

## **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 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 California Air Quality Initiative for Ozone Reduction**

Under the Agricultural Act of 2014, the Secretary shall provide eligible producers with technical and financial opportunities to address serious air quality concerns from agricultural operations and help meet regulatory requirements.

In Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017), the California Air Quality Initiative is designed to help agricultural producers meet air quality compliance requirements and offer opportunities to support practices that address impacts associated with greenhouse gases. Implementing conservation practices that reduce oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), volatile organic compounds (VOC), and particulate matter (PM) emissions from agricultural sources helps achieve and maintain the health- and welfare-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in California.

Financial assistance priority for the California Air Quality Initiative for Ozone Reduction is targeted toward areas that have been identified as having significant air quality resource concerns by being designated as "nonattainment" for the 2008 8-hour Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) NAAQS by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These areas experience air pollution levels that persistently exceed the NAAQS established by the Clean Air Act. Financial assistance may also be available to address the air quality resource concerns within areas designated as "unclassifiable/attainment" for the 2008 8-hour Ozone NAAQS. The critical time period for reducing emissions is May 1st through October 31st, which is considered the peak ozone season.

A map illustrating the designations within EPA-Region 9 for the 2008 8-hour Ozone NAAQS is included in Figure 1 of this document and available on-line at: [https://www3.epa.gov/region9/air/maps/r9\\_o38hr.html](https://www3.epa.gov/region9/air/maps/r9_o38hr.html).

There are two typical conservation treatments under this EQIP fund pool for reducing ozone precursor (NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC) emissions with the associated Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) code:

1. Manure injection methods at dairies, which can control reactive nitrogen emissions and odors, limit greenhouse gases, and sequester carbon in the soil (CPS 590 – Nutrient Management).
2. Precision spray application technologies and integrated pest management strategies to reduce fugitive VOC emissions from pesticide application (CPS 595 – Integrated Pest Management).

### **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.

### 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.

- ❖ **AIR QUALITY IMPACTS** – Direct or indirect emissions of compounds to the atmosphere that impact air quality.
  - **Emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs):** Direct or indirect emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), primarily carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), that accumulate in the atmosphere can have a potent impact on the climate. Activities from crop fertilization (natural and synthetic), tillage and agricultural soils management, manure management, livestock enteric fermentation, combustion activities, rice cultivation, and land-use conversion all contribute to excess agricultural GHG emissions into the atmosphere. Fuel consumption as an energy source contributes to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. Soil tillage is also a CO<sub>2</sub> contributor by increasing the rate of soil organic matter decomposition and releasing soil carbon into the atmosphere. Methane is produced as part of the normal digestive processes in animals and through anaerobic decomposition of manure and managed waste. A portion of nitrogen fertilizer applied to crops and grasslands emit N<sub>2</sub>O by volatilization through the nitrification/denitrification process.
  - **Emissions of Ozone Precursors:** Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) precursor gases are oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) pollutants. Ambient ozone is formed in the atmosphere through a photochemical reaction of NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC pollutants in the presence of sunlight, where its reactivity can be influenced by ambient heat. Exposure to ambient ozone can cause adverse impacts to public health, plants and animals. Sources of NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC emissions are from naturally occurring “biogenic sources” and from “anthropogenic sources” that include livestock activities, pesticide application, solvent and gasoline storage and use, nitrification/denitrification processes, and combustion from boilers, engines and open burning.
  - **Objectionable Odors:** Agricultural odors are a complex mixture of gases that can be generally classified as VOC’s ammonia, or odorous sulfur compounds. The primary sources of odors are animal housing, manure storage, land application of manure, silage storing, open burning, and fertilizer and pesticide application.

**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.

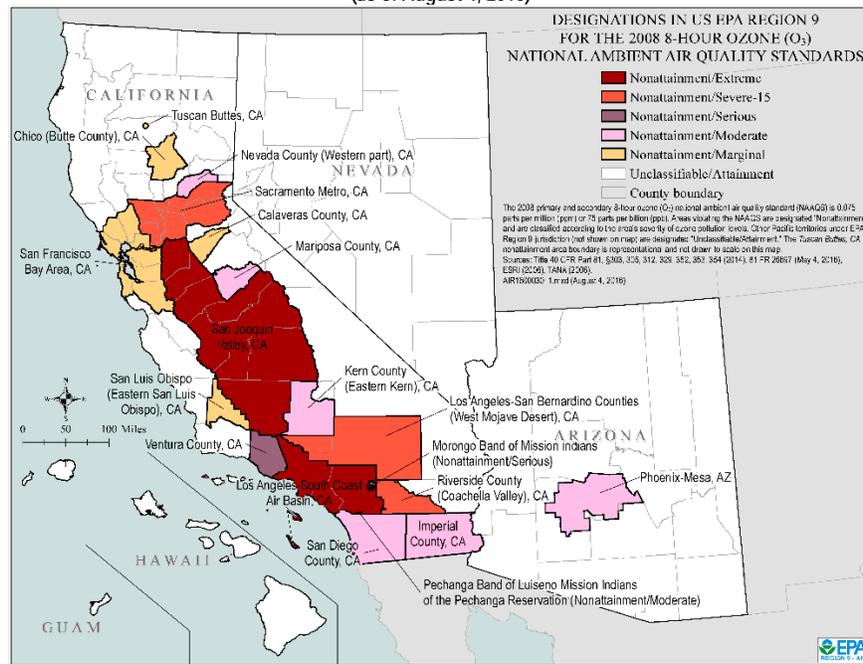
For more information about NRCS conservation practices visit the following website link for NRCS conservation practice standards:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/?cid=NRCSDEV11\\_001020](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)
590	Nutrient Management	ac	1
595	Integrated Pest Management	ac	1

**Figure 1: Designations in EPA Region 9 for the 2008 8-hour Ozone NAAQS (as of August 4, 2016)**



Source for Figure 1: EPA Region 9: <https://www3.epa.gov/region9/air/maps/>

**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.

NRCS Office	Phone Number	NRCS Office	Phone Number
Alturas Service Center	(530) 233-4137	Modesto Service Center	(209) 491-9320
Auburn Service Center	(530) 885-6505	Napa Field Office	(707) 252-4189
Bakersfield Service Center	(530) 336-0967	Oroville Service Center	(530) 534-0112
Bishop Field Office	(760) 872-6111	Oxnard Field Office	(805) 984-2358
Blythe Field Office	(760) 922-3446	Petaluma Service Center	(707) 794-1242
Capitola LPO	(831) 475-1967	Placerville Field Office	(530) 295-5630
Colusa Service Center	(530) 458-2931	Quincy LPO	(530) 283-7511
Concord Service Center	(925) 672-4577	Red Bluff Service Center	(530) 527-3013
Del Norte LPO	(707) 487-7630	Redding Service Center	(530) 226-2560
El Centro Service Center	(760) 352-7886	Redlands Field Office	(909) 799-7407
Elk Grove Service Center	(916) 714-1104	Salinas Service Center	(831) 424-1036
Escondido Field Office	(760) 745-2061	San Jacinto LPO	(951) 654-7139
Eureka Service Center	(707) 442-6058	Santa Maria Service Center	(805) 928-9269
Fresno Service Center	(559) 276-7494	Sonora LPO	(209) 984-0500
Grass Valley Field Office	(530) 272-3417	So. Lake Tahoe Field Office	(530) 543-1501
Half Moon Bay LPO	(650) 726-4660	Stockton Service Center	(209) 472-7127
Hanford Service Center	(559) 584-9209	Susanville Service Center	(530) 257-7272
Hollister Service Center	(831) 637-4360	Templeton Service Center	(805) 434-0396
Hoopa LPO	(707) 486-7439	Tulelake Basin Project	(530) 667-4247
Indio Service Center	(760) 347-3675	Ukiah Service Center	(707) 468-9223
Jackson LPO	(209) 223-6535	Victorville Service Center	(760) 843-6882
Lakeport LPO	(707) 263-4180	Vacaville Service Center	(707) 448-0106
Lancaster Service Center	(661) 945-2604	Visalia Service Center	(559) 734-8732
Livermore LPO	(925) 371-0154	Weaverville Service Center	(530) 623-3991
Madera Service Center	(559) 674-4628	Willows Service Center	(530) 934-4601
Mariposa LPO	(209) 966-3431	Woodland Service Center	(530) 662-2037
McArthur LPO	(530) 336-5604	Yreka Service Center	(530) 842-6123
Merced Service Center	(209) 722-4119	Yuba City Service Center	(530) 674-1461