



United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance is now available for conservation practices related to shellfish aquaculture, oyster reef habitat restoration, and finfish aquaculture, too!

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground water and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

The NRCS New Jersey Aquaculture Initiative is being offered through EQIP.

All conservation practices available through EQIP are approved for the Aquaculture Initiative. Primary practices supported through the EQIP Aquaculture Initiative include:

Gear Cycling - This practice is used to reduce, clean, or remove biofouling organisms and other waste from bivalve production areas. Fouled gear is brought on shore, air dried, and cleaned in an approved off-site location. NRCS assistance can help to defray the cost of extra equipment, increased labor, and record keeping.

Rack Replacement - Wildlife movement can be inhibited by the oyster production racks. Wildlife (especially horseshoe crabs) may be trapped beneath the racks during low tide and unable to reach nesting habitat on shore. NRCS can provide assistance to replace existing oyster racks with new racks built and installed to the appropriate height and spacing to allow for wildlife movement under and around racks. Rack height is at least 12" from the surface.

(Continued)



EQIP
Environmental Quality Incentives Program

NRCS New Jersey
Aquaculture Initiative



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment. NRCS has been "helping people help the land" for more than 75 years, and the agency has recently been expanding services for producers whose harvests come from the sea.

Photo credit: njseagrant.org

Application periods for the Aquaculture Initiative are posted on the NJ NRCS website.

www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov - Follow link to *Current Funding Opportunities*.

Never worked with NRCS? Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted to learn how to get started with NRCS!



Photo courtesy of rutgers.edu

Oyster Bed Restoration or Enhancement/ Replenishment - Successful oyster growth occurs on beds that have a firm substrate. Land used for aquaculture production that needs improvement to the bottom for spat on shell and wild oyster production may qualify for oyster bed restoration assistance.

Shoreline Protection - Prevent the loss of land or damage to banks of streams, lakes, reservoirs, or estuaries (does not apply to ocean fronts). Vegetation and bioengineering treatments are used to stabilize low risk areas.

Other available practices include:

- Agricultural Energy Management Plan
- Constructed Wetland
- Farmstead Energy Improvement
- Heavy Use Area Protection
- Lighting System Improvement
- Waste Storage Facility, and more!

Benefits

Eligible program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices or activities like conservation planning that address natural resource concerns. Payments are made after practices and activities are implemented.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Control (lease) or own eligible land
- Comply with adjusted gross income limitations (AGI) provisions
- Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.

How to apply

Visit NRCS at your local USDA Service Center to apply for the EQIP Aquaculture Initiative. Applications for NRCS conservation programs may be submitted anytime. However, application periods are set periodically so that applications can be ranked and funding awarded.

“[Current Funding Opportunities](#)” are posted on the New Jersey NRCS website and linked from the [NRCS New Jersey home page](#). Applications are funded at designated application cut-off dates as long as funding is available.

NRCS will help eligible producers develop a conservation plan, which will become the basis of the EQIP contract. EQIP applications will be ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

Visit NRCS at the USDA Service Center that serves your county!	
Hackettstown	(908) 852-2576 101 Bilby Road, Building 1-H, Hackettstown, NJ 07840 (Sussex, Warren, Hudson, Essex, Passaic, Morris, Bergen)
Frenchtown	(908) 782-4614 687 Pittstown Road, Suite 2, Frenchtown, NJ 08825 (Hunterdon, Somerset, Union)
Freehold	(732) 462-0075 4000 Kozloski Road, Suite D, PO Box 5033 Freehold, NJ 07728 (Monmouth, Middlesex, Mercer)
Columbus	(609) 267-1639 1971 Jacksonville-Jobstown Rd., Columbus, NJ 08022 (Burlington, Camden, Ocean)
Woodstown	(856) 769-1126 51 Cheney Road, Suite 2, Woodstown, NJ 08098 (Salem, Gloucester)
Vineland	(856) 205-1225 1318 So. Main Rd, BLDG 5 Suite A, Vineland, NJ 08360 (Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland)

Updated 11/2/2015



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