



EQIP

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Oregon NRCS - December 2009

Funding and professional expertise are available for conservation activities on privately owned working land.

If there is conservation work you want to do on your farm, ranch or forest land, contact NRCS about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

.....

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides assistance to growers and landowners who want to install measures to protect the soil, water, air, and other natural resources on their working land.

Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding and professional expertise for measures that protect natural resources while ensuring sustainable production on farms, ranches and working forest land. The focus of EQIP is to promote sustainable production with activities to:

- Protect water quality
- Conserve water supplies and improve irrigation efficiency
- Promote healthy soil and reduce erosion
- Improve air quality

- Save energy
- Improve forest health
- Protect plant and animal communities

Conservation Planning

The first step is to work with NRCS to identify and plan the conservation measures you want on your land. NRCS will work with you to develop a conservation plan that includes a detailed description of your selected conservation activities. To develop a conservation plan, applicants work with NRCS to establish the following information:

- Description of land and proposed practice(s);
- Schedule of timing, sequence and operation of practices;
- Plans for maintenance; and
- Conservation benefits to achieve.

The conservation plan becomes the basis for an EQIP application, for those who decide to pursue program funding. Those who have previously developed a conservation plan with NRCS will already have the conservation planning step completed. Those who consider applying for EQIP for the first time should schedule a meeting with NRCS to discuss their options and develop a conservation plan before moving forward.

Technical & Financial Assistance

Those who submit an application and are accepted into EQIP may receive technical assistance and payments to help plan and implement conservation practices. Through EQIP, NRCS provides or covers the cost of professional technical services to develop conservation strategies for your land. This includes:

- On-site assessments,
- Site-specific practice and management plans, and
- Engineering designs.

EQIP also offers payments to offset costs associated with installation, materials and, in some instances, income lost with the adoption of conservation measures. Practices funded through EQIP include:

- Manure management practices,
- Pest management treatments,
- Efficient irrigation upgrades,
- Forest stewardship plans and management practices,
- Erosion control and buffers,
- Range and pasture planting,
- Fencing and stockwater, and
- A number of other measures.

A complete list of EQIP practices and the associated payment rates for your area are posted on the Oregon NRCS Web site at: www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/EQIP under *EQIP Practice Payment Schedules*.

....continued on following page

Historically Underserved Clients

In Oregon, EQIP provides a higher payment rate to historically underserved participants. Historically underserved refers to groups that have not participated in or have received limited benefits from USDA programs. These are:

- Beginning farmers or ranchers who have been agricultural operators for 10 or fewer years
- Limited resource farmers or ranchers who have:
 1. Direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, AND
 2. Total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years
- Applicants who are American Indian, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or Hispanic

For more information about the definitions above or related program benefits, contact your NRCS office or go to: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/SLB_Farmer.

Land Eligibility

Eligible land includes privately owned cropland, rangeland, pasture, non-industrial forestland, and other working farm or ranch lands.

Applicant Eligibility

The applicant may be an individual or an entity. In the case of contract farmers, either the landowner or lessee may enter into an EQIP contract, provided the applicant meets all eligibility criteria. To be eligible, applicants must own or manage the working land offered for EQIP enrollment. This will be either:

1. An agricultural producer engaged in livestock/agricultural production; or
2. A private non-industrial forest landowner.

In addition, eligible applicants will also:

- Have ownership or control of the land for the duration of the proposed EQIP contract;
- Have a financial interest in the operation associated with the land;
- Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland provisions of the Farm Bill;
- Provide a tax identification number (TIN) or social security number, as well as a listing of the percentage of interest for each individual and entity listed on a jointly owned business;
- Have an adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$1 million or less, unless two-thirds of that is derived from agriculture, ranching or forestry;
- Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements. (The overall payment limitation for EQIP is \$300,000 per person or legal entity over a 6-year period.)

Contact your local NRCS office for more details about EQIP eligibility.

When to Apply

EQIP applications may be submitted at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Periodically, NRCS announces cutoff dates when submitted applications are ranked and selected for funding. EQIP cutoff dates are announced in advance and vary based on location.

How to Apply for EQIP

To apply for EQIP, you will need to submit certain application materials. NRCS personnel at the USDA Service Center will help you find and complete your application materials.

Application Selection

Once a program cutoff date has passed, NRCS evaluates and ranks applications for funding.

Local Work Groups convened by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) provide feedback to NRCS about natural resource concerns and

priorities within their counties. EQIP applications are evaluated based on these local priorities. Applications that best address natural resources as described in the ranking criteria for their area are ranked highest and funded first.

Local resource concerns are identified through a process of community and stakeholder input. To find a listing of local EQIP priorities and ranking questions, contact your NRCS office or visit the Oregon EQIP page at: www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.

Program Requirements

After an application is selected for funding, the program enrollee enters into a program contract with the USDA. The contract is based on practices outlined in the conservation plan. The contract will specify a period of time, one or more years, during which the participant must complete specified activities in order to receive program payments. These activities may include practice installation as well as operational and maintenance activities. Program participants are expected to maintain any EQIP practice throughout its useful life, even after the contract is completed.

In most cases, EQIP payments are made after practices have been completed.

More Information

Contact NRCS to learn more about how EQIP can help you protect and improve your working land. More information can be found at your local USDA Service Center or online at: www.or.nrcs.usda.gov.

**HELPING PEOPLE
HELP THE LAND**



An equal opportunity provider and employer