United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

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January 11, 2011

NEW MEXICO BULLETIN NO. 440-11-01

SUBJECT: PGM – PROGRAMS UPDATE

TO: All Employees

Purpose. To update staff on programs status and upcoming deadlines.

New Mexico is involved in a number of Farm Bill conservation programs this year. There are several national and state EQIP initiatives underway. With so many programs and upcoming deadlines this bulletin is intended to help clarify and update everyone on their status and future actions.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) National Initiatives

There are numerous national EQIP initiatives. Only a few are authorized in New Mexico, these include the Organic, Lesser Prairie Chicken, Ag. Energy Management Plans (EMP), Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) and Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP). We will also be involved in the Ogallala Aquifer initiative but a final decision has not been made for FY 2011. There are various deadlines for these initiatives which have been provided in the national bulletins. A summary of key deadline dates for these initiatives and the other programs is provided as an attachment.

EQIP State Initiatives

These include the small acreage farmer-rancher and watershed initiatives. There is a new state initiative this year called the Local Food Initiative. The **NM Local Food Initiative** is intended to tie into USDAs national 'Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food' initiative. We will be making EQIP funds available to non-organic producers who grow food to be sold at local farmers markets. These ag. producers have traditionally not been among NRCS clients because of their small scale and non-conventional farming. Seasonal high tunnels (hoop houses) are among the practices eligible for financial assistance, in addition to irrigation system improvements and land management practices. Ranking criteria has been developed (attached) and a sign-up announcement is forthcoming with a cutoff date of March 4, 2011 paralleling the National Organic Initiative.

(MORE)

EQIP General

This is the component of EQIP that most employees are familiar with. Applications are now being processed for EQIP general applications on various land uses such as irrigated cropland, grazing lands, dry crop, forested and animal feeding operations (AFO).

EQIP-Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

National ranking period is ongoing and the State Component announcement is to be published in late January with 45-60 day open period.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)

WHIP is intended to assist ag. producers and others with efforts to protect and enhance wildlife habitat. Any conservation practices included in a WHIP must have a direct benefit to wildlife habitat and must mitigate one or more of the FOTG resource concerns for fish and wildlife. WHIP contracts can include private, Tribal or state trust lands. The schedule of activities/deadlines is the same as for EQIP General.

In past years with concurrence from the State Technical Committee we have proposed to set aside a percentage of our WHIP allocation to focus on certain resource concern but have never come to fruition. This year we have the opportunity to focus some funding on the Canadian watershed resulting from outreach efforts made possible through the contribution agreement between NRCS, NMDA and NMACD.

We will be developing subaccounts for WHIP as per national instructions as follow:

- Grazing Lands
- Forest Lands
- Cropland.

Conservation Stewardship Program

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that encourages agricultural and forestry producers to address resource concerns by (1) undertaking additional conservation activities and (2) improving and maintaining existing conservation systems.

CSP is available to all producers, regardless of operation size or crops produced, in all 50 States.

Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

To be eligible, participant must:

- Be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment;
- Have effective control of the land for the term of the proposed contract;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions

(MORE)

NRCS makes CSP available on a nationwide basis through continuous sign-up, with announced cut-off dates for ranking and funding applications. ***The cutoff date for the 2011-1 signup period is January 21, 2011.***

Easement Programs

Grassland Protection Program

2011, first batching period application deadline is January 21, 2011; field office ranking due to state office by: January 28, 2011. (See state bulletin, 300-11-1 for more details.)

Farm and Ranchland Protection Program

2011, first batching period application deadline is February 18, 2011. Applications must come from qualified entities (unlike GRP and WRP).

Wetland Reserve Program

2011, ranking is ongoing. Batching period to be announced when and if qualified application(s) received. Please contact Seth Fiedler if you have potentially qualified applicants.

Quarterly ROOT Audit

The quarterly ROOT audit will be conducted from January 20 through February 18. Data on open obligations is scheduled to be available beginning January 20. State office quality reviews will be conducted probably during the weeks of January 7 and January 14.

If you have any questions on any of the information provide please contact Norman Vigil, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at (505)761- 4445 or by email norm.vigil@nm.usda.gov.

DENNIS L. ALEXANDER
State Conservationist

Attachments

Upcoming Programs Deadlines

Jan. 21 - CSP 2011-1 Application Deadline

Jan. 21 - GRP Application Deadline

Jan. 28 - GRP Ranking Sheet due to S.O.

Jan. 28 - Nat'l RFP for AWEP and CCPI

Jan. 20 - Feb. 18 - ROOT Audit*

Jan. ? - State CIG Component Announced with 45-60 day application period.

Feb. 18 - FRPP Application Deadline

Mar. 4 – LPCI, Organic Applications, Local Food Initiative

Mar. 9 - CSP Resource Inventory completed in the CMT

Mar. 11 - CSP Applications Ranked and Set to Pre-Approved

Mar. 11 - EQIP General & WHIP Contract Approval/FA Obligation

Mar. 18 - Prior year CCPI & AWEP Applications

Apr. 22 - Prior Year CCPI & AWEP Application Ranking

Apr. 22 - CSP Selected Applications Onsite Field Verification

May 2 - Organic Contract Approval/FA Obligation and Local Food Initiative

May 16 - CSP Contract Approval/FA Obligation

May 27 - Prior Year CCPI & AWEP Contract Approval/FA Obligation

*The second quarter ROOT audit will probably begin in April but dates have not been announced.

NM EQIP-Local Food Initiative
State and Local Issues for Ranking Tool

State Issues-

1)	Does the applicant sell/barter ag. products at a local food co-op or farmers market. If no this application should be evaluated under the small acreage initiative (if F.O. has an approved initiative) or regular irrigated crop ranking tool.	0 Pts
2)	This land is within a NMED priority watershed?	45 Pts
3)	Treatment of this land will enhance the benefits of an approved, active or recently completed section 319 project?	45 Pts
4)	Applicant agrees to implement an irrigated crop resource management system?	50 Pts
5)	Habitat for an at-risk species will be protected/enhanced?	45 pts
6)	Noxious weeds (NMDA class A, B or C) are present and will be treated?	45 Pts
7)	Applicant has a prior contract which was implemented on schedule and is providing satisfactory O&M for contracted practices?	20 Pts

Local Issues-

1)	Will the applicant plan/contract to include a 'hoop house'? (798?)	**25 Pts**
	Select Question 2, 3, 4 or 5	
2)	Will the applicant plan/contract for an improved irrigation system (dirt to concrete ditch)?	25 Pts
3)	Will the applicant plan/contract for an improved irrigation system (from sprinkler to drip)?	50 Pts
4)	Will applicant plan/contract for an improved irrigation system (from surface to sprinkler)?	75 Pts
5)	Will the applicant plan/contract for an improved irrigation system (from surface to drip)?	**100 Pts**
6)	Will the applicant plan/contract to include irrigation water management (449)?	**25 Pts**
	Select Question 7 or 8	
7)	Will the applicant schedule practices to be completed in two years or less?	**50 Pts**

8) Will the applicant schedule practices to be completed in two to three years? 25 Pts

Select Question 9, 10 or 11

9) Will the applicant plan/contract include one of the following practices (315, 590 or 595)? 25 Pts

10) Will the applicant plan/contract include two of the following practices (315, 590 or 595)? 50 Pts

11) Will the applicant plan/contract include all of the following practices (315, 590 or 595)? **75 Pts**

Select Question 12, 13 or 14

12) Will the applicant plan/contract to include one of the following practices (328, 340 or 345)? 25 Pts

13) Will the applicant plan/contract to include two of the following practices (328, 340 or 345)? 50 Pts

14) Will the applicant plan/contract to include all of the following practices (328, 340 or 345)? **75 Pts**

Select Question 15 or 16

15) Will the applicant plan/contract a windbreak (380) or renovate a windbreak (650)? 25 Pts

16) Will the applicant plan/contract a windbreak (or renovation) using pollinator friendly plants? **50 Pts**

Only proposed state and local issues are presented because national issues cannot be altered at the state level and the efficiency score is essentially a product of contracted practices, practice costs and practice life spans.

250 Pts are available for national issues
250 Pts are available for state issues
400 Pts are available for local issues
100 Pts are available for the efficiency score (this is computed by comparing practices to practice costs and practice life spans

315 - Herbaceous Weed Control
328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
340 - Cover Crop
345 - Residue & Tillage Management, Mulch Till
380 - Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
449 - Irrigation Water Management
545 - Integrated Pest Management
590 - Nutrient Management
650 - Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation