



Natural Resources Conservation Service
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309-2180

December 22, 2011

IOWA BULLETIN NO. IA440-12-2

SUBJECT: PGM – FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2012 EQIP PROCESS TIMELINE, PRACTICE LIST,
RANKING, AND COST LIST

ACTION REQUIRED: TO STATE OFFICE BY JANUARY 6, 2012

PURPOSE: To provide FY12 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) timeline and request field office review and update of local implementation of FY12 EQIP.

EXPIRATION DATE: September 30, 2013

District conservationists are to review and update county EQIP program description, practice list, and application ranking, and revise as needed.

1. EQIP Timeline

The times below are the latest deadlines to be used. The FY12 timeline for EQIP is as follows:

Upon Receipt of this Bulletin	District Conservationist sends FY12 Program Description and FY12 Practice List to Area Office for review.
January 6, 2012	Area office (AO) sends FY12 Program Description and FY12 Practice Lists to State Office (SO) for posting on the Iowa NRCS website. The AO enters county ranking criteria in ProTracts.
January 20, 2012	Cutoff for batching first round EQIP applications for Local and Statewide sub-accounts (does not include Special Initiatives).
February 3, 2012	Deadline to enter first round EQIP rankings into Protracts for statewide sub-accounts. Fund codes with an asterisk (*) must use the Local County Practice List: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EQIP Beginning Farmer Rancher *• EQIP Tribal *• EQIP Limited Resource Farmer Rancher *• EQIP Cover Crop Project (Lyon and Sioux Counties Only)• EQIP Socially Disadvantaged *• EQIP Forestry• EQIP Conservation Activity Plan

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- February 3, 2012 Cutoff for batching first round Special Initiative EQIP applications:
- Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative (MRBI)
 - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
 - Organic Initiative
 - High Tunnel Initiative
 - Energy Initiative
 - Northern Plain Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (Prairie Pothole Counties Only)
- February 9, 2012 Deadline to enter first round Special Initiative EQIP rankings into ProTracts.
- March 30, 2012 Cutoff for batching second round EQIP applications all sub-accounts.
- April 5, 2012 Deadline to enter second round EQIP rankings into Protracts for statewide and special Initiative sub-accounts.
- June 1, 2012 Cutoff for batching third round EQIP applications all sub-accounts.
- June 7, 2012 Deadline to enter third round EQIP rankings into Protracts for statewide and special Initiative sub-accounts.
- July 2, 2012 National deadline to have 100 percent of the state allocation obligated.

2. EQIP Program Description

Review the 2011 Program Description on Iowa's NRCS website for your county and revise to show changes for 2012. **If using the attached template, insert your local information into the template labeled (county name)12WebInfo.doc (example: Polk12WebInfo.doc) and e-mail to the AO. Area offices are to review the website information, make any necessary corrections and place the files in the statewide shared drive at "S:\Service_Center\NRCS_statewide_shared\440_PGM_Programs\EQIP\2012 EQIP\2012 EQIP Web Site Info" no later than January 6, 2012.**

3. Website Practice List

Review the "2011 County Practice List" for your county and revise to show changes for 2012. **Area offices are to review the Practice Lists, make any necessary corrections and place the files in the statewide shared drive at "S:\Service_Center\NRCS_statewide_shared\440_PGM_Programs \EQIP\2012 EQIP\2012 EQIP Practice Lists" no later than January 6, 2012.**

Only practices which are in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV, are eligible for financial assistance.

The format of the Practice List is unchanged. If there are no changes to last year's Practice List, you can reuse last year's list and change the date in the title to 2012. If you need to make changes from last year's Practice List (check for updated life spans), use the attached template with the county name entered in the file name ([county name]12WebPracticeList.doc, example: Polk12WebPracticeList.doc) for the EQIP website. Conservation practice and payment rates must meet the following requirements:

- a) No local Practice List may have a cap for a waste storage/treatment facility of less than \$50,000. Practices are 316 – Animal Mortality Facility; 317 – Composting Facility; 362 – Diversion; 634 – Waste Transfer; 521A – Pond Sealing or Lining, Flexible Membrane; 521B – Pond Sealing or Lining, Soil Dispersant; 521C – Pond Sealing or Lining Bentonite Sealant; 521D – Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Clay Treatment; 558 – Roof Runoff Management; 632 – Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility; 635 – Vegetated Treatment Area; 313 – Waste Storage Facility; and 359 – Waste Treatment Lagoon.
- b) Financial assistance may be offered for developing the following Conservation Activity Plans (CAP):
 - 102 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP)
 - 104 Nutrient Management Plan
 - 106 Forest Management Plan
 - 110 Grazing Management Plan
 - 114 Integrated Pest Management Plan
 - 118 Irrigation Water Management Plan
 - 122 Agricultural Energy Management Plan – Headquarters (AgEMP) (Energy Initiative Only)
 - 124 Agricultural Energy Management Plan – Landscape (AgEMP) (Energy Initiative Only)
 - 130 Drainage Water Management Plan
 - 138 Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (Organic Initiative Only)
 - 142 Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan
 - 146 Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Plan
 - 154 Integrated Pest Management Herbicide Resistance Weed Conservation Plan
- c) With the exception of CNMP CAP (Practice Code 102) plans must be contracted in single item contracts. Statewide sub-accounts will be created for the CAP plans. When the CNMP is not contracted at the same time as the waste storage/treatment facility it must be in a single item contract under the CAP planning sub-account.
- d) The CNMP CAP must be written prior to beginning design of the associated waste storage facility. If an EQIP plan of operations includes an animal waste storage, management or treatment facility, the participant must develop and implement as scheduled, a CNMP, prior to the installation of the waste storage, management, or treatment facility.
- e) Contracts that include forestry practices require a Forest Management Plan prior to installation of the first practice. Contracts that include practices to convert to organic farming require an Organic Management Plan prior to installation of the first practice. All practices (contracted or not contracted) included in the management plans must be fully applied.

- f) National Bulletins provide guidance for the following National Initiatives:
- NB300-12-4 On-Farm Energy Initiative
 - NB300-12-5 High Tunnel Initiative
 - NB300-12-8 Organic Initiative

Attached to this bulletin are Iowa practice lists for these three initiatives.

- g) Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops (798) is an Interim practice. This practice may be included on County Practice Lists and will be included as an eligible practice in the statewide Organic and Historically Underserved sub-accounts. Information on this practice is posted on the National and Iowa NRCS websites.
- h) No financial assistance is offered on property line fences.
- i) Ponds are only eligible for EQIP when used as a water supply for a grazing system.
- j) Payments are based on the payment schedule. The document, FY12 Iowa EQIP Practice Descriptions and Payment Rates.doc, will be sent to district conservationists providing payment rates and a detailed description of the scenarios for each practice.
- k) Residue and Tillage Management (345) is only offered in the Energy and Organic Initiatives.
- l) Residue and Tillage Management Standards (329 – no-till or strip till and 346 – ridge till) are eligible if determined to be needed locally. When Residue and Tillage Management is included in the contract for no-till, strip-till or ridge-till, and the item is scheduled for more than one year, the scheduled years must run consecutively.
- m) Financial assistance for tile, when Subsurface Drain (606) is associated with a grassed waterway, is limited to no more than the amount needed to maintain the grassed waterway, not to exceed six inch diameter tile. When additional tile is needed for upland drainage outlet(s), it may be installed at the participant's expense as long as all other requirements involving wetland conservation compliance are met.
- n) A sample ADDENDUM TO NRCS-CPA-1202 CONSERVATION PROGRAM CONTRACT is attached. The sample includes several suggested addenda items. Other items may be added.
- o) Any practice cap levels set locally must be based on the amount of financial assistance (caps are not allowed based on the amount of units except for interim practices). The following table lists state wide practice cap levels.

FY2012 Iowa EQIP Payment Rate CAPs			
Practice Code	Practice Name	FY2012 CAP	FY2012 CAP for HU, Organic and CCPI
329	Residue & Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip-Till	\$24,000.00	\$36,000.00
346	Residue and Tillage Management - Ridge Till	\$10,000.00	\$15,000.00
590	Nutrient Management	\$16,000.00	\$24,000.00
595	Pest Management	\$10,000.00	\$15,000.00
798	Seasonal High Tunnel System For Crops	2,178 sq.ft.	2,178 sq.ft.

- p) For the Summer Construction Scenario under Conservation Cover (327), the payment rate includes the cost of the temporary cover seeding and the payment to idle the land. The following is required for the Summer Construction Scenario: Construction must occur between June 15 and October 15 of the scheduled year, a cover crop must be planted, no crop can be harvested between June 15 and October 15, the practice is only available on land in row crop, Summer Construction Scenario is available for the minimum area needed for construction of the associated practice, and no payments can be made until all associated practices are installed.
- q) In order for land to be eligible for an irrigation-related practice in EQIP, that land must have been irrigated in two out of the last five years. This means that irrigation must have been part of managing the cropping system to meet the needs of the plant and to maintain the yields of an irrigated crop. To ensure the practice meets the program purpose, the irrigation practice must be addressing an identified resource concern, such as Soil Erosion – Irrigation Induced or Water Quantity – Inefficient Water Use. To document irrigation history use the attachment titled: Irrigation History Documentation.docx

4. ProTracts Cost List

Historically Underserved (HU) producers receive a higher payment rate. Statewide sub-accounts have been established for HU producers. The HU producers include: beginning farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, or limited resource farmers or ranchers. A link to information on these types of producers is provided here: <http://www.lfctool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

Cost lists are being developed for each of four Common Resource Areas (CRAs). See the attached CRA map. The FY12 cost lists will be uploaded by the State Office to ProTracts for each county. The cost lists for EQIP include Code 900 series codes for TSPs. Cost lists will be sent in a separate e-mail to the district conservationist login with a copy to the AO. These files will be used as the Toolkit cost list. Save the appropriate cost list spreadsheets on each computer that utilizes Toolkit in F:\FOTG\Section_1.

Some important things to remember about cost lists used in ProTracts are:

- Do not change the template format in any way, including the addition of headers/footers or footnotes.
- Cost list errors cannot be corrected in ProTracts. Errors are corrected by deleting the cost list, correcting the errors in the original spreadsheet, and uploading the cost list again.
- Deleting a cost list has no impact if it is not linked to any applications.
- If a cost list is linked to pending applications, the link is deleted along with all contract items. This ensures that applications are always linked to active cost lists.
- If a cost list is linked to an application selected for funding, the cost list associated with the application can be deleted if the application status is reset to pending.
- If a cost list is linked to an obligated contract, it cannot be deleted.

5. Ranking Criteria

Section 515.72 of the EQIP Manual provides very specific guidance on establishing the ranking process and criteria. Local ranking criteria have been developed for each of the four separate CRAs and will be loaded into ProTracts by the area program specialists.

A Prescreening Tool has been developed for prioritizing which applications must be ranked in Protracts. All subaccounts with applications for livestock waste treatment practices must use the Prescreening Tool. The Prescreening Tool and instructions for its use are attached.

National and state ranking factors include questions about 303(d) Impaired Waters, Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), and Threatened and Endangered Species or Species at Risk (T&E).

Use the current 2008 303(d) watershed maps for EQIP that have been posted to the field office servers. The maps may be accessed in each field office at: f:\geodata\project_data\nrcs\eqip. These maps have been updated since the 2008 impaired waters list is now final.

Links to information on these issues are provided here:

<http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/wqm/ImpairedWaters/Year2008/Final2008Category5.pdf>

<http://www.igsb.uiowa.edu/wqm/ImpairedWaters/Year2008/ImpairedWaters2008StateMap.pdf>

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/WatershedResearchData/WaterImprovementPlans/PublicMeetingsPlans.aspx>

TMDLs must be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

<https://programs.iowadnr.gov/naturalareasinventory/pages/Query.aspx>

For T&E species, select the county of the application and click on submit. Select the PDF for information on habitat improvements that benefit the species affected. Points can only be awarded if the practice benefits the species. For species that do not have a PDF, contact the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) private lands biologists or wildlife biologist.

Additional information on Threatened and Endangered Species may be found at:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/state-ia.html>

When habitat improvements may benefit or harm federally listed T&E species, NRCS must initiate consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Decisions regarding ranking issues:

Local resource concerns will be developed locally. Local criteria must adhere to the above guidance and as a minimum:

- Address only the resource concern(s) from the FOTG identified for the local program.
- Address national priorities identified for the local program.
- Address only the resource concern(s) which the client wishes to address through the EQIP application in the ranking of that application.
- The degree of cost effectiveness will be calculated automatically as the application is ranked, through a formula which helps determine the extent of cost effectiveness and environmental benefits. This is done by multiplying the Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) for the practice by the Practice Service Life (PSL), then dividing by the associated Practice Average Cost (PAC).

- Local funding pools are required for different land use types.
- Limit practices for payment rates to only those not well-adopted locally in solving the identified resource concern(s).

I look forward to another great year of serving our customers in implementing conservation plans through timely EQIP assistance.



Richard Sims
State Conservationist

Attachments:

CRA_County_Groups_6-11.pdf
NRCS-CPA-1202 Addendum.doc
FY2012 EQIP Prescreening Tool.docx
County12WebSiteInfo.doc
IA – 2012 EQIP Energy Initiative Practice List.xlsx
IA – 2012 EQIP Season High Tunnel Initiative Practice List.xlsx
IA – 2012 EQIP Organic Initiative Practice List.xlsx
County12WebPracticeList.docx
Irrigation History Documentation.docx