

Team 4 Fund Pool Allocations for Fiscal Year 2023

Team 4 allocations of funds by land use:

- Grazing Land - 40%
- Irrigated Cropland - 40%
- Forested Land – 20%

Reasoning – Most of our Forest Funding for the Team comes from other State and National Funds.

FY 2023
Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Proposal
Team 4
Las Vegas, Mora & Raton Field Offices

Introduction: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Staff for Team 4, worked in conjunction with the local Soil and Water Conservation District's (SWCD) Tierra y Montes, Western Mora, Mora Wagon Mound and Colfax to conduct the Local Work Group (LWG) Meeting. The LWG is made up of various local, state, and federal entities. In addition to meeting the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) requirements, the purpose of the LWG was to identify natural resources concern issues throughout Team 4 service area: San Miguel, Mora and Colfax counties and help provide guidance and recommendations to NRCS. Team 4 service area is in Northeastern New Mexico. The area consists of approximately the following lands: San Miguel County consists of approximately 1,881,524 acres of which 11,145 acres are irrigated land, there are approximately 4,180 acres of non-irrigated land, 1,555,462 acres of rangelands and 326,062 acres of forest land. Mora County consists of approximately 1,125,259 acres of private and state lands, approximately 112,354 acres of federal lands and approximately 4,000 acres of tribal lands. Most of the land consists of rangelands, which includes Pinon/Juniper 775,259 acres, woodlands 246,520 acres, and 21,000 acres of irrigated/non-irrigated lands. Colfax County consists of 2,414,080 acres. Rangeland is approximately 1,722,278 acres, approximately 48,281 acres is irrigated cropland and hay land and approximately 603,520 is privately owned grazed forest land. Most of the area is devoted mainly to beef cattle production and wildlife enterprises. Team 4 covers the east side of the Sangre De Cristo Mountains within all three counties. The diverse land types cover high mountain elevations primarily forestlands consisting of mixed conifer down to ponderosa pine with intermixed grasslands and meadows. This area also covers several acequias that cover the irrigated pastures on introduced and native grasses/legumes. This is followed by grazing lands that stretch east unto the short grassland prairies where the majority of livestock grazing occurs. Unique to Colfax County is the irrigated cropland found predominately east of I-25 in the French Tract area. This area is irrigated from various ditch associations.

Local Work Group: The LWG meeting for Team 4 was held in preparation for FY 2023 program. The LWG meeting was held September 20, 2022 at 10:00am using ZOOM due to COVID 19 this year in Raton, New Mexico. Participation was present from Colfax, Tierra Y Montes and Mora Wagon Mound SWCD board members, local area producers, various government agencies, North Area Staff and Team 4 NRCS Field Office Staff.

Conservation Needs Assessment: A conservation needs assessment has not been done since the re-organization of NRCS NM. This item will be addressed in FY 2023 when districts develop their annual business plans. Resource concerns used from last year will be used in FY 2023.

GIS Data prepared by the Districts by the Districts to use for program funding: The Districts have not developed any type of GIS data to be used for Farm Bill Programs.

Program Outreach: Program outreach was conducted via several methods such as: local newspapers, radio announcements on local radio stations, District Newsletters and bulletins posted at various locations within each county. The LWG did not have any recommendations at time of LWG meeting.

Priority Resource Concerns: NRCS field office staff and LWG reviewed last year's resource concerns and determined that they would not be changed for each land use: Grazing land, Crop Land and Forest Land for the upcoming year. The following resource concerns have been identified and discussed:

Grazing Land Resource Concerns/Weighted Averages

1. Degraded Plant Condition—Inadequate structure and composition/25%
2. Livestock Production Limitation-Inadequate feed and forage/25%
3. Livestock Production Limitation-Inadequate water/25%
4. Soil Erosion-Classic gully erosion/25%

Crop Land Resource Concerns/Weighted Averages

1. Inefficient Water- Inefficient use of irrigation water/30%
2. Livestock Production Limitation-Inadequate feed and forage/25%

3. Degraded Plant Condition-Undesirable plant productivity and health/25%
4. Soil Health—Organic Matter Depletion & or Soil Organism Habitat Loss or Degradation/20%

Forest Land Resource Concerns/Weighted Averages

1. Degraded Plant Condition-Wildfire hazard excessive biomass accumulation/25%
2. Degraded Plant Condition-Inadequate structure and composition/25%
3. Livestock Production Limitation-Inadequate water/25%
4. Soil Erosion-Classic gully erosion/25%

Based on LWG input it was determined that each resource concern by land use would be equally weighted for all land uses. Upon a closer review during our monthly Team 4 Meeting it was determined that weighted percentages shown above would be used in FY 2023.

Funding Considerations: As District Conservationist (DC) decided to make retain the 2023 funding considerations from last year to reflect LWG's input and DC's recommendations: Funds for the land uses will initially be allocated as follows:

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The LWG district has set the cost share rate at 75% for all practices last year and upon review for FY 2023 they will remain at 75%.

The LWG did not recommend incentive payments for any practices for FY 2023 no incentive payments will be made.

Cost Share Rate Factor: The cost share rate for the district will be set at 90% year for Historically Underserved (HU) producers and 75% for non-HU producers for FY 2023.

Screening Criteria: Screening criteria was discussed with the LWG and it was determined that in FY 2023 no screening criteria would be used.

Ranking Criteria: The national ranking tool CART Tool will be used for evaluating all EQIP applications. Local issues will be incorporated into the ranking tool.

Tie breakers will be addressed as follows:

- All tie breakers for each land use/sub account will use the new CART Tool tie breaker tool. Based on the new system the highest number will be used to break ties.

Watershed Initiative: As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that a watershed Initiative not be considered in the 2023 proposal.

Acequia Initiative: As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that the Acequia Initiative would not be considered in FY 2023. Now included in EQIP Water Management Entities (WME) eligible for EQIP.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP): As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that the CStP local funding pools for specific watersheds or geographic areas would not be considered in FY 2023. Team 4 will follow state guidance with implementation of CStP.

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that the ACEP would be implemented using state guidance in FY 2023.