

## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary, conservation program administered by NRCS that can provide financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that address natural resource concerns. The purpose of EQIP is to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals; to optimize environmental benefits; and to help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental regulations.

## **EQIP Application Sign-up and Cut-off Dates**

NRCS accepts EQIP applications year-round, but establishes cutoff dates to make funding selections for eligible, screened, and ranked applications.

To be ready for EQIP funding consideration, interested applicants will need to: (1) Develop a conservation plan, (2) Submit an application, (3) Meet program eligibility requirements, and (4) Approve their 'EQIP schedule of operations'.

The time needed to complete a conservation plan and process eligibility can vary, from a few weeks to more than a month, depending on the complexity of the farming operation.

## **Develop a Conservation Plan**

A conservation plan includes all practices, regardless of the program's financial assistance, that a producer or landowner has agreed to adopt for the agricultural operation and/or associated agricultural lands. Interested applicants are encouraged to request conservation planning and technical assistance from a local NRCS field office to help with the development of a conservation plan.

## **Submitting an Application**

Interested applicants may apply for EQIP by completing and submitting the application, Form NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application, to the NRCS field office in person, by phone, email, or fax in the county which you own land or where you have an agricultural operation or non-industrial private forest land.

## **Program Eligibility Requirements**

In order to be considered eligible for EQIP the applicant must have a vested interest in production agricultural or non-industrial private forest land and meet other program eligibility requirements.

## **'EQIP schedule of operations'**

The basis for an application is the 'EQIP schedule of operations' and is derived from the applicant's conservation plan. The EQIP 'schedule of operations' identifies the conservation practices to be implemented, timing of the implementation, practice location, and payment rates.

## **EQIP Screening, Ranking and Funding**

EQIP funding decisions are based on an application evaluation process that includes screening tools and ranking criteria. Screening tools are worksheets used to prioritize an application based on factors such as: a completed conservation plan; readiness to implement practices; history of contract compliance; and resource priorities addressed in the 'EQIP schedule of operations'. Ranking criteria considers the anticipated benefit of a conservation system, or practice, in the 'EQIP schedule of operations' to a natural resource concern.

### About the EQIP Fund Pool

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) continues to address the unique circumstances and concerns of historically underserved farmers and ranchers to provide for voluntary participation, offers incentives and focuses on equity in accessing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services.

The purpose of the Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher Cropland Fund Pool is to target technical and financial assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers interested in addressing soil health, innovative pest and nutrient management strategies, improved irrigation efficiency, protecting water quality, energy conservation and enhancing wildlife habitat values.

A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group, without regard to their individual qualities. These groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics

**Note:** Gender alone is not a covered group for the purposes of NRCS conservation programs.

A socially disadvantaged applicant is an individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals.

**Note:** One member of an eligible entity may certify for all members rather than have each member self-certify.

Interested owners and/or operators of land managed for agricultural production in California that meet the criteria of a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher may be eligible for the Socially Disadvantaged Farmer/Rancher Cropland Fund Pool.

### Land Uses for the EQIP Fund Pool

Only applications for agricultural operations that address resource concerns on at least one land use type listed below will be considered for financial assistance from this EQIP Fund Pool. The descriptions below are the general NRCS land use definitions - applications should fit within, but do not need to exactly match, these descriptions.

- **Crop:** Land used primarily for the production and harvest of annual or perennial field, forage, food, fiber, horticultural, orchard, vineyard, or energy crops.
- **Farmstead:** Land used for facilities and supporting infrastructure where farming, forestry, animal husbandry, and ranching activities are often initiated. This may include dwellings, equipment storage, plus farm input and output storage and handling facilities.
- **Associated Agricultural Lands:** Land associated with farms and ranches that are not purposefully managed for food, forage, or fiber and are typically associated with nearby production or conservation lands. This could include incidental areas, such as odd areas, ditches and watercourses, riparian areas, field edges, seasonal and permanent wetlands, and other similar areas.

- **Irrigated:** Where an operational irrigation system is present and managed to supply irrigation water.
- **Grazed:** Where grazing animals impact how land is managed.
- **Wildlife:** Where the applicant is actively managing for wildlife.

### Resource Concerns for the EQIP Fund Pool

Only applications for agricultural operations that address at least one resource concern listed below will be considered for financial assistance through this EQIP Fund Pool. The descriptions below are general NRCS natural resource definitions, applications should fit within, but do not need to exactly match, these descriptions.

- ❖ **SOIL EROSION** – Erosion removes topsoil, reduces levels of soil organic matter, and contributes to the breakdown of soil structure.
  - **Sheet and Rill:** Sheet and rill erosion is the detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash and/or irrigation events. Symptoms of soil erosion by water include: small rills and channels on the soil surface, soil deposited at the base of slopes, sediment in streams, lakes, and reservoirs, and pedestals of soil supporting pebbles and plant material.
  - **Wind:** Wind erosion is the detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by wind. Symptoms of wind erosion may be identified by dust clouds, soil accumulation along fence lines or snowbanks, and a drifted appearance of the soil surface.
- ❖ **SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION** – Soil quality degradation effects rooting depths, plant growth, animal habitat and soil biological activity.
  - **Organic Matter Depletion:** Soil organic matter is carbon-rich material that includes plant, animal, and microbial residue in various stages of decomposition. Managing for soil carbon can enhance soil productivity and environmental quality. Increasing soil organic matter levels can reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels. Ground and surface water quality can improve too because better structure, infiltration, and biological activity make soil a more effective filter.
- ❖ **INSUFFICIENT WATER** – Water resources are not optimally managed to support ecological processes, land use objectives and/or water conservation goals.
  - **Inefficient Use of Irrigation Water:** Irrigation water is not stored, delivered, scheduled and/or applied efficiently. Aquifer or surface water withdrawals threaten sustained availability of ground or surface water. Available irrigation water supplies have been reduced due to aquifer depletion, competition, regulation and/or drought.
- ❖ **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION** – Water quality degradation impacts the beneficial use of the receiving waters.
  - **Excess Nutrients in Surface Water:** Nutrients, organic and inorganic, are transported to receiving surface waters through runoff in quantities that degrade water quality. Increased nitrogen and phosphorus levels in water can produce excessive aquatic vegetation and algal blooms resulting in reduced dissolved oxygen, harmful toxins, and increased water temperature.

- **Excess Nutrients in Groundwater:** Nutrients, organic and inorganic, are leached into groundwater in quantities that degrade water quality and limit uses for other purposes, for example, public drinking water systems from shallow domestic wells.
  - **Pesticides Transported to Surface Water:** Pest control chemicals are transported to receiving surface waters in quantities that degrade water quality. Pesticides typically enter surface water when rainfall or irrigation exceeds the infiltration capacity of soil and resulting runoff transports pesticides to streams, rivers, and other surface-water bodies.
  - **Pesticides Transported to Groundwater:** Pest control chemicals are leached to groundwater in quantities that degrade water quality. Pesticides can reach water-bearing aquifers as a result of applications onto crop fields, spills near poorly sealed well heads, seepage of contaminated surface water, accidental spills and leaks, or improper disposal.
  - **Excessive Sediment in Surface Water:** Off-site transport of sediment to surface water can impact water quality and aquatic habitat. Not only does sediment carry nutrients and pesticides that can negatively impact water quality, but the physical characteristics of sediment can clog stream channels, silt in reservoirs, cover fish spawning grounds, and reduce downstream water quality.
- ❖ **INADEQUATE HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE** – Quantity, quality or connectivity of food, water, cover/shelter, habitat continuity and/or space is inadequate to meet requirements of identified fish, wildlife or invertebrate species.
- **Habitat Degradation:** Conserving existing habitat and restoring habitat improves the odds that fish and wildlife communities will thrive. The availability and arrangement of food, water, cover, shelter, habitat continuity and space determine the number of organisms that a region can support, also known as carrying capacity. Increasing carrying capacity is critical to attaining long-term population stability.
- ❖ **INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE** – The inefficient use of energy increases costs and dependence on non-renewable energy sources.
- **Farming/Ranching Practices and Field Operations:** Inefficient energy use occurs whenever equipment or machinery operates more hours than needed to meet management goals. It may also occur when equipment or machinery becomes worn out, outdated, or poorly controlled.

### Eligible NRCS Conservation Practices

All conservation practices planned for financial assistance must be included in the 'EQIP schedule of operations' and address a resource concern identified in this EQIP Fund Pool. NRCS conservation practices eligible for financial assistance through this EQIP Fund Pool are listed in the below table.

For more information about NRCS conservation practices visit the following website link for NRCS conservation practice standards:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/?cid=NRCSDEV11\\_001020](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/?cid=NRCSDEV11_001020)

**Table 1. Eligible Conservation Practices**

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
309	Agrichemical Handling Facility	no	15
311	Alley Cropping	ac	15
313	Waste Storage Facility	no	15
314	Brush Management	ac	10
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	ac	5
317	Composting Facility	no	15
320	Irrigation Canal or Lateral	ft	15
324	Deep Tillage	ac	1
326	Clearing and Snagging	ft	5
327	Conservation Cover	ac	5
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	ac	1
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till	ac	1
330	Contour Farming	ac	5
331	Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crop	ac	10
332	Contour Buffer Strips	ac	5
338	Prescribed Burning	ac	1
340	Cover Crop	ac	1
342	Critical Area Planting	ac	10
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	ac	1
348	Dam, Diversion	no	15
350	Sediment Basin	no	20
351	Water Well Decommissioning	no	20
355	Groundwater Testing	no	1
356	Dike	ft	20
362	Diversion	ft	10
367	Roofs and Covers	no	10
373	Dust Control on Unpaved Roads and Surfaces	sq ft	1
378	Pond	no	20
379	Multi-Story Cropping	ac	10
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	ft	15
382	Fence	ft	20
383	Fuel Break	ac	10
384	Woody Residue Treatment	ac	10
386	Field Border	ac	10
388	Irrigation Field Ditch	ft	15
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	ac	5
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	ac	15
393	Filter Strip	ac	10
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	ac	5
396	Aquatic Organism Passage	mi	5
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	no	15



Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
412	Grassed Waterway	ac	10
422	Hedgerow Planting	ft	15
428	Irrigation Ditch Lining	ft	20
430	Irrigation Pipeline	ft	20
436	Irrigation Reservoir	ac-ft	15
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	ac	15
442	Irrigation System, Sprinkler	ac	15
443	Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface	ac	15
447	Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery <sup>1</sup>	no	15
449	Irrigation Water Management	ac	1
450	Anionic Polyacrylamide (PAM) Application	ac	1
460	Land Clearing	ac	10
462	Precision Land Forming	ac	10
464	Irrigation Land Leveling	ac	15
466	Land Smoothing	ac	10
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	ft	15
472	Access Control	ac	10
484	Mulching	ac	1
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	ac	1
500	Obstruction Removal	ac	10
511	Forage Harvest Management	ac	1
512	Forage and Biomass Planting	ac	5
516	Livestock Pipeline	ft	20
520	Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Soil	no	15
521A	Pond Sealing or Lining, Flexible Membrane	no	20
528	Prescribed Grazing	ac	1
533	Pumping Plant	no	15
554	Drainage Water Management	ac	1
557	Row Arrangement	ac	5
558	Roof Runoff Structure	no	15
560	Access Road	ft	10
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	ac	10
570	Stormwater Runoff Control	no	15
572	Spoil Spreading	ac	1
574	Spring Development	no	20
575	Trails and Walkways	ft	10
578	Stream Crossing	no	10
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	ft	20
584	Channel Bed Stabilization	ft	10
585	Stripcropping	ac	5
587	Structure for Water Control	no	20
590	Nutrient Management	ac	1



Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
595	Integrated Pest Management	ac	1
600	Terrace	ft	10
601	Vegetative Barrier	ft	5
603	Herbaceous Wind Barriers	ft	5
605	Denitrifying Bioreactor	ac	10
606	Subsurface Drain	ft	20
607	Surface Drain, Field Ditch	ft	15
608	Surface Drain, Main or Lateral	ft	15
610	Salinity and Sodic Soil Management	ac	1
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	ac	15
614	Watering Facility	no	20
620	Underground Outlet	ft	20
629	Waste Treatment	no	10
630	Vertical Drain	no	10
636	Water Harvesting Catchment	no	20
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin	no	10
647	Early Successional Habitat Development/Management	ac	1
649	Structures for Wildlife	no	5
650	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	ft	15
656	Constructed Wetland	ac	15
657	Wetland Restoration	ac	15
659	Wetland Enhancement	ac	15
660	Tree/Shrub Pruning	ac	10
666	Forest Stand Improvement	ac	10
740	Pond Sealing and Lining, Soil Cement	no	20

<sup>1</sup>Conservation practice, 447 – Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery, is an irrigation tailwater recovery system and practice payment rates will be based on eligible conservation practices included in the system.

**NRCS Field Office Contact Information**

For more information about EQIP, how to apply and program eligibility, interested applicants should contact a NRCS field office in the county which you own land or where you have an agricultural operation.

NRCS Office	Phone Number	NRCS Office	Phone Number
Alturas Service Center	(530) 233-4137	Modesto Service Center	(209) 491-9320
Auburn Service Center	(530) 885-6505	Napa Field Office	(707) 252-4189
Bakersfield Service Center	(530) 336-0967	Oroville Service Center	(530) 534-0112
Bishop Field Office	(760) 872-6111	Oxnard Field Office	(805) 984-2358
Blythe Field Office	(760) 922-3446	Petaluma Service Center	(707) 794-1242
Capitola LPO	(831) 475-1967	Placerville Field Office	(530) 295-5630
Colusa Service Center	(530) 458-2931	Quincy LPO	(530) 283-7511
Concord Service Center	(925) 672-4577	Red Bluff Service Center	(530) 527-3013
Del Norte LPO	(707) 487-7630	Redding Service Center	(530) 226-2560
El Centro Service Center	(760) 352-7886	Redlands Field Office	(909) 799-7407
Elk Grove Service Center	(916) 714-1104	Salinas Service Center	(831) 424-1036
Escondido Field Office	(760) 745-2061	San Jacinto LPO	(951) 654-7139
Eureka Service Center	(707) 442-6058	Santa Maria Service Center	(805) 928-9269
Fresno Service Center	(559) 276-7494	Sonora LPO	(209) 984-0500
Grass Valley Field Office	(530) 272-3417	So. Lake Tahoe Field Office	(530) 543-1501
Half Moon Bay LPO	(650) 726-4660	Stockton Service Center	(209) 472-7127
Hanford Service Center	(559) 584-9209	Susanville Service Center	(530) 257-7272
Hollister Service Center	(831) 637-4360	Templeton Service Center	(805) 434-0396
Hoopa LPO	(707) 486-7439	Tulelake Basin Project Office	(530) 667-4247
Indio Service Center	(760) 347-3675	Ukiah Service Center	(707) 468-9223
Jackson LPO	(209) 223-6535	Victorville Service Center	(760) 843-6882
Lakeport LPO	(707) 263-4180	Vacaville Service Center	(707) 448-0106
Lancaster Service Center	(661) 945-2604	Visalia Service Center	(559) 734-8732
Livermore LPO	(925) 371-0154	Weaverville Service Center	(530) 623-3991
Madera Service Center	(559) 674-4628	Willows Service Center	(530) 934-4601
Mariposa LPO	(209) 966-3431	Woodland Service Center	(530) 662-2037
McArthur LPO	(530) 336-5604	Yreka Service Center	(530) 842-6123
Merced Service Center	(209) 722-4119	Yuba City Service Center	(530) 674-1461