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March 6, 2012

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-12-41

SUBJECT: LTP—Fiscal Year 2012 Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative Program Announcement and Implementation—Reissued

Action required by: April 25, 2012 (Field Offices [FOs])
May 7, 2012

Action required by: May 18, 2012 (Area Offices [AOs])

Action required by: May 1, 2012 (State Office [SO])

Purpose. Provide guidance on the implementation of the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) and distribute Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking criteria and eligible practices for the approved CCPI proposals

Expiration Date. September 30, 2013

KS300-12-40 and its attachments are cancelled and replaced with this bulletin and its attachments.

Conservation Practice 380—Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment, was included in KS300-12-40, but has been removed from the eligible practice list attached to this bulletin (Attachment 2). This practice was not included last year and the ranking category is specifically for the renovation of existing shelterbelts. No other changes have been made in this bulletin.

Background

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) establishes the CCPI. The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) the authority to use multiyear agreements with partners to provide technical and financial assistance through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP 2008), EQIP, or the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to eligible producers within an approved CCPI project area. The NRCS is responsible for the administration and implementation of the approved proposal. The approved proposal is implemented through contracts with eligible producers in the Programs Contracts System (ProTracts).

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C. Nelson, Atchison (KFS)

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Approved Proposals

Two multi-state proposals were approved that included Kansas:

- Central Great Plains Forested Riparian Buffers
- Central Great Plains Shelterbelt Renovation

These proposals were sponsored by the state forestry agencies in Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. South Dakota is the lead state for both proposals. The CCPI is now in its third year and the entire state of Kansas is eligible for both proposals.

Program Deadlines

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 application evaluation period cutoff date for CCPI applications has been set for **April 6, 2012** in all states in the project area.

Supervisory district conservationists (SDCs) and district conservationists (DCs) should announce the program, if they have not already done so, using the Kansas news release dated February 15, 2012.

Applications will be ready for funding decisions by close of business, **April 25, 2012**. All applications must be ranked and contracts uploaded to ProTracts. Additionally, the vendor information must be populated, the "Vendor Status"—"Active" and "Check Rules" run. Applications will be peer reviewed per Title 440—Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 515, Section 515.72(A)(6). This review should focus on the ranking and eligibility of the application. Additional clarification for the national questions was issued with Bulletin KS300-12-30.

Documentation will be forwarded to the Financial Management (FNM) Staff for second level review as soon as all documentation is obtained, but no later than **May 7, 2012**. Per the Kansas Quality Assurance Plan (KQAP), a contract peer review should be completed prior to second level review. A contract peer review should focus on contract documentation.

All approved applications will be obligated by **May 18, 2012**.

Approved applications over \$150,000 will follow guidance issued in Bulletin KS300-12-11. The assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) will need to submit the request as soon as possible to meet the program deadlines.

Ranking Categories

Applications will be entered in ProTracts using the "EQIP 2008" program code. All applications will be entered as "Partnership" under "Application Type" and "State or Local Government" will be entered for "Partnership Type."

Ranking categories were established in ProTracts as such:

- Central Great Plains Forested Riparian Buffers
- Central Great Plains Shelterbelt Renovation

There are no separate ranking categories for historically underserved (HU) applicants. They will apply under the applicable category listed above. They will be eligible for HU payment rates under these ranking categories.

Eligible Practices

The FY 2012 CCPI eligible practices lists contain the conservation practices eligible for financial assistance in each project area (see Attachments 1 and 2). The SO will enter the CCPI payment schedule into ProTracts and the Customer Service Toolkit (CST). No new payment scenarios were added to the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG). Existing scenarios were used.

There are no program specific narratives in CST for CCPI contracts.

Ranking Criteria

The ProTracts Ranking Tool will be used to rank CCPI eligible applications. Guidance issued in Bulletin KS300-12-30 will be used to answer national priority questions.

Eligible land uses, state and local issue questions and points assigned, and additional requirements for each project are outlined on Attachments 3 and 4. Applications are evaluated by LOCATION county.

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

Working With Kansas Forest Service

FOs will work with the Kansas Forest Service (KFS) to document resource condition, complete conservation practice planning including field sheets, and assist the applicant with practice application. This information, along with assistance from the KFS, will be used to develop conservation plans following the guidance issued.

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) JAMES J. KRUEGER, ACTING FOR

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments