

# 2011 Environmental Quality Incentive Program

## Local Work Group Summary for Truth or Consequences Field Office

### Introduction

The Truth or Consequences Field Office is located in Sierra County and also covers portions of Northern Dona Ana, Northeastern Luna, and Southern Socorro Counties in southwest New Mexico. The office includes SD-2, WP-3, and WP-2 Major Land Resource Areas. It is bordered on the south by the Las Cruces and the Deming Field Offices, on the north by the Socorro and Datil Field Offices, on the east by White Sands Missile Range, and on the west by the Silver City Field Office.

Agriculture in the District consists primarily of ranching and irrigated crop production. The ranches are primarily cow-calf operations. The farms are predominantly chile, corn silage, alfalfa, cotton, onions, wheat, pecans, pasture and other vegetable crops. The primary sources of water are surface diversion from the Rio Grande through Elephant Butte Irrigation District, groundwater from the Nutt-Hockett underground water basins, and surface diversions controlled by acequia groups along tributaries of the Rio Grande.

### Local Work Group (LWG)

- The Local Work Group (LWG) members included representatives from:
- USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- FSA County Committee
- NM Department of Game and Fish
- Cooperative Extension Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Sierra Soil & Water Conservation District
- Caballo Soil and Water Conservation District
- USDA Forest Service
- NMDA
- Jornada RC&D
- NM State Land Office

The meeting of the LWG was held on September 16, 2010 with many of the invited designated agency representatives in attendance.

### Priority Resource Concerns

#### **Irrigated cropland major resource concerns are:**

- *water quantity* - inefficient water use on irrigated lands
- *soil condition* – tillage, compaction, organic matter, damage from sediment deposition
- *plant condition* - productivity, health and vigor

- *soil erosion* - irrigation induced

### **Grazing Land and Forested Land major resource concerns are:**

- *plant condition* - noxious and invasive plants, productivity, health and vigor
- *water quantity* - inadequate water for desired use/rangeland hydrologic cycle
- *domestic animals* - inadequate stock water
- *soil erosion* - classic gully/stream bank
- *fish and wildlife* - inadequate water

AFO/CAFO major resource concerns are:

- *water quality*- excessive nutrients and organics in groundwater
- *air quality* - particulate matter/odor

### **Funding Considerations**

It was the LWG's recommendation that EQIP funds received for use in the Field Office be divided 1% for Woodland concerns, 39% for grazing land concerns, 5% for AFO/CAFO concerns and the remaining field office allocation balance (55%) will be utilized for irrigated cropland concerns. Wildlife habitat concerns will be addressed within each of the previously listed concerns if desired by the producer.

The LWG further recommended adopting and dividing the irrigated cropland into specific areas based on differences in resource concerns/farming practices and designating a percent allocation to each fund code according to the percent of irrigated acreage in three areas; Nutt Hockett 27.2%, Rio Grande South below Caballo Dam 54.8%, and Rio Grande North above Caballo Dam 18%. Reallocation of funds among all fund codes could be accomplished at the discretion of the district conservationist based on need, ranking, and priority of applications if it appeared the applications received did not warrant the amounts originally allocated in those fund codes.

### **Cost Share Rate Factor**

A financial assistance cap of \$95,000 per practice has been established.

No management practices will be contracted or offered.

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

### **Ranking Criteria**

The LWG adopted the South Area/ T or C field office local issues/questions for 2011 to include in the ranking tool for evaluating all cropland, grazing land, and woodland applications. AFO/CAFO applications will be ranked utilizing the South Area AFO/CAFO ranking criteria.

Please refer to the ranking criteria links for specific information.

## **Cropland**

### *Low Priority*

- If points received in local issues section is less than one-fourth total section points, application will be considered low priority.
- Applications with less than 10 percent increase in irrigation efficiency
- Applications with producers who have terminated a previous approved contract.

### *Medium Priority*

- Applications with proposed irrigation practices with an irrigation efficiency improvement of 11 percent to 25 percent.

### *High Priority*

- Applications with proposed sub-surface irrigation practices (micro-irrigation)
- Applications with proposed irrigation practices with an irrigation efficiency improvement greater than 26 percent.

## **Grazing Land**

### *Low Priority*

- If points received in local issues section is less than one-fourth total section points, application will be considered low priority
- Applications using continuous grazing who indicate that the planned grazing system will not change and do not have a permanent source of livestock water will not be considered for funding.
- Applications that will not result in a positive change of at least one point in any of the Range Health Attributes.
- Applications with producers who have terminated or cancelled a previous approved contract.

### *Medium Priority*

- Applications with proposed livestock practices including livestock water and fencing.
- Applications with an improvement of 2 Value Points in the Biotic and/or Soil Site Stability portions of the Rangeland Health Score for all of the Ecological sites.

### *High Priority*

- Applications with proposed livestock practices that include brush control.

- Applications that will result in an improvement of at least greater than 2 in the Rangeland Health Score.

## **Forested Land**

### *Low Priority*

- If points received in local issues section is less than one-fourth total section points, application will be considered low priority.
- Applications using continuous grazing who indicate that the planned grazing system will not change will not be considered for funding.
- Applications that will not result in a positive change of at least one point in any of the Range Health Attributes.
- Applications with producers who have terminated or cancelled a previous approved contract.

### *Medium Priority*

- Applications with proposed livestock practices including livestock water and fencing.
- Applications with an improvement of 2 Value Points in the Biotic and/or Soil Site Stability portions of the Rangeland Health Score for all of the Ecological sites.

### *High Priority*

- Applications with forest land practices that include livestock practices and/or brush control.
- Applications that will result in an improvement of at least >2 in the Rangeland Health Score.

The following is the methodology developed for resolving tied scores on ranking:

## **Irrigated Cropland**

- highest change in efficiency (FIRS)
- distance to surface water
- depth to ground water
- greatest difference in Soil Conditioning Index

## **Grazing Land**

- highest positive change in rangeland health
- highest percent of deeded land in contracted area
- percent change in similarity index
- at risk species habitat that will be benefited

## **Forested Land**

- percent of need to be installed.
- highest positive change to eradicate and /or prevent infestation of class A and/or Class B noxious weeds, as designated by NMDA.
- highest positive change that will enhance habitat for at risk species.

## **Animal Feeding Operations**

- exact distance from surface water
- depth to ground water

## **Watershed Initiative**

The Local Work Group did not recommend targeting a portion of the field office allocation to this initiative. The two existing approved Collaborative Conservation Partnership Initiatives (CCPI) funds will be determined by the State Office.

## **Small Acreage Initiative**

The Local Work Group did not recommend targeting a portion of the field office allocation to this initiative.