

Minnesota NRCS Conservation Program Update

September 29, 2010

Paul Flynn and Tim Koehler

Federal Fiscal year 2010 was another banner year for landowners and operators in Minnesota who have had contracts obligated in excess of \$72 million. These funds are nearly all tied to the Federal Farm Bill but also include funds from the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP).

Program Name	Funds Obligated	Remarks
Emergency Watershed (EWP)	\$302,595	Flood Mitigation
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection (FRPP)	\$1,385,800	Farm Protection w/ Dakota Co.
Wildlife Habitat Improvement (WHIP)	\$590,195	143 contracts
Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP)	\$28,233,986	1192 contracts
Wetlands Reserve (WRP)	\$14,051,544	70 new easements/ 8,252 ac.
Conservation Security (CSP – Original)	\$4,706,291	330 payments - previous contracts
Conservation Stewardship (CSP-new)	\$21,377,320	1578 new contracts
Agricultural Water Enhancement (AWEP)	\$1,198,173	28 contracts

There are many highlights tied to these new obligations and some of them will be detailed below. In addition, NRCS and our partners assisted landowners implement tens of millions of dollars of conservation practices through all of the programs listed above.

Easement Closings

47 WRP easements were closed on **9,847** acres and **7** ARRA EWP FPE easements on **533** acres have been closed this year.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

The Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM)/Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) Partnership effort continues to yield great successes, including:

\$9 million RIM allocation through the State's Bonding Bill (\$2 million) and the newly funded Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (\$7 million). The \$7 million allocation was the largest in the state.

Phase III sign-up with 230 applicants for over \$50 million in requests which then yielded **70 obligated agreements for over \$11 million** in WRP funding.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

NRCS continues to spend time and energy reaching out to new USDA participants related to new initiatives in 2010.

Minnesota continues to have a premiere EQIP Organic Program in 2010 that yielded over **\$1 million obligated with 65 Organic Certified and Transitioning producers.**

A significant EQIP FA and TA effort focused to the State Technical Committee supported outreach efforts including **\$6.635 million** with **183 Historically Underserved Producers (HUP)**, this represents **24%** of the EQIP allocation for Minnesota, the national goal was 10%. HUP contracts included those with Tribal governments, Socially Disadvantaged Producers, Limited Resource Producers and Beginning Farmers.

Seasonal High Tunnels – Minnesota was one of the leaders on this pilot effort. This yielded **161** contracts for **\$666,714** of EQIP FA. Many of these contract holders are non-traditional producers and come from areas that typically do not do a lot of Farm Bill Program work.

68% of the total EQIP allocation was obligated to livestock concerns (the national goal is 60%).

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

Minnesota worked closely with ND and SD, local Watershed Districts, the Red River Basin Commission, local SWCD's and others to promote the NHQ designated Ring Dike Initiative and the AWEP Project with the Red River Basin Commission. This effort is targeted at flood retention, water quality and soil quality practices that may eventually become the template for a much larger Red River Basin Initiative.

This was very successful and yielded **\$1.2 million of EQIP funding obligated with 28 contracts**

ARRA – Flood Plain Easement (FPE)

As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 Minnesota developed an Emergency Watershed Protection – Flood Plain Easement (EWP-FPE) Program. In 2009 MN received nearly \$5 million of applications and NHQ funded 14 projects for \$1.6 million of FA. Once Option To Purchases were mailed out only 7 applicants accepted our offers and over **\$800,000** was eventually obligated. All 7 easements were closed and had restoration contracts developed during the year.

Technical Service Provider (TSP)

NRCS has partnered with private and public entities, agencies and private businesses to provide technical assistance funding to accelerate the planning and implementation of conservation practices. In 2010 NRCS obligated over \$1.1 million of TSP technical assistance funds; this amount was 151% of our goal.

Approximately 40% was allocated to private vendors and 60% to public/private agencies and organizations

2010 EQIP Obligation – Major Practices

Livestock Related

Practice	# of Contracts	Units	Obligation Amount
Confined Livestock			
Waste Storage	59	70	\$5.4 million
Mortality Composting Facility	32	32	\$722,000
CNMP Plans	20	20	\$18,000
Waste Facility Cover	12	12	\$625,000
Waste Facility Closure	38	38	\$138,000
Manure Transfer	29	29	\$477,000
Subtotal			\$7,380,000
Grazing Systems			
Prescribed Grazing	112	16,000 ac	\$1.7 million
Fence	198	1.1 million ft	\$1.5 million
Watering Facility	126	126	\$159,000
Livestock Well	47	47	\$200,000
Pasture Planting	129	19,000 ac	\$616,000
Pipeline	138	544,000 ft	\$889,000
Subtotal			\$5,064,000

Non-Livestock Related

Practice	# of Contracts	Units	Obligation Amount
Management Practices			
Nutrient Management	323	180,000 ac	\$4.2 million
No-Tillage Management	89	29,500 ac	\$1.6 million
Irrigation Water Mgt	29	4,100 ac	\$28,000
Subtotal			\$5,828,000
Structural and Vegetative Practices			
Windbreak	36	105,000 ft	\$40,000
Grade Stabilization	48	56	\$547,000
Irrigation System Conversion	42	4,000 ac	\$203,000
Waterway	83	138 ac	\$193,000
Terrace	15	24,000 ft	\$82,000
Tree Planting	71	1,100 ac	\$151,000
Water and Sediment Control	90	291	\$486,000
Upland Wildlife Habitat	54	177 ac	\$17,000
Subtotal			\$1,719,000

**MN 2010 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Obligations
Livestock Summary**

Livestock Type	# of Counties	Applications Received	Application Acres	Contracts Obligated	Obligation Amount	Contracted Acres
Alpacas	1	1	16	1	\$17,301	16
Beef	76	435	96,033	261	\$7,893,992	51,182
Bees	1	1	7	1	\$2,359	7
Bison	2	2	437	2	\$230,759	437
Dairy	49	224	60,911	140	\$8,309,155	41,709
<i>Goats</i>	7	7	157	5	\$109,824	104
Horses	12	13	873	6	\$65,996	323
Poultry	10	16	2,297	5	\$43,266	689
Sheep	15	17	1,927	12	\$357,148	1,680
Turkeys	4	13	1,414	12	\$317,201	1,174
Swine	41	157	67,945	77	\$1,703,664	27,205
Other Livestock	3	3	349	2	\$37,249	199
Totals		889	232,366	524	\$19,087,914	124,725

* (68% of total EQIP funding)