

2014 Environmental Quality Incentive Program Proposal

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, NMG&F. The LWG met on September 9, 2013. Facilitating the meeting was District Conservationist Kenneth Lujan. The attached meeting sign-in sheet documents the LWG representation at the September 9th meeting.

Priority Resource Concerns: The LWG has identified the following resource concerns:

A. Grazing land:

1. Insufficient Water – Inefficient moisture management
2. Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
3. Livestock Production Limitation – Inadequate water
4. Livestock Production Limitation – Inadequate feed and forage
5. Inadequate Habitat for fish and wildlife – Habitat degradation

B. Irrigated Crop land:

1. Insufficient Water – Inefficient use of irrigation water
2. Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health

C. Forest/Non-Industrial Private Forest land:

1. Degraded Plant Condition – Wildfire hazard, excessive biomass accumulation
2. Degraded Plant Condition – Excessive Plant Pest Pressure
3. Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Productivity and Health

Funding Considerations:

The LWG recommends \$15,000.00 of initial allocation for matching small acres of 640 acres or less initiative funds, with the balance as follows:

- 80% - Rangeland
- 10% - Irrigated Cropland
- 10% - Non-Industrial Private Forestland

This break-down of percentages is in line with the actual land uses in the district. Funds can be moved between these land uses based on applications in each category, and the quality of applications addressing the resource concerns. The LWG has established a \$35,000 practice cap for Brush Control (314) \$30,000 Livestock Pipelines (516) which has worked well in the past and will continue to implement it. The LWG will also adopt a \$50,000 cap on new Pivots (442) \$20,000 cap on Subsurface Drip (441), and \$20,000 cap on Irrigation Pipelines (430). The LWG recommended not to offer Incentive Payments and accepted costs as per 2013 Payment Schedule, and will accept FY 2014 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 there are a large number of serviceable, open top water storage facilities in the district and the State, it would be a considerable benefit to reduce the overall amount of water lost to evaporation every year. There would also be a reduction in the loss of wildlife which become trapped in large storages, as well as an improvement in water quality associated with these covers.

The LWG made recommendations to add a practice that would allow a producer to refurbish existing metal storage tanks with fiberglass. This was a practice that producer could implement at in the past; it is no longer in the cost docket. It was also recommended that chipping and mulching be added to brush control. The LWG agreed that there are small acre producer that would be interested to utilize chipping and mulching if it had a higher cost share.

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.

Resource Concerns:

- Grazing Land - #1 – Insufficient water – Inefficient moisture management
- #2 – Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
- Irrigated Cropland - #1 – Insufficient Water – Inefficient use of irrigation water
- #2 – Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
- Forest/NIPF - #1 – Degraded Plant Condition – Wildfire hazard, excessive biomass accumulation
- #2 - Degraded Plant Condition – Excessive Plant Pest Pressure

Below are the proposed Mountainair Field Office ranking questions, to go with the proposed general Area questions submitted by the Northwest Area staff.

Grazing Lands

1. Will new infrastructure be installed to facilitate controlled grazing?	50	pts
2. Will old, non-functioning infrastructure be replaced?	30	pts
3. Will 3 or more practices that address Insufficient Water –Inefficient Moisture management or Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and health be included in the contract?	60	pts
4. Will 2 practices that address Insufficient Water –Inefficient Moisture management or Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and health be included in the contract?	40	pts
5. Will 1 practice that address Insufficient Water –Inefficient Moisture management or Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and health be included in the contract?	20	pts
6. Select Question 6, 7, 8, or 9 will the majority of 314 address heavy infestation?	30	pts
7. Will the majority of 314 address medium infestation.	40	pts
8. Will the majority of 314 address light infestation.	20	pts
9. Is 314 not needed in this contract to meet conservation needs?	20	pts
10. Is this a first time EQIP application?	20	pts
	200	pts Max

Irrigated Crop

1. Select question 1, 2, 3, or 4 Will practices be implemented that will increase irrigation efficiency by 5 – 10%?	50	pts
2. Will practices be implemented that will increase irrigation efficiency by 11 - 20%?	100	pts
3. Will practices be implemented that will increase irrigation efficiency by 21 – 30 %?	150	pts
4. Will practices be implemented that will increase irrigation efficiency by more than 30 %?	175	pts
5. Is this a first time EQIP applicant?	25	pts
	200	pts Max

Forest Land

1. Select yes to only one of questions #1-3. Will the practice Forest stand improvement, heavy density be completed? (>60 sq.ft.BA or >800 stems/ac.	100	pts
2. Will the practice forest stand improvement, medium density, be completed? (40-60sq.ft.BA or 300-800 stems/ac. Removed	120	pts
3. Will the practice forest stand improvement, light density be completed (<40 sq.ft.BA or <300 stems/ac. Removed	145	pts
4. Will a fuel break be installed?	20	pts
5. Will treatment be installed using hand crews with chainsaws?	15	pts
6. Is this a first time EQIP applicant?	10	pts
7. Will applied practices complement current conservation efforts?	10	pts
	200	pts Max

The LWG agreed to use the computer generated "Tracking Code" in Protracts as a tie breaker between applications with the same ranking scores. The highest number will be the winner.

Watershed Initiative: The LWG declined to participate in the watershed Initiative due to the proposed small acre initiative of 640 acres or less. Which contain the majority of producers in the watershed.

Small Acreage Initiative: The LWG would like to submit the small acre initiative of 640 acres or less. See attachment for details on proposal #1.