NRCS Announces EQIP, AMA and RCPP Signup for 2022 Funding, Apply by November 22, 2021

Providing Conservation Practices to Protect Natural Resources

October 22, 2021

Casper, Wyoming – November 2, 2021 – Farmers, Ranchers and landowners will want to plan ahead and sign up early for USDA conservation funding. James Bauchert, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Acting State Conservationist in Wyoming, announced farmers, ranchers and landowners interested in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA) and Regional Conservation Planning Partnership Program (RCPP) need to apply by Nov. 22, 2021, to be considered for funding in the current 2022 cycle. Applications are being taken at all USDA Service Centers in Wyoming.

While Wyoming NRCS accepts applications for these programs year-round, farmers, ranchers and landowners should apply by the Nov. 22 ranking date to be considered for this year’s funding. If you apply after the program ranking date, Wyoming NRCS will automatically consider your application during the next funding cycle. State-specific ranking dates for all programs can be found at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/staterankingdates/.

EQIP is the primary program available to farmers and landowners for farm and woodland conservation work, offering payments for over 120 basic conservation practices. Last year, Wyoming received over $14 million in funds for EQIP practices.

“The new Farm Bill allows NRCS to support conservation that ensures cost-effective financial assistance for improved soil health, water and air quality and other natural resources benefits,” said Bauchert. By getting EQIP applications in early, NRCS staff will have time to assist in planning conservation practice needs.”

All eligible applications received by Nov. 22, 2021, will be evaluated, prioritized and ranked for funding in 2022. Producers may contact their local USDA Service Center to get started on producer eligibility and planning.

Bauchert reminds farmers who are interested in practices that may require permits, such as manure storage or streambank restoration, to begin planning and seeking permits as soon as possible.

Sign up also includes several special initiatives focusing on conservation efforts.

Sign-up opportunities are now open for all ranking pools for EQIP, AMA and RCPP. Special initiatives are also available for Beginning Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged and other historically underserved customers at increased payment rates. High Priority Practices and identified Source Water Protection areas for Wyoming also have increased payment rates for the EQIP program.

Local Work Group (LWG)/Divisions: Wyoming has nine local work groups which correlate to nine Divisions. Each Division has a fund pools specific to their LWG. LWGs collect local stakeholder input and use the feedback
to focus on their own local resource concern priorities for each fund pool, making each Division fund pool unique and locally relevant.

**On-Farm Energy:** NRCS and producers develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP) or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation. Audit data is used to plan, develop and implement energy conservation recommendations.

**Organic:** NRCS helps certified organic growers and producers, working to achieve organic certification, install conservation practices to address resource concerns on organic operations.

**High Tunnel System (Hoop House):** NRCS helps producers plan and implement high tunnels – steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures that extend growing seasons in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality, fewer nutrients and pesticides in the environment and better air quality due to fewer vehicles being needed to transport crops. Supporting conservation practices, such as grassed waterways and diversions, are available to address resource concerns on operations with Seasonal High Tunnel structures.

**Soil Health:** Soil is a living and life-giving natural resource. By farming using soil health principles and systems that include no-till, cover cropping and diverse rotations, more and more farmers are increasing their soil’s organic matter and improving microbial activity.

**Source Water Protection:** Source water refers to ground water aquifers, rivers or lakes that provide water to public drinking supplies. Areas in Wisconsin with high concentrations of public water systems experiencing elevated nitrate levels have been identified for eligibility. Specific practices identified as improving nitrate levels are eligible to receive 90% payment rate, such as Nutrient Management, Filter Strips, and Forage and Biomass Planting. To see which watersheds are eligible and practices that can receive the 90% payment rate, visit the Source Water Protection section of the Wisconsin NRCS website [here](#).

**Working Lands for Wildlife – Sage Grouse Initiative:** NRCS launched the Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) in 2010 as a highly targeted and science-based landscape approach to proactively conserve sage-grouse and sustain the working rangelands that support western ranching economies. This innovative partnership of ranchers, agencies, universities, non-profit groups and businesses all embrace a common vision – achieving wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching. Visit [sagegrouseinitiative.com](http://sagegrouseinitiative.com) to learn more about the partnership.

**Regional Conservation Partnership Program:** The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. NRCS provides assistance to producers through partnership agreements and through program contracts or easement agreements. Current active projects include Popo Agie Watershed Health and Securing the Grass Highway for Wyoming Migrations.

**Agricultural Management Assistance Program:** Helps agricultural producers use conservation to manage risk and address natural resource issues through natural resources conservation.

Landowners interested in applying for EQIP funding should contact their local NRCS office at the USDA Service Center for their county. For more information, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

Helping People Help the Land

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**NAP 2022**

Due to COVID, we were in this same staffing situation at this time last year and it made signing up for NAP a challenge. The deadline to sign up is December 1, 2021. Please get your checks in early. You will need to mail them. We do not have a secure drop off location at our office and the office is closed to visitors. Please make your checks payable to CCC (Commodity Credit Corporation) for $325.00 per crop ie native grass, and forage grass. Our mailing address is:
If you’re a socially disadvantaged woman or company declaring socially disadvantaged status, please contact our office to be sure your application has been processed for 2022.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office at 307-261-5436.

**USDA Expands Assistance to Cover Feed Transportation Costs for Drought-Impacted Ranchers**

In response to the severe drought conditions in the West and Great Plains, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced its plans to help cover the cost of transporting feed for livestock that rely on grazing. USDA is updating the **Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)** to immediately cover feed transportation costs for drought impacted ranchers. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will provide more details and tools to help ranchers get ready to apply at their local USDA Service Center at [fsa.usda.gov/elap](http://fsa.usda.gov/elap).

ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees, and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.

ELAP already covers the cost of hauling water during drought, and this change will expand the program beginning in 2021 to cover feed transportation costs where grazing and hay resources have been depleted. This includes places where:

- Drought intensity is D2 for eight consecutive weeks as indicated by the S. Drought Monitor;
- Drought intensity is D3 or greater; or
- USDA has determined a shortage of local or regional feed availability.

To be eligible for ELAP assistance, livestock must be intended for grazing and producers must have incurred feed transportation costs on or after Jan. 1, 2021. Although producers will self-certify losses and expenses to FSA, producers are encouraged to maintain good records and retain receipts and related documentation in the event these documents are requested for review by the local FSA County Committee. The deadline to file an application for payment for the 2021 program year is Jan. 31, 2022.

For more information contact the Natrona and Converse County FSA office at 307-261-5436.
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Lee Moore, Member
William Kossert, Member
Brandi Forgey, Member

Next COC Meeting: Dec 7, 2021 @ 1:00pm