



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

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Signup Batching Deadline Announced for Alabama’s Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs

Auburn, Ala., September 20, 2016 – USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist for Alabama Ben Malone announced that October 21, 2016 is the signup batching date for producers for 2017 funding for the following conservation programs:

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** which includes energy retrofits, wildlife, forestry, cropland erosion, cropland irrigation, grazing land, and water quality concerns. National landscape initiatives are also included through EQIP funding. These include:
 1. *Gopher Tortoise Habitat Improvement*: includes forestry practices and prescribed burning for pre-commercial thinning.
 2. *Longleaf Pine Initiative*: includes prescribed burning on existing longleaf stands and the establishment of new stands.
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)** which includes irrigation reservoirs and efficiency improvements in Alabama.
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**
- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)** which has two options.
 1. *Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)*: includes the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and Grassland Reserve Program
 2. *Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)*: open land that has wet soils and was drained.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis; however, selecting applications for funding is completed periodically through batching periods with specific cutoff dates. In EQIP programs, eligible producers may receive a payment based on the statewide average cost of the installation of the conservation practice.

Special emphasis participants like socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers are eligible for a higher payment rate. In addition, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers can receive up to 50 percent advanced payment for purchasing materials or contracting.

-More-

For more information about NRCS and its programs, visit your [local USDA Service Center](#) to determine eligibility. Individuals are not eligible for USDA programs until they have completed the Farm Bill eligibility requirements. General program information is available on the Alabama NRCS website at www.al.nrcs.usda.gov.

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