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January 14, 2013

## **KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-13-36**

### **SUBJECT: LTP—Environmental Quality Incentives Program—Fiscal Year 2013 Ogallala Aquifer Initiative**

**Action required by:** March 8, 2013 (Field Offices [FOs])  
April 15, 2013

**Action required by:** March 15, 2013 (Area Offices [AOs])  
April 30, 2013

**Action required by:** March 22, 2013 (State Office [SO])

**Purpose.** To provide guidance for administering the fiscal year (FY) 2013 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI)

**Expiration Date.** September 30, 2014

#### **Background**

The OAI is designed, through EQIP, to provide producers with financial and technical assistance to reduce the quantity of water removed from the aquifer and to improve water quality using conservation practices on cropland and rangeland.

#### **Eligible Land Uses, Resource Concerns, and Conservation Practices (CPs)**

The eligible land uses, resource concerns, and CPs are available in Attachment 1.

Contracts developed under OAI must include at least one of the applicable core CPs, or must be completing a conservation system that supports core CPs that are documented as already applied on the land under contract.

#### **Priority Area**

Priority areas in the OAI will be those that are within either a priority area for Water Quality (WQL) or Water Quantity (WQT) as seen in Attachment 3. WQL priority areas are those that meet 60 percent or greater chance of nitrate levels exceeding 4 ppm in recent groundwater recharge. Water quantity priority areas are those that have greater than 25 foot of decline. Both of these priority criteria are based on analysis of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) published data and as described in the OAI proposal document.

(more)

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

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### **Screening Criteria**

All applications will be screened and assigned a priority of HIGH or MEDIUM in Program Contracts System (ProTracts).

**HIGH priority** applications will include those located within the designated water quality or water quantity priority areas (Attachment 3). In order to receive priority based on one of these, that resource concern must be treated.

**MEDIUM priority** applications are those that are outside the designated high priority areas but are within the Ogallala Aquifer boundary.

HIGH priority applications must be ranked, approved and/or obligated before any MEDIUM priority applications are ranked or funded.

Applications not meeting screening criteria for priority HIGH or MEDIUM shall not be funded through OAI.

### **ProTracts Ranking Tool**

ProTracts fund code for this EQIP initiative is "Ogallala Aquifer Initiative."

A copy of the state and local ranking questions are provided in Attachment 2.

National ranking questions are consistent for all EQIP applications. Refer to bulletin KS300-13-19 for additional guidance on answering national questions.

OAI does not offer Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), therefore any ranking question referring to the use of a CAP shall be answered "NO" so no additional ranking points are awarded.

All eligible applications shall be entered into the Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI). All answers available on the CPGI report will be used to answer the corresponding question on the ProTracts Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT). The application identification number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts.

### **Deadlines**

Although applications for EQIP are accepted continuously, the FY 2013 application evaluation period cutoff date for OAI applications has been set for February 15, 2013.

FOs will have conservation plans and application rankings completed by March 8, 2013.

AOs will ensure peer reviews of rankings have been completed by March 15, 2013.

The SO Programs Staff will make funding decisions by March 22, 2013.

All approved applications and documentation will be entered in electronic contracts (eContracts) by April 15, 2013.

Assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) will ensure that all contracts have been obligated in ProTracts by April 30, 2013.

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 Chad G. Volkman, Resource Conservationist, at [chad.volkman@ks.usda.gov](mailto:chad.volkman@ks.usda.gov) or (785) 823-4568.

*(Signed)*

ERIC B. BANKS  
State Conservationist

Attachments