

2011 Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Local Work Group Summary for the Mountainair Field Office

INTRODUCTION:

The Mountainair FO covers 1.23 million acres in central New Mexico. The FO covers parts of 4 counties, Torrance, Socorro, Lincoln, and Valencia. The western portion of the area drains into the Rio Grande, the southeastern portion into the Pecos, and the northeastern and northern portions recharge the Estancia Underground Basin. Elevation ranges from 10,000 ft. down to 5000 ft. Topography ranges from steep mountain slopes to gently rolling hills, mesas, and alluvial valleys. Growing season is approximately 180 days with first frost from 9/15-10/15 and last frost from 3/15 – 4/15. Soils developed from limestone on the slopes with mixed alluvium from quartzite, schist, gneiss igneous rock and limestone in the lowlands. Long-term average precipitation is 14.2 in/yr. Vegetation ranges from conifer forests to shrub/shortgrass rangelands. The majority of the area is rangeland with approximately 4000 acres irrigated cropland.

LOCAL WORK GROUP:

Participants at the LWG meeting included representatives from Claunch-Pinto SWCD, USFS, and NM Game & Fish. The LWG met on September 17, 2010. Facilitating the meeting was District Conservationist Louis King.

The attached meeting sign-in sheet documents the LWG representation at the September 17 meeting.

PRIORITY RESOURCE CONCERNS:

The LWG has identified the following resource concerns:

- Watershed Health
 - Soil Erosion and post-fire effects on burned and downstream land. Soil Condition-decrease in Rangeland Site Stability, Rangeland Hydrologic Cycle, Plant Condition-Productivity, Health and Vigor,
 - Water Quality – Excessive suspended sediment and turbidity in surface water due to soil erosion, ash and sediment load from burned areas.
 - Brush control on Grazed Range and Timber Stand Improvement on Forested (Timber) Land. Soil Condition-decrease in Rangeland Site Stability, Rangeland Hydrologic Cycle, Plant Condition-Productivity, Health and Vigor, Noxious and Invasive plants.
 - Water Quantity – increase recharge into the Estancia Basin, Inefficient water use on irrigated land, rangeland hydrologic cycle.
- Grazing management - Invasive and Noxious weeds. Wildfire hazard
- Subdivision/Development Issues – loss of productive land to development, Loss of Wildlife Habitat to fragmentation.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS:

The LWG recommends 20% of initial allocation for matching watershed initiative funds, with the balance as follows:

80% - Rangeland

10% - Irrigated Cropland

10% - Non-Industrial Private Forestland

Funds can be moved between these priorities based on applications in each category, and the quality of applications addressing the resource concerns. This break-down of percentages is in line with the actual land uses in the district. The LWG has established a \$30,000 practice cap for Brush Control (314) and Livestock Pipelines (516) which has worked well in the past and will continue to implement it. The LWG recommended not to offer payments for management practices and accepted costs as per 2010 Payment Schedule, and will accept FY 2011 Payment Schedule when developed by NRCS. The LWG again recommends adding a practice to retroactively install covers on existing open-top water storage facilities as a means to reduce water loss to evaporation, as well as to add cattle guards as a cost share item or component in conjunction with fences (382).

COST SHARE RATE FACTOR:

The LWG accepted the 75% cost share rate factor for all structural practices in the payment schedule, as well as the 90% level for LRP, BFR and SD applicants.

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

RANKING CRITERIA:

The Mountainair office will be part of the Northwest Area for FY 2011 & on, and as such, last year's South Area ranking criteria is no longer valid. We used the same general Local Issues questions generated by the Northwest Area, and added specific questions for the Mountainair service area.

In case of ties, which did not occur last year, for grazing land applications, we will use the Rangeland Health evaluation and the applicant with the greatest departure from expected will rank first. On Crop land, the greatest increase in irrigation efficiency.

Please refer to the ranking criteria links for specific information.

2011 EQIP WATERSHED INITIATIVE PROPOSAL:

The LWG has nominated the Abo Arroyo watershed for funding again this year.

The LWG also recommended submitting Arroyo de Manzano Watershed (HUC 1305000110) and Torreon Draw Watershed (HUC1305000111). This will be the second year for these adjoining watersheds which were impacted by the Trigo and Ojo Peak fires in 2007-08. The potential for watershed impairment downstream of the fires is high and targeting these areas may help mitigate future impacts. The proposal is for another \$10,000 of funding.

SMALL ACREAGE INITIATIVE:

The LWG declined to participate in the Small Acreage Initiative due to the proposed Watershed initiatives, which contain the majority of small acreage producers in the district.