

2011 Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Local Work Group Summary for the Socorro Field Office

Introduction:

The Socorro field office serves the Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District which is located close to the geographic middle of New Mexico. The great majority of the irrigated land lies within the floodplain of the Rio Grande. Virtually all of this land is surface irrigated from the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District canals and ditches. One legally recognized acequia is located on the East side of the Rio Grande and south of US60. All of its lands are also surface irrigated from a main ditch which is owned and maintained by the respective acequia members. There are several vineyards located outside of the floodplain which are drip irrigated. Approximately 75% of the irrigated land is considered hay land. Irrigated pasture, chili, oats, and corn are some of the other crops grown on the irrigated lands. All of the irrigated land is in the Chihuahuan Desert shrub Common Resource Area. The Socorro field office has over 1 million acres of native grazing lands. Land ownership is characterized by intermingled deeded, state, and federal lands. Common Resource Areas represented by grazing lands within the District include Upper Rio Grande Rift Valley, Chihuahuan Desert Shrub, Colorado Plateau Mixed Grass Plains, and the Central New Mexico Highlands.

Local Work Group:

Membership of the LWG consists of local officials of the following entities:

- USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA – RC&D
- USDA- Farm Service Agency & County Committee
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District
- NM State Lands Office
- NM State Forestry
- Socorro County Commission
- Socorro Soil and Water Conservation District Board
- Socorro County Ag Extension Service
- City of Socorro
- NM Game and Fish Department
- NM Environment Department
- Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge
- Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge
- NM Department of Agriculture Field Representative
- Area Stakeholders/Producers

The LWG meeting was held on September 8, 2010 to discuss the implementation of the 2011 EQIP and WHIP programs. The following summary is offered as a proposal for EQIP11 implementation for the NRCS Socorro Field office, based on the recommendations of the LWG and from within NRCS.

Priority Resource Concerns:

The local resource concerns and priorities to be addressed with the implementation of the program are:

Water Quantity

Irrigated cropland

- Inefficient water use on irrigated land

Grazing land:

- Brush encroachment - Noxious or invasive plant species
- Inadequate livestock/wildlife water

Soil Erosion

Irrigated cropland

- Irrigation induced

Grazing land:

- Sheet & Rill - Brush Encroachment, Poor Livestock Distribution
- Wind - Brush Encroachment
- Gully - Brush Encroachment, Poor Livestock Distribution

Plant Condition

Irrigated cropland:

- Productivity, Health & Vigor - Noxious or invasive plant species

Grazing Lands:

- Productivity, Health & Vigor - Brush encroachment - Noxious or invasive plant species
- Forage Quality and Palatability – Brush encroachment, Noxious or invasive plant species
- Not adapted or suited – Brush encroachment, Noxious or invasive plant species

Water Quality

Irrigated cropland:

- Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
- Noxious or invasive plant species - Parrotfeather

Grazing Land:

- Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water - Brush encroachment

AFO/CAFO:

- Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
- Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater

Funding Considerations:

The LWG divided the local funding as follows:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • AFO/CAFO | 5% |
| • Grazing land | 35% |
| • Irrigated Cropland (includes irrigated pasture) | 60% |

These percentages may vary depending on the actual amount of money needed to fully fund the highest ranking irrigated, grazing lands, or AFO contracts. The requirement that 60% goes to livestock concerns should be met, due to the fact that a significant amount of the irrigated cropland is in irrigated pasture.

Cost Share Rate Factor:

The LWG decided not to cost share management practices, due to the fact that the Socorro FO has more applications for structural practices than allocation of funds.

All eligible practices will be cost shared at 75% as proposed by the SO, except for the producers who certify Historically Underserved (HU), which will receive the higher rate according to the approved incentive schedule.

The State Payment Schedule will be used. The \$75,000 payment limitation per practice will remain in effect.

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

Ranking Criteria:

The Ranking Criteria from the 2010 program will be used again if available.

Screening Criteria:

All Applications:

- Low Priority – Previously terminated contract.

Irrigated Cropland:

- High Priority – Drip/Microirrigation, Sprinkler
- Medium Priority – Irrigation delivery (428A, 430--) and 12% or greater increase in irrigation efficiency.
- Low Priority – Less than 12% increase in irrigation efficiency

Grazing Lands:

- High Priority – Brush Management
- Medium Priority – Water development and a positive increase in Rangeland Health
- Low Priority:
 - Continuous grazing and/or no increase in Rangeland Health
 - Less than 25% of Local Issue Points in ranking criteria

AFO/CAFO:

- The Socorro FO will use the South Area AFO ranking and screening criteria

The following criteria will be used to break ties, which may occur when ranking applicants for each respective resource concern:

Irrigated Cropland

1. Highest change in efficiency (FIRS)
2. Exact distance to surface water

Grazing Lands

1. Highest positive change in Biotic Integrity portion of rangeland health.
2. Highest positive change in Soil Site Stability portion of rangeland health.

Animal Feeding Operations

The Socorro FO will use the South Area AFO tie breaking criteria

Please refer to the ranking criteria links for specific information.

Watershed Initiative:

The Socorro LWG decided not to allocate funds to a Watershed Initiative.

Small Acreage Initiative:

The Socorro LWG decided not to allocate funds to a Small Acreage Initiative.