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Nebraska Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) EQIP Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)

Introduction

The Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) provides authority to NRCS to use EQIP financial assistance for practice payments, which includes support for development of Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs). During FY2011, the agency allows the use of 16 CAPs to support priorities of the Department and NRCS. All 16 CAPs are available for use by States through EQIP during FY2011; however, several CAPs are required to be offered in specific States.

For FY2011, Nebraska NRCS offers the following CAPs:

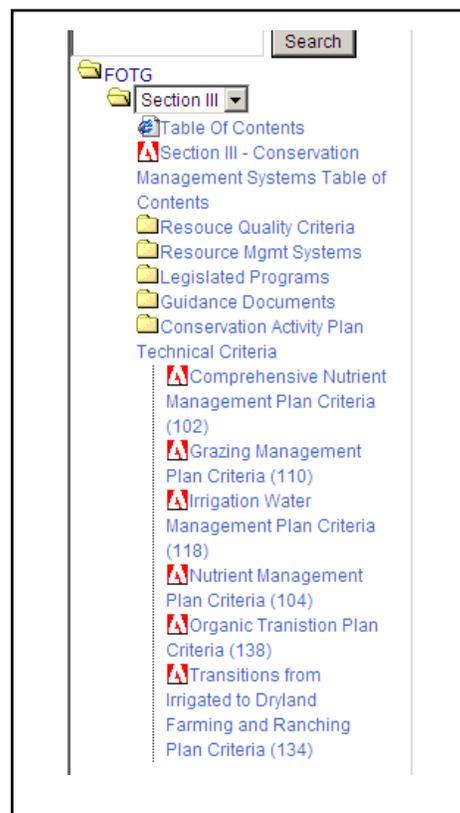
- 1) 102 –Comprehensive Nutrient Management (CNMP) Plan, Written,
- 2) 104 – Nutrient Management Plan – Written,
- 3) 110 – Grazing Management Plan – Written,
- 4) 118 – Irrigation Water Management Plan – Written,
- 5) 134 – Conservation Plan Supporting Transition from Irrigation to Dryland Farming Plan – Written,
- 6) 138 – Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition – Written.

See Nebraska [eFOTG](#), Section III for each CAP Technical Criteria.

Producers may apply for EQIP program assistance for development of a CAP by completing an EQIP application at their local NRCS office at any time of the year (continuous sign up).

There is a limit of one CAP on the same acreage at one time. So a client could not sign up for a CAP 104 and CAP 118 on the same field. Multiple CAPs may be approved for the same participant if they are for different acreages.

EQIP CAPs are not subject to ranking at this time. Therefore, during periodic ranking cut-off dates, eligible EQIP CAP applications (satisfying NRCS requirements) will be awarded contracts. Most EQIP CAP applications will select “Planning” as the application type unless it is a plan for supporting organic transition (in this case the type is Plan-Organic).



CAPs will be developed by Technical Service Providers (TSPs) NOT by NRCS staff. If approved for funding, the producer will select a certified TSP through the TechReg website. (Please make sure that the client is aware that he needs to choose a Certified TSP through TechReg.)

New to FY2011 is that TSPs are no longer required to complete the NE-CPA-52 part of the CAP criteria and TSP criteria. However, a NE-CPA-52 still needs to be completed. Therefore, NRCS field staff will need to complete NE-CPA-52 for all CAP contracts. Please complete the CPA-52s early in the CAP contract to be proactive with environmental concerns that must be addressed by the client (i.e. construction in potential wetlands, manure application in potential wetlands, endangered & threatened species, etc.).

CAPs shall be submitted upon completion and no later than within the first year of the contract. EQIP payments are made directly to program participants for development of a CAP by a [certified Technical Service Provider \(TSP\)](#). Assignment of payments is allowed.

What Are CAPs About?

In premise, CAPs are the development of conservation plans and are simply “Planning”. In the conservation planning process (three phases and nine steps of planning), this would include Phase I – Inventory Collection & Analysis and Phase II – Decision & Support, only.

CAPs do not include Phase III – Application & Evaluation. Application, or the installment of planned conservation structural practices, would be a separate and subsequent EQIP sign up.

TSPs are responsible for the planning and development of the plans. TSPs will inventory resources, complete risk assessments, address resource concerns, develop & provide alternates, and provide estimates of planned structural practices, as necessary. CAP plan criteria are outlined on the eFOTG, Section III under individual CAPs and TSPs will use applicable Statement of Works (SOWs) for submittal of deliverables. CAPs must include an *estimate* of planned practices (based on units) using the NE-CPA-77 “Quantity Estimate for Planned Practices” or equivalent forms.

NRCS field office staff are still responsible for completing the NE-CPA-52 and addressing any environmental (i.e. wetlands) and cultural resource concerns during the development of a CAP by TSPs. NRCS staff should not wait until the CAP is submitted to visit the site and complete the CPA-52. NRCS field staffs are generally very familiar with most of these sites and may have ideas on potential resource concerns that should be addressed before the client and TSP gets too far in the planning process where the concerns are not adequately addressed.

Upon submittal, NRCS staff will also need to review the CAP for completeness and accuracy prior to payment. Discrepancies should be addressed and amended prior to approval.

Overall, the amount of planning assistance NRCS contributes should be less than if we were completing the plan ourselves. Ideally, a well developed CAP by a TSP should replace most of the planning steps usually completed by field offices to develop a conservation plan necessary for EQIP ranking for structural and management practices.

After the NRCS approval of the completed CAP, clients can sign up for EQIP structural and management practices as agreed upon to protect the resource based on the CAP.

Can a Client apply for a CAP and Structural Practice in the same contract, for example CAP 102 (CNMP Written) and 313 (Waste Storage Structure)?

CAPs are “stand-alones” in a contract. No complementary EQIP structural or management practices should be written in the same contract. (Be aware, however, that Protracts will not kick out or provide an error message if a CAP and structural practices are placed in the same contract.)

So, to answer the above question, “No”, and “If a client signs up for a CAP, they can not concurrently sign up for additional structural and management practices that adjoin or complement that particular CAP in the same contract”.

Also, there is a limit of one CAP on the same acreage at one time. Therefore, a client can not sign up for CAP 104 (Nutrient Mgt.) and 118 (Irrigation Water Mgt.) for the same parcel of land in the same contract. However, multiple CAPs may be approved for the same participant. So a client can sign up for a CAP 110 (Grazing Mgt.) on his non-irrigated pasture or rangeland and CAP 118 (Irrigation Water Mgt) on his irrigated cropland.

In effect the sooner the CAP is completed, the sooner the client can sign up for EQIP for the next ranking. However, TSPs should not rush the planning portion of the CAPs because it defeats the purpose of CAPs.

CAP Descriptions

CAP102 – Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans - Producers who need help in CNMP planning of waste storage structures for a new operation; expansion of an existing operation; updating existing operation production site information; updating nutrient management plans for existing operations; or considering land treatment needs for cropland.

The CAP 102 provides CNMP Planning of Nutrient Management; Land Treatment; Manure & Wastewater Handling/Storage; & Manure Transfer with existing and/or planned waste storage structures. This includes the inventorying of resources; evaluation of nutrient management, manure storage structure; manure transfer & land treatment; developing preliminary nutrient management plan (NMP), land treatment and manure storage/transfer alternatives; and assembly of conservation plan & NMP.

CAP 102 planning must be completed in accordance with Nutrient Management Conservation Practice Standard Code 590 (including record keeping, annual soil testing & manure analysis).

Nebraska offers eight scenarios based on type & size of operation and it's planning needs:

- **Full Written CNMP**
 - Six scenarios based on animal type & operation size:
 - Swine & Poultry Small (up to 300 AU);
 - Swine & Poultry Medium (300 – 999 AU);
 - Swine & Poultry Large (1000 AU & greater);
 - Beef & Dairy Small (up to 300 AU);
 - Beef & Dairy Medium (300-999 AU); and
 - Beef & Dairy Large (1000 AU and greater).
 - Encompasses operations that have completed minimal planning, design and nutrient management work; or that are planning to expand the operation/waste storage structures, or planning to construct new operations. This scenario is designed to develop a CNMP to enable an operation to be eligible to apply for EQIP funds for additional waste control facilities.
- **Partial Written CNMP** (one scenario)
 - For operations that have completed major planning and design work in the past 3-5 years; however, may need to update their Nutrient Management plans, or complete Phosphorus Risk Analysis and/or develop Land Treatment practices.
- **Minimal Written CNMP** (one scenario)
 - For operations that have updated their nutrient management and design information in the last 3-5 years, but need help on review of current records and determining the need to adjust nutrient management of the manure.

TSPs working with CAP 102s have more stringent certification criteria to meet as compared to the other CAP criteria. TSP CAP 102 planners must be certified conservation planners. For more information, see the [TechReg Resources](#)". [“Conservation Activity Plans”](#) link on the TechReg website.

CAP 104 – Nutrient Management Plans including Land Treatment - Clients looking for planning assistance in crop nutrient budgeting for their farming operations. Similar to the CAP 102, the CAP 104 offers four scenarios based on farms size and type.

- Small/Medium Farms (up to 1000 acres);
- Large Farms (1000 acres or larger);
- Small/Medium Farms with Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs) (up to 1000 acres that have livestock (where manure is part of the NMP));
- Large Farms with AFOs (1000 acres or greater and have livestock).

The nutrient management plan (NMP) shall meet technical criteria in Practice Standard 590 (Nutrient Management). It must address management of all nutrients applied on cropland, hayland, or pastureland (animal manure, wastewater, commercial fertilizers, crop residues, legume credits, irrigation water credits, organic by-products) and necessary land treatment/erosion control measures.

The NMP includes requirements for the development of annual crop nutrient budgets, record keeping, soil testing, and manure analysis in accordance with Practice Standard 590.

CAP 110 Grazing Management Plan - TSP will develop a conservation plan including: identification of client objectives, resource inventories of forage yield, composition, quality, condition, soils, and ecological site or forage suitability group identification. Includes three scenarios based on acres of grazing land:

- Small (up to 100 acres);
- Medium (100 to 3000 acres);
- Large - (greater than 3000 acres).

This practice incorporates the design procedures for the 528 standard.

CAP 118 - Irrigation Water Management Plan (IWMP) - In some areas of the state, the amount of irrigation water is being limited due to state and local restrictions. Producers looking for assistance in the development of an irrigation plan for the proper management and application of irrigation water will benefit from this CAP. CAP 118 includes two scenarios based on acres of irrigated land:

- Small/Medium (300 to 1000 acres)
- Large (Greater than 1000 acres).

The IWMP shall meet technical criteria for Irrigation Water Management CAP/449 practice standard and other practice standards as appropriate.

CAP 134 - Conservation Plan Supporting Transition from Irrigation to Dryland Farming Plan -

Producers interested in the transition from irrigated to dryland would benefit from this CAP. The developed plan will describe the activities and practices necessary to transition to an irrigated system to a dryland system that meets NRCS quality criteria for soil quality, water quality and quantity, and other identified resource concerns. . CAP 134 includes two scenarios based on type of system:

- Cropland
- Pasture (range and wildlife are not included).

For Pasture, the activity plan must include a detailed prescribed grazing plan that meets the requirements of the Prescribed Grazing standard (528) in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.

CAP 138 - Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition, Written - This practice scenario is for the development of a Conservation Activity Plan that describes the activities and practices necessary to transition to an organic cropping system that meets National Organic Program requirements for organic certification and NRCS quality criteria for soil erosion, water quality, and other identified resource concerns. CAP 138 includes two scenarios based on type of organic system:

- Organic Cropping System
- Organic Grazing System.