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January 8, 2013

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-13-34

SUBJECT: LTP—Environmental Quality Incentives Program—Funding Distribution and Decisions

Purpose. To Issue the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding distribution and provide instructions on the approving of those funds

Expiration Date. September 30, 2014

EQIP Allocation

The FY 2013 Kansas EQIP financial assistance allocation is \$17,800,673. The distribution of these funds is represented on Attachments 1, 2, and 3. Area and management unit allocations were based on the extent of each ranking category's resource concern in that area or management unit.

The allocation will also be used to fund the following (see Attachment 1):

- Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
- Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
- Drought Recovery Initiative
- National Organic Initiative (NOI)
- National On-Farm Energy Initiative (NOFEI)
- National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative (NSHTI)
- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
- Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI)
- State reserve for application cost overruns and cost overruns from 2013 contracts

EQIP Contracting Authority

Per Title 440—Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Conservation Program Contracting (CPC), Part 512, Section KS512.3(A), the state conservationist (STC) has delegated the authority for signing EQIP financial assistance agreements (contracts) to the assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO).

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C. Nelson, Volkman

Funding Recommendations and Decisions

Supervisory district conservationists (SDCs) will prepare funding decisions for the ASTCs-FO for management unit allocation ranking categories of Water Quality, Soil Health, and Grazing Lands Health. Any funds not distributed within the management unit after March 8, 2013, will be transferred to the area reserve. Funding decisions for Forestland Health, Livestock Waste, Stream System Restoration (Area 3 only), Water Quantity, and Wildlife Habitat will be prepared at the area level.

The EQIP manager will prepare funding recommendations for all Beginning Farmer/Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher, and Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher fund codes; along with Sedimentation above Federal Reservoirs, Water Quantity–Quick Response Areas, and Tribal. These decisions will be provided to the ASTCs-FO.

Per CPM, CPC, Part 512, Section KS512.25 (E), each ranking category ranking list will be archived hard copy, filed, and retained in the appropriate office file.

The following guidance shall be used to make decisions during the funding process:

- The Conservation Programs Geographic Information System (GIS) Interface (CPGI) and Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Application and Evaluation Ranking Tool (AERT) will be used to evaluate and rank all eligible applications. The AERT will be used to make funding decisions.
- Applications shall be evaluated using statewide evaluation ranking criteria issued with Bulletin KS300-13-18 and must only include eligible practices (see Bulletin KS300-13-30), and is to be in accordance with CPM, EQIP, Part 515, Section KS515.81.
- The ASTCs-FO will ensure that any application made by a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee is reviewed by area office staff.
- The ASTCs-FO will ensure that any application for land which an NRCS employee is directly associated with is reviewed by the area office staff (e.g., listed in Farm Service Agency (FSA) records as operator, but not a participant to the application).
- Use ProTracts Task Guides 3 and 4 for preparing and ranking applications (see <http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/protracts.html>).
- The ASTCs-FO and SDCs should consider a reserve for application cost overruns in the ranking categories for which they are responsible as they begin to make funding decisions.

- A management unit allocation will not be used elsewhere in an area until all eligible management unit allocation ranking category applications have been funded in that management unit.
- Unused ranking category funds from a management unit should be used to fund other management unit (within their NRCS administrative area) applications in the same ranking category before being redistributed to other ranking categories.
- All applications in an area ranking category must be funded before funds are redistributed to another ranking category.
- After ASTCs-FO fund all eligible applications received by the application evaluation period cutoff date, remaining funds shall be returned to the state office for redistribution.
- In redistributing funds to other ranking categories, the ASTCs-FO should take into consideration the Kansas Technical Committee (KTC) recommendations (see Attachment 1), as well as specific area goals. Fund codes will not be combined outside of ProTracts to make funding decisions.
- Once application approvals are made, field offices will compile appropriate documents and submit documentation to the Financial Management Staff for second level review. Once second level review has been “accepted,” the ASTC-FO shall obligate the contracts less than \$150,000.

NOTE: All approved applications over \$150,000 will be reviewed by the area office for concurrence and will then be forwarded by the state office to the central regional conservationist for contract obligation (see Bulletin KS300-12-11). The Farm Bill Program Application Questionnaire/Checklist needs to be submitted to Corey L. Nelson, Resource Conservationist, Programs Staff, by close of business **March 15, 2013**.

Guidelines for management unit allocations, as outlined on Attachment 3, are as follows:

- There will be FY 2013 EQIP allocations to the management unit level in the following ranking categories: Water Quality, Soil Health, and Grazing Lands Health.
- Fifty percent of the allocation under each ranking category is required to be used for that ranking category. The remaining 50 percent may be used for that ranking category or another management unit allocation ranking category, based on the past advice of the local work groups (LWGs) and the best professional judgment of the SDC. The number of applications, or their total cost, will not be a factor in the funding decision. Allocations under \$10,000 may be used for any management unit allocation ranking category.

- If there are no applications in a management unit allocation ranking category, the SDC may transfer those funds to another management unit allocation ranking category.
- If there are not enough funds to fund the first application in a management unit allocation ranking category, the ASTC-FO should attempt to fund with their area reserve.

LWGs will meet in early summer to obtain recommendations for FY 2014 programs.

Contact: Forward questions through established channels to Corey L. Nelson, Resource Conservationist, at (785) 823-4580 or corey.nelson@ks.usda.gov.

(Signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments