

2014 Environmental Quality Incentive Program Proposal

For the Tucumcari Field Office

Introduction: Tucumcari Field Office is located at 706 S. 1st, Tucumcari, NM. The office is located within Quay County, along Highway 54 and Interstate 40, in the Eastern part of the state. Tucumcari is 40 miles due west of the Texas State line. Quay County is an agricultural community with Irrigated Cropland, Dry Cropland, and Rangeland. Rangeland makes up 87% of the area, dry farmland 10%, and irrigated cropland the remaining 3%. The surface irrigation water comes through a main canal and numerous unlined ditches from Conchas Lake, west of Tucumcari. The irrigation water distribution to approximately 42,000 acres of irrigable cropland is managed through the Arch Hurley Conservancy District. Historically the AHCD has allocated a yearly maximum of 24 inches of water, and a minimum of 2 inches of water. For the last 10-12 years, because of extended drought and a diminishing water level at the lake, there has not been enough irrigation water to allocate full allotments and allocations have been minimal and inconsistent. In the last three years, there has been zero allocation. The farming community has been devastated by this shortage of irrigation and any allotted water would be considered supplemental, at best. In other parts of the county, ground irrigation water is pumped from the Ogallala Aquifer.

Local Work Group: The Local Work Group (LWG) Quay County meeting was represented with members of NMACD, NRCS East Area office, local producers, NRCS field office staff. The LWG met on September 11, 2013, to discuss the 2014 EQIP/WHIP program. Participants met for 2 hours in the morning going over the following information and providing valuable input into the locally led conservation efforts in Quay County.

Priority Resource Concerns:

Rangeland:

Plant Condition

Noxious & Invasive plants

Productivity, health, & vigor

Domestic Animals

Inadequate stock water

Inadequate quantities of feed and forage

Fish & Wildlife

T&E Species: Declining species, species of concern

Inadequate cover/shelter

Inadequate food

Inadequate water

Soil Condition

Rangeland Site Stability

Productivity, health and vigor

Soil Erosion

Classic & ephemeral gull

Wind

Sheet and rill

Water Quantity

Rangeland Hydrologic Cycle

Water Quality

Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water

Irrigated Cropland:

Water Quantity

Aquifer Overdraft

Insufficient and inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land

Water Quality

Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater

Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water

Soil Erosion

Wind

Sheet and rill

Fish and Wildlife

Inadequate cover/shelter

Inadequate food

Inadequate water

T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern

Air Quality

Undesirable Air Movement

Dry Cropland

Soil Erosion

Wind

Ephemeral Gully

Sheet & Rill

Soil Condition

Compaction and Organic Matter Depletion

Fish & Wildlife

T&E Species: Declining species, Species of Concern

Inadequate cover/shelter

Inadequate food

Inadequate water

Water Quality

Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water

Air Quality (Grass Conversion)

Particulate Matter

Reduced Visibility

Plant Condition

Productivity, Health, Vigor

Water Quantity

Inefficient Water Use on Non-irrigated cropland

Windbreaks/Buffers/Hdqtr

Soil Erosion

Wind

Fish & Wildlife

T&E Species: Declining species, Species of Concern

Inadequate cover/shelter

Inadequate food

Inadequate water

Domestic Animals

Inadequate shelter

Air Quality

Undesirable air movement

Adverse Air Temperature

Wildlife Habitat Improvement

Fish & wildlife

T&E Species: Declining species, Species of Concern

Inadequate cover/shelter

Inadequate food

Inadequate water

Water Quantity

Aquifer Overdraft

Rangeland Hydrologic Cycle

Water Quality

Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water

Soil Erosion

Sheet & Rill

Wind

Funding Considerations:

2014 EQIP funds received at the field office will be allocated as follows:

- Grazing Lands – 55%
- Irrigated Cropland – 18%
- Dry Cropland – 20%
- Windbreaks – 2%
- Wildlife Habitat Improvement – 2%
- NM Grass Banking Pilot Program – 3% (East Area ranking criteria will be used for this program)
- Watershed Initiative – (\$25,000 of total allocation)

**The above EQIP funding allocations can be moved between these resources to ensure all funds are expended.

Cost Caps/Management Payments:

These management costs were discussed and reviewed by the LWG. No change for management practices.

Residue Management – *Dry/Irrigated Cropland (No-Till)*

Costs will be set by Regional 2014 cost list. No grazing for 3 years on No-Till acreage.

Range Planting – *Dry Cropland (Grass Conversion)*

Costs will be set by Regional 2014 cost list. (Seed, site preparation, etc) in association with cover crop and a management payment for Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgt for 3 years No haying or grazing for 3 years. Must remain in grass for 10 years (practice lifespan).

Prescribed Grazing – *Wildlife*

Costs will be set by Regional 2014 cost list. Playa lake bottoms deferred grazing for 3 years; Playa upland acres 150ft buffer deferred grazing for 3 years.

Cost Share Rate Factors, Eligible Practices

The LWG recommended keeping the same eligible practices as FY 2012

The LWG recommended that all structural practices be left at a cost share rate of 75%.

The LWG recommended that per practice caps be left at \$75,000.

Ranking Criteria:

It is recommended that the technical criteria to address tiebreakers for all resource concerns will be soil EI with the contract awarded to the highest EI.

*There are no recommended changes in ranking points for 2014 ranking criteria.

Watershed Initiative:

Sandhills Prairie Upland Wildlife Habitat watershed initiative is supported as outlined in 2013. It was recommended that FO should concentrate on keeping the Sandhills Prairie Upland Wildlife Habitat project viable because this initiative has been successful in past years resulting in several EQIP contracts and there is a pool of funds available at SO for the initiative.

It is recommended that ranking criteria developed for this land use and resource for 2013 be used for the 2014 program year as well. It was recommended that \$25,000 be set up for this initiative and the money not used for this, will be distributed to the other funding considerations.

(See attached FY2013 EQIP Watershed Initiative Proposal, Attachment #3)

Small Acreage Initiative:

It is recommended that a \$20,000 amount be set aside from the initial County allocation for small acreage units with matching funds from State Conservationist.

\$10,000 will be used for irrigated cropland and \$10,000 for rangeland. \$10,000 cap per contract

The cropland will have a cap of 50 acres and rangeland will have a cap of 640 acres per unit.

The total household annual income should not exceed \$60,000.

This initiative covers the entire FO area of technical responsibility.

(See attached FY2013 EQIP Small Acreage Initiative Proposal, Attachment #3)