

Ag Secretary Vilsack announces \$235 million for conservation

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U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on Monday announced up to \$235 million in funding for conservation projects to protect water quality and combat the drought that is ravaging parts of the West.

The money is the second phase of the Agriculture Department's Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which was created by last year's farm bill. In January, the agency distributed \$394 million in the program's first round.

Vilsack announced the opening of the program's second round at a signing ceremony for a Colorado project to convert irrigation systems into more efficient pressurized networks.

"This allows us to leverage the dollar the federal government has and allow people to come together," Vilsack said, noting that [local governments](#) can partner with businesses and other governments to create projects eligible for funding.

Vilsack said that the program helps fight soil erosion and keep potentially hazardous chemicals out of drinking water and off agricultural land. The projects "allow us to use water that we have more efficiently, or provide methods in which the soil can retain scarce water."

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