

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

SUBMITTED BY MICHAEL CZECZOK, SOIL CONSERVATIONIST

The type of grazing management a producer uses not only can have an effect on the amount of soil exposure, erosion, variety of native/invasive plants, but can also have a vital impact on water quality in ponds or streams. Water quality decreases when livestock are standing or loafing around in the water, walking down the banks, or depositing manure in the stream or pond. Manure contains phosphorus and nitrogen, which are potent fertilizers for aquatic plants. The algal and rooted aquatic plant growth creates oxygen in the process called photosynthesis from sunlight, but this growth develops into rotting biomass and its decomposition consumes oxygen allowing only specially adapted creatures to survive. Oxygen concentrations fall and anaerobic conditions may form when ponds and creeks freeze, which can decrease fish and aquatic organism populations. Some algae can in fact produce toxins that make water unpalatable resulting in reduction of livestock intake or making livestock ill. By allowing livestock to loaf in water holes and contaminate water, the transmission of disease increases. Giardia and cryptosporidium are the two most common parasites for cattle, sheep, and pigs, which can cause scours in calves and reduce weight gain. This cause's reduced production and profit loss.

There are many practices that can be implemented to improve water quality in riparian areas. Some examples are improving grazing managements and using water tank facilities as alternative water sources. A proper grazing management system can improve vegetative cover and improve soil structure, therefore increasing the infiltration rate in the soil by allowing plants to use the rainfall rather than allowing it to run off. This can also result in sedimentation problems and soil erosion issues. By increasing the vegetative cover, a producer will benefit from decreased amounts of nutrient runoff to riparian areas by livestock. Another alternative to improve water quality in riparian areas is replacing streams and ponds, as a water source, with water tanks. Generally cattle will do the majority of their grazing within 800 feet of a water source. By proper design and spacing of water tanks, producers can allow livestock to utilize more of their pastures for grazing and at the same time keep livestock away from the streams/ponds. In addition, by providing livestock with fresh water sources from water tanks, producers can increase gains by 10-20 percent weight in a season.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can provide conservation technical assistance to land users in planning and implementing conservation plan that addresses producer's resource concern. NRCS also promotes the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which is a voluntary conservation program that provides cost share and/or incentive payments to encourage producers to implement structural, vegetative, and management practices. Examples of conservation practices eligible for cost share and/or incentive payments through EQIP are: tanks, wells, pipelines, fencing, and many more. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about EQIP program stop at the office or give us a call 701-754-2234.

Helping People Help the Land

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NRCS On-Farm Energy Initiative

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering financial and technical assistance to help farmers and ranchers conserve energy through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

The EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative is designed to help producers improve energy efficiency on agricultural operations. Specifically, the initiative is designed to help producers in two ways:

1. Identify ways to conserve energy on farms through an Agricultural Energy Management Plan (AgEMP), or a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)—also known as an on-farm energy audit.
2. Provide assistance to implement various recommended measures through the use of conservation practice standards offered through this initiative. (See list of eligible practices.)

Through the implementation of recommended measures and conservation practices, farmers and ranchers should achieve savings in energy conservation and efficiency.

Am I eligible to participate in the EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative?

In order to be eligible for this initiative, an applicant must be an agricultural producer. Eligible applications will be reviewed for estimated energy savings and will be funded periodically throughout the current fiscal year.

What are the advantages of energy conservation?

The advantages of energy conservation include: reducing air pollutants, reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, reducing dependence on petroleum based products, and slowing escalation of energy cost due to lower demand.

Tell me about Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP)?

An AgEMP is an analysis of current farm infrastructure and management with recommendations to reduce energy consumption on farming operations. A plan can be developed for each farm enterprise—such as a livestock production system, a field crop system, and specialized non-livestock operations such as greenhouses and cold storage facilities. Ultimately, the AgEMP will provide farmers and ranchers with specific cost effective ways to reduce operating costs while saving energy.

What conservation practices are eligible through the EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative?

- Conservation Crop Rotation that includes a legume
- Cover Crop with a legume component
- Irrigation Reservoir.
- Irrigation Water Management
- Pumping Plant.
- Residue and Tillage Management: Mulch Till
- Residue and Tillage Management: No Till, Strip Till, and Direct Seeding
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment

What kind of assistance will NRCS offer through the EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative?

To achieve the purposes of the initiative, financial assistance and associated technical assistance will be offered to qualified producers to help improve energy efficiency on agriculture operations. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program for farmers, promoting agricultural production and environmental quality.

Applications can be filled out anytime throughout the year. Funding is competitive; if an application is not selected for funding during a particular funding cycle, it can be deferred to the next funding cycle.

There will be **three** distinct application and ranking periods in 2012, **February 3, March 30, and June 1, 2012.**

Those interested in applying for the Energy Initiative can contact their local NRCS service center or visit

www.nd.nrcs.usda.gov.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM (CSP)

The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a leader in efforts to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources.

In keeping with this tradition of "helping people help the land," NRCS administers a number of programs to assist landowners with conservation needs. It has earned a reputation for reaching out to all segments of the agricultural community to ensure that its programs are assessable to everyone.

One of the newest programs offered by NRCS is the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Through CSP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their lands.

Conserving our natural resources is paramount to ensuring that we pass on a healthy and prosperous environment to our children and grandchildren. Our nation's farmlands and rangelands offer an excellent starting point to preserve and enhance rural America.

What exactly is CSP?

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a strictly voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner. This is done by:

- Undertaking additional conservation activities; and
- Improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

The program provides equitable access to all producers, regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location.

What are the payment options?

The Conservation Stewardship Program offers participants two possible types of payments. They are as follows:

- Annual Payment—for installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities.
- Supplemental Payment—for the adoption of resource-conserving crop rotations.

The annual payment limitation for a person or legal entity is \$40,000. A person or legal entity cannot exceed \$200,000 for all contracts entered into during any five-year period.

For more information regarding payments, please visit the CSP web page. <http://www.nd.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

How do I know if I am eligible?

The CSP is available on Tribal and private agricultural lands, as well as nonindustrial private forest lands statewide. Individual producers, legal entities, corporations, and Indian Tribes may be eligible for the program. Lands that are eligible include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian Tribe.

Specifically, applicants must:

- Be the operator on record in the USDA farm records management system for eligible land being offered for enrollment;
- Have documented control of the land for the term of the proposed contract;
- Include the eligible land in their entire operation as represented for other USDA programs;
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions and adjusted gross income.

Important Information to Remember!

If CSP is something you are interested in, we encourage you to contact your local NRCS field office to learn more about the program.

CSP applications are accepted on a continuous basis. Signed applications on file at the close of business on **January 13, 2012** will be batched and ranked for FY 2012 funding consideration. To apply, you will be requested to compile the following documentation to ensure that you meet the application eligibility requirements.

1. Maps outlining the lands that will be included in the proposed contract.
2. Documentation showing that you are the operator in the FSA farm records management system for the agricultural operation being offered.
3. Have documented control of land for the term of the proposed contract.
4. Be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions.
5. Be in compliance with Adjusted Gross Income provisions.
6. Supply information for payment eligibility, SF-1199a (Direct deposit).
7. Provide a list of all members of the legal entity with member's tax identification numbers, percent interest in the entity and signing authority.
 - NRCS CCC-902 (Member's Information).
 - FSA-211(Power of Attorney).
 - Entity Papers.

All programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis

CONSERVATION

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Logan County Soil Conservation District

TREE THOUGHTS

As I sit here finalizing some tree plans, I thought I would get the word out that even though we have put our initial order for trees in, we can still add to the order for a while yet. So if anyone is interested, please stop by soon and talk to me. I will try to find cost-share dollars to help you fund the planting.

A program that I think is really being over-looked is the Living Snow Fence Tree Program. These are tree plantings along roads with problem snow areas. After the last three winters, I am guessing we can all think of a least one site that was a problem area! If this area meets cropping history, producers could get up to 90% cost share for both the trees and fabric, plus get 15 years of CRP payments for that area. It should certainly help the county with the expense of snow removal. So if there is a problem site, and there should be numerous ones, give me a call and we will see if the area meets the criteria for the program. The Living Snow Fence Tree Program applies to county roads, highways, and private roads as well as farmsteads.

Submitted by: Terry Weigel, District Technician

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