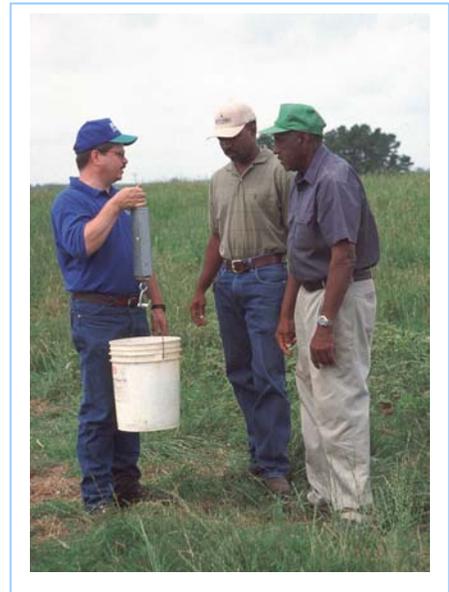




ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Finding of No Significant Impact
April 2003



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal agencies to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. I have determined, based upon the reasons provided below, that there will be no significant individual or cumulative impacts on the quality of the human environment as a result of implementing modifications to the EQIP, particularly when focusing on the significant adverse impacts which NEPA is intended to help decision makers avoid and mitigate against. Therefore, an EIS need not be prepared.

The EQIP program authorizes activities that improve the quality and quantity of natural resources. Because of the potential to affect one type of resource while improving the condition of another resource, there may at times be minimal site-specific adverse environmental effects, individually or cumulatively. However, NRCS has in the past and will continue to prepare documentation of an environmental evaluation on a site-specific level and will consult with the appropriate organizations to avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts on protected resources and will comply with requirements protecting unique geographic features and other resources, as well as NRCS policies protecting natural resources (EA pages 9,10). Thus, any adverse effects that may result from this program will occur at a much lower threshold than the EIS threshold.

Because of the steps NRCS will take to work with other agencies to avoid, mitigate and reduce any potential adverse effects, there is no threat of a violation of any Federal, State or local law or other requirements for the protection of the environment. There is no impact on public health or safety identified in this EA or otherwise expected. Furthermore, there is no effect identified that might be considered highly controversial or uncertain or that might involve unique or unknown risks. Neither the proposed action nor any of the alternatives is likely to establish a precedent for future actions.

Implementation of the EQIP rule is not sufficiently related to other actions that either individually or cumulatively is likely to result in the type of significant impacts that NEPA is intended to address. To the extent other NRCS EQIP activities may result in significant effects to the quality of the human environment, a State or area-wide EA or EIS may be prepared separately from this National EA.

Based on the information presented in the attached EQIP EA, I find that the proposed action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment that requires preparation of an EIS.

BRUCE I. KNIGHT
Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

DATE