

2011 Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Local Work Group Summary for the Espanola Field Office

Introduction:

The Espanola Field Office is located in the north central part of the state, in the Rio Grande Valley, just below the confluence of the Rio Chama and Rio Grande. The Rio Grande is New Mexico's main waterway and dissects the entire state from north to south, providing habitat and life to all species within the narrow corridor. The Espanola Field Office area consists of surface irrigated small farms and small rangeland livestock operations. Organic farming of produce is increasing in the area along with specialty crops such as herbs. Many individuals and families grow hay on irrigated land and graze federal lands with permits during the summer and in some cases year around. The area also includes two Native American pueblos, Santa Clara and Okay Owingeh, as well as various Spanish Land Grants that all have deep roots to the land and agriculture.

Local Work Group:

The East Rio Arriba SWCD invited members to the Local Work Group Meeting on September 8, 2010 at the East Rio Arriba SWCD office. At this meeting new items for the EQIP 2011 program year were reviewed and recommendations were received. Invitations were sent to federal agencies, state and local governments and to the two Pueblo Governors within the SWCD. Representatives from the East Rio Arriba SWCD, Farm Service Agency, and NRCS responded to the invitation and provided input for recommendations.

Priority Resource Concerns:

The priority resource concerns were revisited and it was decided that Soil Quality be added to the list. The Local Work Group agreed that the following are all priority resource concerns:

- Water quantity and quality
- Soil erosion (by water and wind)
- Restoring and improving wildlife habitat (Along Riparian Corridors)
- Noxious Weeds
- Forest and Watershed Health
- Soil Quality

Funding Considerations:

The Local Work Group was informed that the State will obligate funds by land use for non-tribal and tribal lands. The Local Work Group reaffirmed that the non-tribal funds will be split 70 percent to Irrigated Cropland and 30 percent to Grazing Land. If funds are available in either land use category then the funds can be moved to the land use in need of funds. If there is not a need then the money will return to the NW

Area for redistribution. The group also decided the same conditions will apply to the tribal allocation as previously stated.

It was recommended by the group that all practices currently in the Field Office Technical Guide with cost associated in the cost docket, including management practices, will be available for all resource concerns and for all land uses. The group was also informed that EQIP 2011 cost share rates will be flat rates and that beginning farmers/ranchers, Limited Resource Producers, and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/Ranchers would receive 90 percent cost share unless a lower rate is approved by the State Technical Committee, based on the Area Conservationist recommendation. No payment caps were suggested by the Local Work Group as long as the resource concerns were addressed.

Please refer to the links to view the final practices, cost share rates and component costs.

Ranking Criteria:

The Local Work Group (LWG) reviewed ranking sheets from previous year and decided to keep the ranking sheets the same. It was also recommended that all practices be included under all different types of funding categories. In the past different practices have been excluded out of different types of land use categories but are sometimes needed to address resource concerns. An example of this is Stream bank and Shoreline protection (580), where there may be irrigated land that is close to a water body that may need to address erosion along the bank. In the past we could not include the component because it was not normally associated with irrigated land but more with wildlife or forest resource concerns. Thus it was not included as part of the alternative to address the resource concern on the producers land because there was not resource concern to match up with the component when ranked.

Please refer to the ranking criteria links for specific information.

Watershed Initiative:

The idea of allocating a separate amount of funds from the area allocation was discussed with the Local Work Group. The group liked the idea but due to already limited amount of funding we currently receive the group felt that any money taken out of initial allocation, even if matched with the same amount, would not have a large enough impact to consider the alternative. The Local Work Group has identified areas where work can be done.

Small Acreage Initiative:

The Small Acreage Initiative was presented to the Local Work Group and discussed as an alternative to fund those producers with low income or who have small acreage and cannot compete with the larger land owners. The Small Acreage Initiative was discussed again with the Local Work Group by the District Conservationist and the group decided not to include the initiative because this need is being met with local cost share program from the East Rio Arriba SWCD. NRCS assists with the program technically when ever requested. The Local Work Group also felt that the ranking was selecting contracts that are addressing the

priority resource concerns and representing a variety of income levels that represent the area. The Local Work Group did not totally dismiss the idea and said they would revisit the idea if they saw that smaller and lower income producers are being overlooked because of their financial restrictions in the future.