ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVE PROGRAM (EQIP)
Water Conservation Initiative for the Rancho California Water District - Fiscal Year 2012

Program Description:

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address water conservation needs on their farms through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Assistance will be provided as part of a NRCS and USDI Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) partnership that targets funds to high priority water delivery agencies and on-farm irrigation improvements. NRCS will provide EQIP funding for eligible producers to apply conservation practices on private land while USBR funding will be used to improve district-wide irrigation efficiency.

A separate regional funding pool for eligible producers and irrigated agricultural operations within the Rancho California Water District (RCWD) will be established from California's EQIP allocation in Fiscal Year 2012 to support water conservation and the NRCS-USBR partnership. This initiative will be available to irrigated agricultural operations within the De Luz area west of I-15.

This initiative will provide financial and technical assistance opportunities to agricultural producers in the RCWD who are willing to address on-farm water conservation and implement eligible conservation practices that meet NRCS technical standards and guidelines. EQIP applications will be screened to determine priority; highest priority applications that provide the greatest water conservation benefits will be selected for funding through an evaluation process that considers national, state and local ranking criteria. Financial assistance payments are limited to 50 percent of the estimated average cost of applying the practice. Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged, Indian Tribes, and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers may be eligible for payment rates of 75 – 90 percent. The approved practice list is included in this document along with screening and ranking criteria.

Any system or practice installed/applied, including purchase of materials for a practice, prior to approval and obligation of an EQIP contract is not eligible for payment. All payments are made after practice implementation is complete, project costs have been incurred and all certifications are complete as required by the contract. Applicants can apply to the NRCS State Conservationist for a waiver of the prior approval requirement. Waivers will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Where to Apply:

For application assistance or for more information regarding the Water Conservation Initiative for the Rancho California Water District contact your local NRCS field office, which can be obtained at the NRCS California web site: http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/

Program Application:

To be eligible for the Water Conservation Initiative for the Rancho California Water District a complete application must be submitted to the local NRCS office by close-of-business (COB) **June 8, 2012.** Program applications are accepted on a continuous basis. A complete application submitted to the local NRCS office by close-of-business (COB) **June 8, 2012** will be evaluated for funding in a ranking evaluation period between **June 9, 2012** and **June 15, 2012**. Applications submitted after the **June 8, 2012** date will be evaluated in the next ranking and funding period. Incomplete applications may be re-submitted for the next ranking and funding period. For application assistance or for more information regarding the California programs county and statewide initiatives contact your closest NRCS office, which can be obtained at the NRCS California web site: http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/.

To be eligible to participate in EQIP, an applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Be a producer. To be considered a producer, the applicant must be—
    a. A person, legal entity, Indian Tribe, or joint operation with signature authority and
    b. Engaged in agricultural production or forestry management or have an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation associated with the land being offered for enrollment in EQIP.
        - Interest in the farming operation means one of the following:
            i. Owner or renter of the land in the farming operation;
            ii. An interest in the agricultural products, commodities, or livestock produced by the farming operation; or
            iii. A member of a joint operation that either owns or rents land in the farming operation or has an interest in the agricultural products, commodities, or livestock produced by the farming operation.
2. Have control of the land for the term of the proposed contract period.
3. Be in compliance with the provisions for protecting the interests of tenants and sharecroppers, including the provisions for sharing EQIP payments on a fair and equitable basis.
4. Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation compliance.
5. Be within appropriate payment limitation requirements, as specified in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

    Exception: Federally-recognized Indian Tribes are exempt from payment limitation requirements. The $300,000 contract limitation remains applicable to Indian Tribes, but there is no limit on payments so an Indian Tribe could have multiple $300,000 contracts. Individual tribal members must be within appropriate payment limitations.
6. Be in compliance with adjusted gross income requirements.

    Exception: Federally-recognized Indian Tribes are exempt from adjusted gross income requirements

To be eligible for EQIP, the land being offered for application into the program must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Be agricultural land, nonindustrial private forest land, or other land on which agricultural products, livestock, or forest-related products are produced.
   i. Agricultural products include but are not limited to the following:
      Grains or row crops; Tobacco; Seed crops; Vegetables or fruits; Hay, forage, or pasture; Orchards or vineyards; Flowers or bulbs; Ornamentals; Plant materials, including those grown in greenhouses or seasonal high tunnels; Trees; Other agricultural commodities; Other crops used for subsistence.
   ii. Livestock production is defined as farm or ranch operations involving the production, growing, raising, or reproducing of livestock or livestock products, including but not limited to, the following:
      Alpacas; Beef cattle; Bison; Dairy cattle; Fish or other animals raise through aqua-cultural methods; Horses; Llamas; Ratites; Poultry; Sheep or goats; Swine; Turkeys; All other livestock or fowl produced as part of agricultural operations on farms or ranches identified by the State Conservationist, considering the advice of the State Technical Committee.
   iii. Nonindustrial private forest land is rural land that—
      Has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees.
      Is owned by any nonindustrial private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian Tribe, or other private legal entity.
   iv. Permanently submerged lands may be eligible only if all of the following apply:
      The EQIP practice(s) to be implemented is land-based
      The Farm Service Agency establishes farm records, common land unit (CLU information, and completes HEL/WC determinations for the submerged land area
      The proposed EQIP practice(s) addresses an identified natural resource concern.
      Note: By statute and regulation (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-1; and §1466.8), EQIP may only be used to implement practices or support activities on eligible land. As such, areas of water in which no land-based conservation practice(s) will be implemented are not eligible.

2. Be privately owned or Indian land. Publicly owned land may be eligible if—
   i. The land is a working component of the participant's agricultural and operations.
   ii. The participant has control of the land for the term of the contract.
   iii. The conservation practices to be implemented on the public land are necessary and will contribute to an improvement in the identified resource concern.
3. Have permission of the landowner to install a structural practice on land not owned by the applicant.
4. Have an identified resource concern that may be addressed.
5. Have irrigated two out of the last five years to install a water conservation or irrigation related practice.

To be eligible for program funds, applicants must be established in Service Center Information System (SCIMS), have the following certifications completed and filed at the USDA service center: Form AD-1026, "Highly Erodible Land Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification;" Form CCC-926, "Average Adjusted Gross Income Statement;" and Form CCC-901, "Member's Information (for legal entity and joint operations only), and meet EQIP program eligibility requirements.

A Complete Application Must Include:

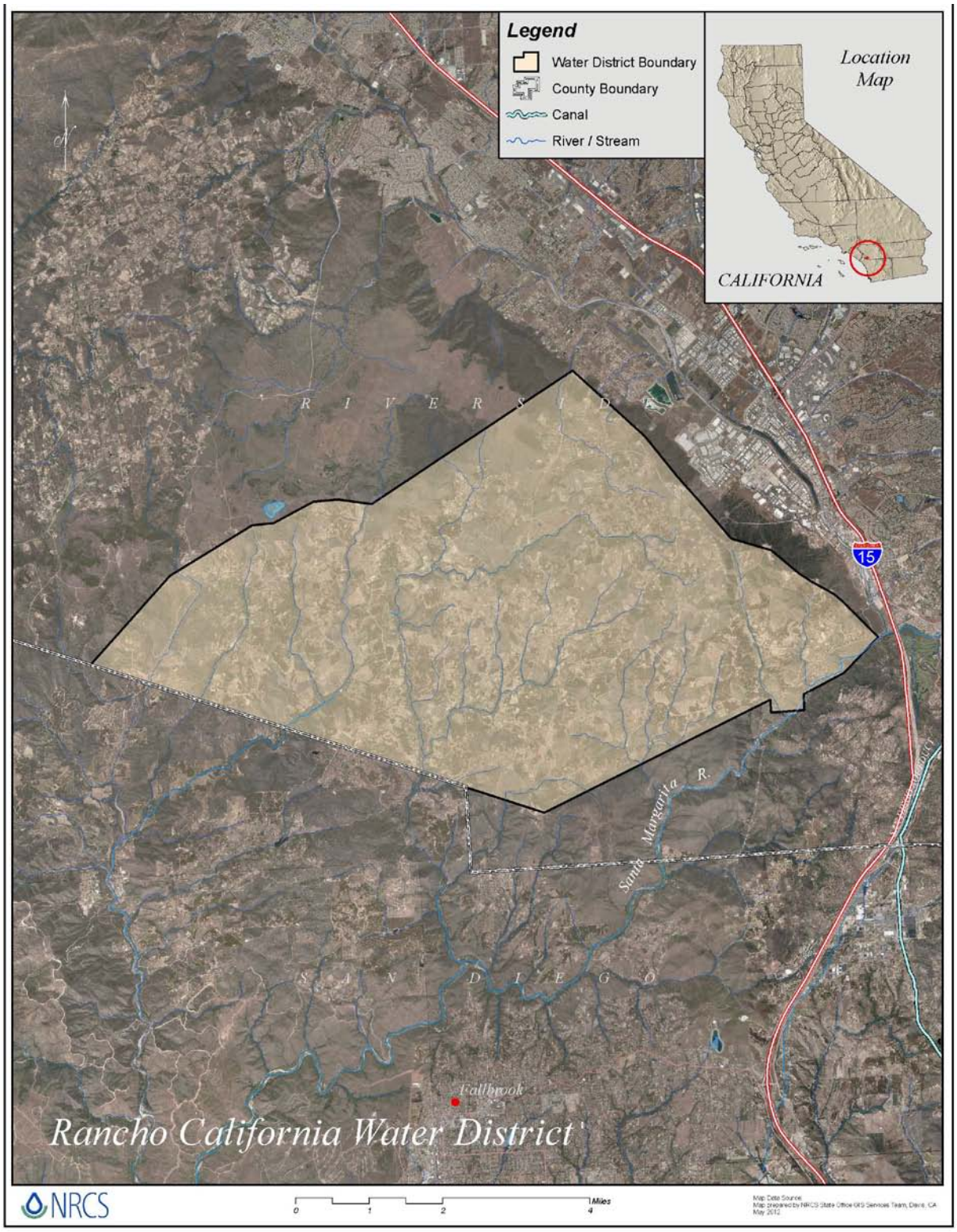
- **Form NRCS-CPA-1200 Application -** Signed and dated by all program participants or authorized persons.

The designated conservationist will review applications for completeness and consistency with individual or business information maintained in SCIMS. Applications will be serviced and funded on the basis of the signup and evaluation cutoff dates, the ranking criteria, the availability of program funds, and other requirements, as specified for the program.

- **Form AD-1026**: Highly Erodible Land Conservation - Wetland Conservation Certification.
- **Form CCC-931**: Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification.
- **Form SF-1199A**: Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form.
- **Form CA-LTP-5**: Producer Certification of Irrigation History - if applicable.
- **Form CCC-901**: Entity Member Information - if applicable.
- **Form FSA-211**: Power of Attorney – if applicable (Entity applicants must submit this form).
- **Landowner Agreement to Install Structural Practices**– if applicable.
- **Signature authority**: Self-certification of signature authority as indicated on Form CCC-901 or documents such as articles of incorporation, charter, bylaws, partnership agreements, trust agreements, wills and similar legal evidence – if applicable (Entities must submit this form).
- **DUNS Number**: All entities/ organizations are required to obtain a DUNS number when submitting a conservation program application.
- **Proof of Identity**: Authorized persons may be required to show valid state driver's license, passport or other personal identification as well as Social Security or EIN numbers, address and other information.

Note: **Confidential and private information**: Many of the program application forms or documentation requires the applicant to provide sensitive, contact, financial or other confidential information. Disclosure of this data is voluntary, but failure to provide the required information in a timely manner may result in the deferral of an application or denial of a benefit payment. By law and policy, confidential, private and sensitive information is protected by USDA and employees and agency partners are subject to penalty and disciplinary action for inappropriate or mismanagement of private data.

Rancho California Water District Boundaries:



Approved Land Use Types, Resource Concerns and Practice List for the Water Conservation Initiative for the Rancho California Water District:

Approved Land Use Types:

- Irrigated Crop

Approved Resource Concerns:

Water Quantity

- Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land
- Excessive Runoff, Flooding, or Ponding

Approved Practice List:

The following page is a complete list of conservation practices eligible for financial assistance through the Water Conservation Initiative for the Rancho California Water District.

Eligible conservation practices are those planned to address existing RCWD water use efficiency. An irrigation pumping plant is eligible for improved irrigation efficiency of RCWD irrigation water allocations, but not for the conversion from RCWD water use to groundwater pumping.

Conservation Practices			**Resource Concerns**	
			Water Quantity	
Practice Code	**Practice Name**	**Units**	**Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land**	**Excessive Runoff, Flooding, or Ponding**
340	Cover Crop	ac		X
430	Irrigation Pipeline	ft	X	
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	ac	X	
449	Irrigation Water Management	ac	X	
484	Mulching	ac		X
533	Pumping Plant	no	X	
587	Structure for Water Control	no	X	
620	Underground Outlet	ft		X

Applications for the Water Conservation Initiative for the Rancho California Water District will be evaluated based on the following application screening and local, state and national ranking criteria.

Application Screening Criteria:

Screening Criteria	Priority
Applicant will follow an irrigation water management schedule, make micro-irrigation infrastructure improvements to irrigation system as recommended by an irrigation system evaluation and the agricultural operation is located within the De Luz area, west of I-15, of the RCWD.	High Priority
Applicant will make micro-irrigation infrastructure improvements to irrigation system as recommended by an irrigation system evaluation and the agricultural operation is located within the De Luz area, west of I-15, of the RCWD.	Medium Priority
Applicant will follow an irrigation water management schedule and the agricultural operation is located within the De Luz area, west of I-15, of the RCWD.	Low Priority
Planned conservation treatments outside of the service of the RCWD De Luz area west of I-15.	Ineligible

I. National Ranking Criteria (25 percent of total ranking score)

National Ranking Criteria	Points
1. Clean and Abundant Water: Water Quality – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
1a. Meet regulatory requirements relating to animal feeding operations, or proactively avoid the need for regulatory measures?	15
1b. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a designated impaired water body?	10
1c. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a water body?	5
2. Clean and Abundant Water: Water Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
2a. Increase groundwater recharge in identified groundwater depletion areas (http://water.usgs.gov/ogw/rasa/html/TOC.html)?	15
2b. Conserve water from irrigation system improvements and result in estimated water savings of at least 5% and saved water will be available for other beneficial uses?	10
2c. Conserve water in an area where the applicant participates in a geographically established or watershed-wide project?	5

3. Clean Air: Treatment of Air Quality from Agricultural Sources – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
3a. Meet regulatory requirements relating to air quality or proactively avoid the need for regulatory measures?	15
3b. Reduce green house gases such as methane, nitrous oxide, and volatile organic compounds (VOC)?	15
3c. Increase carbon sequestration?	5
4. High Quality, Productive Soils Erosion Reduction – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
4a. Reduce erosion to tolerable limits (Soil "T")?	15
5. Healthy Plant and Animal Communities Wildlife Habitat Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
5a. Benefit threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, or species of concern as identified in a State wildlife plan?	15
5b. Retain wildlife and plant benefits on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)?	15
6. High Quality, Productive Soils, Healthy Plant and Animal Communities: Special Environmental Efforts/Initiatives – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
6a. Eradicate or control noxious or invasive species?	10
6b. Increase, improve or establish pollinator habitat?	10
6c. Implement precision agricultural methods?	10
6d. Properly dispose of animal carcasses?	5
6e. Implement an Integrated Pest Management plan?	5
7. Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy Production – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
7a. Reduce energy consumption on the agricultural operation?	15
7b. Increase on-farm energy efficiency with more efficient equipment?	10
7c. Assist in producing energy from renewable resources (solar, wind, biofuel, etc)?	10
8. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation Additional Ranking Considerations - Will the proposed project result in:	
8a. Implementation of all planned conservation practices within three years of contract obligation?	10
8b. Improvement of existing conservation practices or conservation systems already in place at the time the application is accepted, or will complete an existing conservation system?	10
9. Does the applicant meet the following conditions:	
9b. Did the applicant successfully complete any past contract(s) in full compliance?	5
9c. Is this the applicant's first application?	5

II. State Ranking Criteria (50 percent of total ranking score)

	State Ranking Criteria	Points
1	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings of greater than 35 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	200
2	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 30-34.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	175
3	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 25-29.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	150
4	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 20-24.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	125
5	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 15-19.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	100
6	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 10-14.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	75
7	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 5-9.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	50
8	Planned conservation treatments result in irrigation system improvements with an estimated net water savings between 0-9.99 ac in/ac as determined by the California Water Savings Tool v. 9-2008.	25

III. Local Ranking Criteria (25 percent of total ranking score)

Local Ranking Criteria		Points
Category One: Water Quantity: Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Lands (Select YES to only ONE answer for this Category).		
1	Planned conservation treatment results in the implementation of a plan that meets the requirements of the local agricultural waiver program for water conservation and includes the following: (a) an irrigation water management (IWM) audit; (b) installation of irrigation system components recommended by the IWM audit; (c) improvement in irrigation distribution uniformity to minimum of 80 percent; (d) installation of irrigation scheduling and monitoring devices; (e) developing a plan for an irrigation schedule utilizing evapotranspiration (Etc) data, irrigation monitoring devices, and irrigation record-keeping for a minimum of 5 years.	85
2	Planned conservation treatment includes a microirrigation system or other structural practices installed that will result in greater than 50 percent water savings and/or improved application efficiency to greater than 80 percent. The NRCS Conservation Practice, 449 – Irrigation Water Management, will be implemented in year two of the contract.	40
Category Two: Water Quantity: Excessive Runoff, Flooding, or Ponding (Select YES to only ONE answer for this Category).		
3	Planned conservation treatment will manage soil moisture using cover crop and/or mulching.	25