2014 Farm Bill
NRCS AQAC Team Update

NRCS/ARS Livestock GRACEnet webinars

– 3 complete, 2 to go

  • May 21 – Acid Scrubbers for Ammonia from Poultry Houses


USDA Methane Strategy

– NRCS helping develop Biogas Roadmap
Farm Bill Overview

What’s New?

– Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
– Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

What’s Not?

– Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
  • Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)
  • Air Quality Initiative (AQI)
– Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
– Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Differences from 2008 Farm Bill:

• Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program rolled into EQIP
• Funding authorization:
  • $1.35 billion for 2014
  • $1.60 billion for 2015
  • $1.65 billion for 2016 and 2017
  • $1.75 billion for 2018
Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

No major differences from 2008 Farm Bill

- Funding from EQIP

FY14 pre-proposals were due March 7, 2014

- Full proposals due on May 5, 2014
- Air Quality and Atmospheric Change included as part of the National Component priorities in FY14
Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

State-level CIG for FY14:

- Arkansas – closes 4/30/14
- Connecticut – closed 4/25/14
- Georgia – closes 4/30/14
- Idaho – closed 4/25/14
- Iowa – closes 4/30/14
- Kansas – closes 5/16/14
- Kentucky – closed 4/25/14
- New Hampshire – closes 5/2/14
- New Jersey – closes 6/30/14
- New Mexico – closes 5/30/14
- Oregon – closes 5/16/14
- Pacific Islands Area – closes 4/30/14
- South Carolina – closes 5/5/14
- Vermont – closes 5/9/14
- Virginia – closes 5/2/14
- Wyoming – closes 5/1/14
Air Quality Initiative (AQI)

No major differences from 2008 Farm Bill

• Funding authorization:
  • $25 million/year through 2018

FY14 program substantively similar to FY13

FY14 states:

• Arizona
• California
• Colorado
• Ohio

• Oregon
• Pennsylvania
• Texas
• Washington
Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) and Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

No major differences from 2008 Farm Bill

- CStP cap of 10 million acres per year
- HFRP authorized at $12 million per year
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:

– Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)
– Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
– Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLPP)
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Combines and replaces the purposes and functions of:

– Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)
– Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program (CBWP)
– Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
– Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control
New regional program that:

• Furthers the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife on a regional scale

• Encourages partners to cooperate with producers and landowners in:
  
  – Meeting or avoiding the need for national, State, and local natural resource regulatory requirements related to production on eligible land; and
  
  – Implementing projects that will result in the installation and maintenance of eligible activities that affect multiple agricultural or nonindustrial private forest operations on a local, regional, State, or multistate basis
Implement eligible activities on eligible land through:

• Partnership agreements under which NRCS enters contracts and easement agreements with producers and landowners participating in a project with a selected partner; and

• Direct Conservation Program Contracts (CPCs) or easement agreements in
  – Critical conservation areas; or
  – In a selected partner project area but who are seeking to implement an eligible activity independent of a partner
**RCPP**

Critical conservation areas

- Secretary will select up to 8 critical conservation areas
- Priority consideration given to geographical areas which:
  - Include multiple States with significant ag production
  - Have an existing agreement or work plans
  - Benefit water quality improvement
  - Benefit water quantity improvement
  - Assist producers to meet natural resource regulatory requirements
RCPP

Partners are responsible for:

- Contributing a significant portion of the overall costs
- Conducting outreach and education to eligible producers for potential participation in the project
- Acting on a landowner’s or producer’s behalf, if requested by the landowners or producer in applying for assistance
- Leveraging financial or technical assistance provided by NRCS with additional funds to help achieve the project objectives.
- Conducting and providing an assessment of the project costs and conservation effects
In the selected partner project areas, RCPP program assistance is delivered to producers through conservation program contracts and easement agreements under the covered programs.
RCPP

Covered programs:

– Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
– Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
– Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
– Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)

In addition to the covered programs, the authorities under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566), other than Watershed Rehabilitation provisions, may be used in CCAs.
RCPP Funding

Available funding:

– $100 million of direct RCPP funding each year
– 7% of funds from the four covered programs (ACEP, EQIP, CStP, HFRP) reserved annually through April 1
RCPP

Funding Allocation

– 25% for State Projects
– 40% for National Projects
– 35% for Projects in Critical Conservation Areas
RCPP

Additional Program Provisions

– Allows the Secretary to waive AGI if needed to fulfill purposes of the program

– Allows adjustments to discretionary rules of covered program with Secretary’s approval, if requested by partner

– No funding may be used to cover partner administrative costs
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

www.nrcs.usda.gov/FarmBill

Questions may be submitted via Email to: FarmBillQA@wdc.usda.gov