

2014 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Proposal

For the Mora Field Office

Introduction: The Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Staff at Mora, New Mexico worked in conjunction with the Western Mora and the Mora Wagon Mound Soil and Water Conservation Districts to conduct the Local Work Group (LWG) Meetings. The LWG is made up of various local, state, and federal entities. In addition to meeting the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) requirements, the purpose of the LWG was to identify natural resources concern issues throughout Mora County and help provide guidance and recommendations to NRCS. Mora County consists of approximately 1,125,259 acres of private and state lands, approximately 112,354 acres of federal lands and approximately 4,000 acres of tribal lands. The majority of the land consists of rangelands, which includes Pinon/Juniper 775,259 acres, woodlands 246,520 acres, and 21,000 acres of irrigated/non-irrigated lands.

Local Work Group: The LWG meetings for the Western Mora and Mora-Wagon Mound Soil and Water Conservation Districts were held in preparation for FY 2014 program. The Western Mora SWCD meeting was held September 3, 2013, 10:00am at the Helping Hands in Mora this area represents the west side of the county. The LWG meeting for the Mora-Wagon Mound SWCD was held on September 3, 2013, 4:00 pm at the Wagon Mound, Public Schools at the Zack and Eloisa Montoya Administrative Building this area represents the east side of the county which typically has larger acreage operations. Participation was limited with Western Mora SWCD District Manager attending, New Mexico Environment Department, NRCS Mora Field Office Staff and East Area Staff.

Priority Resource Concerns: NRCS field office staff and area office staff reviewed last year's resource concerns and agreed that they would remain the same for the upcoming year. The following resource concerns have been identified and discussed:

1. Water Quantity – The amount of water being loss due to tree canopies especially in the forest/brush types is reducing water flow in water courses. Snow pack is not reaching the ground and thus reducing run off in spring and it also affecting infiltration into the unground aquifer.
2. Water Quality – The lack of herbaceous vegetation in upland sites is affecting water quality by increasing sediment loads into streams.
3. Soil Erosion – Increased woody vegetation and lack of herbaceous vegetation is resulting in accelerated soil erosion in the form of sheet and rill erosion. Overall soil loss especially top soil loss is a big concern. Gully erosion is also a big concern.
4. Plant Condition - As it relates to both herbaceous vegetation and forest health. Increased woody species vegetation (invasive species i.e. junipers, ponderosa pines etc.) is affecting

herbaceous vegetation vigor, health and overall production levels. Increased trees also increase wildfire hazard potential which is a big concern throughout the county.

5. Water Quantity – The lack of control of irrigation water from acequias/ditches from main ditch or field ditches onto irrigated cropland and or Pasture/Hayland is affecting overall herbaceous production.
6. Wind Erosion- The lack of herbaceous vegetation is affecting top soil being lost during wind events.

Funding Considerations: I have as District Conservationist decided to again leave LWG's previous years funding considerations as is. I have again chosen to divide the fund allocation by resource concerns in each of the major land resource categories. Monies left over in each of the resource categories will be split equally into the remaining resource categories until funds are exhausted. Funds for the land uses will initially be allocated as follows:

Mora-Wagon Mound District

- Grazing Lands (includes Pinon, Juniper, and Ponderosa Pine) - 45%
- Pasture & Hay land (irrigated/non-irrigated) - 20%
- Forested Land – 30%
- Cropland-5%

Western Mora District

- Grazing Lands– 30%
- Pasture & Hay Land (irrigated) - 20%
- Forested Land – 45%
- Cropland (irrigated)-5%

A per practice cap of \$75,000 has been established for all other approved NRCS practices with the exceptions listed below. A per practice cap of \$30,000 has been established for both districts for brush control (314). A per practice cap on Forest Stand Improvement will be established at \$25,000 per contract for both districts. Please refer to the East Area Payment Schedule for a list of eligible practices.

The LWG's from both districts set the cost share rate at 75% for all practices last year and upon review for FY 2014 they will remain at 75%.

The LWG's did not recommend incentive payments for any practices last year and for FY 2014 no incentive payments will be made.

Cost Share Rate Factor: The cost share rate for both districts will be set at 75% as it was last year.

Ranking Criteria: The national ranking tool will be used for evaluating applications. Local issues will be incorporated into the ranking tool.

Tie breakers will be addressed as follows:

- Grazing Lands – Tie breaker will be awarded to the application that has a higher point total in section 3 (Local Issues).
- Cropland (irrigated) – Tie breaker will be awarded to the application with the higher efficiency percentage total based off Farm Irrigation Rating System (FIRS) worksheet.
- Forested Lands – Tie breaker will be awarded to the application with the higher number of trees per/acre from forest inventory worksheet.
- Pasture & Haylands (irrigated) – Tie breaker will be awarded to the application that has a higher point total in section 3 (Local Issues).

Local ranking issues will change from last year with the deletion/addition of the following ranking questions.

Watershed Initiative: As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that a watershed Initiative not be considered in the 2014 proposal.

Small Acreage Initiative: As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that the Small Acreage Initiative be added to the 2014 proposal. The following criteria will be used to evaluate initiative:

- Eligible lands will be Irrigated Cropland and or Pasture/Hayland and will be 20 acres or less
- \$20,000 will be taken from the initial county allocation for the small acreage initiative with the state office matching the \$20,000 for a total of \$40,000
- Available funds will be limited to \$10,000 per contract and any monies left in fund code can be shifted into another fund code if needed
- Tie breaker will be awarded to the application that has a higher point total in section 3 (Local Issues).

Acequia Initiative: As District Conservationist and in discussion with the LWG it was determined that the Acequia Initiative be added to the 2014 proposal. The following criteria will be used to evaluate initiative:

- Eligible lands will be Irrigated Cropland and or Pasture/Hayland irrigated from an acequia within both Western Mora and Mora Wagon Mound SWCD District boundaries.
- Acequia Del Alto Del Norte Diversion Dam Reconstruction (Western Mora SWCD) estimated project cost \$125,000. Currently 25 landowners use the Diversion to divert water from Mora River into acequia. The project is on the State Engineers priority list for projects with final designs being completed in fall of 2013. The Acequia Commission has already signed off on designs for the project. The process to have a formal or informal joint venture signed by all members is scheduled to commence in fall of 2013 with TSP assistance. The acequia has not appointed a member to represent the joint venture. Final designs for project are scheduled to be completed in fall of 2013.

- Buena Vista Community Ditch (Acequia) pipeline/sluiice project (Mora Wagon Mound SWCD) estimated project cost \$100,000. Currently 35 landowners use this acequia to divert water from the Mora River into acequia. The project is not currently on the State Engineers priority list for projects but is on the Field Office priority list next in line for PI, survey and design. No alternatives have been discussed with the group to date but a meeting was held with acequia group last fall to discuss the process of forming either a formal/informal joint venture agreement. The local field office has started the process of getting TSP assistance to complete joint venture agreement in fall of 2013. Final designs will be completed by contract approval date.