

EQIP-WaterSMART Initiative (WSI)

2025 Progress Report



Managing water resources in the American West can be challenging. Drought, aging infrastructure, and environmental requirements can strain the ability of farmers and others to access water supplies needed for healthy communities and agricultural landscapes.

NRCS and WaterSMART

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program-WaterSMART Initiative (EQIP-WSI) is a collaborative effort between NRCS and the U.S. Department of Interior’s (DOI) Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Through EQIP-WSI, the agencies coordinate investments in the western U.S. to conserve water and build resilience to drought impacts.

DOI’s WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America’s Resources for Tomorrow) Program provides funding to help water resource managers stretch and secure water supplies for future generations.

Through WaterSMART, Reclamation assists states, tribes, and local entities as they work to increase water supply reliability through investments in infrastructure and attention to local water conflicts.

EQIP-WSI complements Reclamation investments by targeting EQIP-WSI funds to help farmers and ranchers improve their operations in a way that aligns with a specific WaterSMART funded project.

EQIP-WSI plays an important role in the National Drought Resilience Partnership as the coordination between NRCS and Reclamation helps communities better prepare for future droughts and reduce the impact of droughts on livelihoods and the economy.

EQIP-WSI Priority Areas

EQIP-WSI is implemented in priority areas proposed by state conservationists and selected based on how well activities carried out over a multi-year period meet initiative priorities including:

- ◆ Improving irrigation water use efficiency,
- ◆ Optimally managing natural precipitation, and
- ◆ Preventing groundwater and surface water depletion.



Depending on local conditions, funded activities may also improve soil health; reduce soil erosion, sediment, nutrient, and pathogen losses; protect crop health and productivity; and make using equipment, facilities, and operations more efficient.

By coordinating NRCS’s EQIP and Reclamation’s WaterSMART investments, water users can more effectively conserve this vital resource for future or other uses.

“Coordinated action must be focused on a watershed or landscape scale to gain the greatest positive and sustainable conservation outcomes.” – Hugh Hammond Bennett, 1st Chief of the Soil Conservation Service

Precision nutrient application conserves water and places necessary plant nutrients where and when needed.



Fiscal Year 2025 EQIP-WSI Financial Assistance

Region	Contracts	Obligations	Acres
Arizona	4	\$1,064,281	1,367
California	124	\$19,350,552	13,101
Colorado	4	\$268,367	192
Idaho	14	\$6,314,475	4,507
Kansas	4	\$593,885	177
Montana	1	\$276,543	3
Nebraska	3	\$198,102	926
Nevada	17	\$1,305,070	1,568
New Mexico	20	\$3,994,233	1,458
Oregon	19	\$1,799,789	1,184
Texas	9	\$429,727	213
Utah	3	\$80,086	33
Washington	6	\$2,282,540	1,667
Wyoming	22	\$1,482,634	1,129
Total	250	\$39,440,283	27,525

Data source: FPAC-NRCS Economics Policy Analysis Division, December 2025

NRCS Project Criteria

NRCS monitors progress in the EQIP-WSI by tracking project accomplishments for:

- ◆ Practices used to address priorities in each area,
- ◆ Completed project goals for:
 - Number of contracts
 - Acres treated
- ◆ Successfully completed projects.

Initiative Progress

EQIP-WSI began in 2011 with a pilot in California and was introduced as a regional initiative in 2016. Between 2016 and 2025, NRCS and Reclamation coordinated to fund complementary investments in 16 different states. In FY 2025, eleven new priority area projects were selected in addition to 26 ongoing projects.

The most common agricultural conservation practices supported through EQIP-WSI are structures for water control, pipeline, irrigation water management, pumping plant, micro-irrigation, cover crops, and sprinkler irrigation systems.

Overall Summary FY 2016–25

Total NRCS Investment \$163,487,771
 Number of Contracts 1,340
 Total Acres Contracted..... 181,020

Successful Collaborations

Successful EQIP-WSI projects are highlighted on NRCS’s [WaterSMART Initiative](#) webpage.

Reclamation WaterSMART projects which enable EQIP-WSI activities include water delivery automation and monitoring; canal lining or replacement with pipe; other infrastructure modernization; drought response; stream restoration; and watershed restoration.

Producers in selected EQIP-WSI priority areas increase irrigation water use efficiency and meet state and local requirements for water withdrawal rates by improving on-farm water distribution, irrigation system components, and management.

The reductions in water losses ensure that more water is available for producers and other community members to use and to build drought resilience.