



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: District Receives Federal Funding for Community Gardens

Indiana County Conservation District

CONTACT PERSON: Douglas M Beri Jr., (724) 471-4751 Ext. 4

DATE: October 29, 2021

On October 28th, the United States Department of Agriculture announced an investment of more than \$243 million in grants to support specialty crops, including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and nursery crops through two USDA programs – the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the Specialty Crop Research Initiative grants program.

Of the awarded projects, the Indiana County Conservation District received \$100,491.24 to collaborate with other community organizations including the Chevy Chase Center and the Indiana Community Garden on installing community garden areas and food forests to demonstrate various specialty crop species, expanding community knowledge of growing produce while combating food desert issues.

District Manager Doug Beri stated “this is a unique opportunity for the District to work with our community to increase overall knowledge of various types of vegetables, fruits, and nuts that can be grown in our area.”

This project will fund the installation of community garden plots and a food forest at the Indiana County Conservation District’s new office and education center and the Chevy Chase Center Community Garden. Additionally, it will fund supplemental plantings and develop for the Indiana Community Garden food forest.

Throughout the project, educational workshops and volunteer days will be held to engage the community in specialty crops education. Specific concepts that will be taught include soil preparation, planting and care techniques, harvesting, and culinary preparation.

Beri added “This project will also aim to create new market opportunities for area farmers to supply specialty crops to local restaurants. Part of the goal with this project is to increase local demand for locally sourced produce, which will in-turn drive additional market opportunities for our farming community.” The District will also be creating a specialty crop cookbook as part of the project to showcase various recipes and tips for cooking with specialty crops.

With partners, this project will also create an annual statewide virtual workshop on specialty crops.

This project is expected to start this year and be completed by September of 2024.

