

# 2014 Environmental Quality Incentive Program Proposal

## For the Raton Field Office

**Introduction:** The Raton Field office includes all of Colfax County in Northeastern New Mexico. It is bordered by Colorado on the north, Union County on the east, Harding and Mora Counties on the south, and Taos County on the west. It consists of 2,414,080 acres. The Field Office ranges from the crest of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the west with the highest point being Mt. Baldy, 12,441 feet, to the east high plains portion of the county at 5,800 feet. The south portion of the county is generally undulating plains while the northwest portion is composed of mountains, high mountain valleys and mesas. Rangeland occupies 73% of the Field Office area and is devoted mainly to beef cattle production and wildlife enterprises. Approximately 2% is irrigated cropland and hay land. Most of the available agricultural irrigation is from surface water. Less than 1% is dry cropland, mostly in CRP. Approximately 24% is privately owned grazed timberland.

**Local Work Group:** The Local Work Group Meeting was held on September 10, 2013 at the Raton Post Office Conference Room. The Local Work Group consisted of: Tommy Lloyd, Patricia Kossler, Gary Shaw, Gerald Seward, Alice Moore, Colfax Soil and Water Conservation District; Ernie Lopez, NM State Forestry; Sheldon Dormen, Alfred Chavez, Office of the State Engineer; Margaret Gigante, Soil Conservationist, Randy Velasquez, District Conservationist, Raton Field Office, NRCS.

**Priority Resource Concerns:** The LWG has agreed to address the following resource concerns for the FY 2014 EQIP program:

1. Plant Condition - Productivity Health and Vigor / Wildfire Hazard/ Noxious and Invasive Weeds
2. Water Quantity – Inefficient Water use on Irrigated Land / Rangeland Hydrologic Cycle

**Funding Considerations:** The initial percent of allocation for land uses in Raton Field Office will be:

- Grazing land – 50%
- Irrigated land – 40%
- Non-Industrial Private Forest land – 10%

These percentages are established as a “general rule” and not hard lines. Local minimum environmental points will be established for each ranking for the different land uses to ensure positive environmental benefits are achieved for applications to be considered.

Pest Management (595) will be utilized for the control of NM Class A & B weeds. A payment for Prescribed Grazing (528a) will be offered to producer initiating or improving a grazing system. A cost cap of \$3,000 will be set for this practice. Note-These rates will be adjusted to the closest payment rate in the established Payment Schedule.

**Cost Share Rate Factor:** The LWG for Colfax County recommends a cost share rate factor of 75% for all structural practices in the payment schedule for the county.

**Ranking Criteria:** Ranking criteria worksheets for Grazing Lands, Irrigated Crop/Hay Land, and Non-Industrial Private Forest Land will be developed utilizing National, State, and Local issues. The worksheets for 2014 will be the same as ranking sheets used for the FY13 sign up for Grazing Lands and Non Industrial Private Forestland. Irrigated Crop worksheet for 2014 will have one change. Under the Water Quality portion, concerning the FIRS efficiency, percentages will be changed. New breakdown will be, <20% = 50pts, 20% - 30% = 100pts, and >30% = 200pts for increase in efficiency. Each ranking worksheet will be used to rank applications to promote agricultural production and environmental benefit. In the event of a tie, certain portions of each ranking will determine application funded. For Grazing Lands, the applicant with the highest ranking score on the management portion of local issues will be funded. For Irrigated Cropland, the applicant with the highest irrigation efficiency increase in the FIRS section will be funded. For NIPF, the applicant treating highest percentage of eligible forest land will be funded.

The ranking criteria worksheets for each land use are attached.

**Watershed Initiative:** The watershed initiative will not be implemented in Colfax County for the 2014 EQIP Program.

**Small Acreage Initiative:** The Small Acreage Initiative will not be implemented in Colfax County for the 2014 EQIP Program.