

Future Directions Funding Request

TREATY RIGHTS AT RISK AND SALMON RECOVERY

The right to harvest salmon is guaranteed to multiple Northwest Tribes. The decline in salmon populations has resulted in the Northwest Tribes working with the Council on Environmental Quality to ensure that Federal Agencies take action to address salmon recovery. NRCS is one of the Federal Agencies that has been engaged in the Treaty Rights at Risk actions. **NRCS-WA is requesting 1.5 million in EQIP FA and the allowable TA in FY16 to continue these efforts. Commensurate funding levels continuing in FY-17 and FY-18 will be requested.**

Natural Resource Concerns:

NRCS-WA has successfully used EQIP to target improvements in salmon habitat. Specific examples include replacing undersized culverts to make stream reaches fully passable to migrating salmon and to plant riparian buffers to reduce stream temperatures and help recruit large woody debris. Additionally, WA-NRCS currently has an agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to seek alternatives to increase stream flow in critical stream reaches.

Urgency:

The Northwest Tribes are pressing for immediate action by all Federal Agencies. The current drought conditions further underscore the need for action.

Approach for Providing Accelerated Assistance:

WA-NRCS has identified geographic priority areas including Puget Sound, watersheds along the Pacific coast, and the Columbia River. Within these broad geographic areas, priority watersheds have been identified and ranking criteria have been developed for each geographic region. The ranking criteria include such considerations as listed species, 303d listed streams, linear feet of habitat made fully passable and the potential to implement EQIP based upon the presence of eligible land and eligible program participants. Implementing conservation practices for effective salmon recovery is expensive. Typical EQIP contracts will involve the removal of an undersized culvert and replacement with the properly sized culvert or bridge as well as the associated channel work required to meet the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) fish passage standards. These practices require a high effort of Technical Assistance to properly design and install practices to meet mandated channel criteria and for the landowner to secure the necessary permits. Additional funding beyond the typical WA allocation is needed to focus funding on this need.

Partner Engagement:

NRCS-WA has successfully engaged a multitude of partners to implement EQIP for salmon recovery efforts. We have an agreement in place with WDFW to provide PE stamped engineering designs and to provide assistance with permitting. NRCS-WA also has a current agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to analyze opportunities to improve stream flow in critical reaches. Additionally, we are working with Non-governmental organizations such as American Farmland Trust, The Nature

Conservancy, and multiple Land Trusts. NRCS-WA involves the Washington State Conservation Commission, individual Conservation Districts and other sources of state funding such as the Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP), Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRF Board) as well as private funding leverage to EQIP funding to increase landowner participation and accelerate implementation.

Outcomes and Metrics:

Based upon previous performance of salmon recovery efforts in WA, 1.5 million in FA would equate to approximately 14 miles of stream made fully passable to listed species and approximately 14 acres of riparian forest buffers installed. Conservation practices will be installed on cropland, forestland, range and pasture. The outcomes of each contract in terms of stream miles made fully passable and acres of riparian buffers will be tracked and aggregated into a report at the conclusion of contract obligations.

Timelines:

A special program signup will be held in FY-16 to attract high quality projects on both the east and the west side of the Cascade Mountains. Outreach meetings will be conducted to encourage entities to leverage funding and/or technical assistance. The goal will be to have all practices installed within three years of contract obligation.