Conservation Programs

FY2020 Programs Update – CSP, EQIP, ACEP, RCPP, CIG

FY2021 Local Work Group Recommendations

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Conservation Stewardship Program
Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

• FY2020 Allocations
  o CSP Classic = $12.2 Million
  o CSP Renewal = $7.8 Million
  o CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative = $3.4 Million

• Results of 2020 GCI signups
  o New contracts = 199
  o Contract acres = 10,425

• Results of 2020-1 Renewal signup
  o Applications = 258
  o Contracts = 95
  o Contract acres = 180,000
• Results of 2020 CSP Classic Signup
  o Applications = 910
  o Contracts = 125
  o Contract Acres = 305,000 (estimated)
Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

• 2020 CSP Annual Payments
  o All FY 2020 approved contracts - **November 6, 2020**
    ▪ CSP-Renewal, CSP-Classic, and CSP-GCI
  o Active contracts approved in FY 2015 – FY2019 where participant elects to receive payment in CY 2020 - **November 6, 2020**
  o Active contracts approved in FY 2015 – FY2019 where participant elects to receive payment in CY 2021 - **February 5, 2021**
Environmental Quality Incentives Program
EQIP Allocation
FY2020
2020 Mandatory Distribution

- Source Water Protection – 10%
- Wildlife Initiative – 10%
- Historically Underserved – 10%
- Livestock – 50%
FY2020 STATEWIDE FUND POOLS

- Seasonal High Tunnel
- Organic
- Energy
- Conservation Activity Plans
- Animal Feeding Operations
- Tribal
- HEL Treatment
FY2020 PARTNERSHIP FUND POOLS

- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
  - 4 Projects = $1.3 million

- Water Smart (Bureau of Reclamation)
  - 1 Project – URNRD = $150,000

- Forest Service (Joint Chiefs)
  - 1 Project – UNWNRD, MNNRD, ULNRD = $342,000
FY2020 General EQIP Allocation = $23 Million

- Local Work Groups = $14 Million
- Wildlife (10%) = $2.3 Million
- Historically Underserved (10%) = $2.3 Million
- Source Water Protection (10%) = $2.3 Million
- Animal Feeding Operations = $1.0 Million
- HEL Treatment = $500,000
- Conservation Activity Plans = $200,000
- Working Lands for Wildlife = $100,000
- High Tunnels = $100,000
- Organic = $100,000
- Tribal = $100,000
- Energy = $25,000
ANIMAL MORTALITY MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE

• Provides assistance to livestock producers for animal mortality disposal resulting from impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

• Application cutoff dates:
  • May 11, 2020
  • June 1, 2020
  • June 22, 2020

• Applications = 21
• Contracts = 3 (Platte county = 2, Cedar county = 1)

➢ Total obligation = $12,499
Source Water Protection
The Phase 2-4 and Quantity Management Areas that intersect a Wellhead Protection Area define the medium priority level.

Total Medium & High Priority Areas: 8,006,050 acres
Source Water Protection Practice List

* Practices with potential up to 90% c/s rate

- 327 - Conservation Cover
- *328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
- 332 - Contour Buffer Strips
- *340 - Cover Crop
- 342 - Critical Area Planting
- 355 - Well Water Testing
- 386 - Field Border
- 390 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- 391 - Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393 - Filter Strip
- 412 - Grassed Waterway
- *449 - Irrigation Water Management
- *590 - Nutrient Management
- 635 - Vegetated Treatment Area
- 656 - Constructed Wetland
Source Water Protection Practice List

* Practices with potential up to 90% c/s rate

- *351 - Water Well Decommissioning
- 430 - Irrigation Pipeline
- *441 - Irrigation System, Micro irrigation
- *442 - Sprinkler System
- 512 - Forage and Biomass Planting
- 550 - Range Planting
- *595 - Integrated Pest Management
- *657 - Wetland Restoration
- 659 - Wetland Enhancement
EQIP High Priority Practices

State Conservationists, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, have the option to select up to 10 high priority practices, which may receive increased payment rates. A high priority practice must meet one of the following criteria:

• Addresses specific causes of impairment relating to excessive nutrients in ground or surface water;
• Addresses the conservation of water, to advance drought mitigation and declining aquifers;
• Meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or
• Is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.

*Selection of practices to receive higher payment should incentivize conservation practices that have high potential for conservation but are underutilized.
EQIP High Priority Practices
(Maximum of 10 practices allowed)

• 328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
• 338 – Prescribed Burning
• 386 – Field Border
• 391 – Riparian Forest Buffer
• 393 – Filter Strip
• 420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting
• 472 – Access Control
• 590 – Nutrient Management
• 595 – Pest Management
• 657 – Wetland Restoration
NRCS Partnership Initiatives & Grants

Core Principles:
- Innovation
- Partner Contributions
- Impact
- Partnerships & Management
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- Existing Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects in Nebraska
  - Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery – CPNRD & TPNRD
  - Regional Grassland Bird & Grazing Enhancement Initiative – NGPC.
  - Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife – NGPC
  - Republican Basin Conservation Partnership – LRNRD
  - Divots in the Pivots – UBBNRD/RWBJV
  - Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 & 27 – LPNNRD
  - Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam – PMRNDRD

- New award for FY2019
  - Resilient Futures for Nebraska Soils – TNC, UBBNRD & CPNRD
    - PPA (Programmatic Partnership Agreement) executed soon
Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery (5 Years, 2015 – 2019)

- CPNRD, TPNRD
- $ 1.7 million
- 1 year extension approved
- Expires 05/13/2021
- Renewal Award Approved
- Agreement negotiated and signed prior to May 2021
- Potential 5 year agreement for $2.7 million
Regional Grassland Bird & Grazing Enhancement Initiative (5 years, 2015 – 2019)

- Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa
- $ 885,000 (Nebraska allocation)
- Expires 09/30/2020
RCPP - Nebraska

Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife - 2016
– NGPC

• Initial Allocation = $700,000
• Expires: 12/31/2020
• Approved for FY20 Renewal
  (Expected Approved funds = $700,000)
• Agreement being developed
  (potential 5 years into 2025)
• Next signup in FY2021
RCPP - Nebraska

Republican Basin Conservation Partnership (2016) – LRNRD, MRNRD, URNRD

- $2.1 million allocated
- Additional FA approved = $500,000
- Received one year no cost extension
Expires: 08/08/2021
Divots in the Pivots (2017)

• UBBNRD and RWBJV Partners

• Combination of ACEP-ALE, ACEP-WRE and EQIP

• $1.8 million

• Expires 09/30/2022
RCPP - Nebraska

Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 & 27 (2017)

- LPNNRD Partner
- $1.5 million
- Active Status
RCPP - Nebraska

- Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam (2018)
  - P-MRNRD Partner
  - $4.4 million
  - Active Status
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

• FY 2020 Awards (FY19 APF)
  ➢ 4 proposals received involving Nebraska
  ➢ Awarded 1 RCPP project announced mid April 2020
  ➢ Programmatic Partnership Agreement (PPA) executed June/July 2020 with TNC.
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Resilient Futures for NE Soils

• TNC – Lead Partner
• ~ $4.4 million
  ➢ 3.1 million FA
  ➢ Potential 5yr project
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- FY 2019 Classic Award
  - The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
    Resilient Futures for Nebraska Soils

Funding Amount: $4,419,304
Partner Contributions: $4,397,865
Funding Pool: State/Multi State
Critical Conservation Area (if applicable): N/A

Summary: The Nature Conservancy, supported by project partners, including two Natural Resources Districts, will help farmers in central Nebraska adopt soil health practices on an estimated 100,000 acres over five years, storing 150,000 metric tons CO2e and preventing 375,000 tons of erosion. Alongside this traditional approach to soil health practice adoption, farmers will be connected to carbon markets and the partnership plans to rigorously report on the economic and social outcomes of the project.
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- Proposal Deadlines/Award Announcements
  - FY 2020 RCPP-AFA – proposals were due May 29th in portal
    - Peer reviews are underway and awards announced in September 2020
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- Submitted NE Proposal RCPP-AFA – (15 Projects will be funded)

Nebraska Forest Restoration Partnership
Priority Forest Areas

Oak Priority Regions
- Missouri River Basin
- Nemaha River Basin
- Elkhorn River Basin (eastern 1/2 of priority area)
- Blue River Basin (eastern 1/2 of priority area)
- Platte River Basin (eastern 1/4 of priority area)

Cottonwood Priority Regions
- Republican River Basin
- Loup River Basin
- Blue River (western 1/2 of priority)
- Elkhorn River Basin (western 1/2 of priority area)
- Platte River Basin (western 3/4 of priority area)

Priority area polygons reflect the geographic regions in which the work will be completed. Forest stand perimeters were too fine to project on this map.
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Proposal Deadlines/Award Announcements

- FY 2020/2021 RCPP Classic funding announcement released August 6, 2020
  - Grants.gov: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPPC-21-NOFO0001033
  - Proposals are due November 4, 2020 in RCPP Portal – partner webinar on how to submit a proposal is September 10, 2020 – 2-3pm CST.
  - Awards announced March 2021
National CIG

• Funds the development of promising approaches and technologies—which may or may not be successful!

• Funding rarely provided directly to producers

• Projects often include small-scale pilots or demonstrations

• National and State competitions
CIG On-Farm Trials

- Funds the implementation and evaluation of innovative approaches, systems and practices that we know provide a conservation benefit.

- Funding must be provided directly to producers to offset implementation risk.

- Partners must complete both conservation and economic evaluations.

- Soil Health Demo Trial awardees must agree to use consistent assessment methods.

- National competition only.
Conservation Innovation Grants

• **2019 On-Farm Trials funding announcement released May 15, 2019**
  • 2019 On-Farm Trials Award recipients announced November 26, 2019
  • 4 Nebraska projects approved

• **2020 On-Farm Trials proposals were due 5/29/20**
  • Peer reviews are underway, and awards will be announced September 2020

• **2020 National CIG funding announcement released 4/30/20 – proposals were due 6/29/20**
  • Peer reviews are underway, and awards will be announced September 2020
  • CIG Webinar is September 24th at 12:30 CST
    - Webinar will highlight new innovations in Water Quality
    - Webinar call information is located on the CIG National Website
VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS and HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM (VPA-HIP)

- Competitive Grants Program through grants.gov

- The primary objective of the VPA-HIP is to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by State or tribal governments.

- NE Game & Parks received this three year grant for FY21 because of the well established Open Fields & Water Program (OFW)
  - $3,000,000 Federal Funds
  - $500,000 Non-Federal Funds
EQIP WaterSMART Landscape Conservation Initiative

WaterSMART Program

Supplements Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program – Water Conservation and Efficiency Grants
WaterSMART

Current WaterSMART Projects funded by Bureau of Reclamation in Nebraska:

Upper Republican NRD - 2018
  Remote Water Metering and Conservation Project

Middle Republican NRD – 2019
  Remote Meter Monitoring and Irrigation Water Conservation Project

Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation District – 2019
  Meeker Driftwood Canal SCADA and TCC Modernization Project
EQIP WaterSMART LCI

FY20 Proposals:

One Project Approved: $136,000

FY21 Proposals:

Two Project Proposals Submitted: $1.3 Million
Submissions were due: July 31, 2020
NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE (NWQI)
National Water Quality Initiative

- **Wahoo Creek** – Lower Platte North NRD
- **Bazile Creek** – Lower Elkhorn NRD, Lewis and Clark NRD, Upper Elkhorn NRD
- **Big Sandy Creek** – Little Blue NRD
- **Turkey Creek** – Lower Big Blue NRD
A conservation effort to reduce groundwater nitrates to levels below the drinking water standard.
Wahoo Creek HUC 12s
Selected for the
2016 National Water Quality Initiative in Nebraska

Legend
Selected HUC12s

Wahoo Creek Category 5
Impaired at this point

North Fork Wahoo Creek
Miller Branch-Wahoo Creek
Dunlop Creek-Wahoo Creek

SAUNDERS COUNTY
Lower Platte North Natural Resource District

WAHOO

D. Griffith - 1/2016
• FY2020 Applications Received
  o Big Sandy = 0
  o Wahoo Creek = 10
  o Bazile = 41
  o Turkey Creek = 2

• FY2020 NWQI Allocation = $1.3 Million
  o Big Sandy: Contracts = 0, $0
  o Wahoo Creek: Contracts = 10, $350,371
  o Bazile Creek: Contracts = 9, $872,591
  o Turkey Creek: contracts = 2, $56,224
Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs
FY2020 ACEP - Nebraska

- ACEP-WRE Applications = 33
  - 5,900 acres, $16 million estimated cost
- ACEP-WRE approved = 5
  - 910 acres, $3.1 million
- RCPP-WRE Approved = 1
  - 47 acres, $133,200
- ACEP-ALE-GSS approved = 1,
  - 8,900 acres, $2.9 million federal share
- ACEP-WREP Applications = 8
- ACEP-WREP Approved = 5
  - 430 acres, $1.7 million
2019 Spring Flood
EWP – Floodplain Easement Program

- Sign up ended October 31, 2019.
- 34 applications on approximately 6,400 acres.
- 20 applications eligible on approximately 5,500 acres
- Cost estimates approximately $20 million for purchase and restoration on eligible applications.
- Nebraska has received an allocation of $16.6 million
- 7 applications approved on 4,657 acres
- Requested additional $3.2 million to fund rest of applications.
FY2021 ACEP - Nebraska

• Application cutoff date – October 1, 2020
• Appraisals will determine Fair Market Value
  o Percentage GARCS will be used in FY2021
• Compensation rate for 30-year easements is 75% of permanent easement value
FY2021 LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS
LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS

• Meetings completed in January/February 2020

• LOCAL WORK GROUP AGENDA ITEMS:
  o Priority Resource Concerns
  o Fund Pools - Ranking Tools – Screening Tools
    • Revised ranking process for FY2020 – CART
  o Practice Payment Schedule
  o Local issues
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests

  • Irrigation Water Management (449)
    - Add IWM scenario - Modeling
      - Action: Approved – Added scenario “Consultant based IWM No Equipment”

  • Sprinkler System (442)
    - Leave VRI speed control on docket for NRD to use
      - Action: Request to add Practice: 442 - Sprinkler System, Scenario: #6 - VRI
        System Retrofit Speed was denied by NHQ technical specialists
    - Would like to C/S on the required filters needed to irrigate when the water source is from canals
      - Action: Not available in the FY2021 scenarios. Consider editing existing or developing new scenario for FY2022 PPS.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests
  • Planned Grazing System (528)
    - LWG asked if scenarios pay for partial year rest or full year deferment
      - **Action:** The EQIP planning guidance document will be edited to provide clarification and training provided to planners.
    - Add partial deferment scenario instead of just the full year deferment in Scenario 8
      - **Action:** No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
    - Edit or add scenario for livestock deferment under Prescribed Grazing allowing early spring grazing until May 20 or 30th. Livestock then deferred rest of the year.
      - **Action:** No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

- Practice scenario requests
  - Planned Grazing System (528)
    - Add new or edit Scenario 5, Grazing lands 30-73% rest - $15
      - Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
    - Add new or edit Scenario 6, Grazing lands >73% rest - $30
      - LWG comment: Payments are significantly lower than pasture rental rates in eastern NE where stocking rates are higher
      - Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

- Practice scenario requests
  - Planned Grazing System (528)
    - Add new or edit Scenario 8, Livestock Deferment (F1) - $60
      - LWG comment: Full year deferment needs to be comparable to actual rental rates to be competitive
        - Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
    - Add another Livestock Deferment scenario allowing early spring grazing until May 20 or 30. Then defer livestock for remainder of the year.
      - Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

- Practice scenario requests
  - Planned Grazing System (528)
    - Edit 528 rules: Allow prescribed grazing to be cost shared more than once.
      - LWG comment: Currently limiting producers to only one grazing land improvement contract.
    - Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations. Under current policy this would require going to a higher level of management for additional payments.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests

  • Cover Crop (340)
    ➢ Modify existing scenario to allow the ability to hay or graze cover crops when converting cropland to grassland
      ☐ Action: Approved. Current scenario allows this. Training will be provided.
    ➢ Scenario #44 Frost terminated Cover Crop should be allowed to be used in more situations
      ☐ Action: Training will be provided to clarify policy and procedures.

  • Residue Management (329)
    ➢ Should no longer be an incentive payment or reduced to 1 year
      ☐ Action: No change to current policy for FY2021. Under review for FY2022
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests

• Underground Outlet (620)

  ➢ Scenario names are confusing. Recommend change to reflect type and size of pipe rather than number of risers in system.
  ❑ Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.

  ➢ Need additional underground outlet scenarios (no specific suggestions)
  ❑ Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.

  ➢ Noted that most scenarios were for PVC pipe, other types such as CMP, dual wall, etc., are not well represented
  ❑ Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenario recommendations.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests

  • Grassed Waterway (412), Terrace (600), WS Basins (638)
    ➢ Waterways, terrace and basins should be paid by acre, should be increased 20-25%
    ❑ Action: No change for FY2021, scenarios are set. Under review for FY2022 practice scenarios recommendations.

  • Water Well (642)
    ➢ Add scenario to convert power supply on existing stock wells to solar. Currently policy only allows solar system on new wells.
    ❑ Action: No change from current policy for FY2021
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests

  • Conservation Crop Rotation (328)
    ➢ Require cover crop if cash crop removed by Oct. 15, fund the seeding costs
    ❑ Action: no change to policy for FY2021

  • Nutrient Management (590)
    ➢ LWG does not agree with allowing producers to exceed UNL recommendations and still be in compliance (>15%)
    ❑ Action: Training will be provided to clarify policy and procedure
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests
  
  • Add new practice: Land Smoothing (466)
    
    ➢ Practice needed to remove surface irregularities (old or broken terrace systems) which interfere with new systems
    
    ➢ Adapt existing Kansas payment scenario #2.
      
      o Field Shaping Scenario Description: Removing irregularities on the land surface of cropland by use of heavy equipment.

FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Practice scenario requests
  • Suggestion to allow payments for perimeter fencing and livestock water systems in cropland for grazing cover crops after harvest.
    - Action: No change for FY2021. This is not allowed on cropland under current policy. Requires complete conversion to grassland.

• Add new practice for ditching
  - Practice needed for ditching (drainage) of inundated fields, new resource concerns due to excess precipitation (shelterbelts drowning out)
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Change practice payment caps

➤ Reduce (590) Nutrient Management – From $10,000 to $7,500
   Action: No change for FY2021. Payment cap remains at $10,000.00

➤ Increase (313) Waste Storage Facility – From $80,000 to $150,000
   Action: Increased cap to $100,000.00 for FY2021.

➤ Increase (340) Cover Crop – from $7,500 to $10,000
   Action: No change for FY2021. Payment cap remains at $7,500.00

➤ Increase (327) Conservation Cover – currently $7,500
   Action: No change for FY2021. Payment cap remains at $7,500.00
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

- Retain existing payment caps
  - (329) No Till - $5,000
  - (528) Prescribed Grazing, Adaptive Mgmt. - $15,000
  - (645) Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt. - $7,500
  - (595) Integrated Pest Mgmt. - $10,000

- Action: All remain unchanged for FY2021
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

- Practice Payment Schedule – Payment Rate Calculation

  - Localize scenario cost determinations (4 state region too large)
    - LWG Comment: Supplemental funding from NRD can be inaccurate if rates reflect region as opposed specifically to Nebraska

  - Action: No change for FY2021. Practice component costs are based on Regional cost data as required by National policy and procedure.

  - Recommend locally based payment rate using bills submitted from producers.
    - LWG Comment: Actual bills are needed in order to determine if payment rate is too high or too low.

  - Action: Monitor practice payments in this Local Work Group area during FY2021 and implement procedure to request receipts for practices applied if it is determined that additional receipts are needed for quality assurance or for assessment of cost data.
FY2021 Local Workgroup Recommendations

• Additional Fund Pools Requested
  - Forestry
  - Long Pine Watershed
  - Infrastructure Repair
  - Cover Crops
  - Grassed Waterway
  - Farm Technology
  - Water Quality
  ❑ Action: Concur, support local ranking decisions being made by LWGs.

• EQIP application and ranking cutoff dates
  - Multiple Recommendations
  ❑ Action: Establish mid November application cutoff and January ranking deadline.
QUESTIONS?