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February 2, 2012

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-12-36

SUBJECT: LTP—Fiscal Year 2012 Environmental Quality Incentives Program— Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative

Action required by: March 2, 2012 (Field Offices [FOs])

Action required by: March 23, 2012

Action required by: March 30, 2012 (Area Offices [AOs])

Action required by: March 9, 2012 (State Office [SO])

Purpose. Provide guidance on the implementation of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Lesser Prairie–Chicken Initiative (LPCI) and distribute ranking criteria and eligible practices

Expiration Date. September 30, 2013

Available Funds

Kansas has received an allocation of \$396,406 for EQIP—LPCI Fiscal Year (FY) 2012.

Priority Areas

The LPCI uses EQIP funds to create, improve, and expand the habitat and current range of the LPC. Applications will be considered HIGH or MEDIUM priority (see Attachment 1) dependent on their location related to the LPC current range, LPC action area defined in the LPC Conference Report, and the Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT) identified using Conservation Programs Geographic Information System (GIS) Interface (CPGI).

If the application acres do not fall within these priorities, they will be deemed ineligible.

The Program Contracts System (ProTracts) fund code for this EQIP initiative is LPCI. Attachment 2 is the EQIP—LPCI state and local issue ranking questions. National questions are the same as General EQIP (refer to Bulletin KS300-12-30).

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, Burr, Franklin, Mitchner (KDWPT), C. Nelson

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Some of the ProTracts Ranking Tool questions require the use of geospatial data. The CPGI will be used to obtain this data. The application number in CPGI will match the application number from ProTracts.

NOTE: State issue question number one refers to active leks. If a producer has *identified an undocumented (not shown in CPGI tool data) active lek on their operation*, ranking points may be obtained if the active lek is confirmed by a Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) area biologist and a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) range conservationist.

Participants must be willing to share this information (documented in CPGI or undocumented) to receive points.

Eligible Conservation Practices

All EQIP—LPCI applicants must agree to follow the conservation practice standards and treatment measures as described in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 2011 LPCI Conference Report in order to be eligible for screening and ranking (this report is online at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1044884.pdf).

To meet the requirements of the Conference Report, conservation plans developed must include a core practice that is either planned within the contract period (a contract item) or already applied. Supporting conservation practices may be included if they facilitate the implementation of core practices and are planned within the contract period or already applied on the land under contract.

Attachment 3 is the eligible practices list for the EQIP—LPCI and identifies core and supporting conservation practices that are eligible for financial assistance. If a core practice has not been previously applied to Conference Report requirements, there must be a core practice receiving financial assistance. Below are new and deleted conservation practices for this program year:

New:

- Conservation Practice 315, Herbaceous Weed Control
- Conservation Practice 340, Cover Crop
- Conservation Practice 342, Critical Area Planting
- Conservation Practice 378, Pond
- Conservation Practice 410, Grade Stabilization Structure
- Conservation Practice 511, Forage Harvest Management
- Conservation Practice 512, Forage and Biomass Planting
- Conservation Practice 550, Range Planting
- Conservation Practice 643, Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitat

Deleted:

- Conservation Practice 595, Integrated Pest Management

The Program Contracts System (ProTracts) and Toolkit payment schedules will be uploaded to FO servers for this initiative once they are finalized.

Technical Assistance

KDWPT area biologists will be assisting with habitat assessments. Contract development, administration, contract reviews and follow-up for EQIP—LPCI contracts are the responsibility of the NRCS.

Program Deadlines

The FY 2012 application evaluation period cutoff date for applications has been set for **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**.

All approved applications and documentation will be 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 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.

Contact: Forward questions, through established channels, to Joni' Y. Franklin, Resource Conservationist, at joni.franklin@ks.usda.gov or (785) 823-4556.

(Signed)

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments