

2014 Environmental Quality Incentive Program Proposal

For the Chama Field Office

Introduction:

The Chama NRCS field office is located in north central Mountains of New Mexico, 7 miles south of the Colorado Line, approximately 109 miles east of Farmington, New Mexico, 111 miles north of Santa Fe, New Mexico and approximately 96 miles west of Taos, New Mexico. Elevations range from 12,200 in the San Juan Range of Rocky Mountains down to an elevation of 6,400 feet in the Western Plateaus and Mesas. The Major Land Resource are MLRA-48 RM, MLRA-36 WP.

Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District

The Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District is located in the north-central part of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. It is bounded on the north by the Colorado-New Mexico state line, on the east by the Tierra Amarilla Grant line, on the south roughly by the southern boundary of the Carson National Forest, and on the west by the Rio Chama and on part of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, covering approximately 952,750 acres.

Approximately 719,476 (75%) acres of the area is rangeland. About 100,000 acres of this is private forestlands which are graze able, and offer the best return under multiple purpose management rather than being used solely for timber production. Carrying capacities vary greatly due to the difference in elevation, precipitation, past management, and topography. However, they are generally more productive than most other areas of New Mexico. Grazing generally occurs only during the late spring, summer, and early fall due to the high elevations with resulting heavy winter snows. Approximately 215,767 (23%) acres of the area is wooded. The timber/woodland resources consist of pinyon-juniper, aspen, ponderosa pine, mixed conifer types. The types are average quality, the potential is high if better management is implemented. These lands furnish many other important functions as watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreation, and grazing for livestock. The value of these areas for such multiple purposes far exceeds its value for any single purpose. Timber production is average to poor in the ponderosa type as compared to the rest of the state, and good in the mixed conifer types. Approximately 17,507 (2%) acres of the area is in irrigated hayland. The soils are moderately deep to deep over shale. Water tables have been developed in some of the irrigated areas. Surface water provides nearly all of the water used

for irrigation. Much of this is diverted from the perennial flows of the Rio Chama, Canones, Nutrias, Brazos and the Navajo rivers. Other systems provide irrigation water only during the spring months. Most irrigation systems are open earthen ditches with no control devices or structures. Users presently have no way of determining the quantity of water they use each year and as a result some of the lands are over irrigated and water logged, thus reducing yields and land values.

Jicarilla Apache Nation

The Jicarilla Apache Nation in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico is located between the Colorado state line on the north and Cuba on the south end. The Jicarilla is about 60 miles long north to south and varies from 20-30 mile wide east and west. Dulce, near the Colorado line, is headquarters for the Jicarilla Apache. The Jicarilla Apache Reservation was established by Executive Order in 1887 and entails 843,000 acres in the area. Elevations range from 6,500' on the south end to 9,500' on the mountains northern part.

Livestock production is the principle agricultural endeavor on the Reservation. Approximately 780,686 (93%) acres (371,621 acres of grazeable woodland and 409,247 acres of open rangeland) of the Reservation is grazing lands. The north half of the Reservation is used for summer range and the south half for winter range. The area consists of 95 range units with cattle being the predominant livestock. Vegetation on the Jicarilla Apache Nations is quite variable due to variations in elevation and precipitation. Generally the lower elevation sagebrush-grassland mesas in the central and southern parts of the Jicarilla Nation are dominated by a big sagebrush over story and blue grama understory. At intermediate elevations pinyon-juniper woodlands and mountains browse shrub land are the primary vegetation types. Coniferous forest dominates the higher elevation mountainous areas. Irrigated hayland is a small but booming resource at 890 acres (1%) that the Jicarilla Apache Nation is beginning to focus on with center pivot developments on the southern extents and pockets of areas that utilize mountain spring run off from the river systems to irrigate hayland.

Local Work Group:

The LWG consists of various local, state, federal, Native American government agencies, ranchers and conservation groups. The area represented is the Upper Chama Soil and Water District (see description above) and the Jicarilla Apache Nation. The Meeting was held and announced by local paper and radio as well as written

invitation. Two separate LWG meetings were held at different times for the purpose of each separate community members to address their own resource concerns for their respective region. The Upper Chama members held their LWG on September 6, 2013 at the Rio Arriba County Council Chambers in Tierra Amarilla, NM and the Jicarilla Tribe held their LWG meeting on September 12, 2013 @ the Dept. of Game and Fish Building, in Dulce, NM.

Priority Resource Concerns:

Priority Resource Concerns were established and agreed to by the local work group:

1. Insufficient Water
 - Insufficient moisture management
 - Insufficient use of Irrigation water
 - Accessible livestock and wildlife water supply
 - Reduction of overstocked volume of trees
2. Water Quality Degradation
 - Elevated water temperature
3. Degraded Plant Condition
 - Undesirable plant productivity and health
 - Inadequate structure and composition
 - Excessive plant pest pressure
 - Wildfire hazard, excessive biomass accumulation
4. Inadequate Habitat for fish and wildlife
 - Habitat degradation
5. Livestock Production Limitation
 - Inadequate Livestock water
 - Inadequate feed and forage
6. Soil Erosion
 - Concentrated flow erosion.
 - Sheet, rill, and gully erosion
 - Excessive bank erosion
7. Soil Quality Degradation
 - Subsidence
 - Organic matter depletion
 - Compaction

Funding Considerations:

The funding considerations are as follows:

Non-Tribal Allocation:

- Small Farmer Initiative (SFI) \$50,000.00 (Matched with State additional allocation)
- Cebolla-Nutrias Project Watershed \$30,000.00 (Match with State additional allocation)
- For the SFI and Cebolla-Nutrias Project Watershed allocation, if all the monies are not completely used, the remaining allocation is to be placed in the main Non-Tribal Field Office Allocation .

Remaining Non-Tribal Field Offices Allocation:

- Rangeland 40%
- Irrigated Hay land 40%
- Forestland 20%

Tribal Allocation:

- Forestland 15%
- Rangeland 75%
- Irrigated Land 10%
- For the tribal allocation, if there are no irrigation applications, the allocation is to be used for remaining applications. If there are no forest applications, the allocation is to be used for remaining applications. Likewise, if there are no range applications is to be used for remaining applications.

Practice Caps:

Non Tribal Allocation: In the local workgroup meeting, the group decided not to place any caps as that option did not work for contracts awarded in 2011 as evaluated.

Tribal Allocation: The local workgroup meeting, the group decided to place a cap on:

- Brush Management (314) of \$38,000
- Pumping Plant (533) of \$20,000 – watts based
- Well (642) of \$16,000

Tie Breakers: Applications will be assigned a tracking code by the State program manager on or after February 14, 2014 after all applications are ranked. Once tracking codes have been assigned, if there are any tied applications, the application with the lowest tracking code number will have higher priority. Then next lowest tracking code number applicant will be the next priority and will continue using pattern until funding is utilized.

Screening Criteria:

Applications submitted after October 31 will be considered low priority. Applications that are greater than 3 years in length will be medium priority. All other applications will be high priority.

Cost Share Rate Factor:

As per the New Mexico Bulletin No. 440-13-6 regarding Field Office Proposals, we support all practices being at established amount. For practices implemented by successful Beginning Farmer-Rancher, Limited Farmer-Rancher and Socially Disadvantage applicants the HU rate will be used. All practices currently in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) with cost associated in the payment schedule, including management incentives, will be available for all resource concerns, all land uses. It will be the responsibility of the planner to provide accurate resource management system alternatives to the client.

Ranking Criteria:

<u>Grazing Land Questions?</u>	<u>Points</u>
6. Will the applicant develop a permanent adequate stock water source where one is not already established?	60
7. Will this treatment include practices that will address invasive woody species (if present)?	50
8. Will this treatment include practice(s) that will address Jicarilla Apache Nation (as per JAN Natural Resource Management Plan) or UCSWCD identified invasive or noxious species (if present)?	40
9. Will this treatment include practice(s) that will address sheet & rill erosion (if present)?	30
10. Will riparian zones be protected in this contract (as per JAN Natural Resource Management Plan)?	20
11. Will applicant have documentation proving that they are working with the Northern	20

New Mexico
Cooperative Weed Management Area?

<u>Irrigated Cropland Questions?</u>	<u>Points</u>
14. Will this treatment include practice(s) that will address UCSWCD identified invasive and noxious species (if present)?	60
15. Are you willing to land smooth fields to get better water distribution onto fields?	40
16. Will riparian zones be protected in this contract (as per JAN Natural Resource Management Plan)?	25
17. Will applicant have documentation proving that they are working with the Northern New Mexico Cooperative Weed Management Area?	20

<u>Forestland Questions?</u>	<u>Points</u>
1. Is the pre-treatment stand density heavy (130-150 basal area on forest lands) – (>70% canopy on wood lands)?	100
2. Is the pre-treatment stand density medium (100-130 basal area on forest lands) – (40-70% canopy on wood lands)?	60
3. Will this treatment include practices specific to forestland health?	65
4. Will standing diseased and pest problem trees affecting stand health be removed?	35
5. Does this practice fall within a medium/high priority area as designated by the NM Resources Assessment?	25
6. Will applicant have documentation proving that they are working with the Northern New Mexico Cooperative Weed Management Area?	20

Watershed Initiative:

**Cebolla-Nutrias Project Watershed Proposal
Upper Chama Service Area**

Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to watershed groups. We are working hand in hand with proactive watershed groups that have take the initiative to identify and promote their resource needs and through collaborative efforts are working with multiple agencies at state and federal levels to initiate resource improvement at a watershed level.

In developing and implementing this Watershed Proposal in the Chama, NM service area, NRCS will use technical practices and programs to help break through potential barriers to participation in USDA programs by producers in target area.

Issue

There are ongoing concerns over resource issues in the Cebolla-Nutrias watershed area. On forest and grazing lands there is a resource imbalance as forage is limited during emergence from winter dormancy. Livestock and big game species are in direct competition for forage in these areas. In these areas animal demands on forage are equaled by drinking water demands. On irrigated haylands, on field water distribution is not adequate to provide for growing needs for hayland products for producers who have short season water availability.

On grazing lands the number of acres released to forage production (brush competition removed) will be the measured before and after to show increase of available forage. Hayland areas success will be determined by number of bales (lbs of production) harvested over the three year period.

Outreach

The Cebolla-Nutrias Project group will conduct outreach to eligible producers in the watershed area by word of mouth and in meetings. The NRCS Chama FO/Upper Chama SWCD will put out radio and newspaper ads. Flyers will be available to all to give out concerning this watershed area.

Eligibility

- The resource concerns to be addressed in the Cebolla-Nutrias Project Watershed area are: (1) Water Quantity – Inefficient water use on irrigated lands and inadequate stock water (livestock/wildlife). (2) Noxious and Invasive Plants. (3) Plant Condition, Productivity, Health and Vigor.
- Hay land or Grazing land in the Middle Rio Nutrias (HUC 130201020702), and the Upper Rio Nutrias (HUC 130201020701), and the Headwaters Rio Cebolla (HUC 130201020502) and the Cedar Grove Cemetery-Arroyo Blanco (HUC 130201020501) watersheds will be eligible. Written ownership/control for the length of contract is needed.
- 2014 Average State Cost will be used when developing contracts.
- **All Practices will be reimbursed at established payment schedule rate.**

Small Acreage Initiative:

GUIDELINES for FY 2014 Small Farmer Initiative* for the Upper Chama Service Area

Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to Small Scale Farmers. The target audience is defined as small farmers who have historically not participated in nor ever ranked high enough to be selected for a contract. We must be innovative in allowing small farmers to select practices that are best suited for their particular operations while at the same time low enough in cost to be effective and practical for small farms to implement and maintain.

In developing and implementing this Small Farmer Initiative in Chama, NM, NRCS will use technical practices and programs to help break through potential barriers to participation in USDA programs by small farmers.

Issue

There are ongoing concerns over the low participation of small farmers in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm Bill Programs.

Eligibility

- The resource concerns to be addressed in the Upper Chama Soil and Water Conservation District are: (1) Water Quantity – water management, irrigation and availability for livestock. (2) Noxious Weeds Control. (3) Rangeland Health.
- All Small Farmers Initiative funds will be used to help **small farmers with 75 acres or less of irrigated land and/or 200 acres or less of rangeland and/or 200 acres or less of woodland owned or controlled by participant.** Acres can be any combination of irrigated hay land and/or grazing land and/or woodland, with total acres not more than 275 in combination.
- **Applicants with grazing land** must be willing to follow a prescribed grazing plan.
- **Applicants with harvestable woodlands** must have a forest management plan.
- **Applicant Household Income will be limited to \$60,000 per year.**
- **2014 Average State Cost will be used when developing contracts.**
- **All practices will be reimbursed at the established payment schedule rates.**

Applications for ranking: December 20, 2013.