

State Technical Committee Minutes
Richmond, Virginia
January 31, 2012

Wade Biddix, NRCS ASTC-Programs, opened the meeting and welcomed the group to the first meeting of 2012. He introduced himself and then asked the group to introduce themselves by stating the organization represented. He also asked them to sign the attendance sheet, updating any necessary information or providing contact information if attending for the first time.

Attendance: Wade Biddix (*NRCS*), Jack Bricker (*NRCS*), Jane Corson-Lassiter (*NRCS/FPCC*), Jon Roller (*Ecosystem Services*), Pat Paul (*NRCS*), Eric Paulson (*USDA*), Hobey Bauhan (*VA Poultry Federation*), Kristen Hughes-Evans (*Sustainable Chesapeake*), Sue Ellen Johnson (*Piedmont Environmental Council*), Libby Norris (*CBF*), Emily Horsley (*FSA*), Marc Puckett (*VDGIF*), Dan Solomon (*NRCS*), David Kriz (*NRCS*), Patricia Stansbury (*VABF, WRIR*), Mark Schonbeck (*VABF*), Mark Dubin (*UMD/MAWP/CBPO*), John Ignosu (*VA Extension*), Chad Wentz (*NRCS*), Ron Wood (*NRCS*), Diane Dunaway (*NRCS*), Jeremy Stone (*NRCS*), Seth Coffman (*Trout Unlimited*), John David Harper (*NRCS*), Dan Kugler (*University of Maryland*), Karen Hudson (*VIMS*), Alan Spivey (*VA Forage/Grasslands Council/VA Cattlemen Assn.*), Jessica Rhodes (*USFWS*), Tom Harlan (*VDOF*), Todd Groh (*VDOF*), Maribeth Pettigrew (*NRCS Recorder*).

Jack Bricker – NRCS – Opening Comments: We went over preliminary budget info last time. Look at the handout that shows allocations and where we were for 2011. Our initial allocation is for more than 27 million dollars. I anticipate getting additional money in EQIP. We have a good start to the year and we anticipate more money coming in. We already have nearly 500 applications for EQIP. We're well on our way to using 100% of the available funding. This is also true for CBWI; we may also get money from other Bay States. We've pushed the field hard on recruiting applicants for CSP this year. Last year we had 89 contracts, but we already have 191 applications this year. It's been a successful sign-up with outstanding work by the field. We don't have WHIP allocation yet. We have taken some hits and that's one of them.

Emily Horsley – FSA – (handout attached) Handout provides CRP/CREP information. A couple of new longleaf pine practices are in place; that brought enrollment up. We are working toward the CREP enrollment ceiling in the Southern River watersheds. We're proud of that, but want to continue that effort. We have been talking with DCR about revising the agreement to bump up the ceiling. Our revised goal will be 20,000 acres. FSA will send a letter forward to the Governor and try to get it increased. They asked for the support of the State Technical Committee to include in the letter. She asked for questions. They hope to have an update at the next meeting. Wade offered support of the STC, saying he didn't know of any agency that wouldn't want more CREP enrollment.

Farm Manure to Energy Initiative – Special Presentation – Kristen Hughes-Evans – This is a watershed wide effort, specifically focusing on areas that have excess phosphorus. The over-arching goal is to shed light on the subject. They have 4-6 farm demonstration projects planned. They are looking for financing. The University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center is involved. They are looking for advisors on high levels. Economics is going to be a challenge. Some of the things may not be feasible with the current economic climate. They are encouraging an open exchange of information on technologies. The ultimate goal is to look at performance and then confront any barriers.

With that overview, Kristen turned the time over to **Jane Corson-Lassiter** who distributed handout: Farm Pilot Project Coordination, Inc. Reviewed slides on handout: There are various sized farms from 2-11 poultry houses. They want to look at scale of farms, technology and examine air emissions. Each one will have an ash by-product. The goal is to reclaim energy. She pointed out that there are multiple levels of technology. Slides on the back emphasize that the solutions must meet the size of the individual operations. She then segued into Dan Kugler's presentation by stating the need to look at costs/benefits.

Dan Kugler (retired from USDA) – “pragmatic” economist. After retiring, he moved to University of Maryland where mid-Atlantic office for EPA is housed. The big question: How these projects at various technology levels could be financed. They are looking at any possible sources of funding to these pilot and second-stage projects that appear to be/prove to be sustainable.

Kristen pointed out that the first two projects are here in Virginia, one on the Eastern Shore and one in the Shenandoah Valley. Her fact sheet is included in attachments as part of the minutes of meeting.

It’s a 3 year project. A web-based clearinghouse of information will be developed as results come in. That will probably be up and going at the end of the 2nd year.

Q: Libby Norris asked re: the concentration on poultry. A: Right now, dairy waste provides challenges; technologies are not as mature with other waste as they are with poultry.

Q: Mark Schonbeck asked how much phosphorus remains in the ash. A: Kristen said pretty much 100% .

Q: re: USDA’s consideration of manure as a fuel. A: Kristen stated that criterion is still being considered. They will keep the STC posted on any developments.

Wade stated that this project is very welcome and that we hope it will be an important option for farmers to use to improve water quality.

Eric Paulson of VA Dairymen Association – trying to work with “whole farm” plans to reduce phosphorus content. Kristen has worked with them to develop this plan. The operation in place has three steps to process manure to take out the phosphorus. An open house is planned for sometime this year in the Valley so farmers can come in on the ground level, look at what’s happening and be able to give input on further development. Farms in the Shenandoah Valley are the main focus for now.

Q: Where does the phosphorus go when it is taken out of the product? A: That is still being considered. If this process is successful, grant will be applied for to help manage it. They are looking at various markets.

Q: What is the typical size of the relevant farms. A: Kristen talked about challenge – increasing challenge – to have enough land because of encroaching urban areas. Paulson – if we can convert to “dry matter”, it becomes more manageable.

Q: Do farms have a lot of pasture? A: There is some where manure is spread, but most goes on cropland.

Q: Someone asked re: other BMPs. A: Yes; others are being considered. That’s a separate part of the grant, but it is being considered eligible for cost-share as well. Outcome should be to develop a menu of options for the farmer. A lot of farmers are doing this already, so this will be support for things already in place.

Diane Dunaway – NRCS – WRP – (handouts attached) – acquisition ongoing for 9 WRP easements; surveys have been completed on all. We are hoping to close earlier than the 12 month deadline. Restoration plans are underway on 8 WRP easements. That totals 294 acres.

Easement team is in the process of putting together a WRP 5-year plan. This is required by the National Office. We have some catch-up to do. This will be submitted to NHQ in the next couple of weeks.

FY-12 WRP allocations have been split into three sub-categories: 1) Closing/Monitoring; 2) Acquisition; and 3) Restoration. The reason they are doing that is to bring focus to closing and monitoring, separate from new acquisition, and to get the needed restoration caught-up. In the past, we’ve been given a lump sum.

GRP – handout – monitoring is on schedule. There has been a huge cut in allocations from last year. It's a popular program, so this is a bit of a blow. Applications deadline is next Friday for WRP and GRP.

Mark Schonbeck - Q: Why would a popular program like this be cut? Wade - A: We don't really know the answer for the cuts in Virginia yet, but it is across the board nationally that the GRP funding has been cut.

Jeremy Stone – NRCS – FRPP – (handouts attached) – Reviewed handout: 400% increase in funding over last year. To put that in perspective: All that allotment can be used in the Virginia if funds can be matched. If they cannot be matched, they'll be lost and will be given to another state. It is a REALLY great match formula – We want to stress that this is a GOOD deal, and we'd really like to be able to use these funds within Virginia. We are marketing it to all the LandTrusts in the state, and we are reaching out to land conservation professionals, trying to get anyone working in the land conservation field invested in using these monies. We're open to suggestions as far as ways to promote it.

There are 8 FRPP easements currently open. Four will close in April.

100% of all easements will be monitored by August. We are giving more independence on monitoring to the participants – there will be select sample audits after the fact which should allow things to move more quickly and smoothly.

Wade – PROGRAM OVERVIEWS: We are in fairly good shape; program funding is down a little bit, but still workable. We may get additional funds later this year too. We usually run a backlog of requests. He pointed out the handout listing cutoff dates and reviewed the details. Continuous sign-up is available, but the time is divided into "batching periods". If funds are not obligated by 7/2, they will go back to Washington for redistribution to other states.

CIG – 3 categories – National applications deadline is today. Notification of pre-proposal approvals will come out at the end of February. Maximum award is a million dollars. This is a 2 phase program – pre-proposal and full proposal.

There is also a CIG for the Chesapeake Bay. It is just one phase and the deadline is the March 2nd. The focus is on water quality credit trading. VMRC and VIMs may be submitting a proposal for aquaculture.

Handout: Wade discussed the DRAFT State CIG announcement – There is a total of \$150,000 available funding with a limit of \$75,000 available per applicant. Pre-proposals are due March 30, 2012. Comments or suggestions for improvement of the DRAFT announcement should be submitted to Wade by February 8 so they can be incorporated into the draft. Wade reiterated that if anyone has projects that we can support through national or state CIG, we'd love to do that.

Q: Is the State CIG the same as the National? A: For the most part, but we have focused a bit more on soil health.

CCPI – There will be no new requests for projects. We will not receive money for new projects, but we are anticipating getting money for existing projects.

Dan Solomon – NRCS – CSP – reiterated 191 application received – very good for VA – big increase from 89 last year. Pointed out handouts on state grazing land demonstration project on mob grazing for CSP; feeling is that this is a very good practice and we would like to promote it in the state of VA.

Forestry – handout shows allocations by fund code. We have allocated out \$580,000 and have only \$20,000 left. We had 2x as many requests as we had money. Thanks to DOF for their cooperation.

CAP - Conservation Activity Plans – These are outside providers with certain certifications. We have had 22 approved plans and used half of our funds for that. We have people in VA who are certified to do those CAPS here in VA. We have funds for some things we don't have anyone currently qualified to certify.

CBWI – no deadlines yet – handout that showed subfund categories and funding pools.

Allocation spreadsheet has been put together; Ag statistics – the percentages is how we allocated the funds to different fund pools. It's not an exact science, but we do try to follow a formula somewhat for allocations so we can explain and document how funds were allocated.

Ron Wood – NRCS – Organic, High Tunnel and Energy - 52 applications received so far. Lots of funding remains for organic. He will be attending the VBF conference next week to try to encourage more participation. Allocations aren't indicated because this comes from a national pool; we're not sure how they will work. It will depend on how the rest of the country comes in. National threshold for automatic approval for organic is 400 points; this doesn't really seem to be an issue with us.

AGENCY UPDATES:

Sue Ellen Johnson – Piedmont Environmental Council – As a new member, right now she is just getting the “lay of the land”.

Patricia Stansbury (VABF) – just worked on a grant through SAWG re: growing farm profits; it was well attended. She will give follow up at next meeting.

Emily Horsley – FSA – We received allocations for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and are working to distribute them.

Libby Norris – CB – Their organization is involved heavily in working with matters associated with the General Assembly – specifically, of course, they are trying to get funds. The Farmers to the Bay project is coming up again – They are looking for folks interested in a 3 day trip to Tangier. A one day trip canoe trip down Smith Creek is being coordinated for April.

Pat Paul – NRCS – We are still distributing the Gaining Ground videos and are planning to post the new video on longleaf pines on our website soon.

Mark Puckett – VA DGIF – The agency survived the Governor's Commission on Reform – they are very glad to still be the DGIF. One thing that did come out of this reform was coordinated licensing with DMV to register boats. They are also very involved with the General Assembly. The Sunday Hunting bill is probably the biggest bill right now; it has passed the Senate – there is still time to get your opinions to your representatives. If it passes, that will open up a lot of issues.

He asked that STC members refer landowners to website www.dgif.virginia.gov/quail to obtain a comprehensive update to see what's been done: the Bobwhite Bulletin. He also recognized the valued partnership with NRCS/VA Tech and VDGIF – this program will enter its 4th year this year. Private land biologist jobs are working well – four have been hired to other agencies with permanent positions; the down side is that these are highly skilled jobs – we invest an enormous amount of time training and hate to lose them.

Dave Kriz – NRCS – looking to see if there are more places where our soils information can be utilized. He explained some of the things being done, then talked about soil index usage with EQIP sign-up. He asked that the partners on the committee let everybody know that NRCS is available to give assistance.

Alan Spivey – VA Grass and Forage Council – He praised the Gaining Ground video. They have just finished 4 meetings; at least 120 people each at all four locations. Brought in speaker from Colorado; Kathy Balk – who has taught cattle and sheep to eat “weeds”. She was well received. On the dairy and beef front, convention is next week at Hotel Roanoke (the 9th and 10th).

Seth Coffman – TU – Working with Shenandoah SWCD and NRCS on Powerpoint to have it ready for the spring JED training. They’ve taken out a dam and opened up some native habitat. It has been a busy winter and should be a busy spring.

Todd Groh – VDOF – Fire Season begins February 15th – no burning trash between midnight and 4 pm. There has been an increase in fires occurring before official fire season begins. Let people know to be cautious. In some places in the state, foresters are down to 0; there are still technicians in areas for fire-fighting, but the headquarters people aren’t there. Forestry will take any more money for planting trees that NRCS has to offer. Right now there are seedlings available. He directed the group to go to their website. They are sold out of some seedlings already, however. Loblolly seedlings last years were sold out across the South; we brought in more but are sold out already.

Tom Harlan – VDOF – New regional resource person helping out in Charlottesville. For anybody involved in forest stewardship, Tom has taken over that area. Q: Patricia asked question about hardwood trees. A: Yes, we have them, but not nearly the volume of loblolly seedlings. Q: What kills loblollies? A: It could be almost anything...no specific threat at the moment. Tom will do quite a bit with CREP and Riparian Forest Buffers and will be at more meetings, including internal longleaf pine meeting tomorrow. Jack Bricker commented that NRCS supports that effort.

Mark Schonbeck – (VABF/SSAWG) VBFC holiday Kroger center Feb 10 & 11. David Lamb, NRCS Greensboro, will be presenting. Overall theme is transition to organics. Mark is participating on committee nationally which is working on making it easy for NRCS field staff to apply programs to organic growers. There have had successful no-till projects already.

Mark Dubin – (UMD/MAWP/CBPO) – They have been successful at getting support and have launched out on some scientific review panels; they are trying to bring in more research for a variety of ag practices – especially nutrient management, from basic to complex. They are specifically looking at how these can be represented appropriately in Bay modeling. They are also very interested in no-till and cover crops, poultry litter and manure processing technology. They have 4 panels working right now. Also interested in interim practices - things that haven’t gone through a scientific review, but temporary definition suggested. VA has requested gasification as an interim practice. That is going to be represented in the Bay modeling program. PA is also interested – they are looking at models with dairy cattle and swine. He will share results as they come out. Other activities: new info from U.S. Geological Survey – Sparrow Analysis - landscape with Bay; new analysis is very much up to date. New maps will come out with info on phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment etc. They will be available to all Bay states. There haven’t been as detailed sediment maps available previously. Much analysis is being done that should be helpful for future planning – it’s a multi-year process. They are working with USDA.

Their website has been changed – things are different. He asked the group to provide comments on new website.

Karen Hudson – VIMS – partnering with NRCS – VIMS is involved with aquaculture; they are also looking to partner with DCR.

Wade Biddix – (NRCS) – adjourned meeting at approximately 11:45 p.m. Wade thanked everyone for coming and announced that the next STC meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2012, at 10 a.m.

State Technical Committee
Agenda

January 31, 2012 - 10:00 a.m.
Richmond NRCS State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Ste. 209

Welcome and Opening Remarks	NRCS - Bricker
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP & CREP)	FSA - Horsley DCR - Moore
Farm Manure to Energy Initiative	CBF - Hughes Evans NRCS - Corson-Lassiter Univ. of MD - Kugler
Phosphorus Mgt. on Small Dairies Project	VA Dairymen Assoc. - Paulson
Program Overview Allocations Program Cut-off Dates CIG CCPI	NRCS - Biddix
Financial Assistance Programs (EQIP, CBWI, CSP) (WHIP)	NRCS - Solomon NRCS - Wood
Easement Programs (WRP, GRP) (FRPP)	NRCS - Dunaway NRCS - Stone
Agency Updates	All



Next Meeting - March 27, 2012

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Sign-up Progress

As of 11/22/2011

Chesapeake Bay -	1,866 contracts approved 16,991 acres <i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 8,009</i> <i>Current Allocation: 25,000</i>
Southern Rivers -	2,111 contracts approved 14,067.7 acres <i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 932.3</i> <i>Current Allocation: 15,000</i>
CP-33 - Habitat Buffer For Upland Birds	237 contracts approved 1,695.3 acres <i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 804.7</i> <i>Current Allocation: 2,500</i>
CP-36 Longleaf Pines	19 contracts approved 384.9 acres <i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 3,365.1</i> <i>Current Allocation: 3,750</i>
SAFE	
<i>Culpeper Basin Bird Habitat Restoration</i> <i>CP-38A – (Forested Riparian Areas)</i> <i>CP-38E – (Native Grass Areas)</i>	<i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 500</i>
<i>CP-38C</i> <i>Restoration and Management of</i> <i>Eastern Shore Migratory Bird</i> <i>Tree/Shrub Habitat</i>	<i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 300</i>
<i>CP-38C</i> <i>Statewide Tree Planting</i>	<i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 500</i>
<i>CP-38D</i> <i>Longleaf Pine</i>	13 contracts approved 356.2 acres <i>AVAILABLE ACRES: 643.8</i> <i>Current Allocation: 1,000</i>

Virginia FY-12 Initial Program Allocations
 State Technical Committee Meeting
 January 31, 2012

<u>Fund</u>	<u>2012 Allocation</u>	<u>2011 Funds*</u>	<u>Difference</u>
EQIP	\$9,488,606	\$11,809,327	-19.7%
CBWI	\$11,907,311	\$16,547,757	-28%
WHIP**	\$0	\$732,888	-100%
FRPP	\$4,589,047	\$912,940	+400%
GRP	\$90,584	\$778,850	-88.4%
WRP	\$1,139,022	\$1,068,954	+6.6%
Overall	\$27,214,570	\$31,850,716	-14.6%

Notes:

1. * 2011 funds based on amount obligated at year end.
2. ** WHIP funds may be forthcoming depending on NHQ allocations to States. There is a new initiative "Working Lands For Wildlife" this year.
3. Have not received CCPI funds yet for WHIP, CBWI or EQIP.
4. CSP funds are not included. They are distributed based on acreage enrolled.

EQIP Funds Allocation and Sign-Up Status 1/30/2012

Account Name	Allocated	Contracts and Approved Applications	Pre-Approved Applications	Funds Remaining	Number of Applications
Virginia	\$9,485,884.22	\$15,505.00			
Sub Funds	\$8,821,696.00	\$15,505.00			
Aquaculture	\$100,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$100,000.00	6
Beginning Farmer	\$304,517.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$304,517.00	16
CAP 102 CNMP Development	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$50,000.00	0
CAP 104 Nutrient Management Plan	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	0
CAP 106 Forest Mgmt Plan	\$50,000.00	\$15,505.00	\$11,616.00	\$22,879.00	22
CAP 114 Intergrated Pest Mgmt	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	0
CAP 118 Irrigation Water Management Plan	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	0
CAP 122 Energy Audit Headquarters	\$50,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,865.00	\$48,135.00	3
CAP 124 Energy Audit Field Operations	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,550.00	\$7,450.00	1
CAP 130 Drainage Water Management	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	0
CCPI-Ches Bay Foundation	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
CCPI-Fish America	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Cropland - Christiansburg	\$236,872.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$236,872.00	4
Cropland - Farmville	\$325,711.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$325,711.00	4
Cropland - Harrisonburg	\$325,711.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$325,711.00	2
Cropland - Smithfield	\$345,453.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$345,453.00	24
Forestry - Statewide	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	\$579,254.00	\$20,746.00	153
FY12 Certified Organic	\$171,548.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$171,548.00	0
FY12 On-Farm Energy	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	2
FY12 Organic Transition	\$171,547.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$171,547.00	5
FY12 Seasonal High Tunnels	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	45
Limited Resource Farmer	\$304,517.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$304,517.00	6
Livestock in Confinement - Christiansburg	\$1,997,886.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,997,886.00	25
Livestock in Confinement - Farmville	\$541,208.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$541,208.00	13
Livestock in Confinement - Harrisonburg	\$1,010,256.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,010,256.00	0
Livestock in Confinement - Smithfield	\$252,564.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$252,564.00	6
Pasture - Christiansburg	\$550,734.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$550,734.00	34
Pasture - Farmville	\$459,488.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$459,488.00	32
Pasture - Harrisonburg	\$485,558.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$485,558.00	0
Pasture - Smithfield	\$133,609.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$133,609.00	0
Socially Disadvantaged	\$304,517.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$304,517.00	13
FY12 CIG State Component	\$150,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$150,000.00	0
FY12 EQIP Reserve	\$47,412.22	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$47,412.22	0
					416

CBWI Funds Allocation and Applications 1/30/2012

Account Name	Allocated	Number of Applications
Virginia	\$11,879,311.00	
Sub Funds	\$11,879,311.00	
CBWI - Animals in Confinement	\$5,038,290.00	23
CBWI - Cropland	\$2,519,145.00	34
CBWI - Limited Resource Farmer	\$393,577.00	1
CBWI - New Farmer	\$393,577.00	12
CBWI - Pasture	\$2,519,145.00	29
CBWI - Socially Disadvantaged	\$393,577.00	5
Forestry CCPI	\$0.00	8
Forestry CCPI Forest Management Plan	\$0.00	3
Shenandoah Valley RCD_CCPI	\$0.00	0
Smith Creek Showcase Watershed-Cropland	\$150,000.00	0
Smith Creek Showcase Watershed-Pasture	\$350,000.00	0
Trout Unlimited	\$0.00	0
FY12 CBWI Reserve	\$122,000.00	0
		115

2012 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

National CIG Announcement = \$20M

Pre-Proposals Due to Washington DC on January 31, 2012

Notification of Selected Applications by February 29, 2012

Full Proposals Due on April 6, 2012

Maximum Award Amount = \$1M

Chesapeake Bay/National CIG Grant for Water Quality Credit Trading = \$10M

\$5M Dedicated for Chesapeake Bay States

Full Proposals Due to Washington DC on March 2, 2012

Maximum Award Amount = \$2M

DRAFT State CIG Announcement = \$150,000 (See handout)

Pre-Proposals Due on March 30, 2012

Full Proposals Due on June 1, 2012

Maximum Award Amount = \$75,000

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)

1. No CCPI funds have been distributed yet to the states.
2. No new CCPI projects will be solicited or funded in 2012.
3. We have been told that existing CCPI projects will be funded in CBWI, EQIP and WHIP. Some may be at a reduced level from the original budget in the proposal.

WRP :: Wetlands Reserve Program

1. Acquisition is proceeding on 9 WRP easements, totaling 400 acres.
2. Restoration plan (WRPO) design and implementation are underway on 8 closed WRP easements, totaling 294 acres; plus one ten-year restoration agreement of 3.4 acres.
3. Monitoring continues on schedule with goal of meeting new national guidelines 100% by August 2012.
4. Five-year plan in progress: Monitoring, Restoration, New Acquisitions.
5. Established new Wetland Restoration Plan of Operations (WRPO) procedure with input from Field Offices, Area Offices and State Office staff, based on WRP Manual guidelines, effective in January.
6. FY-12 Allocation: Total: \$1,139,022 is split:
 Enrollment: \$879,118;
 Restoration: \$259,904.
7. Applications due from landowner to Field Office 2/3/12.

GRP :: Grassland Reserve Program

1. Acquisition is proceeding on 2 GRP easements, totaling approx. 235 acres.
2. Backlog of prior year funded acquisitions was completed in 2011.
3. Monitoring continues on schedule with goal of meeting new national guidelines 100% by August 2012.
4. FY-12 Allocation: Total: \$90,584.
5. Applications due from landowner to Field Office 2/3/12.

2012 Program Cut-Off Dates (Timeline)

- 1-13-12 Forestry Sign-up #1
- 1-27-12 CSP Sign-up #1
- 1/27/12 Forestry Ranking Due for Sign-up #1
- 2/3/12 High Tunnel/Organic/Energy Sign-up #1
- 2/3/12 All Programs Sign-up #1
- 2/13/12 High Tunnel/Organic/Energy Ranking Due for Sign-up #1
- 2/29/12 Ranking Due for All Programs from Sign-up #1
- 3/30/12 High Tunnel/Organic/Energy Sign-up #2
- 3/30/12 All Programs Sign-up #2
- 4/9/12 High Tunnel/Organic/Energy Ranking Due for Sign-up #2
- 4/30/12 Ranking Due for All Programs from Sign-up #2
- 6/1/12 High Tunnel/Organic/Energy Sign-up #3
- 6/1/12 All Programs Sign-up #3
- 6/11/12 High Tunnel/Organic/Energy Ranking Due for Sign-up #3
- 6/11/12 Ranking Due for All Programs from Sign-up #3
- 7/2/12 Deadline for All Program Obligations. Return Unused Funds to NHQ.

EQIP and CBWI Allocations to Subaccounts

January 31, 2012

Allocation Process

- 1) Reviewed the FY-12 State Allocation Letter to ensure all requirements were covered.
- 2) Included 5% for Special Water Quality Initiative as per Chief
- 3) Included historically underserved categories = 10%
- 4) Included Special Projects such as CAPS, State CIG, Smith Creek, Aquaculture, Forestry
 - a. CAPS = 8 total with 3 getting \$50K each and 5 getting \$10K each.
 - b. Forestry = \$600,000 (plus \$50K for CAP 106)
 - c. State CIG = \$150K
 - d. Aquaculture = \$100K
 - e. Smith Creek = \$500K
- 5) Organic got separate allocation (Split for Certified, Transitioning and CAP 138)
- 6) Have not received CCPI funds yet.

Utilized the Ag. Statistics percentages by area to breakdown the allocations for Cropland, Pasture and Animals in Confinement

For EQIP, calculated 60% to animal agriculture

- 70% went to animals in confinement
- 30% went to pasture

Cropland

- Each Area got base of 5%
- Added percentage from Ag. Statistics table

Pasture

- Each Area got base of 5%
- Added percentage from Ag. Statistics table

Animals in Confinement

- Took the entire pot of CBWI and EQIP and then applied percentages from Ag. Statistics
- This helped provide equitable share to all Area – accounting for non-Bay sections of the State.

CBWI

- Reviewed final obligations, by area, from 2011 to determine the percentages.
- Took out historically underserved and Smith Creek.
- Remaining allocations broken down
 - 50% for animals in confinement (down 3% from 2011)
 - 25% for pasture (down 3% from 2011)
 - 25% for cropland (up 6% from 2011)

Geographic Area	Area	Cropland Acres from the 2007 Agric. Census	Pasture Acres from the 2007 Agric. Census	Confined Animal Feeding Operation/AFO Animal Units (2009)	Total Animal Units (cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, poultry) from the 2007 Agric. Census ^{1/}
Area		% of Total Cropland Acres from the 2007 Agric. Census	% of Pasture Acres from the 2007 Agric. Census	% of Total Confined Animal Feeding Operation/AFO Animal Units (2009)	% of Total Animal Units (cattle, hogs, sheep, horses, poultry) from the 2007 Agric. Census
1 - Harrisonburg		27%	31%	66%	48%
2 - Christiansburg		18%	36%	3%	22%
3 - Farmville		27%	29%	17%	23%
4 - Smithfield		29%	4%	14%	7%
Virginia		100%	100%	100%	100%

1/ Total animal units based upon: cattle and calves: 1AU for each animal in inventory (with beef cows and calves, stockers, heifers, bulls, dairy calves and large framed dairy cows all averaging out to 1AU/animal in inventory); hogs and pigs: 1AU for every 9 animals in inventory; sheep and lambs: 1AU for every 12 animals in inventory; horses and ponies: 1AU for every animal in inventory; layers 20 weeks old and older: 1AU for every 455 animals in inventory; broilers and other meat type chickens: 1AU for every 455 animals in inventory; turkeys: 1AU for every 68 turkeys sold;

Mathematically the calculation for total animal units is as follows:

$(\text{total \# cattle and calves} * 1) + (\text{total \# hogs and pigs} / 9) + (\text{total \# sheep and lambs} / 12) + (\text{total \# horses and ponies} / 1) + (\text{total \# layers} / 455) + (\text{total \# broilers} / 455) + (\text{total \# turkeys} / 68)$

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

ACTION: NOTICE (Announcement No. USDA-NRCS-VA-12-01)

Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Announcement for Program Funding

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

SUMMARY: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency under the United States Department of Agriculture, is announcing availability of Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in Virginia. NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 will be approximately **\$150,000**. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration. Individual grants will not exceed \$75,000.

Funds will be awarded through a two-phase statewide competitive grants process that will include (1) a pre-proposal process and (2) a full proposal process. The full proposal process will only be open to applicants whose pre-proposal applications are selected to advance to full proposals. Both phases are described in this announcement, but **only pre-proposals are being solicited at this time**.

This notice identifies the objectives, eligibility criteria, and application instructions for CIG projects. Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. NRCS will request a full proposal package only from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal phase.

DATES: Applications for the pre-proposal phase must be received at the NRCS State Office in Richmond, Virginia, by 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on Friday, **March 30, 2012**.

Notification of selected pre-proposal applications will be announced by **April 20, 2012**. Selected applicants will then be required to submit a full proposal package to the NRCS State Office by 4 p.m. EST on **June 1, 2012**.

ADDRESSES: Applications sent via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service must be sent to the following address: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, Virginia State Office, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014. The contact phone number for hand-delivered pre-proposals and applications is (804) 287-1691.

Applications sent via the United States Postal Service must be sent to the following address: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, Virginia State Office, 1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209, Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014.

To submit your application electronically, visit Grants.gov-Apply for Grants and follow the instructions. Note: all applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO

submit a paper copy through the methods listed above to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

For more information contact:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
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Phone: (804) 287-1675
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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under Section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies, while leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches into NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides, and references, or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Projects intended to test hypotheses do not qualify for a CIG grant. CIG is used to apply or demonstrate previously proven technology. It is a vehicle to stimulate development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a high likelihood of success, and that are a candidate for eventual technology transfer or institutionalization. CIG promotes sharing of skills, knowledge, technologies, and facilities among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG funds projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

A two-phase evaluation process will be utilized for applications submitted under this notice. The first phase requires the applicant to submit a pre-proposal. Applications will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the bulleted topics identified by the applicant (see section I.D). Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

NRCS will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted to NRCS from eligible entities including State and local units of government, and non-governmental organizations and individuals.

NRCS will only request a full proposal package from those applicants selected in the pre-proposal process. Complete applications received by applicable deadlines will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in the application instructions in section VI.A.

Full proposal applications, along with recommendations from the NRCS technical review group, will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist of Virginia, who will make the final selections.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development, field testing, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems; or
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches; or
- Environmental soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity should:

- Make use of a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector;
- Adapt conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance; and
- Demonstrate transferability of knowledge.

D. State Component

For FY 2012, NRCS in Virginia will consider offering CIG in the following resource concern areas: Nutrient Management, Energy Conservation, Soil Health, and Wildlife.

Pre-proposals that demonstrate the use of innovative technologies and/or approaches to address at least one bulleted topic listed below will be considered. Pre-proposals must identify the most appropriate bulleted topic the innovation/technology is addressing. While NRCS/VA will accept proposals for each bulleted topic below, special interest is placed on receiving proposals that address topics identified as a "Priority Need."

PRIORITY NEED:

Soil Health

- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate and quantify the impacts of hyper-diverse cover crop mixtures (8-12+ species from 3+ functional groups) in particular and high diversity cropping systems in general (including mixed livestock/crop systems) on soil health (chemical, physical and/or biological properties) with special emphasis on yield and fertilizer response in subsequent crops.
- **Priority Need:** Demonstrate the effects of mob grazing on soil health (physical, chemical, and/or biological properties) and the related effects on nutrient distribution, plant diversity, ground cover and forage growth throughout the year.

Other Topics of Consideration

- Demonstrate innovative approaches to building soil health in traditional Virginia cropping systems (for example: demonstrate innovative seeding methods, termination methods, crop rotations, etc. to allow better integration of high diversity/high biomass cover crops into cropping systems).

- Demonstrate the effects of grazing management of cover crop mixes on soil chemical, physical and biological properties and water quality.
- Demonstrate and evaluate opportunities for increasing the intensity of forage-based rotations in order to increase overall nutrient uptake, forage production, and soil quality while reducing reliance on traditional crops subject to drought such as corn (for example, by integrating fall seeded spring oats into dairy crop rotations)
- Demonstrate and quantify the effectiveness of methods to capture dissolved phosphorus from field runoff and subsurface drainage.
- Demonstrate the applicability and utility of in-season nitrogen management tools for determining additional nutrient needs for a range of soils, climates and/or cropping systems.
- Demonstrate effective whole farm strategies for reducing nutrient/sediment losses from dairies, for example by increasing perennials in rotation.
- Quantify and demonstrate nutrient distribution from historical winter feeding sites on pasture based livestock systems, evaluate the historical effect on nutrient management of the system, and demonstrate cost effective management techniques to efficiently distribute manure nutrients throughout the winter feeding season to areas of the system for overall improved pasture productivity.
- Evaluate and demonstrate energy savings through adaptive management grazing systems that utilize grazing techniques that reduce the need for making and feeding hay, while also using manures and legumes rather than synthetic fertilizers. Deliverables should include energy lifecycle comparison of grazing and haying systems.
- Evaluate and demonstrate energy savings through adaptive management cropping systems that utilize crop rotations that include legumes and grasses in long term no-till systems that will increase nutrient cycling through enhanced soil biological activity.
- Demonstrate the feasibility and document the relevant issues associated with using low-head hydropower turbines in surface water sources such as in-stream installations and small dams (e.g. using a flow-through or pumpback configuration).
- Develop planning and decision aids to assess and maximize wildlife habitat value on land used to grow biofuel crops.
- Demonstrate new techniques and/or technologies for monitoring and evaluating wildlife habitat both on site and via remote sensing.
- Demonstrate the effectiveness and document the economics of alternate pest control methods in agricultural crops to protect pollinators and their habitats (e.g., ground application versus aerial application of pesticides, provision of habitat for “beneficial” insects).
- Estimate and document the effects upon pollinator populations and health due to the conversion to biofuel feedstock or agricultural production of lands presently enrolled in CRP or other suitable conservation easement programs.
- Evaluate the following NRCS conservation practice standards using a large diversity of flowering plants in order to quantify and demonstrate the revised practice standard benefits to pollinators: 332-Contour Buffer Strips, 342-Critical Area Planting, 393-Filter Strip, 391-Riparian Forest Buffer, 380-Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment, and/or 580-Streambank and Shoreline Protection.
- Evaluate the various cover crop mix recipes and the impacts on pollinators
- Evaluate the seedbank response to fescue removal/eradication
- Demonstrate and document the relevant issues associated with innovative on-farm energy practices and/or technology such as solar, wind and bioenergy.

- Demonstrate and document the relevant issues associated with use of conservation tillage such as no-till and strip-till, cover crops, roller-crimper and/or other cover crop cessation technology and techniques, alone or combined, on specialty crop farms.
- Monitoring to demonstrate the outcomes of establishment of a Longleaf Pine forest. How does establishing a Longleaf Pine forest benefit wildlife, T&E Species, water quality, etc?
- Knowledge and understanding of the economic value of a Longleaf Pine and/or Shortleaf Pine plantings. What are the economic benefits of establishing a Longleaf Pine/Shortleaf Pine planting over a Loblolly planting including pine straw production and how that may influence participation in establishment.
- Provide technical education on the establishment and management of Longleaf Pine ecosystems in order to have a successful planting focusing on when and how to restore the understory vegetation component.
- Understory forest management with fire/herbicide use to promote rejuvenation and forest stand health as well as related wildlife benefits.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

A. State Component

NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 will be approximately **\$150,000**.

CIG will fund single and multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years (anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2012**). Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. The maximum award amount for any project will not exceed **\$75,000**.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or an individual.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of their total project cost. CIG recipients must match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. Of the applicant's required match (50%), a minimum of 25 percent of the total project cost must come from cash sources; the remaining 25 percent may come from in-kind contributions.

In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match (except in the case of projects carried out by either a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities). The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.

Matching funds must be secured at time of application for full proposals. Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Additional information about matching funds can be found at the following link: 2 CFR 215.

B. Beginning or Limited Farmers or Ranchers

Below are definitions of Beginning Farmer or Rancher and Limited Resource Producer. These definitions can also be found at 7 C.F.R. 1466.3:

Beginning Farmer or Rancher - a person or legal entity who:

- Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch;
- In the case of a contract with an individual, or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the individual provide substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located; and
- In the case of a contract with an entity or joint operation, all members must materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch. Material and substantial participation requires that each member provide some amount of the management or labor necessary for day-to-day activities, such that if each of the members did not provide these inputs, operation of the farm or ranch would be seriously impaired.

Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher -

- A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$155,200 in each of the previous 2 years (adjusted for inflation using Prices Paid by Farmer Index as compiled by National Agricultural Statistical Service); and
- Has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years (to be determined annually using Department of Commerce data).

C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, imposes a \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between fiscal years 2008 and 2012. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation.
- Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to the NRCS CIG program manager in the semi-annual report. Direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any USDA programs (EQIP, Conservation Security Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, etc.) because that would be a duplicate payment.

D. Project Eligibility

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 USC 3839aa-1. Further, all agricultural producers receiving

direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

A person or legal entity will not be eligible to receive any benefit during a crop, fiscal, or program year, as appropriate, if the average adjusted gross non-farm income of the person or legal entity exceeds \$1,000,000, unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income ([7 CFR Part 1400](#)).

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance and Wetland Compliance provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach (applicants should reference the appropriate State's EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the NRCS State office).

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, Administrative Contact, and Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION and SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. PRE-PROPOSAL

1. How to Obtain Materials

The announcement for this CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following web site: www.grants.gov.

2. Content and Format

Applications must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for the full proposal phase. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in their application. If submitting applications for more than one project, submit a separate application for each project. Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered.

- a. Pre-proposal Cover Sheet: (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance)
Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](#).
- b. Project Description: (limited to 3 pages in length) Applicants must submit a description including the information below.
 1. Project title
 2. Primary resource concern area for consideration
 3. Project duration (anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2012**)
 4. Project director name, and contact information (including e-mail)
 5. Names and affiliations of project collaborators

6. Project purpose
 7. Project area/location
 8. Project summary
 9. Project deliverables/products
 10. Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 11. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher
- c. Project Location Map: Applicants must submit a map indicating the location of the proposed project (limited to 1 page in length).
- d. Budget Information (Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs).
1. Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the cost share. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. Applicants must prepare this document to identify budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: [Grants.gov - Forms Repository](http://www.grants.gov)
 2. A one page narrative describing the budget needs and justifying why the budget is appropriate should also be included. This is limited to a 1-page maximum.
- e. DUNS Number: A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A *Federal Register* notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- f. Required Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration: The CCR is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, go to: <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration

3. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov. Alternatively, applications may be submitted in person or via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date of **March 30, 2012**

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site problems related to Grants.gov. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems. All applicants who submit electronically are

strongly encouraged to ALSO submit a paper copy through the methods listed below to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

The address for submitting an application via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

The contact phone number for hand-delivered pre-proposals is (804) 287-1691.

The address for submitting applications via the United States Postal Service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

Applications submitted by fax or email **will not** be considered.

4. Due Date

Pre-proposals must be received at the NRCS Virginia State Office by 4:00 p.m. EST on **March 30, 2012**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications by overnight mail, or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

5. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered for the second phase of the application process.

CIG Program Contact:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Fax: (804) 287-1737
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

6. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

7. Review

Applications will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the bulleted resource concern area identified by the applicant. Each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice, including EQIP payment limitations. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

8. Anticipated Notification

Applicants will be notified via mail by **April 20, 2012**. Applicants selected for full proposals will be required to submit a full proposal package by **June 1, 2012**.

V. INFORMATION FOR FULL PROPOSALS (only for those applicants notified at the end of the pre-proposal review process that their application has been identified for further evaluation).

A. FULL PROPOSAL

All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following web site: Grants.gov - Forms Repository. An application checklist is available in this announcement.

1. Content and Format

Applications are required to contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applicants must submit one original copy of the application in the following format:

- Applications should be typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper. The text of the application should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, single-spaced, single-sided, with one-inch margins and page numbered.
- Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding.

Applications must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

- a. Proposal Cover Sheet:** (Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance)
Applicants must use this document as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from Grants.gov - Forms Repository.
- b. Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 12 pages in length.
 1. **Project background:** Describe the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success of the project.
 2. **Project objectives:** Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how the project is innovative.

3. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.
4. Location and size of project or project area: Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
5. Producer participation: Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP).
6. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. Anticipated project start date of **September 1, 2012**.
7. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and non-government entities. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
8. Project deliverables/products: Provide a list of specific deliverables and products that will allow NRCS to monitor project progress and payment.

In addition to specific deliverable, applications must include the following activities as deliverables:

- a. Semi-annual reports
 - b. Supplemental narratives to explain and support payment requests
 - c. Final report
 - d. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress [A thorough list and explanation of measurable performance items specific to the project will be used in the technical evaluation (refer to "CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria")]
 - e. New technology and innovative approach fact sheet
 - f. Participation in at least one NRCS CIG Showcase or comparable NRCS event during the period of the grant
9. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities, and explain how the results will be measured. Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; rural communities; and municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.
 10. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report. Grant recipients will be required to provide a semi-annual progress report, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.
- c. **Additional Information**: Bibliographies and/or resumes (not to exceed two pages per person), and references.
 - d. **Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts**: Describe and assess the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. The description of the potential environmental and social impacts must address all potential beneficial and

adverse impacts of the proposed action. A full description and assessment of the potential impacts to all environmental resources must be disclosed. One line or short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the project proposed and the environmental resources impacted either directly, indirectly (later in time), or cumulatively. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc. Environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other specific resources protected by law, Executive Order, and agency policy. These resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, form NRCS-CPA-52, which is available at: [NRCS-CPA-52](#). The NRCS-CPA-52 form can be used as a guide for the scope of environmental information that should be prepared for this section of the application. In addition to describing impacts, applicants are required to assess the significance or degree of potential environmental impact of the proposed project on environmental resources.

e. **Budget Information:** The budget portion of the application consists of three parts described below.

1. Standard Form (SF) 424A Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs: Fill in all spaces as appropriate. Section B, Item 6, column 1 should reflect the NRCS funds and Column 2 should reflect the cost share funds. If your cost share is from multiple sources you may show that in the remaining columns of Item 6. This form is the summary budget for the project.
2. Detailed Budget Description: Specific item by item breakdown of the totals provided in Item 6 of the SF-424A should be provided. This detail should show what individual costs were added together to arrive at the totals presented in each of Object Class Categories on the SF-424. The format of this information should be readable in 8.5 by 11 printable pages. It may be in a chart, spreadsheet, table, etc. The information needs to be presented in such a way that the evaluators and NRCS can readily understand what expenses will be incurred to support the project. The breakdown of the federal share and the cost share should be shown separately as in the SF-424A, not combined. This may be on separate documents or on different sections of the same presentation. Listed below are some suggested items that should be shown in the budget details. These are suggested details and are not inclusive:
 - 6a. Personnel; A list of personnel, their salary, hourly rate, hours, % time
 - 6b. Fringe Benefits: % of salary, differing rates for different staff
 - 6c. Travel: basis for airfare, mileage rate (NTE Federal govt. rate), per diem, hotel, car rental, how many trips, how many days, number of staff
 - 6d. Equipment: type of equipment, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity
 - 6e. Supplies: type of supplies, cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity (a general statement such as "office supplies \$3,000" is not acceptable)
 - 6f. Contractual; Cost of each subcontract – the total of all subcontracts should be shown on the SF-424, but an itemized budget should be provided for each potential subcontract. The budgets for the subcontracts should follow this same format and be submitted with your proposal.
 - 6g. Construction: N/A
 - 6h. Other: Cost per item, per batch, per load, quantity

3. **Budget Narrative:** Provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how budget items are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel and consultant salaries with a description of duties. In addition to the information above, the subcontractors and consultants must also submit a statement of work. The budget narrative should support the federal funds requested and the cost share.

f. Indirect Costs

If you have a current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement you must:

- a. Submit a copy of the agreement with your application,
- b. Calculate indirect costs based on the total Federal Funds awarded and cannot exceed 15 percent,
- c. Requesting unrecovered indirect costs in the matching funds is not approved.

If you do **not** have a current Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Agreement you **may not claim indirect costs** in this application.

- g. Matching:** Applications must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from non-federal third parties.

Cash Match

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation, and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-Kind Match

"In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of "in-kind" include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and are verifiable.

For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement is required for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant's organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution, and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The sources and amounts of all matching support from outside the applicant institution must be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support (matching support means a budget narrative broken down by year).

The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars, Cost Principles that apply to their entity for additional guidance, and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

- h. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement:** Identify any previously awarded CIG projects involvement related to this proposal and any of its principal investigators. Detail the purpose, outcomes to date, and how this new proposal relates to the previous award.
- i. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher:** If applicants wish to conduct a project on historically underserved farms, they must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities. This declaration is also required in order to be eligible for the in-kind contribution exception.
- j. Certifications:** Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. All applications must include this document. The SF-424B may be found at: Grants.gov - Forms Repository or by contacting the Virginia State office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 CFR:
 - a. Part 3017, [Government wide Debarment and Suspension \(Non-procurement\)](#)
 - b. Part 3018, [New Restrictions on Lobbying](#)
 - c. Part 3021, [Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace \(Financial Assistance\)](#)
- k. DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. CIG applicants must obtain a DUNS Number. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- l. Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration:** The CCR is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. This database is also used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, go to: <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

2. How to Submit an Application

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov. Alternatively, applications may be submitted in person or via express mail, overnight courier service, or U.S. Postal Service to the addresses listed below. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete package and meet the requirements described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, and instructions for adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date of **June 1, 2012**.

Note: NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or web site problems related to Grants.gov. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process in advance of the

submission deadline to avoid problems. All applicants who submit electronically are strongly encouraged to ALSO submit a paper copy through the methods listed below to ensure that any potential problems with the electronic submission system do not negatively impact any applications.

The address for submitting an application via hand-delivery, express mail or overnight courier service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

The contact phone number for hand-delivered applications is (804) 287-1691.

The address for applications sent via the United States Postal Service is:

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Innovation Grants Program
Virginia State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, Virginia 23229-5014

Note: Applicants must submit one signed original copy of each project application. Applicants must submit five copies of the application. Applications submitted by fax or email will not be considered.

3. Due Date

Applications must be received at the Virginia NRCS State Office by 4:00 p.m. EST on **June 1, 2012**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications by overnight mail, or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

4. Acknowledgement of Submission

NRCS will acknowledge receipt of timely applications via e-mail. An applicant who does not receive such an e-mail acknowledgement within 30 days of their submission but believes he/she submitted a timely application must contact the NRCS program contact below. Failure to do so will result in the application not being considered for the second phase of the application process.

CIG Program Contact:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Fax: (804) 287-1737
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

5. Withdrawal

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before selections are made. Applications may be withdrawn by the applicant, or by an authorized representative.

6. Funding Restrictions

Awardees may not use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and,
- g. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person.

7. Review

Applications will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. Complete applications will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in the application instructions in section V.B.

Applications with recommendations from the NRCS technical review group will be forwarded to the NRCS State Conservationist in Virginia who will make the final selections.

8. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR §3019.36 and 7 CFR §3019.2. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal Government use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically.

9. Environmental Review Requirements

The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and the NRCS regulation that implements NEPA at 7 CFR part 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for actions where the agency has discretion and control. Accordingly, NRCS financial assistance under the CIG program requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application packet, applicants are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project to help NRCS determine the appropriate documentation required to comply with NEPA and NRCS regulations. If the application is selected for funding, the NRCS Program Contact will coordinate with the selected applicant concerning documentation for compliance with NEPA. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement if required for NEPA compliance). Grant funding cannot be approved until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

VI. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The proposals will be evaluated and reviewed by a NRCS technical and programs review group. The review group will make recommendations to the NRCS State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

A. Criteria for Application Evaluation

NRCS Staff will use the following criteria to evaluate project applications:

CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria
Purpose, Approach, and Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.b) Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.c) Project outcome is clearly measurable.d) Potential for successful completion.e) Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.
Innovative Technology or Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Project is innovative (national, regionally, and local in nature).b) Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in proposal request announcement.
<u>Project Management</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.b) Project staff has technical expertise needed.

- c) Budget is adequately explained and justified.
- d) Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.

Transferability

- a) Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology or technologies.
- b) Potential to transfer the approach or technology statewide or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas, including limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally underserved producers and communities.
- c) Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods.
- d) Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.)

B. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG selections are anticipated to be announced by **August 1, 2012**; all agreements are expected to be awarded by **September 1, 2012**. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee.

Applicants should plan their projects based on a project start date of **September 1, 2012**.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification from the NRCS State Conservationist in Virginia. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process and financial review. NRCS reserves the right to have grant award(s) administered by a third party. In the event that a third party administers the grant award(s), the applicant/recipient will be notified in writing.

B. Environmental Review Requirements

Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the NRCS program contact to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to award of grant funds.

Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document(s) if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

CIG Program Contacts:

Wade Biddix
Assistant State Conservationist (Programs)
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1675
Fax: (804) 287-1737
Email: Wade.Biddix@va.usda.gov

Patrick Vincent
Farm Bill Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1642
Fax: (804) 287-1736
Email: patrick.vincent@va.usda.gov

CIG Administrative Contact:

Denise Burruss, Contract Specialist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Culpeper Building, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229-5014
Phone: (804) 287-1630
Fax: (804) 287-1734
Email: denise.burruss@va.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions, is available on the CIG web page at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>.

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered

**CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2012 PRE-PROPOSAL PACKAGE CHECK LIST**

- A. Pre-proposal Cover Sheet:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- B. Project Description:** Submit a description including the information below (Three (3) pages maximum in length).
 1. Project title
 2. Primary area for consideration (refer to page 4)
 3. Project duration
 4. Project director name, and contact information (including e-mail)
 5. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
 6. Project purpose
 7. Project area/location
 8. Project summary
 9. Project deliverables/products
 10. Description of EQIP eligible producer involvement
 11. Declaration of beginning or limited farmer or rancher
- C. Budget Information:** Submit Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs.
 1. Complete SF-424A
 2. One page narrative
- D. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- E. Required CCR Registration:** To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

**CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS
FISCAL YEAR 2012 FULL APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECK LIST**

- A. Proposal Cover Sheet:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- B. Project Description:** (12 pages maximum, single-spaced, single-sided, 12 point font)
 - 1. Project background
 - 2. Project objectives
 - 3. Project methods
 - 4. Location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
 - 5. Producer participation
 - 6. Project action plan and timeline
 - 7. Project management
 - 8. Project deliverables/products
 - 9. Benefits or results expected and transferability
 - 10. Project evaluation
- C. Additional Information:** Bibliography, resumes, and/or references
- D. Assessment of Environmental and Social Impacts**
- E. Budget Information:** Submit a completed Standard Form 424A (SF-424A) Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs.
 - 1. Complete SF-424A
 - 2. Detailed budget description
 - 3. Budget narrative
- F. Indirect Cost**
- G. Matching Information**
- H. Declaration of Previous CIG Projects Involvement.**
- I. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Farmer or Rancher:** If applicable, include a statement declaring your status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or community-based organization representing these entities.
- J. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424B) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.
- K. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- L. Central Contractor Registry (CCR):** To register, visit www.ccr.gov. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay).
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United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Farming in the 21st Century

a practical approach to improve **Soil Health**

What is Soil Health? Why Should I Care?

Soil health is *the capacity of a soil to function*. How well is your soil functioning to infiltrate water and cycle nutrients to water and feed growing plants?

Soil is a living factory of macroscopic and microscopic workers who need food to eat and places to live to do their work.

There are more individual organisms in a teaspoon of soil than there are people on earth; thus, the soil is controlled by these organisms.

Tillage, fertilizer, livestock, pesticides, and other management tools can be used to improve soil health, or they can significantly damage soil health if not applied correctly.

Managing for soil health (improved soil function) is mostly a matter of maintaining suitable habitat for the myriad of creatures that comprise the soil food web.

Managing for soil health can be accomplished by disturbing the soil as little as possible, growing as many different species of plants as practical, keeping living plants in the soil as often as possible, and keeping the soil covered all the time.

Manage More by Disturbing Soil Less

Tilling the soil is the equivalent of an earthquake, hurricane, tornado, and forest fire occurring simultaneously to the world of soil organisms. Simply stated, tillage is bad for the soil.

Physical soil disturbance, such as tillage with a plow, disk, or chisel plow, that results in bare or compacted soil is destructive and disruptive to soil microbes and creates a

hostile, instead of hospitable, place for them to live and work.

The soil may also be disturbed chemically or biologically through the misuse of inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides. This disrupts the symbiotic relationship between fungi, microorganisms and crop roots.

By reducing nutrient inputs, we can take advantage of the nutrient cycles in the soil to supply crop nutrients and allow plants to make essential associations with soil organisms.

Diversify with Crop Diversity

Sugars made by plants are released from their roots into the soil and traded to soil microbes for nutrients to support plant growth.

The key to improving soil health is assuring that the food and energy chains and webs includes as many different plants or animals as practical.

Biodiversity is ultimately the key to success of any agricultural system. Lack of biodiversity severely limits the potential of any cropping system and disease and pest problems are increased.

A diverse and fully functioning soil food web provides for nutrient, energy, and water cycling that allows a soil to express its full potential.

Above ground diversity = Below ground diversity
(plants) (soil food web)





Grow Living Roots Throughout the Year

There are many sources of food in the soil that feed the soil food web, but there is no better food than the sugars exuded by living roots.

Soil organisms feed on sugar from living plant roots first. Next, they feed on dead plant roots, followed by above-ground crop residues, such as straw, chaff, husks, stalks, flowers, and leaves. Lastly, they feed on the humic organic matter in the soil.

Healthy soil is dependent upon how well the soil food web is fed. Providing plenty of easily accessible food to soil microbes helps them cycle nutrients that plants need to grow.

Keep the Soil Covered as Much as Possible

Soil should always be covered by growing plants and/or their residues, and soil should rarely be visible from above. This is true regardless of land use (cropland, hayland, pasture, or range).

Soil cover protects soil aggregates from 'taking a beating' from the force of falling raindrops. Even a healthy soil with water-stable aggregates (held together by biological glues) that can withstand wetting by the rain may not be able to withstand a 'pounding' from raindrops.

A mulch of crop residues on the soil surface suppresses weeds early in the growing season giving the intended crop an advantage. They also keep the soil cool and moist which provides favorable habitat for many organisms that begin residue decomposition by shredding residues into smaller pieces.

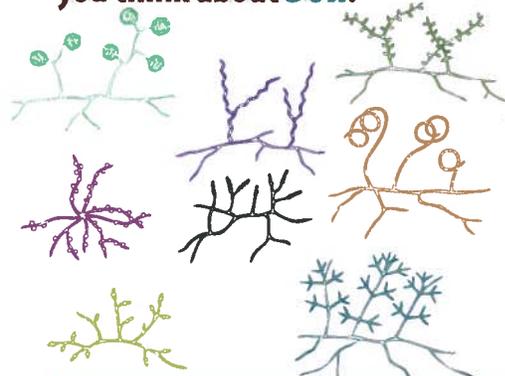
Soil Health for Your Farm, Ranch... for You!

Soil health is improved by disturbing the soil less, growing the greatest diversity of crops (in rotation and as diverse mixtures of cover crops), maintaining living roots in the soil as much as possible (with crops and cover crops), and keeping the soil covered with residue at all times.

Drills, planters, seed, fertilizer, pesticides, livestock, fences, water, farm implements, etc. are all tools that can be used to manage the soil habitat for the benefit of living members of the soil food web.

Many soils have a water infiltration problem that causes a water runoff problem. If soil health is improved, the structure of the soil results in greater water infiltration, less runoff, less or no erosion, and reduced incidence of flooding and sedimentation.

Managing for Soil Health must begin by changing the way you think about Soil.



Illustrations courtesy of Dr. James Nard, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



diversify with crop diversity

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September 2010

Developed by the Soil Quality National Technology Development Team with contributions from North Dakota NRCS

Status. The project is in the initial start-up phase. The partnership is focusing early efforts on identifying technologies that can convert poultry and other livestock manure to energy (and other valuable products), and reduce fertilizer loss to surface waters, that are suitable for demonstration on farms in the region. In addition, project partners are in the process of identifying appropriate demonstration farm sites where these technologies may fit best. Two technologies have already been selected for demonstration on two poultry farms – one on the Eastern Shore and the other in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia (see figures 1 and 2 below). Additional vendors will be extended an opportunity to submit information in 2012.

Next Steps. Manure to energy technologies that will be demonstrated by this project are ready for farm scale operation, but they need to be demonstrated on working farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed before widespread adoption is likely to occur. Field days where farmers can see the technologies operational in familiar settings, as well as objective, third-party economic analysis, environmental monitoring and performance evaluation will provide farmers, conservation professionals, and funders with information necessary to identify technologies that are appropriate for widespread deployment. In addition to on-farm demonstration and technology evaluation, development of information resources, including a network of experts that can meet one-on-one with farmers and a web-based information clearinghouse, will help farmers select appropriate technologies for their operations. Efforts to identify and expand options for financing resources will increase the likelihood that farmers interested in adopting these technologies will have the financial resources necessary to proceed with implementation.



Figure 1. Davel Lovell farm in Melfa, VA. Eleven poultry houses producing 1.8 million birds and 2,200 tons of litter annually.



Figure 2. Oren Heatwole farm in Dayton, VA. Two broiler houses producing 422,000 broilers and 814 tons of litter annually.

For more information, contact:
Kristen Hughes Evans
Sustainable Chesapeake
Kristen@sustainablechesapeake.org
www.sustainablechesapeake.org

Farm Pilot Project Coordination, Inc.
www.fppcinc.org

Bob Monley, FPPC General Manager
PO Box 3031, Tampa, FL 33601-3031
bob.monley@fppcinc.org /813-222-3270

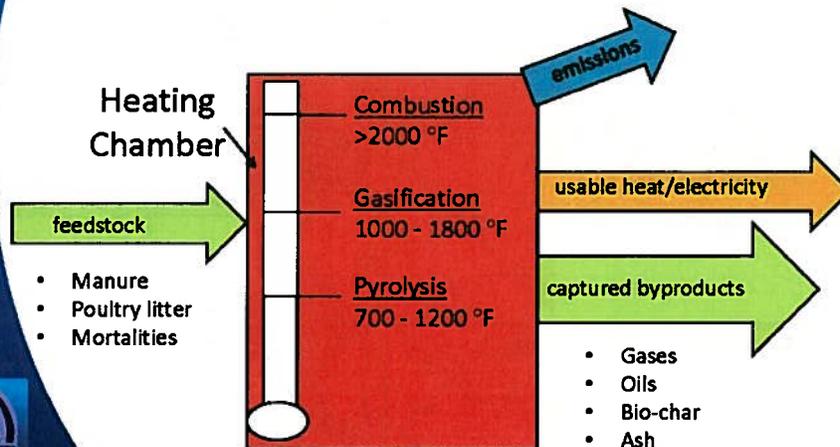
Jane Corson-Lassiter, FPPC Regional Director
22545 Center Parkway, Accomac, VA 23301
jane.lassiter@va.usda.gov/757-787-0918, x110

Chesapeake Bay Initiative Poultry Focus

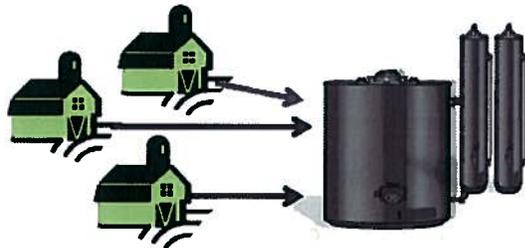
- Evaluate economies of scale from 2 to 11 house broiler operations
- Work with different technology providers who offer different configuration, deployment and system costs
- Air emissions for each heating chamber will be measured
- Each project demonstration will yield an ASH byproduct which will be fully characterized and evaluated for market potential
- Reclaim energy and generate either heat or electricity on the farm



Thermo-chemical Conversion

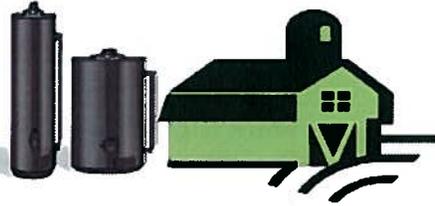


Solutions Must Fit Size of Operation



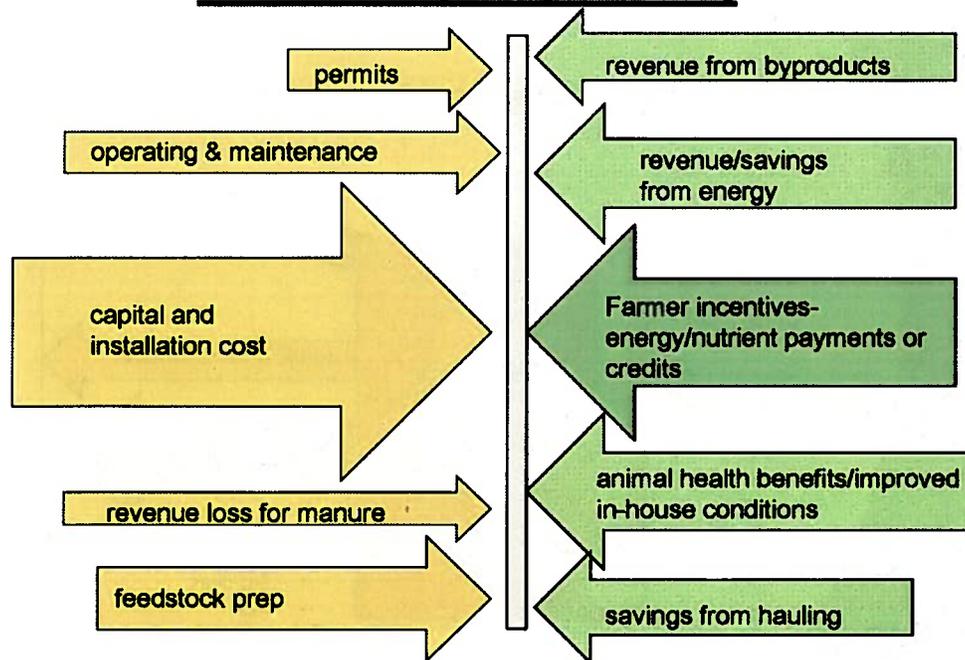
Hauling waste to a centralized facility may offer a better solution for farms, clustered nearby.

Adequate sized or larger farms, remotely located, may be better served with on-site facilities.



A service provider may be well suited to treat waste at multiple small farms.

Economics (Cost/Benefit)





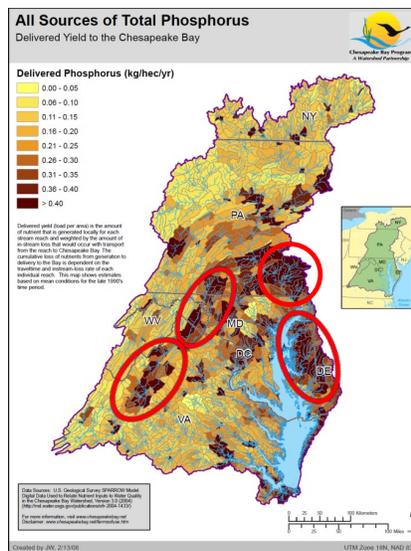
Farm Manure to Energy Initiative

Request for Information Manure to Energy Technology Vendors

January 30th, 2012

Project Partners: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Funders Network, Farm Pilot Project, Inc., University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, University of Maryland Finance Center, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Lancaster County Conservation District, and Sustainable Chesapeake.

Background: The Farm Manure to Energy Initiative was launched to evaluate and encourage the widespread adoption of appropriate manure to energy technologies as an alternative to land application of excess manure and poultry litter in nutrient saturated regions of the watershed. To achieve this goal, the project partners will work to identify, demonstrate and evaluate manure to energy technologies capable of converting excess manure and poultry litter to energy, while also providing alternatives to land application and additional revenue streams for farms. Technologies will be demonstrated on 4-6 farms located in manure “hotspots” in the Chesapeake Bay region (see Figure 1) including: the Delmarva Peninsula, the Shenandoah Valley (VA), the Western Potomac River (WVA), and Lancaster County (PA). Partners will also work to increase technical assistance, information, and financing options available to farmers.



Host farms and technology vendors for demonstrations in the Shenandoah Valley, the Virginia Eastern Shore, and Delaware, have already been selected. **We are currently seeking information from technology vendors interested in participating in farm demonstrations in the West Potomac region of West Virginia, the Maryland Eastern Shore, and the Lancaster County region of Pennsylvania.**

Because there are more technology vendors than can be demonstrated by this project on farms, as well as a lack of objective information resources regarding manure to energy technologies that provide alternatives to land application, project partners are also working to develop a web-based clearinghouse of information that farmers and conservation professionals can use to learn about manure to energy technology options. Technology vendors will also be invited to submit information to be included in the clearinghouse.

On-farm demonstration projects will be supervised by Farm Pilot Project Coordination, Inc. (FPPC), a non-profit organization designated by Congress to develop manure management solutions for animal feeding operations (see www.fppcinc.org for more information).



Farm Manure to Energy Initiative

Evaluation Criteria: Proposed Demonstration Projects submitted for consideration will be evaluated based on criteria including but not limited to, the following:

1. Proven on-farm project history/experience.
2. Ability to replicate/adapt the technology to other farms/facilities, within the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
3. Cost-effectiveness of the technology system, including construction, implementation, operation and maintenance.
4. The likelihood that if widely adopted, the proposed technology/project will facilitate the transport of manure or poultry litter nutrients out of nutrient-saturated regions and/or provide alternatives to land application of excess manure and poultry litter nutrients.
5. Ability to meet all applicable federal, state and local permitting and certification requirements. We are specifically looking for technologies with verified emissions data demonstrating that they fall below the emissions permitting thresholds for criteria pollutants and hazardous air pollutants (note data on uncontrolled air emissions using EPA-approved methodology is necessary to make this determination).
6. The technology provides a value-added coproduct that is recognized economically by the marketplace.
7. Environmental benefits derived from the technology are quantifiable.
8. The vendor is willing to share environmental, economic, and technical performance data and results of the farm demonstration with farmers, conservation professionals and other stakeholders engaged in the project, and specifically, to allow information about the technology performance and cost to be included in the web-based clearinghouse of information being developed by project partners.
9. The vendor is willing to contribute funding and technical resources to the farm demonstration project.
10. The vendor is willing to work collaboratively with the farm operation to prepare a business plan for the technology demonstration project.

Specific information requested is outlined on pages 3 and 4 of this document. Please limit your responses to 20 pages. Additional information may be solicited following initial evaluation. Please note that the following questions are similar (and in many cases identical) to the request for information released by the Chesapeake Bay Commission in advance of the September 2011 Manure to Energy Summit. **At this time, please DO NOT send information about a technology or system that is of a proprietary or protected nature.** Also note that a separate RFI has been released seeking farmers interested in hosting technology demonstrations. See www.fppcinc.org for more information.

Deadline for Submission: Proposals must be received no later than March 15, 2012. Interested technology providers should reply to:

Kristen Hughes Evans, Director, Sustainable Chesapeake
3607 E. Marshall St., Richmond, VA 23223
Kristen@sustainablechesapeake.org; 804-477-7683



Farm Manure to Energy Initiative

Specific Information Requested

A. BASIC INFORMATION (Company name, contact information, name of technology and description of technology)

B. TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY

1. Is the technology commercially available now? If not, when is it expected to be commercially available?
2. Has the technology been previously deployed or demonstrated on a farm? If yes:
 - a. At what scale was it operated and what is its capacity? (please note that we are interested in technologies that propose to operate at the farm as well as the community scale).
 - b. What type of manure did it treat?
 - c. How much manure did it treat? How much manure is needed to maintain year-round operations?
 - d. Were any environmental permits required/obtained? If yes, please list the types of permits.
 - e. If the technology produced energy or heat, how much did it produce?
Specifically:
 - i. What was the total annual wattage capacity and/or BTUs produced?
 - ii. How was the energy/heat captured or used?
3. Is it operable by a farmer or best operated by a trained professional?
 - a. If the farmer can operate the equipment, what tasks and time would be required on a daily, monthly and annual basis?
 - i. Daily:
 - ii. Monthly:
 - iii. Annually:

C. ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY

2. How much does the technology cost? Specifically, what is the:
 - a. Total cost:
 - b. Annualized capital equipment costs: cost and operating life
 - c. Operation costs (annual):
 - d. Maintenance cost (annual):
 - e. Cost per ton of manure processed:
3. What are the saleable products?
 - a. If heat/energy is a coproduct, how much is produced per year and what is the cost per unit of electricity and/or heat produced?
 - b. If coproducts suitable as a fertilizer are produced, please describe, including:
 - The estimated amount of total and plant-available N-P-K content.
 - The estimated market value.



Farm Manure to Energy Initiative

- c. Are there other, residual coproducts that need market development and/or disposal?
4. Would the technology be expected to generate environmental credits (ex. carbon, renewable energy, and nutrient)? If so, please describe, including the number of credits and estimated market value.
5. Has a business model for the technology been demonstrated and/or written? If yes, is it available for review?
6. What sources of financing are currently available? What sources of financing are needed?

D. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

1. What is the ultimate fate (i.e. mass balance) of the manure nutrients?
2. Does the technology facilitate transport of nutrients out of high-density manure/poultry litter production areas? If so, please explain.
3. What data on air emissions are available? Specifically, what are the emissions of criteria air pollutants and hazardous air pollutants (collected using EPA-approved methodology) per ton of manure processed or per energy unit?
4. Is there an established market for any nutrient-rich coproduct that could result in documentation of export out of high-density animal production regions? If yes, please describe.
5. Are there other characteristics of the technology or product(s) that would result in reduced N and P loading to surface waters? If yes, please describe:

E. OTHER INFORMATION

Is there any other information you wish to share with us about the technology and its potential?