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 is 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 purpose of the San Joaquin Valley Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) EQIP Fund Pool is to minimize impacts to water quality, improve irrigation efficiency and promote energy conservation on dairies, confined animal operations and associated cropland and/or pastureland. Conservation treatments associated with dairies and confined animal operations include manure-handling systems, groundwater and surface water protection and whole-farm nutrient management.

Common conservation practices on dairies, animal feeding operations and associated cropland include; roof runoff structures, manure transfer pipelines, heavy use area protection, tail water return systems, waste transfer, nutrient management and irrigation water management.

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 ***Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced and Tulare*** counties may be eligible for the San Joaquin Valley 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.
- 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 QUALITY DEGRADATION – Soil quality degradation effects rooting deeps, plant growth, animal habitat and soil biological activity.

- Concentration of Salts or Other Chemicals: Concentration of salts leads to salinity and/or sodicity. Saline soils are indicative of inadequate drainage to leach salts from the soil or upward migration of salt from shallow groundwater. Sodic soils are high in sodium relative to concentrations of calcium and magnesium. Salinity or sodicity occurs naturally from parent materials high in salts, such as marine deposits, or may result from the addition of fertilizers, soil amendments (gypsum, lime), manure or saline/sodic irrigation water.

❖ 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.

- 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.

- 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

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
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	ac	5
316	Animal Mortality Facility	no	15
317	Composting Facility	no	15
327	Conservation Cover	ac	5
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till	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[1]	sq-ft	10
374	Farmstead Energy Improvement	no	10
378	Pond	no	20
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	ft	15
382	Fence	ft	20
386	Field Border	ac	10
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	ac	5
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	ac	15
393	Filter Strip	ac	10
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	no	15
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
447	Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery[2]	no	15
449	Irrigation Water Management	ac	1
464	Irrigation Land Leveling	ac	15
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	ft	15
472	Access Control	ac	10
516	Livestock Pipeline	ft	20

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
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
558	Roof Runoff Structure	no	15
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	ac	10
578	Stream Crossing	no	10
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	ft	20
587	Structure for Water Control	no	20
590	Nutrient Management	ac	1
591	Amendments for the Treatment of Agricultural Waste	au	1
603	Herbaceous Wind Barriers	ft	5
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
614	Watering Facility	no	20
620	Underground Outlet	ft	20
629	Waste Treatment	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
650	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	ft	15
670	Lighting System Improvement	no	10
672	Building Envelope Improvement	no	10
740	Pond Sealing and Lining, Soil Cement	no	20

[1]Conservation practice, 367 – Roofs and Covers, is offered as a supporting practice for 366 – Anaerobic Digester only and no other instances of the practice is eligible for financial assistance in this EQIP fund pool.

[2]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.

Practice Payment Rate Caps

For certain conservations practices a limit to the amount of financial assistance has been established. Practice payment caps are established in consultation with local partners and to allow limited financial assistance support to reach more participants. Please contact your local field office if you have questions. A maximum payment amount per contract or practice is not allowable. Payment rate caps are applicable per contract item number.

The payment cap for practice 313 - Waste Storage Facility, is only applicable for the practice payment scenarios, drystack, concrete floor or non-reinforced concrete floor, no walls. The payment rate cap for practice 634 – Waste Transfer is only applicable for the practice payment scenarios concerning pipelines.

Table 3. Practice Payment Rate Caps

Conservation Practice Code and Name	Regular Payment Rate Cap	Historically Underserved Payment Rate Cap
313 – Waste Storage Facility	$225,000	$337,500
430 – Irrigation Pipeline	$225,000	$337,500
590 – Nutrient Management	$25,500	$45,900
634 – Waste Transfer	$225,000	$337,500

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, Fresno County
Fresno Service Center
(559) 276-7494
David Durham, District Conservationist

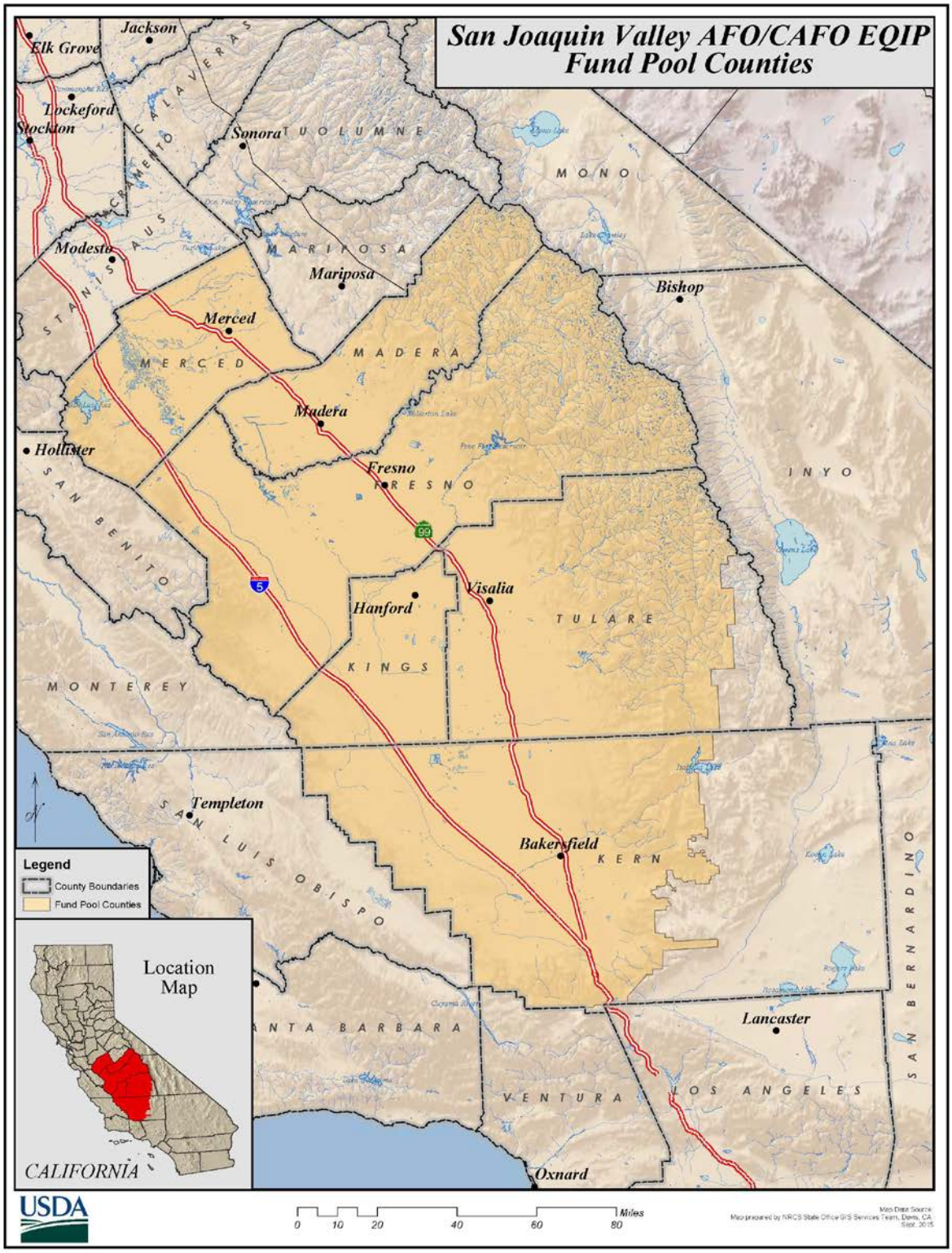
USDA-NRCS, Madera County
Madera Service Center
(559) 674-4628
Johnnie Siliznoff, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Kern County
Bakersfield Service Center
(661) 336-0967
Jermaine Jenkins, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Merced County
Merced Service Center
(209) 722-4119
Jarrod Martin, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Kings County
Hanford Service Center
(559) 584-9209
Hugo Calvillo, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Tulare County
Visalia Service Center
(559) 734-8732
Joe Williams, District Conservationist


San Joaquin Valley AFO/CAFO EQIP
Fund Pool Counties
Jackson
Elk Grove
Lockeford
Stockton
Sonora
TUOLUMNE
CALAVERAS
SACRAMENTO
STANISLAUS
MONO
Modesto
MARIPOSA
Mariposa
Bishop
Merced
MERCED
MADERA
Madera
Hollister
SAN BENITO
Fresno
FRESNO
INYO
99
5
Visalia
Hanford
TULARE
KINGS
MONTEREY
Templeton
SAN LUIS OBISPO
Bakersfield
KERN
Legend
County Boundaries
Fund Pool Counties
Location Map
CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA
Lancaster
SAN BERNARDINO
VENTURA
LOS ANGELES
Oxnard
USDA
0 10 20 40 60 80
Miles