

2011 Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Local Work Group Summary for Chama Field Office

Introduction:

The Chama NRCS field office is located in north central Mountains of New Mexico, 7 miles south of the Colorado Line, approximately 109 miles east of Farmington, New Mexico, 111 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico and approximately 96 miles west of Taos, New Mexico. Elevations range from 12,200 in the San Juan Range of Rocky Mountains down to an elevation of 6,400 feet in the Western Plateaus and Mesas. The Major Land Resource are MLRA-48 RM, MLRA-36 WP.

Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District

The Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District is located in the north-central part of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. It is bounded on the north by the Colorado-New Mexico state line, on the east by the Tierra Amarilla Grant line, on the south roughly by the southern boundary of the Carson National Forest, and on the west by the Rio Chama and on part of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, covering approximately 952,750 acres.

Approximately 719,476 (75%) acres of the area is rangeland. About 100,000 acres of this is private forestlands which are graze able, and offer the best return under multiple purpose management rather than being used solely for timber production. Carrying capacities vary greatly due to the difference in elevation, precipitation, past management, and topography. However, they are generally more productive than most other areas of New Mexico. Grazing generally occurs only during the late spring, summer, and early fall due to the high elevations with resulting heavy winter snows. Approximately 215,767 (23%) acres of the area is wooded. The timber/woodland resources consist of pinyon-juniper, aspen, ponderosa pine, mixed conifer types. The types are average quality, the potential is high if better management is implemented. These lands furnish many other important functions as watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreation, and grazing for livestock. The value of these areas for such multiple purposes far exceeds its value for any single purpose. Timber production is average to poor in the ponderosa type as compared to the rest of the state, and good in the mixed conifer types. Approximately 17,507 (2%) acres of the area is in irrigated hayland. The soils are moderately deep to deep over shale. Water tables have been developed in some of the irrigated areas. Surface water provides nearly all of the water used for irrigation. Much of this is diverted from the perennial flows of the Rio Chama, Canones, Nutrias, Brazos and the Navajo rivers. Other systems provide irrigation water only during the spring months. Most irrigation systems are open earthen ditches with no control devices or structures. Users presently have no way of determining the quantity of water they use each year and as a result some of the lands are over irrigated and water logged, thus reducing yields and land values.

Jicarilla Apache Nation

The Jicarilla Apache Nation in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico is located between the Colorado state line on the north and Cuba on the south end. The Jicarilla is about 60 miles long north to south and varies from 20-30 mile wide east and west. Dulce, near the Colorado line, is headquarters for the Jicarilla Apache. The Jicarilla Apache Reservation was established by Executive Order in 1887 and entails 843,000 acres in the area. Elevations range from 6,500' on the south end to 9,500' on the mountains northern part.

Livestock production is the principle agricultural endeavor on the Reservation. Approximately 780,686 (93%) acres (371,621 acres of grazeable woodland and 409,247 acres of open rangeland) of the Reservation is grazing lands. The north half of the Reservation is used for summer range and the south half for winter range. The area consists of 95 range units with cattle being the predominant livestock. Vegetation on the Jicarilla Apache Nations is quite variable due to variations in elevation and precipitation. Generally the lower elevation sagebrush-grassland mesas in the central and southern parts of the Jicarilla Nation are dominated by a big sagebrush over story and blue grama understory. At intermediate elevations pinyon-juniper woodlands and mountains browse shrub land are the primary vegetation types. Coniferous forest dominates the higher elevation mountainous areas. Irrigated hayland is a small but booming resource at 890 acres (1%) that the Jicarilla Apache Nation is beginning to focus on with center pivot developments on the southern extents and pockets of areas that utilize mountain spring run off from the river systems to irrigate hayland.

Local Work Group:

The LWG consists of various local, state, federal, and Native American government agencies. The area represented is the Upper Chama Soil and Water District (see description above) and the Jicarilla Apache Nation. The Meeting was held and announced by local paper and radio as well as written invitation. Two separate LWG meetings were held at different times for the purpose of each separate community members to address their own resource concerns for their respective region. The Upper Chama members held their LWG on September 28, 2010 at the Rio Arriba County Council Chambers in Tierra Amarilla, NM and the Jicarilla Tribe held their LWG meeting on September 27, 2010 @ the Dept. of Game and Fish Building, in Dulce, NM.

Priority Resource Concerns:

Priority Resource Concerns were established and agreed to by the local work group:

Water Quantity

- Increased irrigation water delivery
- Accessible livestock and wildlife water supply
- Reduction of overstocked volume of trees

Water Quality

- Decrease in sediment and nutrient levels in irrigation water
- Suitable livestock drinking water
- Decreasing flow rates to reduce erosion on forest lands

Plant Condition

- Reduction of noxious and invasive weeds
- Increase in quality of hay land species
- Improved health and vigor of native range plants for livestock and wildlife
- Improving available resources for residual forest stands, post treatment

Soil Erosion

- Reduction of sediment loading of irrigation systems
- Reduction of rangeland gully erosion
- Implement erosion control measures after forestry treatments

Soil Condition

- Increase in Organic matter
- Reduction in compaction on hay land and grazing land

Funding Considerations:

The funding considerations are as follows:

Non-Tribal Allocation:

- Small Farmer Initiative (SFI) \$50,000.00 (Matched with State additional allocation)
- For the SFI allocation, if all the monies are not completely used, the remaining allocation is to be placed in the main Non-Tribal Field Office Allocation .

Remaining Non-Tribal Field Offices Allocation:

- Rangeland 40%
- Irrigated Hay land 40%
- Forested 20%

Tribal Allocation:

- Rangeland 75%
- Irrigated Land 25%

- For the tribal allocation, if there are no irrigation applications, the allocation is to be used for Rangeland applications.

Practice Caps:

Non Tribal Allocation: In the local workgroup meeting, the group decided to place a cap on:

- 587 – Structure for Water Control practice of \$15,000 for 2011.

Tribal Allocation: The local workgroup meeting, the group decided to place a cap on:

- Brush Management (314) of \$25,000
- Pumping Plant (533) of \$8,500
- Well (642) of \$10,000

Cost Share Rate Factor:

As per the New Mexico Bulletin No. 440-10-1 regarding Field Office Proposals, we support all practices being at 75% cost share. For practices implemented by successful Beginning Farmer-Rancher, Limited Farmer-Rancher and Socially Disadvantage applicants a 90% cost share will be used. All practices currently in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) with cost associated in the payment schedule, including management incentives, will be available for all resource concerns, all land uses. It will be the responsibility of the planner to provide accurate resource management system alternatives to the client.

Please refer to the FY 2011 EQIP cost list for final practice payment rates.

Ranking Criteria:

Screening Criteria: For ranking purposes, a high and low priority will be set. Answering yes to question 3 for the grazing lands, irrigated crop land, and wood land local ranking question will put applicant into low priority.

Tie Breakers: The Irrigated hay land tie-breaker will be the difference in percent efficiency from benchmark to planned condition of the FIRS tool as determined by field office staff. The Grazing lands tie breaker will be the change in percentage of rest. Forested tie breaker will be deviation from target basal area.

Please refer to the ranking criteria links for specific information.

Watershed Initiative:

None recommended for this year.

Small Acreage Initiative:

None recommended for this year

GUIDELINES for FY 2011 Small Farmer Initiative for the Upper Chama Service Area

Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to Small Scale Farmers. The target audience is defined as small farmers who have historically not participated in nor ever ranked high enough to be selected for a contract. We must be innovative in allowing small farmers to select practices that are best suited for their particular operations while at the same time low enough in cost to be effective and practical for small farms to implement and maintain.

In developing and implementing this Small Farmer Initiative in Chama, NM, NRCS will use technical practices and programs to help break through potential barriers to participation in USDA programs by small farmers.

Issue

There are ongoing concerns over the low participation of small farmers in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm Bill Programs.

Eligibility

The resource concerns to be addressed in the Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District are: (1) Water Quantity – water management, irrigation and availability for livestock. (2) Noxious Weeds Control. (3) Rangeland Health.

- All Small Farmers Initiative funds will be used to help **small farmers with 75 acres or less of irrigated land and/or 200 acres or less of rangeland and/or 200 acres or less of woodland owned or controlled by participant**. Acres can be any combination of irrigated hay land and/or grazing land and/or woodland, with total acres not more than 275 in combination.
- **Applicants with grazing land** must be willing to follow a prescribed grazing plan.
- **Applicants with harvestable woodlands** must have a forest management plan.
- **Applicant Household Income will be limited to \$60,000 per year.**
- **2010 Average State Cost will be used when developing contracts.**
- **Small Farmer Initiative eligible practices with some planning guide lines:**
 1. **Fence** – Practice Code 382 includes new building cross fencing. No boundary fences are cost shareable. Existing fence (previously NRCS cost shared) are only eligible if older than 20 years
 2. **Ponds** – Practice Code 378 include the development of new ponds. Pond clean out is not an acceptable practice. Existing ponds (previously NRCS cost shared) over 20 years old are replaceable under cost share. Ponds will be considered if livestock water is not adequate.

3. **Pest Management** – Practice Code 595. Treatment will be for Noxious weeds and for Chicory which has been identified as a weed priority by the Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District.
 4. **Brush Management** – Practice Code 314. Range planting will be necessary if it is a ground disturbing practice to control erosion.
 5. **Structures For Water Control** – Practice Code 587 includes the construction of a new structure. Existing structures (previously NRCS cost shared) are only eligible if older than 20 years.
 6. **Irrigation Field Ditches** – Practice Code 388 includes the development of new ditches. Existing ditches (previously NRCS cost shared) are only eligible if older than 15 years.
 7. **Range Planting** – Practice Code 550.
 8. **Pasture and Hay land Planting** – Practice Code 512.
 9. **Land Smoothing** – Practice Code 466.
 10. **Irrigation Pipelines** – Practice Code 430.
 11. **Water Wells** – Practice Code 642 includes the drilling of a new well. Replacement of existing wells (previously NRCS cost shared) are only eligible if well is older than 20 years. Water wells will be considered if livestock water is not adequate.
 12. **Watering Facility** – Practice Code 614 includes installation of new tanks and troughs. Watering facilities will be considered if livestock water is not adequate.
 13. **Livestock Pipeline** – Practice Code 516.
 14. **Pumping Plants** – Practice Code 533.
 15. **Forest Stand Improvement** – Practice Code 666.
 16. **Tree and Shrub Establishment** – Practice Code 612.
- **Above practices will be cost shared at the participant's eligibility rate: General, Beginning Farmer/Rancher, or Limited Resource Producer.**