

2011 Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Local Work Group Summary for the Lordsburg Field Office

Introduction:

The Lordsburg Field Office is located in the town of Lordsburg, county seat of Hidalgo County, in the southwestern corner of New Mexico. The field office provides assistance to the Hidalgo Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) with a total of about 2.4 million acres. Approximately 55% is state and private lands and 45% federal lands. There is a variety of landscapes ranging from 4,000 feet up to 8,500 feet in elevation. Annual precipitation ranges from 8 to 12 inches throughout most of the county, but the southwestern part of the county averages up to 16 inches. Soils are extremely variable and complex with over 80 mapped soils occurring. They include sandy to gravelly clay or silt clay loams which make up nearly two thirds of the mapped area, deep loamy soils in the Gila River valley, alkaline playas, and rough and broken rock land with very shallow soils. Vegetation includes blue and black grama, tobosa, dropseeds, bush muhly, creosote bush, yucca, Mormon tea, mesquite, and juniper. The only known native population of buffalo grass west of the continental divide is also found in Hidalgo County. Approximately 98% of the land in Hidalgo County is native rangeland with about 2% in cropland or other uses. Ranching operations are primarily cow/calf producers, with cattle grazed on a year-round basis. The primary crop grown on irrigated land is chile, with some corn, alfalfa, milo, cotton and permanent pasture also grown. Cropland is mainly located south of Interstate 10, with the majority being in the area of Cotton City, Animas, and Playas. Pumped groundwater is the only source of irrigation in these areas. The exception to this is the Virden Valley, along the Gila River in the northwest part of the county, which uses a combination of diverted river water and pumped water to irrigate. The population of Hidalgo County is 5,600 with over 27 percent of the population falling below the poverty level. The present economy of the area is based on agriculture with less emphasis on mining or related operations than in the past.

Local Work Group (LWG)

The Mexico. Invitations were sent out to federal, state, general public and local agencies. Ten participants were in attendance and provided input in the initial development of the new 2011 EQIP program year. Purpose of the meeting was to update the Local Work Group (LWG) on outcome of the 2010 EQIP Programs and recommend changes to the 2011 EQIP Program. Representation at the meeting was varied and included: Hidalgo SWCD, NMSLO, FSA Co. Committee, Black Range RC&D, NRCS-AZ and NRCS-NM.

Priority Resource Concerns

Rangeland resource concerns in priority order are:

- Soil Erosion- Sheet and Rill Erosion
- Plant Condition - Noxious and Invasive Plants
- Domestic Animals- Inadequate Stock Water
- Fish and Wildlife- Inadequate Cover/Shelter

Irrigated Cropland - The following two sets of priority resource concerns were decided upon:

Virden Valley in priority order:

- Soil Erosion- Streambank/Shoreline Protection
- Water Quantity- Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land
- Plant Condition- Productivity, Health and Vigor; Noxious and Invasive Plants
- Soil Condition – Organic Matter Depletion
- Fish & Wildlife – Inadequate Food and Water

Rest of the county in priority order are:

- Water Quantity – Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land
- Soil Condition – Organic Matter Depletion
- Soil Erosion – Irrigated Induced and Wind
- Plant Condition – Productivity, Health and Vigor and Noxious and Invasive Plants
- Fish & Wildlife – Inadequate Food and Water

Hidalgo SWCD held a Local Work Group Meeting on September 21, 2009, at the USDA Service Center in Lordsburg, New

Funding Considerations

The local funding allocation will be split accordingly:

Irrigated Cropland: 46%

The funding allocated to irrigated cropland will be further subdivided into:

- Virden Valley 13%
- and the rest of the county 87%

Rangeland: 37%

Local Watershed Initiative: 17%

These funds will remain interchangeable if not obligated within their primary land use.

A payment for chemical control of noxious weeds listed on the NM Noxious Weed Lists A & B will be initiated. Payment rate provided in the payment schedule will be used for Class A and/or B. This practice shall not be a stand alone and should be in addition to at least one other practice in the contract.

A \$92,500 financial assistance cap has been established per practice; cap will be kept the same.

Cost Share Rate Factor

LWG will accept the cost share rate of 75% for structural practices. LWG did not recommend a lower rate.

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

Ranking Criteria

The following screening criteria were developed to place applications by ranking and environmental benefit for initial funding consideration.

Cropland

- Low Priority – scores < 125 pts
- Medium Priority – scores of 126 - 300 pts
- High Priority – scores > 300 pts

Since low priority applications do not address resource concerns this category will not be considered for funding until all medium and high priority applications are funded.

Any ties in irrigation will be broken using the following hierarchy:

- The highest change in efficiency (FIRS)
- The highest change in Soil Condition Index

Grazingland

- Low Priority – score <120 pts
- Medium Priority – scores of 120 – 200 pts
- High Priority – scores > 200 pts

Since low priority applications do not address resource concerns this category will not be considered for funding until all medium and high priority applications are funded.

Any ties in grazingland will be broken using the following hierarchy:

- The highest positive change in rangeland health
- The highest percent of deeded land in contracted area

Please refer to the ranking criteria links for specific information.

Watershed Initiative The LWG will pursue a Watershed Initiative for this fiscal year to cost share Irrigation center pivot (442) to meet water quantity resource concerns on irrigated cropland.

Small Acreage Initiative The LWG will not pursue a Small Acreage Initiative for this fiscal year.