USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program

Natural Resources Conservation Service South Dakota

SD-FS-105

New Opportunity

The **Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife (PPWQW) Program** is a new funding opportunity available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). When enrolled, producers are eligible for payment on cropped wetlands, two acres or less in size as identified on the National Wetland Inventory, and with intact hydrology. The payment rate will differ by region.

Background

Wetter, or more water saturated portions of cropland fields, have the potential to produce a significant amount of moist soil plants which are valuable sources of forage and cover for many waterfowl, shorebird and wading bird species. Under normal cropland production, the native vegetation is restricted on these sites through mechanical and/or chemical control. The current system provides little to no wildlife habitat with habitat limiting factors such as quality, quantity and continuity of forage, cover, shelter and space being identified. Drainage could also result in inadequate wildlife water and inadequate habitat.

The Prairie Pothole Water Quality and Wildlife Program emerged from a North Dakota concept called the Working Wetlands program. Farmers and conservation leaders worked together to find a new approach to conserve small wetlands in working cropland. The ND project was instrumental in guiding the development of the new NRCS program and represents a true “win-win” for farmers, water quality, ducks, and other waterfowl.

Level 1 Practice Option

Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) 327 Conservation Cover

Conservation cover is permanent vegetation, including a mix of introduced cool season grasses and legumes, and native grasses and forbs established on cropped wetland areas that need permanent vegetative cover to help improve water quality and provide wetland wildlife habitat.

The wetlands must be wholly or partially in cropland, typically two acres in size. Wetland hydrology has or could be diverted from the wetland.

Cost rate $253.90 per acre

CPS 644 - Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management addresses wildlife habitat for wetter or water saturated portions of cropland fields. The wetlands must be wholly or partially in cropland. Wetland hydrology has or could be diverted from the wetland through tiling, field or road ditching, diking, or any other feature that removes wetland hydrology.

The planning unit is adequately covered with permanent and/or annual (non-persistent) vegetation. The cession of cropping and maintenance of hydrology provides adequate forage and cover in areas where normal cropland production restricts the growth of cover and forage sources. Monitoring assures hydrology is intact and provides wildlife water and habitat. Acres will be assessed and scored 0.5 or greater as both Wetlands and Cropland on the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide. Monitoring will be used to determine if the hydrology remains intact and cover is adequate and free of invasive weed species.

Cost rate $231.99 per acre

Eligibility

To be eligible for the PPWQW Program, wetlands must be:

- Cropped wetlands,
- 2 acres in size or less as identified on the National Wetlands Inventory, and
- Intact Hydrology.

Monitoring

Examples of monitoring include but are not limited to:

- Photo points with comparisons to surrounding wetlands.
- Use documentation by livestock, regeneration or breeding success.
- Completing an annual management records log.
- Documenting wildlife sightings, or
- Documenting location and species of invasive plants and condition of vegetative and structural treatments.

Level 2 Practice Option

CPS 644 - Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management

Under normal cropland production, the native vegetation is restricted on these sites through mechanical and/or chemical control. A current crop rotation provides little to no wildlife habitat with habitat limiting factors such as quality, quantity and continuity of forage, cover, shelter, and space being identified. A producer will agree to the cession of cropping and maintenance of hydrology that will provide adequate forage and cover in areas where normal cropland production restricts the growth of cover and forage sources. Producers will monitor to determine if the hydrology remains intact and cover is adequate and free of invasive weed species. Monitoring will be completed by one or more of the following: photo points with comparisons to surrounding wetlands, use documentation by livestock, regeneration or breeding success, completing an annual management records log, documenting wildlife sightings, documenting location and species of invasive plants, and condition of vegetative and structural treatments.

Cost rate $235.87/acre

Level 3 Practice Option

CPS 644 - Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management

Excess wetness during the early planting season often cause ag producers to seed these small areas after the initial seeding date resulting in soil compaction, reduced hydrology, and limited crop success. If a producer chooses Level 3, an agricultural crop or annual vegetation will be allowed to persist providing food and cover essential for migratory birds on wetland where hydrology will be maintained. Crops and annual vegetation will not be harvested during the primary nesting season as identified by the habitat evaluation guide. This allows for successful nesting and brood rearing. Producers will be required to monitor the wetland to (with supporting photo documentation) demonstrate that wildlife habitat has been improved to levels consistent with management goals/objectives, as well as observed use of the wetland habitat by wildlife.

Cost rate $171.43 per acre

Implementing and Maintaining

The following are considerations for successfull program participation:

- Connecting wetland habitats to other habitats through the use of corridors to reduce edge effect.
- Establishing upland grass buffers to protect the overall function of the wetland and provide habitat for wetland and upland wildlife.
- Revegetating wetlands, providing habitat for wetland and upland wildlife (this is especially critical to upland species for winter food and cover).
- Appropriate management and monitoring of vegetative cover both within the wetland basin and the surrounding upland.
- Control sediment delivery to the wetland.
- Management of weed infestations.

To find the contact information for your local USDA Service Center, go to farmers.gov/service-center-locator

How To Apply

Applying for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in South Dakota:

- Work with the local NRCS Field Office to develop a Conservation Plan.
- Complete Form NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application.
- Complete the Direct Deposit Sign-up Form.
- Work with the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) to update the appropriate eligibility requirements.
- Provide signature authority if applicable.
- Obtain Evidence of Land Control.
- Obtain Landowner Concurrence to apply structural or vegetative conservation.

For More Information

For more information on EQIP, contact your local NRCS field office found in USDA Service Centers or go to: sd.nrcs.usda.gov > Programs > Financial Assistance > EQIP

South Dakota

Natural Resources Conservation Service

sd.nrcs.usda.gov/

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