Nebraska NRCS Source Water Protection Sub-committee

2018 Farm Bill Source Water Protection Mandates

- Dedicate at least 10 percent of the total funds available for conservation programs (with the exception of CRP), each year, to be used for source water protection.
- States can select up to 10 conservation practices to be eligible for 90% practice payment rate.
- Addresses the conservation of water to advance drought mitigation
- Addresses excessive nutrients, and other impairments of drinking water sources (ground water or surface water).
- Typical conservation practices used to address nitrates:
  - Nutrient management;
  - Irrigation water management;
  - Cover crops.
- Practice incentive payments for this initiative will go to EQIP eligible owners/operators of agricultural land who install conservation practices relating to water quality and quantity.
- Meet other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other restoration plans.
- Is geographically located to address a national resource concern in a specific watershed.
- Focus of initiative is the protection of community water systems that is defined by 25 people or more, 15 or more service connections, year-round.
- Utilities that provide public drinking water as well as the State agencies that regulate drinking water are important partners who should be engaged in NRCS efforts to implement the mandated provisions to protect source water.

Selection of Priority Areas – Due by September 30, 2019

- STCs working with the State Technical Committee, public water utilities and the State drinking water agency must select initial local priority areas where we can anticipate targeting approximately 10 percent of conservation program funding to benefit source water protection.
- There will be opportunities to expand, change, or add priority areas in subsequent years.
- The delineated SWPAs should have a protection plan, in addition to an assessment, that characterizes the source water, identifies areas of concern, potential threats, and describes source water protection goals and an action plan for implementation. Must Provide a map and GIS layer of the selected local priorities (SWPA delineations, expanded areas, or areas with multiple SWPAs), and identify the SWPA as surface, ground, or both.
- In Nebraska, 99% of municipalities use ground water as their source of drinking water.
- It is suggested to use delineated Source Water Protection Areas where agriculture is a potential source of water quality degradation. DEQ’s wellhead areas outline 20 or 50-year time of travel boundaries.
- Groundwater Management Areas – may be eligible if they encompass several community water systems. It would be good to have these GWMA’s in a GIS layer.
- Ensure that there is local support for implementation of voluntary adoption of conservation to protect source water when selecting priority areas. This includes stakeholders, partners, and producers.

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