

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 Coastal AFO-CAFO EQIP Fund Pool

The purpose of the Coastal Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) EQIP Fund Pool is to minimize impacts to water quality, improve irrigation efficiency and promote energy conservation on dairies and other animal feeding operations.

Animal feeding operations within this fund pool region include pasture based systems as well as some confined operations, but many of the operations are smaller in size, less than 700 milk cows, or consist of atypical operations such as goat dairies, and poultry farms. Rainfall in these regions is typically higher than other areas of the state and hillside farming, urban encroachment, tidal influences and coastal shorelines are also factors in these areas.

Interested applicants are encouraged to request conservation planning and technical assistance from a local NRCS field office or certified Technical Service Provider to help with the development of a farm-wide Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) which will serve as the basis and justification for practices in the 'EQIP schedule of operations'.

Some of the benefits of developing a customized CNMP include: identifying immediate or potential resource problems that could negatively impact production, analyzing existing storage capacity of waste facilities, developing a nutrient budget and guiding the decision making process for future farm improvements, all while preparing you for various conservation program opportunities.

A CNMP promotes agricultural production and profit, environmental quality, and regulatory compliance as compatible goals. The CNMP is a wise business tool, helping producers look at their options and identify the best mix of practices and actions before making manure management investments. A CNMP also provides the basis for a successful nutrient management strategy.

Interested owners and/or operators of land managed for agricultural production in *Alameda, Contra Costa, Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma and Trinity* counties may be eligible for the Coastal AFO EQIP Fund Pool; please refer to the map at the end of this document for the boundaries of this EQIP 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.
- **Pasture:** Land composed of introduced or domesticated native forage species that is used primarily for the production of livestock. Pastures receive periodic renovation and cultural treatments, such as tillage, fertilization, mowing, weed control, and may be irrigated. Pastures are not in rotation with crops.
- **Range:** Land used primarily for the production of grazing animals. Includes native plant communities and those seeded to native or introduced species, or naturalized by introduced species that are ecologically managed using range management principles.

- **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.

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.
 - **Classic Gullies:** Classic gullies are forms of erosion created by the concentrated flow of water. Classic gully erosion generally occurs in well-defined drainage ways and generally is not obliterated by tillage. Untreated classic gullies may enlarge progressively by head cutting and/or lateral widening.
- ❖ **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.
 - **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.

- ❖ **AIR QUALITY IMPACTS** – Direct or indirect emissions of compounds to the atmosphere that impact air quality.
 - **Objectionable Odors:** Emissions of odorous compounds, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), ammonia, and odorous sulfur compounds, can cause nuisance conditions. The three primary sources of odor are manure storage facilities, animal housing, and land application of manure. Other sources can include burning, silage storage, and fertilizer and pesticide applications.
- ❖ **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION** – Plant condition degradation can result in stress, disease, insect damage and result in changes to the structure and composition of plant communities.
 - **Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health:** Plants must be adapted to the site and provided with appropriate amounts of nutrients, water, and sunshine, and protected from unchecked animal, weed, insect, and disease pests. Plants established in the wrong climate or soil may be under stress and may never thrive, no matter how much fertilizer or water supplied. Natural events, such as drought, or mismanagement can cause plant stress. Plants under stress are more susceptible to disease and insect damage.
- ❖ **INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE** – The inefficient use of energy increases costs and dependence on non-renewable energy sources.
 - **Equipment and Facilities:** Inefficient energy use occurs whenever facilities, equipment, or machinery operate more hours than needed to meet management goals. It may also occur when facilities, equipment, or machinery become worn out, outdated, or are poorly controlled or maintained.
 - **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 Activity Plans

Only applications for NRCS conservation activity plans listed in the table below are eligible for financial assistance through this EQIP Fund Pool. A Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) can be developed for an applicant to identify conservation practices needed to address a specific natural resource need.

Information about CAP services from Technical Service Providers (TSP), including how to find a certified TSP in your State, can be found on the NRCS national TSP website:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?cid=stelprdb1042981>

Table 1. Eligible Conservation Activity Plans

Practice Code	Conservation Activity Plan Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan - Written	no	1
110	Grazing Management Plan – Written	No	1
118	Irrigation Water Management Plan – Written	No	1
130	Drainage Water Management Plan – Written	No	1

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

Table 2. Eligible Conservation Practices

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
309	Agrichemical Handling Facility	no	15
313	Waste Storage Facility	no	15
314	Brush Management	ac	10
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	ac	5
316	Animal Mortality Facility	no	15
317	Composting Facility	no	15
320	Irrigation Canal or Lateral	Ft	15
324	Deep Tillage	Ac	1
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
332	Contour Buffer Strips	Ac	5
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
356	Dike	ft	20
359	Waste Treatment Lagoon	no	15
360	Waste Facility Closure	no	15
362	Diversion	ft	10
366	Anaerobic Digester	no	25
367	Roofs and Covers	no	10
374	Farmstead Energy Improvement	no	10
375	Dust Control from Animal Activity on Open Lot Surfaces	ac	1
378	Pond	no	20
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	ft	15
381	Silvopasture Establishment	ac	15
382	Fence	ft	20
386	Field Border	ac	10
388	Irrigation Field Ditch	Ft	15



Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	ac	5
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	ac	15
393	Filter Strip	ac	10
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	no	15
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	Sprinkler System	ac	15
443	Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface	ac	15
449	Irrigation Water Management	ac	1
447	Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery ¹	ac	15
450	Anionic Polyacrylamide (PAM) Application	ac	1
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
548	Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment	ac	1
550	Range Planting	ac	5
554	Drainage Water Management	Ac	1
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
582	Open Channel	ft	15

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
584	Channel Bed Stabilization	ft	10
585	Stripcropping	Ac	5
587	Structure for Water Control	no	20
590	Nutrient Management	ac	1
591	Amendments for the Treatment of Agricultural Waste	animal unit	1
592	Feed Management	animal unit	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 Facility	no	10
632	Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility	no	15
634	Waste Transfer	no	15
635	Vegetated Treatment Area	ac	10
636	Water Harvesting Catchment	No	20
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin	no	10
642	Water Well	No	20
650	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	ft	15
654	Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment	Ft	10
660	Tree/Shrub Pruning	Ac	10
670	Lighting System Improvement	no	10
672	Building Envelope Improvement	no	10
735	Waste Gasification Facility	No	10
740	Pond Sealing and Lining, Soil Cement	no	20

¹Conservation 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.

USDA-NRCS, Alameda County

Livermore Local Partnership Office
(925) 371-0154
Alyson Aquino, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Contra Costa County

Concord Service Center
(925) 672-4577
Hilary Phillips, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Del Norte County

Del Norte Local Partnership Office
(707) 487-7630
Jared Schniers, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Humboldt County

Eureka Service Center
(707) 442-6058
Jonathan Shultz, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Marin County

Petaluma Service Center
(707) 794-1242
Jennifer Walser, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Mendocino County

Ukiah Service Center
(707) 468-9223
Carol Mandel, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Monterey County

Salinas Service Center
(831) 424-1036
Bobette Parsons, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Lake County

Lakeport Local Partnership Office
(707) 263-4180
Korinn Woodard, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, San Benito County

Hollister Service Center
(831) 637-4360
Erika Boyland, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, San Luis Obispo County

Templeton Service Center
(805) 434-0396
Margy Lindquist, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, San Mateo County

Half Moon Bay Local Partnership Office
(650) 726-4660
James Howard, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Santa Barbara County

Santa Maria Service Center
(805) 928-9269
Jeff Rodriguez, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Santa Clara County

Hollister Service Center
(831) 637-4360
Erika Boyland, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Santa Cruz County

Capitola Local Partnership Office
(831) 475-1967
Richard Casale, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Sonoma County

Petaluma Service Center
(707) 794-1242
Jennifer Walser, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Trinity County

Weaverville Service Center
(530) 623-3991
Heidi Carpenter Harris, District Conservationist

