

Issue Paper for Oregon Technical Advisory Committee

Topic:	Farm Bill Programs, conservation planning requirements and Oregon policy	
Presenter / Sponsor(s):	Bill White, NRCS, Leader for Programs	
Issue Statement:	New national guidance may not require a conservation plan to participate in EQIP. Oregon should develop policy to ensure that each EQIP contract is supported by a conservation plan. The plan should enable the achievement of the resource management system (RMS) level of treatment when fully implemented.	
Action Required:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review & Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice Requested	<input type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Other:: _____
Background:	<p>Conservation planning process is the basis for delivering technical and financial assistance for conservation on private agricultural lands. The conservation plan emphasizes sustainability of natural resources based on ecological, economic, and social considerations. The conservation plan is a record of the client's decisions and supporting information for treatment of a unit of land or water as a result of the planning process, that meets FOTG quality criteria for each natural resource and takes into account economic and social considerations. The plan describes the schedule of operations and activities needed to solve identified natural resource concerns.</p> <p>The conservation planning process assists the potential EQIP participant to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide an eligibility assessment of the farming or ranching operation ▪ Identify resource needs ▪ Inventory resources ▪ Formulate system alternatives to determine conservation practices ▪ Determine environmental impacts of selected alternatives ▪ Estimate projected costs and costs producer is willing to incur <p>As to the level of treatment, EQIP encourages but does not require the implementation of a total resource management system, for the farm or ranch operation. As a minimum, the conservation plan must enable the producer to achieve the resource management system (RMS) quality criteria, as identified in the local FOTG, for the priority natural resource concern(s) in the priority area or for the significant statewide natural resource concern(s).</p>	
Progress / Current Status:	Oregon NRCS and OACD have implemented an extensive planning certification process to strengthen the quality of conservation plans in Oregon. In Oregon, each EQIP contract is supported with an RMS level conservation plan. EQIP encourages but does not require the implementation of a total resource management system, for the farm or ranch operation. As a minimum, the conservation plan must enable the producer to achieve the resource management system (RMS) quality criteria, as identified in the local FOTG, for the priority natural resource concern(s) in the priority area or for the significant statewide natural resource concern(s).	
Technical / Staff Recommendation:	<p>Oregon shall :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Require a conservation plan for obligation of EQIP program dollars. ▪ A signed conservation plan will reflect optimized conservation benefits. ▪ Any one can apply for EQIP funding regardless of having a conservation plan but applicants having a conservation plan or committing to have a conservation plan prior to being funded will receive a higher ranking. ▪ Consider the use of a sliding scale of cost share rates based on different levels of implementation. 	
Attachment:		