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.

NRCS Field Office Contact Information

For more information about EQIP, how to apply and program eligibility, interested applicants should contact the NRCS field office in the county which you own land or where you have an agricultural operation.

USDA-NRCS, Solano County
Vacaville Service Center
(707) 448-0106 ext. 3
Wendy Rash, District Conservationist

About the Bay-Delta Initiative for Cache Slough Complex Watersheds

The purpose of the Bay-Delta Initiative for Cache Slough Complex Watersheds is to provide financial and technical assistance to producers to fund targeted implementation of water quality, water conservation, and wildlife habitat practices on eligible agricultural operations in Solano and Yolo counties and that are within the Cache Slough Complex Watersheds. Please reference the map included in this document.

The Bay-Delta Initiative for the Cache Slough Complex Watersheds will address the following water quality priorities.

- Conservation plans in watersheds with management plans under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program and address pollutants of concern within that watershed. For example:
  - Sediment and pyrethroids in the Z-drain
  - Chlorpyrifos in Ulatis Creek
- Conservation plans that will address high-risk pesticide use (as identified with Win-PST or other risk assessment tool) in the Cache Slough Complex watersheds.
- Conservation plans that will reduce sediment delivery to Cache Slough Complex water bodies.
- Conservation plans that will develop and implement nutrient management for fields or operations within the Cache Slough Complex watersheds.
- Conservation plans that will restrict livestock access to water bodies in the Cache Slough Complex.
- Conservation plans that will establish filtering vegetation on water bodies in the Cache Slough Complex.

The Bay Delta Initiative for the Cache Slough Complex Watersheds will address the following water use efficiency priorities.

- Conservation plans within the Cache Slough Complex watersheds that will reduce irrigation water use by 15 percent or more.
- Conservation plans that will implement irrigation water management on irrigated land within the Cache Slough Complex watersheds.
- Conservation plans that will reduce water use by surface irrigation systems (flood or furrow) by 8 percent or more.

The Bay Delta Initiative for the Cache Slough Complex Watersheds will address the following fish and wildlife habitat priorities.

- Conservation plans that will enhance or establish native riparian habitat on Cache Slough Complex tributary water bodies.
- Conservation plans that remove and manage invasive plant species from riparian zones on Cache Slough Complex tributary water bodies.
- Conservation plans that will provide habitat elements for species of concern.

This initiative provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers who are willing to improve irrigation systems and/or implement irrigation water management to conserve water; to employ structural or management practices to protect water quality; or to establish or enhance wildlife habitat on irrigated cropland and pasture operations.

Land Uses for the Bay-Delta Initiative 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 Bay-Delta Initiative 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.
- Grazed: Where grazing animals impact how land is managed.
- Wildlife: Where the applicant is actively managing for wildlife.
- Irrigated: Where an operational irrigation system is present and managed to supply irrigation water.

Resource Concerns for the Bay-Delta Initiative EQIP Fund Pool

Only applications for agricultural operations that address at least one resource concerns listed below will be considered for financial assistance through this Bay-Delta Initiative 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.

❖ 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.
- Pesticides Transported to Surface Water: Pest control chemicals are transported to receiving surface waters in quantities that degrade water quality. Pesticides typically enter surface water when rainfall or irrigation exceeds the infiltration capacity of soil and resulting runoff transports pesticides to streams, rivers, and other surface-water bodies.
- 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.

❖ INADEQUATE HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE – Quantity, quality or connectivity of food, water, cover/shelter, habitat continuity and/or space is inadequate to meet requirements of identified fish, wildlife or invertebrate species.

- Habitat Degradation: Conserving existing habitat and restoring habitat improves the odds that fish and wildlife communities will thrive. The availability and arrangement of food, water, cover, shelter, habitat continuity and space determine the number of organisms that a region can support, also known as carrying capacity. Increasing carrying capacity is critical to attaining long-term population stability.

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 in the applicant's conservation plan. NRCS conservation practices eligible for financial assistance through this Bay-Delta Initiative Fund Pool are listed in the below table.

Every application approved for funding must include at least one core practice unless the contract will complete a conservation system that supports core practices documented as applied for the land.

- Core conservation practices are critical to addressing the targeted resource concern(s) for this Bay-Delta Initiative and achieving the desired environmental outcome(s).
- Supporting practices are those practices needed to make the core practices function properly or to address a specific site or condition related to the identified resource concern(s).

All applications selected for financial assistance through this Bay-Delta Initiative must include documentation that an alternative containing the core practices was presented to the decision-maker.

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. Core Conservation Practices

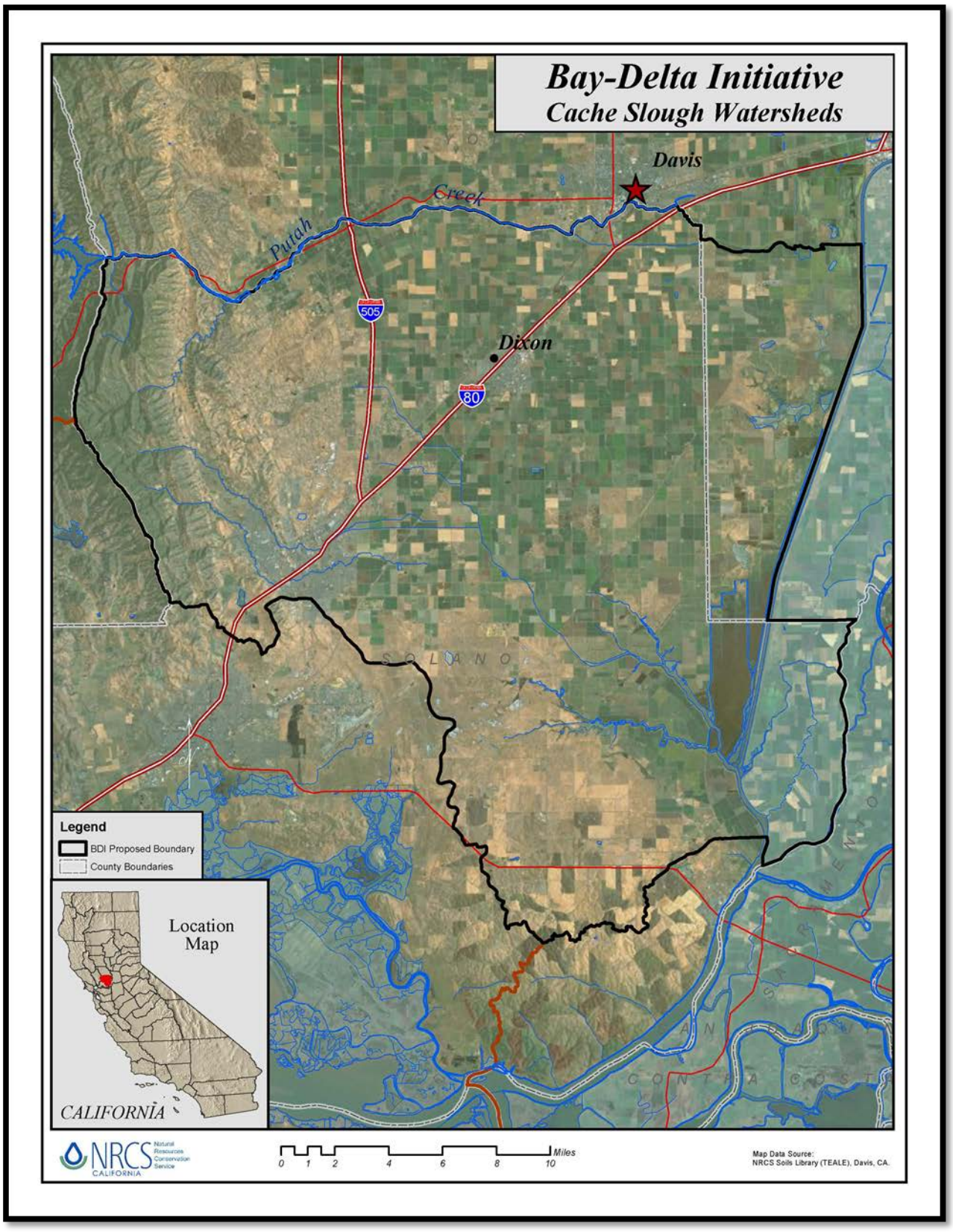
Practice Code	Core Conservation Practice Name	Units	Lifespan
314	Brush Management	ac	10
327	Conservation Cover	ac	5
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	ac	1
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till	ac	1
340	Cover Crop	ac	1
342	Critical Area Planting	ac	10
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till	ac	1
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover	ac	5
391	Riparian Forest Buffer	ac	15
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	ac	5
396	Aquatic Organism Passage	mi	5
422	Hedgerow Planting	ft	15
449	Irrigation Water Management	ac	1
472	Access Control	ac	10
528	Prescribed Grazing	ac	1
560	Access Road	ft	10
578	Stream Crossing	no	10
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection	ft	20
584	Channel Bed Stabilization	ft	10
587	Structure for Water Control	no	20
590	Nutrient Management	ac	1
595	Integrated Pest Management	ac	1
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	ac	1
649	Structures for Wildlife	no	5
657	Wetland Restoration	ac	15

Table 2. Supporting Conservation Practices

Practice Code	Supporting Conservation Practice Name	Units	Lifespan
315	Herbaceous Weed Control	ac	5
317	Composting Facility	no	15
320	Irrigation Canal or Lateral	ft	15
327	Conservation Cover	ac	5
350	Sediment Basin	no	20
351	Water Well Decommissioning	no	20
356	Dike	ft	20
362	Diversion	ft	10

Practice Code	Supporting Conservation Practice Name	Units	Lifespan
382	Fence	ft	20
386	Field Border	ac	10
388	Irrigation Field Ditch	ft	15
393	Filter Strip	ac	10
410	Grade Stabilization Structure	no	15
412	Grassed Waterway	ac	10
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[1]	no	15
450	Anionic Polyacrylamide (PAM) Application	ac	1
464	Irrigation Land Leveling	ac	15
468	Lined Waterway or Outlet	ft	15
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	ac	1
516	Livestock Pipeline	ft	20
520	Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Soil	no	15
521A	Pond Sealing or Lining, Flexible Membrane	no	20
533	Pumping Plant	no	15
561	Heavy Use Area Protection	ac	10
574	Spring Development	no	20
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	ac	15
614	Watering Facility	no	20
620	Underground Outlet	ft	20
642	Water Well	no	20

[1]Conservation practice, 447 – Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery, is an irrigation tailwater recovery system based on eligible component practices. Practice payment rates for conservation practice, 447 – Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery, will be based on eligible practice components.


Bay-Delta Initiative
Cache Slough Watersheds
Davis
Creek
Putah
505
Dixon
80
SOLANO
Legend
BDI Proposed Boundary
County Boundaries
Location Map
CALIFORNIA
NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service
CALIFORNIA
0 1 2 4 6 8 10
Miles
Map Data Source:
NRCS Soils Library (TEALE), Davis, CA.