



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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August 1, 2007

UTAH BULLETIN UT300-07-17

SUBJECT: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative

Purpose: To issue guidelines for a FY 07 EQIP Special Initiative for restoring grazinglands damaged by wildfires.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2007.

Background. The timing of the wildfire season does not correspond with EQIP funding cycles. Specifically, 2007 EQIP funds were obligated prior to the beginning of the Utah wildfire season. In order to address the natural resource concerns associated with the 2007 wildfire season, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Utah will offer a special initiative for grazinglands damaged by wildfires. **The sign-up will begin August 1, 2007 and end August 14, 2007.**

Program Eligibility. Producers must follow all guidelines in this bulletin in addition to EQIP program policies. **Adherence to the program rules does not guarantee funding approval; however, it does allow interested producers the ability to remain eligible for future funding consideration.** The focus of this initiative is privately-owned and Tribal grazinglands that have burned within Utah. Woodland areas (Pinyon/Juniper) that have previously been grazed are eligible grazinglands. Cropland acres (used for grazing crop aftermath) are not eligible. All forested areas containing trees with commercial value are not eligible. The fire must be completely out by August 5th on the land that is being offered by the cooperator for the incentive payment.

The primary emphasis of this initiative is to restore the health, productivity, and vigor of privately-owned and Tribal grazinglands burned by wildfires. Any application received after this date will not be eligible for participation in the 2007 program. Applications that do not meet eligibility requirements by the deadline will not be ranked in the 2007 program. Any applications that do not meet all eligibility criteria or miss the August 14th deadline will be deferred for consideration in 2008. Please refer to the NRCS website www.ut.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

EQIP Fire Recovery Initiative Application Process. Producers must adhere to the following steps in order to remain eligible for this EQIP wildfire recovery initiative:

1. Immediately rest the grazinglands burned by the wildfire on acres proposed for enrollment. **Resting the contracted grazingland acres until October 1, 2008, will be required for participation in this program. Contracted acres shall not exceed 2,500 acres per individual or entity.** The maximum number of eligible acres may be increased based on the availability of funding. NRCS has determined that resting is the best treatment for wildfire damaged grazinglands. Producers who are unwilling or unable to meet this requirement will not be eligible for funding assistance in this special initiative.
2. Submit an EQIP application to NRCS during the August 1 to August 14 sign-up period. Applications received after 12:00 noon on August 14 will be deferred for consideration during the 2008 fund cycle. Due to a large volume of expected applications, interested parties are encouraged to submit their applications early.
3. All eligibility documentation forms must be submitted prior to the application deadline. Refer to the "2007 Fire Recovery Initiative Producer Application Checklist."
4. Read and sign Attachment A to this bulletin which is an acknowledgement of the special initiative requirements. Read and ensure understanding of documents contained in Application Packet.
5. Cooperate with NRCS to determine the acres eligible for this special initiative on the agricultural operation in order for NRCS to evaluate and rank the application.

2007 Fire Recovery Initiative APPLICATION PACKET. A packet containing the following documents will be provided to all potential applicants. The packet shall include:

- A copy of Bulletin UT300-07-17 and Attachment A.
- Fact Sheet
- 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative Producer Application Checklist
- 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative Grazingland Assessment
- NRCS-CPA-1200 (EQIP Application)
- NRCS-CPA-1202 (Appendix)
- A copy of the standards and specifications for Prescribed Grazing (528) and Range Planting (550)

Approved Practices. The approved practice cost list for the EQIP Fire Recovery Initiative consists of the following:

- 528 – Prescribed Grazing – A one-time \$11.00 per acre incentive payment for resting the enrolled acres through October 1, 2008.
- 550 – Range Planting – To be determined contingent upon available funding.

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Screening. The applications will be screened prior to ranking utilizing the Utah Fire Recover Initiative Calculator. Only applications that receive a high or medium priority will be ranked.

Ranking Criteria. The application priorities and the ranking criteria will be completed using the Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT). A fund pool labeled “2007 Fire Recovery Initiative” has been developed. Prioritization will be based on total private and Tribal grazingland acres, burned private and Tribal grazingland acres, and burned private and Tribal grazingland acres that will be rested. The questions are:

1) What percentage of the private and/or Tribal grazingland acres was burned?

Points will be assigned based on the percentage of the total private and Tribal grazingland acres of the operation that were burned. Three examples are:

- **Example 1:** 1,200 acre grazingland operation where 900 acres burned.
 - $900 / 1,200 = 0.75$ (75 points)
 - If funded, the contract will be 900 acres @ \$11.00 = \$9,900
- **Example 2:** 35,000 acre grazingland operation where 5,000 acres burned.
 - $5,000 / 35,000 = 0.14$ (14 points)
 - If funded, the contract will be 2,500 acres (cap) @ \$11.00 = \$27,500
- **Example 3:** 5,000 acre agricultural operation (3,000 acres of grazing land and 2,000 acres of cropland) where 2,400 acres of grazing land burned
 - $2,400 / 3,000 = 0.80$ (80 points)
 - If funded the contract will be 2,400 acres @ \$11.00 = \$26,400

2) What percentage of the burned grazingland acres are being contracted for prescribed grazing? For operations that had private or Tribal grazingland burned by wildfire in excess of the 2,500 acre cap, the cap amount (2,500) will be used as the denominator when calculating the points in this question. Three examples are:

- **Example 1:** Burned private grazingland acres equal 2,600. 2,600 acres will be rested (2,500 will be contracted)
 - $2,500 / 2,500 = 1$. (100 points)
- **Example 2:** Burned private grazingland acres equal 1,600; 800 acres will be rested and contracted
 - $800 / 1,600 = 0.5$ (50 points)
- **Example 3:** Burned private grazingland acres equal 2,600; 1,400 acres will be rested and contracted (Note the use of **2,500** in the denominator instead of 2,600.)
 - $1,400 / 2,500 = .56$ (56 points)

The answers to these two questions will be transferred to the AERT under state questions. Question 1 – Burned acres percentage will be placed in one of the 1 to 50 series of questions and Question 2 – Rested burned acres will be placed in one of the 51 to 100 series of questions. Do not fail to answer the national priority questions if applicable.

TIMELINE.

Deadline Date	Item	Required Actions
August 1 through August 14, 2007	<i>Application Period</i>	<p><i>Producers – must go to the local NRCS field office and submit an EQIP application in compliance with this bulletin. Producers need to work with NRCS and FSA to ensure that all eligibility documentation is submitted.</i></p> <p>NRCS – will immediately begin accepting applications and provide initiative information in the form of the EQIP Fire Recovery Initiative Packet to the producers.</p>
August 14, 2007	<i>Application Cut-off</i>	<p><i>Producers – must submit an EQIP application that includes all eligibility forms to NRCS and FSA by NOON (MDT) on this date. <u>Late applications are not eligible for funding. No extensions or waiver of this deadline will be offered.</u> Producers must work with NRCS to effectively determine eligible acres and total grazing land acres of the agricultural operation. Producers need to clearly understand the requirement of resting the contracted acres until October 1, 2008, which includes the completion of Attachment A.</i></p>
August 15-17, 2007	<i>Application Evaluation Period</i>	<p>NRCS – will evaluate and rank all applications received by the August 14 deadline. Selected applications will be “preapproved” in Protracts by August 22.</p>
August 18 through September 14, 2007	<i>Contracting Deadline</i>	<p><i>NRCS & Producers – must work together to ensure that the contract is developed, signed, and obligated by the Contracting Officer (ASTC-FO) in protracts by close of business on September 14, 2007.</i></p>

Please direct any questions you may have through your Area Fire Recovery Points of Contact (as determined by Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations), to Jeff Williams, EQIP Fire Recovery Initiative Coordinator, at (801) 263-3204 or Lisa R. Coverdale, Assistant State Conservationist-Programs, at (801) 524-4565.

/S/ SYLVIA A. GILLEN
State Conservationist

Attachments:

- Attachment A
- Web Ranking Questions

cc:

UACD
BLM
UDAF
USFS
FSA

DIST: E

UT300-07-17 ATTACHMENT A

PRODUCER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF 2007 EQIP FIRE RECOVERY INITIATIVE REQUIREMENTS AS OUTLINED IN UT300-07-17

Operator/Farm Name _____

County _____ EQIP Application # _____

I certify that my farm/ranch has sustained wildfire damages to the extent (acreage) as listed below. I will provide NRCS factual information to properly define and delineate my grazing operation as well as the burned areas of my grazing operation.

Tract #	Field #	Total Private Grazingland Acres	Total Burned Private Grazingland Acres	Burned Grazingland Acres to be Deferred

I understand that it is my responsibility to provide NRCS with all records necessary to verify the wildfire damages. I acknowledge that my grazing operation must immediately defer all livestock grazing activities on acreage enrolled in the 2007 EQIP Wildfire Special Initiative. I further acknowledge that the deferment of grazing on acreage enrolled into the program will continue through October 1, 2008. The purpose of this special initiative is for USDA to provide financial incentives for my grazing operation to; defer grazing on lands impacted by fire, and to restore, repair or replace fences, watering facilities, and other livestock management practices which were destroyed by the wildfire. I understand that failure to comply with all special initiative requirements will result in my forfeiture of eligibility for the program regardless of the status or priority of my EQIP application.

I understand that if this application is funded by USDA, failure to comply with all special initiative requirements will result in an immediate violation of the EQIP contract provisions. I further understand that contract violations will result in NRCS terminating the contract, and USDA seeking cost recovery of incentive payments made and liquidated damages.

I understand that NRCS has in no way guaranteed that I will receive funding. I further understand that my participation in this initiative may limit my ability to participate in the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and that I should consult with the Farm Services Agency (FSA) for more information.

My signature below indicates that I have read, understand, or had fully explained to my satisfaction, all requirements referenced within this document and Utah Bulletin UT300-07-17.

Applicants Signature

Date

2007 EQIP / Utah Fire Recovery Initiative

July 2007

Overview

The 2007 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Utah Fire Recovery Initiative is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers who have control over private or tribal grazing lands impacted by the 2007 wildfires.

Agricultural producers are eligible for a one-time prescribed grazing incentive payment of \$11.00 per acre for resting the enrolled acres until October 1, 2008. The incentive is limited to 2,500 acres per individual or entity. An additional cost-share payment for range planting may be provided contingent upon the availability of funding. NRCS will provide technical assistance with replacing and repairing fences, watering facilities, and other facilitating conservation practices.

Eligibility

To participate, an applicant must meet all EQIP and 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative eligibility criteria including:

- Be an agricultural producer who is engaged in livestock or agricultural production with verifiable grazing and forage losses as a result of 2007 wildfires;
- Eligible land includes private or tribal grazinglands;

- Submit a completed form NRCS-CPA-1200 program application to the local NRCS Field Office no later than August 14, 2007; and
- Submit all necessary forms to ensure that program eligibility requirements have been met by August 14, 2007.

How to Apply

Obtain an EQIP 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative Application Packet from your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office.

Timeline

August 1 – 14	Sign-up
August 15 – 17	Project Ranking
August 20-21	Project Selection

For More Information

If you need more information about the EQIP 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information on EQIP is also available on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.ut.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>



Note: This is not intended to be a definitive interpretation of farm legislation. Rather, it is preliminary and may change as USDA develops implementing policies and procedures.

2007 Fire Recovery Initiative Producer Application Checklist

As required, and in order to expedite processing of your application for participation in the EQIP 2007 Fire Recovery Initiative you must provide certain information as described below:

- Grazingland Assessment Worksheet** – Complete and sign the worksheet.

- Beginning Farmer/Limited Resource Producer** – To determine if you are eligible and for more information you can visit http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/SLB_Farmer/. Complete the On-Line Limited Resource Producer Self-Determination Tool. (Note: No documentation is required for self-certification. However, if you certify that you are eligible for the special cost-share payment rates under EQIP, at a later date, supporting documentation may be requested.)

- Proof of Land Ownership** – You must provide documentation of land ownership. (deeds, tax assessment, or other legal documentation.)

- Leased Land** – If the land is leased you must provide NRCS with evidence that you have control of the land for the length of the contract you wish to enter in to. Such evidence could be a copy of the lease agreement or a signed letter from the landowner. You must also supply evidence of the landowner's approval to apply structural practices on the land.

- Legal documentation of signatory** – Documentation may include Power of Attorney or Articles of Incorporation that stipulates who has signatory authority for the entity or operation.

- Vendor Information** – In order for us to reimburse you, the vendor information is required. Please provide a current 1199a, available at your local NRCS office. If you have participated in the past, we may have one on file.

Producer Signature

Date

2007 Fire Recovery Initiative Grazingland Assessment

PLEASE COMPLETE THE BENCHMARK CONDITION INFORMATION FOR YOUR GRAZING OPERATION. Answer the following questions:

Acres used for grazing land _____

Is any of your grazingland irrigated? **Yes** **No**
If yes, what fields? _____

Are you following a grazing plan? **Yes** **No**
If yes, please provide a copy of the Grazing plan.

Does the grazing plan identify periods of grazing, rest and other treatment for each paddock? **Yes** **No**

Do you have any way of balancing forage availability with livestock and wildlife demands? **Yes** **No**

<u>Type of vegetation</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Acres burned</u>
Native Range	Acres _____	_____
Grass	Acres _____	_____
Grazed Woodland	Acres _____	_____
Pasture	Acres _____	_____

Invasive species of concern (indicate areas on map) _____

Are there riparian areas that need to be addressed? **Yes** **No**

Based upon the availability of funds, how many acres of grazing land would you consider reseeded?
Acres _____

LOCATION OF GRAZINGLAND APPLICATION ACRES – Please provide copies of maps with legal descriptions and all fields clearly marked. Is the acreage offered currently under any other USDA Conservation Program? Check those that apply.

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)*
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*
- Conservation Security Program (CSP)*
- Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)*
- Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)*
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)*
- Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)*

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