Maine NRCS Programs Update

Presented at the State Technical Committee Meeting on December 7, 2023

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Topics to present

- **Status of FY2024 Program allocations**
  - **$24,454,104 Grand Total of current Financial Assistance (FA) allocation**
- **IRA program delivery information**
- **FY2024 delivery information**

Review of FY2024 Program Allocations-as of 12/7/2023

- Traditional Program Allocations:
  - AMA: $675,000
  - CSP: $1,400,000 (Classic, Organic and Renewal)
  - EQIP: $8,525,181
    - EQIP General: $7,785,695
    - EQIP NWQI: $739,486
  - ACEP-ALE: $271,907
  - ACEP-WRE: $357,016
    - New enrollment: $348,750
    - Stewardship (existing) $8,266

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and NRCS Program Delivery information

- Maine received separate FY2024 IRA funds for contracts to be obligated in CSP-IRA and EQIP-IRA.
  - **CSP-IRA: $904,000**
  - **EQIP-IRA: $12,321,000**

CSP-IRA and EQIP-IRA specific fund pools are required for obligating IRA funds and the IRA funds cannot be mingled with CSP classic or EQIP general funds

Delivery decisions for FY2024

- Initial application deadline:
  - for AMA, CSP,CSP-IRA, EQIP, EQIP-IRA, and RCPP2018 was August 25, 2023.
  - Application deadline for ACEP-WRE was October 27, 2023.
  - The deadline for ACEP-ALE applications is November 30, 2023.
- Potential for additional application/funding rounds dependent on funding levels for FY2024 and the number of applications approved for funding.
- Plan to continue ACT NOW opportunity, but for 2024 will be for all planning activity options applications (CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs).
  - Intend to open sign up for ACT NOW when the FY 2024 payment schedule is released for use. Intended obligation deadline March 1, 2024 with $1.5 million set aside for obligations. Will end sooner if set-aside funds are expended before March 1st.

Payment schedule information

- 2024 Payment schedules have not yet been released by NRCS National Headquarters . When released, these will be posted online: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules
  - Preparing contracts and obligations are on hold until the payment schedules are released.
  - All typical practice costs continue to be regionalized for all practices in 2024.
  - Conservation plan activity option payment rates are nationalized for 2024, including those related to Forestry and CNMPs.

Delivery decisions for FY2024

- EQIP Local High Tunnel and statewide Climate Smart Ag and Forestry fund pools being discontinued for FY2024
  - High Tunnels can be funded through AMA and several other EQIP fund pools and only a few Field Offices offered this as an EQIP local fund pool in 2023
  - Applications that would compete in a statewide Climate Smart Ag and Forestry fund pool will be eligible for EQIP-IRA funding, so no need to duplicate
- CSP NIPF state priority resource concern change being made for FY2024
  - Replaced Wind and Water Erosion with Weather Resilience as a more pertinent concern in forests.

AMA statewide fund pools for FY2024 will be:

- High Tunnel Systems
- Irrigation (both micro and sprinkler)

CSP, CSP-IRA and CSP-Renewal statewide fund pools for FY2024 will be:

- Ag Land Classic
- Ag Land Beginning Farmer
- Ag Land Socially Disadvantaged
- Ag Land Organic (not for CSP-IRA)
- NIPF Classic
- NIPF Beginning Farmer
- NIPF Socially Disadvantaged

EQIP statewide fund pools for FY2024 are intended to be:

- ACT NOW
- Aquatic Restoration
- Beginning Farmer
- Deer Wintering Yard Initiative
- EQIP CIC (Pasture focus)
- On-Farm Energy
- Organic Initiative
- Pollinators
- Socially Disadvantaged
- Tribal Projects
- Urban Agriculture
- Water Conservation

EQIP local fund pools for FY2024 will be:

- Agricultural Waste
- Cropland
- Forestry
- Pasture
- Unique Local Priority
- Wildlife

EQIP-IRA pool is anticipated to be just one fund pool based on Climate Smart Ag and Forestry core practice list.