

2014 Environmental Quality Incentive Program Proposal

For the Truth or Consequences Field Office

Introduction: The Truth or Consequences (TorC) 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: 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
- US Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
- Sierra County Manager
- Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Area Stakeholders/Producers

The meeting of the LWG was held on September 5, to discuss the implementation of the 2014 EQIP and WHIP programs, with many of the invited designated agency representatives in attendance. The following summary is offered as a proposal for EQIP/WHIP2014 implementation for the NRCS TorC Field office, based on the recommendations of the LWG and from within NRCS.

Priority Resource Concerns: The local resource concerns and priorities to be addressed by land use with the implementation of the program are:

- Irrigated Cropland:
 1. Excess/Insufficient Water
 2. Soil Erosion
 3. Water Quality
 4. Energy
- Grazing Lands:
 1. Soil Erosion
 2. Degraded Plant Condition
 3. Water Quality
 4. Energy
- AFO/CAFO:
 1. Water Quality

Funding Considerations: (Change) The LWG divided the local funding as follows:

- AFO/CAFO 0%
- Grazing land 40%
- Irrigated Cropland (includes irrigated pasture) 60%

These percentages may vary depending on the actual amount of money needed to fully fund the highest ranking irrigated, or grazing lands contracts. If we received any eligible AFO applications, we will request South Area AFO Funds to cover them due to the high cost of these applications.

Cost Share Rate Factor: The LWG decided not to cost share management or incentives, due to the fact that the TorC FO has more applications for structural practices than allocation of funds.

A financial assistance cap of \$95,000 per practice has been established. Please refer to the FY14 NM Payment Schedules for details of eligible practices and payment rates.

Ranking Criteria: (No Change) - The South Area Ranking Criteria from the 2013 program will be used again if available.

Screening Criteria:

- All Applications:
 - Low Priority – Previously terminated contract.
- Irrigated Cropland:
 - High Priority – Drip/Microirrigation, Sprinkler, and/or 26% or greater increase in irrigation efficiency.
 - Medium Priority – 11% - 25% increase in irrigation efficiency.
 - Low Priority – Less than 11% increase in irrigation efficiency
- Grazing Lands:
 - High Priority – Brush Management
 - Medium Priority – Water development and a positive increase in Rangeland Health
 - Low Priority:
 - a) Continuous grazing and/or no increase in Rangeland Health
 - b) Less than 25% of Local Issue Points in ranking criteria.
- AFO/CAFO:
 - The TorC FO will use the South Area AFO ranking and screening criteria.

Watershed Initiative: (No Change) The TorC LWG decided not to allocate funds to a Watershed Initiative. There are two **expired** Collaborative Conservation Partnership Initiatives (CCPI) in the FO service area with funding to be determined at the State Office level.

Small Acreage Initiative:

(No Change) The TorC LWG decided not to allocate funds to a Small Acreage Initiative.

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