

**Environmental Quality Incentive Program Delivery in
Cumberland and York Counties, Maine
First Application Evaluation and Ranking Period of FY 2013**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers financial assistance to agricultural producers to implement on-farm conservation practices. Eligibility is determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Eligible producers may apply for financial assistance on conservation practices that will address identified resource concerns on eligible land.

Interested agricultural producers may apply in person at the Scarborough USDA Service Center. Applicants may also request EQIP assistance by telephone, FAX, e-mail, or letter. Send to: Wayne P. Munroe, District Conservationist, 306 US Route, Suite A-1, Scarborough, Maine 04074, phone number (207) 883-0159 extension 101, Fax number (207) 883-3460, or email wayne.munroe@me.usda.gov.

Objective: The objective of the Cumberland and York Counties Local Work Group is to utilize EQIP to promote the use of conservation practices to benefit the environment while promoting sustainable agriculture, healthy forestlands and conserving natural resources.

Priority Resource Concerns: In Cumberland and York Counties, the Local Work Group (LWG) has identified and prioritized the following resource concerns:

HIGH - Soil erosion and sediment control, surface water quality, animal waste management, ground water quality (agriculture and non-agriculture), farmland protection, forest resource conservation, soil productivity, wetlands loss or degradation, water management – water quantity – agriculture were selected as the *highest priority* in Cumberland and York Counties.

These concerns are intimately connected, and can negatively impact soil and water quality. Structural and management practices will be applied to agricultural land to minimize and prevent the degradation of natural resources. Grassed and/or lined waterways, subsurface drains, and diversions, along with critical area plantings, can help to stabilize eroding slopes.

The implementation of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans along with supporting practices, i.e. Compost Facilities, Waste Storage Structure, Heavy Use Area Protection, Roof Runoff Structure, etc. will minimize the risk of pollution associated with animal wastes.

Irrigation System conversions to higher efficiency standards on previously irrigated cropland will conserve water, improve water quality, and conserve energy. Implementation of Forest Management Plans with practices such as Access Roads, Forest Trails and Landings, Stream Crossings, Invasive Treatments and Riparian Forest Buffers will improve water quality and promote healthy forest communities.

MEDIUM - Soil, Water, and Air quality, Energy conservation – other, Water Management – flood damage reduction, fish and wildlife habitat – loss or degradation, and grazing land were given a *medium priority*. Livestock Watering Facilities, Prescribed Grazing, and Field Borders can reduce soil erosion, improve soil health, prevent sedimentation in surface water bodies, and help to manage livestock better. The need to minimize the risk of flood damage can be addressed through existing USDA (FSA), Federal (FEMA) and State (MEMA) programs.

LOW – Water Management – non-agriculture: forestland, air quality, and water management listed as a *low priority*.

Eligible Practices and Payment Rates: For a list of practices eligible for EQIP financial assistance in fiscal year 2013, see Cumberland & York **County Maine Practice List and “Southern Maine Payment Schedule “**.

Sign-up: All program sign-up is continuous and applications may be taken at any time. Sign-up will be conducted according to local priorities and grouped along the lines of the resource areas that the State Technical Committee defined and that the LWG have recommended be funded in 2013.

For each funding cycle, a cutoff date will be established to provide time for screening and ranking. Applications received after the cutoff date will be considered for the next funding cycle.

Conservation practices (both structural and management) in Forestland will be eligible for inclusion in a cost share contract only when a Forest Stewardship Plan, or other forest management plan that meets the State of Maine Stewardship Plan standard, has been developed for the acres to be enrolled in the program. Applications involving animal waste management such as waste storage facilities, milking center waste water treatment system, and heavy use area protection require the development of a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) prior to funding. There may be opportunities for financial assistance to obtain these specific types of plans. Landowners should contact the office to request assistance and information.

Ranking: All eligible applications received prior to the funding cycle cutoff date will be screened. Those determined to be high priority will be ranked based on an on-site resource inventory and assessment. Planners will develop alternative measure to address resource concerns based on their assessment and work with the applicant to come to decisions for practice application. Ranking will be based on the decisions the applicant makes for addressing the resource concerns.

The combined ranking sheet for Cumberland and York Counties, which incorporates resource concerns and applicable quality criteria from the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide, is the basis for ranking applications. A single combined ranking sheet will be completed for each farm or planning/contract area. Points will be assigned for those resource concerns that are not meeting quality criteria in the benchmark condition and will be improved as a result of implementation of the client’s contract.

Applications will be selected for contracting in ranked order by resource area, according to the score, as available funds allow. If available funds are insufficient to contract all eligible applications, applications may be held (deferred) and considered for funding with any subsequently received applications during FY 2013 if another application ranking period is announced.

Funding: Periodic requests for program allocations will be scheduled throughout the year as funding permits. Separate program requests will be submitted by the District Conservationist according to the resource areas that the State Technical Committee defined and that the LWG has recommended be funded in 2013. Each of these requests will constitute a separate pool of ranked applications.

Allocation decisions to each Field Office will be made in the State Office based on national, state and local priorities, and the nature and extent of requests. Field Office Allocations will be split between each of the resource categories based on percentages set by the LWG, as shown below. Unfunded applications will be deferred to the next program request date.

Fund Pools: The Cumberland & York County Local Work Group has decided to allocate the available general pool EQIP funds as follows for the first Application Evaluation and Ranking Period of FY 2013:

Resource Category	% of Local Allocated Funding
Animal Waste	73
Forestry	15
Cropland (incl. hayland)	2
Grazing	10

If you have any questions about how EQIP will be delivered in Cumberland and York Counties, please contact Wayne Munroe, District Conservationist at (207) 883-0159 ext. 101.