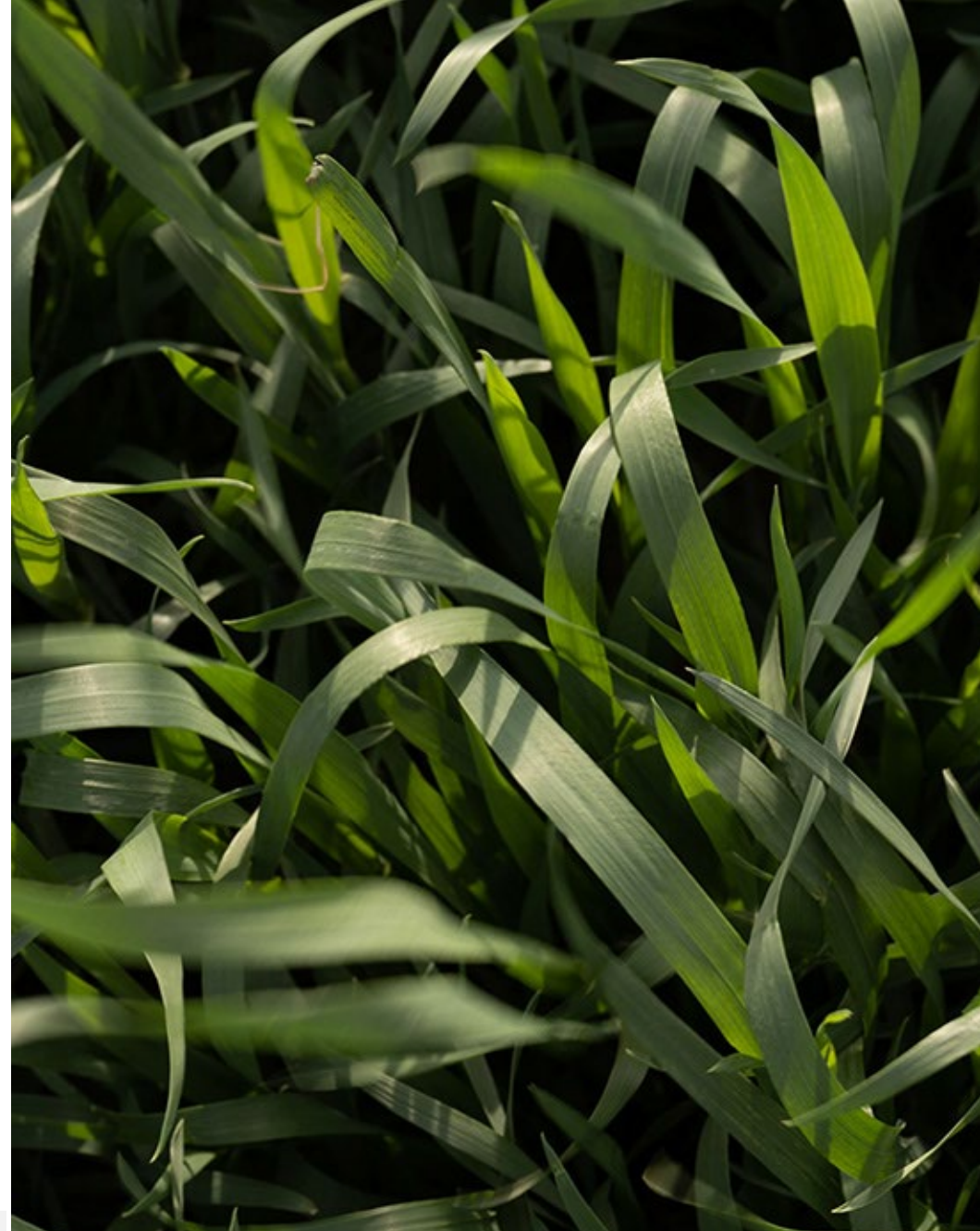
Budget
(35 points)

Project Management and Provider Capacity
(15 points)

Evaluation

Design and Plan for Execution of the Proposed Activity (50 Points)

- ✓ Demonstrate need and role of Conservation Agronomist
- ✓ Degree of reach of CA as demonstrated by proposed adoption of conservation agronomy practices within serviced area
- ✓ Describe sustainability plan such as your post-award transition plan of Conservation Agronomist to position fully funded by Retailer.
- ✓ Demonstrate alignment with the Scope of Activities and designated milestones
- ✓ Demonstrate a detailed plan to engage and support targeted groups and farmers in the adoption of climate smart practices and services



Evaluation

Budget (35 Points)

- ☑ Degree of co-investment relative to Climate SMART grant resources
- ☑ Cost reasonableness (including proposed salary relative to qualifications, provider labor market and proposed outcomes)
- ☑ Demonstrated ability to show how funds will be used to support activities proposed in the technical narrative



Evaluation

Project Management and Provider Capacity (15 Points)

- Demonstrated experience and track record of the organization and personnel in the proposed area of work
- Demonstrates that the organization is appropriate in size and scope for proposed activities
- Demonstrated ability to monitor and report on the proposed activities



Submission

The application should be submitted to:

www.truterraag.com/conservation-agronomist-rfa

Getting Started

**Submit your
questions!**

Resources available

- Milestone and budget workbook
- Example of completed milestone and budget workbook
- Frequently asked questions (FAQ) resource
- RFA submission checklist
- Conservation Agronomist qualifications recommendations
- Funding opportunity Info Sheet
- Q&A - Retailers can formally submit questions to Truterra through our website by 6/26/24. Truterra plans to publish all questions and answers by 7/10/24



Truterra, LLC, the sustainability business of farmer-owned cooperative, Land O'Lakes, Inc. will deploy funding from the USDA's Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities to scale production and demand for climate-smart corn, soybean, wheat, cotton and milk among the Truterra network.

The purpose of the Conservation Agronomist Program request for applications (RFA) is to invite Truterra network providers to develop and submit applications to fund the provision of conservation agronomy support for farmers. The RFA provides Truterra providers with a fair opportunity to submit applications to Truterra for conservation agronomy funding opportunities.

Conservation Agronomists will serve as the sustainability experts within their organization by creating and implementing a plan to engage farmers, initiating climate smart practice changes, and educating farmers about the availability of public, private, and non-profit conservation programs. Conservation Agronomists will also lead an initiative to build a peer network of farmers and provide outreach and education to farmers, rural communities, and educational organizations.



All materials are accessible at www.truterraag.com/conservation-agronomist-rfa

Build a Better Application webinar

- A guide for ag retailers responding to RFAs issued under the USDA-funded Partnership for Climate Smart Commodities Program funded by Truterra
- Deeper dive on:
 - RFA section walk through
 - RFA audience (NRCS) debrief
 - Selection criteria
 - Tips on crafting your application
 - How to leverage provided resources
 - Answer questions



You will receive an email in the coming days to join the build a better application webinar on 6/14/2024.

Need help crafting your application?

- 2 hours of complimentary support from Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) to assist retailers in developing an application including
 - Support includes defining technical strategy, crafting your budget, and reviewing application and providing feedback.
 - Learn more at:
<https://www.michaelfields.org/grants-advising-resources>

MICHAEL FIELDS **AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE**



MFAI assistance can be accessed by contacting:

Wren Almitra

Email: grants@michaelfields.org

Phone: 719-318-7936

Note: Please contact between 8 AM and 4 PM Central

Next Steps & Key Dates

June 5, 2024	Conservation Agronomist RFA published
June 6, 2024	Informational webinar
June 14, 2024	Webinar training: How to Build a Better Application
June 26, 2024	Deadline to submit questions
July 10, 2024	RFA Q&A distributed
August 7, 2024	Application submission deadline

Visit www.truterraag.com/conservation-agronomist-rfa for more information and to submit a question by 06/26/24



Questions?