

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary, conservation program administered by NRCS that can provide financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that address natural resource concerns. The purpose of EQIP is to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals; to optimize environmental benefits; and to help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental regulations.

EQIP Application Sign-up and Cut-off Dates

NRCS accepts EQIP applications year-round, but establishes cutoff dates to make funding selections for eligible, screened, and ranked applications.

To be ready for EQIP funding consideration, interested applicants will need to: (1) Develop a conservation plan, (2) Submit an application, (3) Meet program eligibility requirements, and (4) Approve their 'EQIP schedule of operations'.

The time needed to complete a conservation plan and process eligibility can vary, from a few weeks to more than a month, depending on the complexity of the farming operation.

Develop a Conservation Plan

A conservation plan includes all practices, regardless of the program's financial assistance, that a producer or landowner has agreed to adopt for the agricultural operation and/or associated agricultural lands. Interested applicants are encouraged to request conservation planning and technical assistance from a local NRCS field office to help with the development of a conservation plan.

Submitting an Application

Interested applicants may apply for EQIP by completing and submitting the application, Form NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application, to the NRCS field office in person, by phone, email, or fax in the county which you own land or where you have an agricultural operation or non-industrial private forest land.

Program Eligibility Requirements

In order to be considered eligible for EQIP the applicant must have a vested interest in production agricultural or non-industrial private forest land and meet other program eligibility requirements.

'EQIP schedule of operations'

The basis for an application is the 'EQIP schedule of operations' and is derived from the applicant's conservation plan. The EQIP 'schedule of operations' identifies the conservation practices to be implemented, timing of the implementation, practice location, and payment rates.

EQIP Screening, Ranking and Funding

EQIP funding decisions are based on an application evaluation process that includes screening tools and ranking criteria. Screening tools are worksheets used to prioritize an application based on factors such as: a completed conservation plan; readiness to implement practices; history of contract compliance; and resource priorities addressed in the 'EQIP schedule of operations'. Ranking criteria considers the anticipated benefit of a conservation system, or practice, in the 'EQIP schedule of operations' to a natural resource concern.

NRCS Field Office Contact Information

For more information about EQIP, how to apply and program eligibility, interested applicants should contact the NRCS field office in the county which you own land or where you have an agricultural operation.

USDA-NRCS, Trinity County

Weaverville Service Center
(530) 623-3991
Heidi Carpenter Harris, District Conservationist

About the Joint Chiefs' Forestry Restoration Partnership

The United States Forest Service (USFS) and the NRCS have entered into a multi-year partnership to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet across the nation. By leveraging technical and financial resources and coordinating activities on adjacent public and private lands, conservation work by NRCS and USFS will be more efficient and effective in these watersheds. Reducing forest fuels will provide additional protection for community safety, wildlife habitat, watershed health, recreation opportunities and cultural resources.

About the Joint Chiefs' Initiative for the South Fork Trinity River and Upper Mad River

The focus area of this Joint Chiefs' EQIP Initiative is the South Fork of the Trinity River and the Upper Mad River watersheds located in Trinity County in northwestern California. Spanning both the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests, the largely publicly owned watersheds are interspersed with private timberland, ranches, and six isolated rural communities.

The primary goal of this Joint Chiefs' Initiative is to provide technical and financial assistance for conservation practices that will increase community wildfire protection and assist in the restoration of ecological process on non-industrial private forestland within the focus area of the Trinity Community Protection and Landscape Restoration Project.

Conservation practices implemented with assistance through this Joint Chiefs' Initiative can help to establish a sustainable system of shaded fuelbreaks and strategic fuel treatments across the landscape that would reduce the potential for large, high severity fires. The system of fuelbreaks and fuel management will also benefit habitats, sensitive populations, and watersheds by reducing severe fire disturbances, replacing them with higher frequency, yet lower intensity disturbances.

Land Uses for the Joint Chiefs' Initiative EQIP fund pool

Only applications for forest management that address resource concerns on at least one land use type listed below will be considered for financial assistance from this EQIP Initiative. The descriptions below are the general NRCS land use definitions - applications should fit within, but do not need to exactly match, these descriptions.

- **Forest:** Land on which the primary vegetation is tree cover (climax, natural or introduced plant community) and use is primarily for production of wood products or non-timber forest products.
- **Associated Agricultural Lands:** Land associated with forestland that are not purposefully managed for food, forage, or fiber and are typically associated with nearby production or conservation lands. This could include incidental areas, such as, ditches and watercourses, riparian areas, seasonal and permanent wetlands, and other similar areas.

Resource Concerns for the Joint Chiefs' Initiative EQIP fund pool

Only applications for forest management that address at least one resource concern listed below will be considered for financial assistance through this EQIP Initiative. The descriptions below are general NRCS natural resource definitions, applications should fit within, but do not need to exactly match, these descriptions.

- ❖ **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION** – Plant condition degradation can result in stress, disease, insect damage and result in changes to the structure and composition of plant communities.
 - **Inadequate Structure and Composition:** Plant communities, such as - wetland habitat, unique ecosystems or targeted plant communities, have insufficient diversity, density, distribution patterns, and three-dimensional structure necessary to achieve ecological functions and/or management objectives.
 - **Excessive Plant Pest Pressure:** The term “pest” can be any animal, plant, insect, bacteria, or virus that results in plant damage or competes for space, nutrients, or water (e.g., weeds). Heat, drought, wind, sun, and cold create stress on plants that make them more susceptible to pests.
 - **Wildfire Hazard, Excess Biomass Accumulation:** Accumulated plant residue (biomass) creates wildfire hazards that pose risks to human safety, structures, plants, animals, and air resources. While fire is an important and often beneficial part of the natural ecosystem, uncontrolled or “wild” fire poses a threat to life, health, and property.

Eligible NRCS Conservation Activity Plans

Only applications for NRCS conservation activity plans listed in the table below are eligible for financial assistance through this EQIP Initiative. A Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) can be developed for an applicant to identify conservation practices needed to address a specific natural resource need.

Information about CAP services from Technical Service Providers (TSP), including how to find a certified TSP in your State, can be found on the NRCS national TSP website:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?cid=stelprdb1042981>

Table 1. Eligible Conservation Activity Plans

Practice Code	Conservation Activity Plan Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (years)
106	Forest Management Plan - Written	no	1

Eligible NRCS Conservation Practices

All conservation practices planned for financial assistance must be included in the 'EQIP schedule of operations' and address a resource concern identified in this EQIP Initiative. NRCS conservation practices eligible for financial assistance through this EQIP Initiative are listed in the below table.

For more information about NRCS conservation practices visit the following website link for NRCS conservation practice standards:

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/?cid=NRCSDEV11_001020



Table 2. Eligible Conservation Practices

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
314	Brush Management	ac	10
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	ac	5
327	Conversation Cover	ac	5
338	Prescribed Burning	ac	1
342	Critical Area Planting	ac	10
383	Fuel Break	ac	10
384	Woody Residue Treatment	ac	10
660	Tree/Shrub Pruning	ac	10
666	Forest Stand Improvement	ac	10