

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation program under the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). AWEP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to assist them in applying agricultural water enhancement activities that conserve ground and surface water and improve water quality on agricultural lands. NRCS may carry out AWEP by entering into contracts with agricultural producers who apply directly or through partnership agreements with entities that apply on behalf of agricultural producers.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) established AWEP and replaced the Ground and Surface Water Conservation Program.

AWEP's purposes – to promote ground and surface water conservation and improve water quality – are achieved by having producers

implement agricultural water enhancement activities. These include:

- Water quality or water conservation plan development, including resource condition assessment and modeling;
- Water quality or quantity restoration or enhancement projects;
- Irrigation system improvement or irrigation efficiency enhancement;
- Activities designed to mitigate the effects of drought; and
- Other related activities deemed by the Secretary to help achieve water quality or water conservation benefits on agricultural land.

An agricultural producer may apply directly to NRCS for financial or technical assistance to implement agricultural water enhancement activities. Producers who apply directly to NRCS must be eligible for EQIP and selected applications will be subject to applicable EQIP requirements.



An eligible entity may apply for EQIP funds to be brought into the state. The entity may submit a proposal on behalf of a group of agricultural producers. An eligible entity may be a Federally-recognized Tribe, State, unit of local government, agricultural or silvicultural association, or other such group of agricultural producers.

An application submitted by an entity is selected competitively and must include the following:

- Description of the geographic area to be covered by the agreement;
- Description of the agricultural water quality or water conservation issues to be covered by the agreement;
- Description of agricultural water enhancement objectives to be achieved through the partnership;
- Description of the partners collaborating to achieve the project objectives, as well as the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of each partner; and
- Description of the program resources required for the project.



In evaluating an application, NRCS may give higher priority to proposals that:

- Include a high percentage of agricultural land and producers in an region or area;
- Result in high levels of applied agricultural water quality and water conservation activities;
- Significantly enhance agricultural activity;
- Allow for monitoring and evaluation;
- Assist producers in meeting a regulatory requirement;
- Leverage Federal funds with those provided by the potential partner.

More Information

For more information and updates about AWEP and other Farm Bill topics, contact your local NRCS office or visit the Alabama NRCS web-site: <http://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep>.

NRCS field offices are listed in the telephone directory under U.S. Department of Agriculture or on-line at <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov>.



Irrigation systems with drop nozzles save water.

NRCS--Who We Are

NRCS collaborates with farmers, ranchers, communities, and other individuals and groups to protect natural resources on private lands.

Working with these customers, we identify natural resource concerns, such as water quality and quantity issues, soil erosion, air quality, wetlands and wildlife habitat, and develop unique conservation plans for restoring and protecting resources. Funds to implement these plans are made available in Farm Bill programs that share the cost of conservation for the benefit of the farm, the watershed, and the community. Conservation easement programs, also in the Farm Bill, provide long-term options.

NRCS helps Alabama and the Nation balance economic goals with the needs of the environment—ensuring sustainable productive lands that supply food, fiber, forest products, and energy for all.

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Helping People Help The Land