

## **EQIP Sign-up and Ranking Requirements**

**The following is an outline for delivering the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) beginning in FY 2010.**

### **Application Acceptance:**

- Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis.
- For each funding cycle a cutoff date for accepting applications will be established to provide the maximum amount of time for screening and ranking. Applications received after that date will be considered for the next funding cycle.

### **Application Ranking:**

- All eligible applications received prior to the application cutoff will be screened using an approved screening tool.
- Applications which make it through the screening as “High” priority will be ranked based on an on-site resource inventory and assessment.
- Planners will develop alternatives based on their assessment and work with the applicant to get decisions for practice application.
- Environmental compliance elements of the planning process (NEPA, ESA, EFH, Cultural Resources, etc) will not be required for ranking purposes but must be completed prior to contract obligation.

### **Contract Development:**

- Funds will be allocated to the various funding pools according to priorities established by the DC’s with input from the USDA Local Working Group.
- Applications will be selected for funding based on the availability of funds and their rank at the close of business of the established ranking deadline.
- Conservation plans, including all environmental compliance requirements, will be developed for applications that are selected for funding.
- Contract obligations will be approved only after a conservation plan and environmental compliance activities are completed for the selected applications.

### **Timeline: FY 2010**

- Sign-up cutoff - December 1, 2009
- Screening of all applications will be ongoing
- Applications that are currently in ProTracts that were planned and ranked in FY 2009 may be promoted to FY 2010 without further screening.
- Ranking and Evaluation deadline for “High” priority applications - February 1, 2010
- Contract Obligation Deadline - April 1, 2010

### **Timeline: FY 2011**

- Sign-up cutoff – July 1, 2010
- Screening of all applications will be ongoing
- Ranking and Evaluation deadline for “High” priority applications - October 20, 2010
- Contract Obligation Deadline - April 1, 2011

## EQIP SCREENING TOOL

A screening tool specific to each funding category will be employed to determine which applications are to be ranked. A “yes” answer to any one question in the appropriate funding category indicates that the application will be marked as “High” priority and ranked.

<b>Application Pool/ Resource Category</b>	<b>Screening Question(s)</b>
General	1. Is the application in one of the resource categories that will receive funding? If “Yes”, proceed to the appropriate screening question.
Animal Waste	1. Is there a current CNMP available for this operation?
Forestland	1. Is there a current Forest Management Plan available for this operation?
Water Conservation/ Irrigation	1. Is there a current Irrigation Management Plan available for this operation? 2. Is the current irrigation water source subject to Maine low flow rules?
Grazing lands	1. Is there a current Grazing Management Plan available for this operation? 2. Are stocking rates for the grazing season greater than twice the AUM listed for the area’s soils? (FOTG-Section II-A - Soil Information-Pasture and Hayland Yield) 3. Are grazed areas within 200 ft. of a water course or water body? (GIS Group: “Hydro24_state”)
Cropland	1. Are cropland soils mapped as “B” slopes or steeper? 2. Are cropland soils mapped as “Somewhat Excessively” or “Excessively” drained? 3. Do crop fields lie within a MDEP “Impaired” watershed? (Program Ranking Layers, “Impaired_H20_2008_final_a_me”) 4. Is there a current Integrated Pest Management Plan available for this operation?
Wildlife	1. Is there a current Wildlife Management Plan available for this operation? 2. Does the proposed action address “At Risk Species” management?(GIS Groups: “State-Protected_Habitats and Federally-Protected_Habitats”, all layers) 3. Does the proposed action address “Invasive species” ( <a href="http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mnap/features/invshets.htm">http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mnap/features/invshets.htm</a> ) 4. Does the proposed action address non-listed species or other habitat identified as a priority by Maine NRCS' “Fish and Wildlife Action Plan”? ( <a href="ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ME/Programs/ME_NRCS_Fish_Wildl_ActionPlan.pdf">ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ME/Programs/ME_NRCS_Fish_Wildl_ActionPlan.pdf</a> ) 5. Does the proposed action address habitat for native pollinators, a legislatively mandated priority of the 2008 Farm Bill? ( <a href="http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/2008_farm_bill_-_fact_sheet_xerces_society.pdf">http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/2008_farm_bill_-_fact_sheet_xerces_society.pdf</a> )