

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 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 Forest Tree Mortality EQIP Fund Pool

The purpose of the Forest Tree Mortality EQIP Fund Pool is to provide immediate resource protection in drought-affected conifer forestlands where elevated levels of forest insect tree mortality has occurred or where forest insects are an imminent threat to forestlands. The Forest Tree Mortality EQIP pool is for non-industrial private conifer forestlands in Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Kern, Lake, Los Angeles, Mariposa, Madera, Nevada, Placer, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Tulare, or Tuolumne counties.

The State Conservationist has determined that the geographic scope of a Forest Management Plan and nonindustrial private forest land does not include areas within 100 feet from a building or a greater distance if required by state law, or local ordinance, rule, or regulation.

Priority resource concerns for the Forest Tree Mortality EQIP Fund Pool necessitating immediate management of dead and dying conifer trees include fire hazards resulting from dead tree debris fuel loads; pest control to reduce spread of insect mortality; and degraded, understocked forest conditions resulting from the insect damage and loss of forest trees.

The immediate consequence of tree mortality on California forestlands is the potential for increased wildfires, further spread of forest insect tree damage, threats to critical public safety infrastructure from falling trees, reduced forest carbon stocks, loss of commercial timber values to landowners, and diminished forestland benefits such as wildlife habitat and aesthetics.

Land Uses for the EQIP Fund Pool

Only applications 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.

- **Forest:** Land on which the primary vegetation is tree cover (climax, natural or introduced plant community) and use is primarily for production of wood products or non-timber forest products.
- **Associated Agricultural Lands:** Land associated with forests 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 watercourses, riparian areas, appurtenant roads, seasonal and permanent wetlands, meadows, and other similar areas.

Resource Concerns for the EQIP Fund Pool

Only applications 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.

- ❖ **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.
 - **Inadequate Structure and Composition:** Plant communities have insufficient diversity, density, distribution patterns, and three-dimensional structure necessary to achieve ecological functions and/or management objectives.
 - **Excessive Plant Pest Pressure:** The term “pest” can be any animal, plant, insect, bacteria, or virus that results in plant damage or competes for space, nutrients, or water (e.g., weeds). Heat, drought, wind, sun, and cold create stress on plants that make them more susceptible to pests.

- **Wildfire Hazard, Excess Biomass Accumulation:** Accumulated plant residue (biomass) creates wildfire hazards that pose risks to human safety, structures, plants, animals, and air resources. While fire is an important and often beneficial part of the natural ecosystem, uncontrolled or “wild” fire poses a threat to life, health, and property.

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 1. Eligible Conservation Practices

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name	Practice Units	Lifespan (Years)
314	Brush Management	ac	10
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	ac	5
342	Critical Area Planting	ac	10
383	Fuel Break	ac	10
384	Woody Residue Treatment	ac	10
394	Firebreak	ft	5
472	Access Control	ac	10
484	Mulching	ac	1
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	ac	1
500	Obstruction Removal	ac	10
560	Access Road	ft	10
578	Stream Crossing	no	10
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	ft	20
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	ac	15
654	Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment	ft	10
655	Forest Trails and Landings	ft	5
660	Tree/Shrub Pruning	ac	10
666	Forest Stand Improvement	ac	10

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 non-industrial private forest land.

USDA-NRCS, Amador County

Jackson Local Partnership Office
(209) 223-6535
Vacant, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS Calaveras County

Jackson Local Partnership Office
(209) 223-6535
Vacant, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, El Dorado County

Placerville Service Center
(530) 295-5630
Danny Marquis, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Fresno County

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

USDA-NRCS, Nevada County

Grass Valley Service Center
(530) 272-3417
Pam Hertzler, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Kern County

Lancaster Service Center
(661) 945-2604
Phillip Dixon, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Lake County

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

USDA-NRCS, Los Angeles

Lancaster Service Center
(661) 945-2604
Phillip Dixon, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Madera County

Madera Service Center
(559) 674-2108
Johnnie Siliznoff, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Mariposa County

Mariposa Local Partnership Office
(209) 966-3431
Robyn Smith, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Placer County

Auburn Service Center
(530) 885-6505
Jennifer Johnson, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Western Riverside County

Redlands Service Center
(909) 799-7404
Tomas Aguilar-Campos, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Riverside County

San Jacinto LPO
(951)654-7139
Robert Hewitt, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, San Bernardino County (Santa Ana Watershed)

Redlands Service Center
(909) 799-7404
Tomas Aguilar-Campos, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, San Bernardino County (Mojave Watershed)

Victorville Service Center
(760) 843-6882
Holly Shiralipour, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, San Diego County

Escondido Service Center
(760) 745-2061
Cori Calvert, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Tulare County

Visalia Service Center
(559) 734-8732
Joe Williams, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Tuolumne County

Jackson Local Partnership Office
(209) 223-6535
Vacant, District Conservationist

