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February 6, 2012

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-12-37

SUBJECT: LTP—Fiscal Year 2012—Agricultural Water Enhancement Program Announcement and Implementation

Action required by: February 24, 2012 (Field Offices [FOs])
March 2, 2012
March 23, 2012
Action required by: March 30, 2012 (Area Offices [AOs])
Action required by: March 9, 2012 (State Office)

Purpose. Provide guidance on the implementation of the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) and distribute ranking criteria and eligible practices

Expiration Date. September 30, 2013

Kansas has received an allocation of \$3,819,398 for the approved AWEP project areas for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.

Project Areas

The allocation will be distributed among the following approved Kansas AWEP project areas following the formula developed from the amounts requested in their AWEP proposals. Five percent will go toward Historically Underserved (HU):

- Equus Beds Groundwater Management District (GMD) No. 2
- Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3
- Northwest Kansas GMD No. 4
- Big Bend GMD No. 5

The eligible priority areas are outlined on Attachment 1. The entire GMD No. 2 is eligible under their proposal. The eligible areas in GMD No. 3 are located in parts of Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Haskell, Kearney, Meade, Morton, Seward, Stanton, and Stevens Counties. In GMD No. 4, only portions of Cheyenne, Sherman, Sheridan, and Thomas Counties are eligible. The GMD No. 5 designated the Rattlesnake Creek sub-basin as their project area.

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C, Nelson, FNM, GMDs

GMD No. 4 and GMD No. 5 are offering additional payments to participants. Questions from participants on these payments will be referred to the respective GMD.

Program Deadlines

The FY 2012 AWEF application evaluation period cut-off date is February 24, 2012.

FOs will have conservation plans, application rankings, and peer reviews of rankings completed by March 2, 2012.

The SO Programs Staff will make funding decisions by March 9, 2012.

The FOs will have all approved applications and documentation entered in electronic contracts (eContracts) by March 23, 2012.

Assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) will ensure that all contracts have been obligated in Program Contracts System (ProTracts) by March 30, 2012.

Approved applications over \$150,000 will follow guidance issued in Bulletin KS300-12-11. The ASTCs-FO will need to submit their request as soon as possible to meet the program deadlines.

Ranking Categories

Ranking categories were established in ProTracts as such:

- Equus Beds GMD No. 2
- Equus Beds GMD No. 2—Beginning Farmer/Rancher (BF/R)
- Equus Beds GMD No. 2—Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher (LRF/R)
- Equus Beds GMD No. 2—Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher (SDF/R)
- Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3
- Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3—BF/R
- Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3—LRF/R
- Southwest Kansas GMD No. 3— SDF/R
- Northwest Kansas GMD No. 4
- Northwest Kansas GMD No. 4—BF/R
- Northwest Kansas GMD No. 4—LRF/R
- Northwest Kansas GMD No. 4—SDF/R
- Big Bend GMD No. 5
- Big Bend GMD No. 5—BF/R
- Big Bend GMD No. 5—LRF/R
- Big Bend GMD No. 5—SDF/R

NOTE: LRF/R, BF/R, and SDF/R may apply under the ranking category specific to their resource concern or the ranking category specifically for their HU group.

Eligible Practices

The FY 2012 AWEP eligible practices lists contain the conservation practices eligible for financial assistance in each project area. See Attachments 2, 3, 4, and 5. The SO will enter the AWEP payment schedule data into ProTracts and the Customer Service Toolkit (CST). New payment scenarios will be posted to the payment schedule data in the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), Section I–Cost Data.

There are **NO** management practice limitations for AWEP. Management practices where participants are transitioning from irrigation to non-irrigated are eligible to receive AWEP financial assistance for those practices for up to five years.

Under the Equus Beds GMD No. 2 ranking category, there will be a conservation practice cap for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Practice (CP) 441, Irrigation System–Microirrigation, as recommended by the Kansas Technical Committee for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and implemented by the state conservationist. **This cap must be entered manually** into the contract item in ProTracts. Supervisory district conservationists (SDCs) are responsible for ensuring that these caps have been entered correctly.

There are program specific narratives in CST for AWEP contracts. If an application is not selected for funding, the CST conservation plan will need to be updated with non-program type narratives.

Ranking Criteria

All applications will be entered in ProTracts as “Partnership” under Application Type. “State or Local Government” should be entered for partnership type.

The ProTracts Ranking Tool will be used to rank AWEP eligible applications. Guidance issued in Attachment 6 will be used to answer national priority questions.

Each section of the ranking tool is weighted as such:

- Efficiency—10 percent
- National Priorities—25 percent
- State Issues—40 percent
- Local Issues—25 percent

Eligible land uses, state and local issue questions and points assigned, and additional requirements for each project area are outlined on Attachments 7, 8, 9, and 10. Applications are evaluated by LOCATION county. LOCATION county will be determined by the location of the point of diversion being treated.

Additional requirements for the GMD No. 5 include a **COPY** of an affidavit to be provided to the NRCS by the participant prior to obligation (see Attachment 11) for your information. Questions on this affidavit will be referred to GMD No. 5. The **NRCS employees are not to answer questions on this form.**

Some of the ProTracts Ranking Tool questions require the use of geo-spatial data. The Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI) will be used to obtain this data. The application number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts.

Contact: Please forward feedback and 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