

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 EQIP Fund Pool

The purpose of the North Coast Forestland EQIP Fund Pool is to promote healthy and productive forest lands, reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, minimize the impacts to water quality and reduce wildfire risks.

Interested owners and/or operators of land managed for agricultural production in *Del Norte, Humboldt, and Mendocino counties* may be eligible for the North Coast Forestland EQIP Fund Pool; please refer to the map at the end of this document for the boundaries of this EQIP Fund Pool.

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.

- **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 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.

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.

- ❖ **SOIL EROSION** – Erosion removes topsoil, reduces levels of soil organic matter, and contributes to the breakdown of soil structure.
 - **Sheet and Rill:** Sheet and rill erosion is the detachment and transportation of soil particles caused by rainfall runoff/splash and/or irrigation events. Symptoms of soil erosion by water include: small rills and channels on the soil surface, soil deposited at the base of slopes, sediment in streams, lakes, and reservoirs, and pedestals of soil supporting pebbles and plant material.
 - **Classic Gullies:** Classic gullies are forms of erosion created by the concentrated flow of water. Classic gully erosion generally occurs in well-defined drainage ways and generally is not obliterated by tillage. Untreated classic gullies may enlarge progressively by head cutting and/or lateral widening.

- ❖ **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION** – Water quality degradation impacts the beneficial use of the receiving waters.
 - **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.
 - **Elevated Water Temperature:** Water temperature has important ecological consequences and potential negative impacts for human use. As water temperature rises, there is a corresponding decrease in the availability of oxygen, carbon dioxide, and other gases important to aquatic life. Warm water also has the potential to increase the presence of dissolved toxic substances that may restrict the suitability of water for human use.

- ❖ **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.
 - **Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health:** Plants must be adapted to the site and provided with appropriate amounts of nutrients, water, and sunshine, and protected from unchecked animal, weed, insect, and disease pests. Plants established in the wrong climate or soil may be under stress and may never thrive, no matter how much fertilizer or water supplied. Natural events, such as drought, or mismanagement can cause plant stress. Plants under stress are more susceptible to disease and insect damage.
 - **Inadequate Structure and Composition:** Plant communities, such as - wetland habitat, unique ecosystems or targeted 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.

- ❖ **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 Activity Plans

Only applications for NRCS conservation activity plans listed in the table below are eligible for financial assistance through this EQIP Fund Pool. A Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) can be developed for an applicant to identify conservation practices needed to address a specific natural resource need.

Information about CAP services from Technical Service Providers (TSP), including how to find a certified TSP in your State, can be found on the NRCS national TSP website:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/technical/tsp/?cid=stelprdb1042981>

Table 1. Eligible Conservation Activity Plans

| Practice Code | Conservation Activity Plan Name | Practice Units | Lifespan (Years) |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 106 | Forest Management Plan - Written | no | 1 |
| 110 | Grazing Management Plan - Written | no | 1 |
| 112 | Prescribed Burning Plan - Written | no | 1 |

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 2. Eligible Conservation Practices

| Practice Code | Conservation Practice Name | Practice Units | Lifespan (Years) |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 314 | Brush Management | ac | 10 |
| 315 | Herbaceous Weed Control | ac | 5 |
| 326 | Clearing and Snagging | ft | 5 |
| 327 | Conservation Cover | ac | 5 |
| 338 | Prescribed Burning | ac | 1 |
| 342 | Critical Area Planting | ac | 10 |
| 362 | Diversion | ft | 10 |
| 378 | Pond | no | 20 |
| 379 | Multi-Story Cropping | ac | 10 |
| 380 | Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment | ft | 15 |
| 381 | Silvopasture Establishment | ac | 15 |
| 382 | Fence | ft | 20 |
| 383 | Fuel Break | ac | 10 |
| 384 | Woody Residue Treatment | ac | 10 |
| 390 | Riparian Herbaceous Cover | ac | 5 |
| 391 | Riparian Forest Buffer | ac | 15 |
| 393 | Filter Strip | ac | 10 |

| Practice Code | Conservation Practice Name | Practice Units | Lifespan (Years) |
|---------------|---|----------------|------------------|
| 394 | Firebreak | ft | 5 |
| 395 | Stream Habitat Improvement and Management | ac | 5 |
| 396 | Aquatic Organism Passage | mi | 5 |
| 410 | Grade Stabilization Structure | no | 15 |
| 412 | Grassed Waterway | ac | 10 |
| 422 | Hedgerow Planting | ft | 15 |
| 441 | Irrigation System, Microirrigation | ac | 15 |
| 460 | Land Clearing | ac | 10 |
| 468 | Lined Waterway or Outlet | ft | 15 |
| 472 | Access Control | ac | 10 |
| 484 | Mulching | ac | 1 |
| 490 | Tree/Shrub Site Preparation | ac | 1 |
| 500 | Obstruction Removal | ac | 10 |
| 516 | Livestock Pipeline | ft | 20 |
| 520 | Pond Sealing or Lining, Compacted Soil | no | 15 |
| 521A | Pond Sealing or Lining, Flexible Membrane | no | 20 |
| 528 | Prescribed Grazing | ac | 1 |
| 533 | Pumping Plant | no | 15 |
| 550 | Range Planting | ac | 5 |
| 560 | Access Road | ft | 10 |
| 561 | Heavy Use Area Protection | ac | 10 |
| 570 | Stormwater Runoff Control | no | 15 |
| 572 | Spoil Spreading | ac | 1 |
| 574 | Spring Development | no | 20 |
| 575 | Trails and Walkways | 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 |
| 606 | Subsurface Drain | ft | 20 |
| 612 | Tree/Shrub Establishment | ac | 15 |
| 614 | Watering Facility | no | 20 |
| 620 | Underground Outlet | ft | 20 |
| 630 | Vertical Drain | no | 10 |
| 636 | Water Harvesting Catchment | no | 20 |
| 638 | Water and Sediment Control Basin | no | 10 |
| 642 | Water Well | no | 20 |
| 647 | Early Successional Habitat Development/Management | ac | 1 |
| 649 | Structures for Wildlife | no | 5 |
| 650 | Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation | ft | 15 |
| 654 | Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment | ft | 10 |
| 655 | Forest Trails and Landings | ft | 5 |

| Practice Code | Conservation Practice Name | Practice Units | Lifespan (Years) |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 657 | Wetland Restoration | ac | 15 |
| 658 | Wetland Creation | ac | 15 |
| 659 | Wetland Enhancement | ac | 15 |
| 660 | Tree/Shrub Pruning | ac | 10 |
| 666 | Forest Stand Improvement | ac | 10 |
| 740 | Pond Sealing and Lining, Soil Cement | no | 20 |

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, Del Norte County

Del Norte Local Partnership Office
(707) 487-7630
Jared Schniers, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Humboldt County

Eureka Service Center
(707) 442-6058
Jonathan Shultz, District Conservationist

USDA-NRCS, Mendocino County

Ukiah Service Center
(707) 468-9223
Carol Mandel, District Conservationist

