

## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

The purpose of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is to promote agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals; optimize environmental benefits; and help farmers and ranchers meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental regulations.

EQIP is a continuous sign-up, voluntary, conservation program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that provides financial and technical assistance for approved conservation practices based on a current conservation plan.

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.

## **About the National Organic Initiative**

Authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill, EQIP includes provisions to provide opportunities for organic producers to address natural resource concerns related to organic production as well as requirements related to adherence to the National Organic Program (NOP) requirements.

Some highlights of the organic provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill and associated regulatory changes include:

- Assistance for conservation practices and planning related to addressing resource concerns as part of organic production,
- National Organic Initiative assistance is limited to \$20,000 per year and \$80,000 during a six year period
- Producers will develop and work toward implementing an Organic System Plan (OSP)
- Producers must have or be pursuing organic certification

NRCS has determined that organic production includes certified organic producers and producers who are transitioning to become certified organic. Eligible applicants also include producers who fall under the exemption category in the National Organic Program (NOP) regulation.

- **Certified Organic Producers:** Certified organic producers must provide NRCS with a copy of their Organic System Plan (OSP) and Organic Certification must be maintained for the life of the contract.
- **Organic Producers (Exempt from Certification):** Organic producers selling less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempt from organic certification. Exempt organic producers are eligible for the National Organic Initiative. Applications should be ranked with certified organic producers provided that they self certify that they agree to develop and implement an OSP.
- **Transitioning to Organic Producers:** Transitioning to Organic must self-certify that they agree to develop and implement an Organic System Plan (OSP) and provide NRCS the contact information of the applicant's USDA accredited organic certifying agent before an EQIP contract can be approved.

### **Submitting an EQIP Application**

Interested applicants may apply for EQIP by completing Form NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application, and submitting the application to the NRCS field office in person, by phone, email, or fax in the county which you own land or have an agricultural operation.

There will be two application cut-off dates for ranking applications submitted for the fiscal year 2013 National Organic Initiative, November 16, 2012, and February 15, 2013.

Applications submitted by the second application cut-off date, February 15, 2013, will be evaluated and ranked only if funding is available.

### **Requesting Conservation Planning Assistance**

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; the basis for any EQIP application is a conservation plan. Some of the benefits of developing a customized conservation plan include: helping you to comply with environmental regulations; preparing you for various conservation programs opportunities and identifying immediate or potential resource problems that could hurt your production.

### **How EQIP Works**

EQIP initiatives are funding opportunities created to assure funds are available to resource priorities across various land use types, for special emphasis resource needs and to assure that underserved groups have access to assistance.

For the National Organic Initiative there will be two separate ranking and funding pools: a Certified Organic fund pool and an Organic Transition fund pool. Applications from certified organic and organic (exempt) producers will be ranked in the Certified Organic fund pool. Applications from transitioning to organic producers will be ranked in the Organic Transition fund pool.

An EQIP initiative is a ranking and funding pool where similar applications are evaluated. Applications for an EQIP initiative will be evaluated based on screening and ranking criteria that consider the benefits of planned conservation practices as identified by local, state and national priorities. The basis for an EQIP application is a conservation plan.

Please contact your local NRCS field office about EQIP eligibility and the application process or visit [http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip\\_program\\_eligibility.html](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/eqip_program_eligibility.html) and [http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/how\\_to\\_apply\\_for\\_eqip.html](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/how_to_apply_for_eqip.html).

Payments for practices for the National Organic Initiative are limited to \$20,000 per fiscal year and \$80,000 during the 6 rolling years of a Farm Bill. All program payments are limited to \$300,000 a person or entity for all contracts entered into during any six-year period. This limitation includes unpaid prior year contract obligations as of October 1, 2008, as well as new contract obligations. For the purpose of applying this requirement, the six-year period will include those payments made in fiscal years 2009-2014.

### **Priority Resource Concerns**

The purpose of the National Organic Initiative is to assist producers plan and implement conservation practices to allow their organic operations to be environmentally sustainable; and, through the National Organic Initiative NRCS can provide technical and financial assistance to eligible producers with installation of conservation practices on agricultural operations related to organic production.

### **Typical Conservation Treatments**

Typical conservation treatments to assist organic producers meet their resource concerns and fulfill many of the requirements in an Organic System Plan (OSP) include, but not limited to assistance with:

- Improving soil quality and organic matter while minimizing erosion
- Improving pest management
- Developing a grazing plan and improving grazing resources
- Improving waste utilization and composting
- Improving irrigation efficiency
- Enhancing cropping systems and nutrient management
- Developing a transition to organic production plan
- Establishing boundaries and buffer zones

Also offered through the initiative is the development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) by a Technical Service Provider. An application to develop a Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition (CAP-138) will receive ranking priority due to the resulting conservation benefits from identifying and addressing resource concerns associated with organic transition. Technical Service Providers are listed online at <http://techreg.usda.gov/>.

### **Approved NRCS Land Uses**

Only the approved NRCS land uses are eligible for the National Organic Initiative. Approved land uses are:

- Crop
- Forest
- Grazed Forest
- Headquarters
- Grazed Range
- Pasture
- Hay

### **Approved NRCS Resource Concerns**

Only the approved NRCS resource concerns are eligible for the National Organic Initiative. Approved air quality resource concerns are:

#### Soil Condition

- Organic Matter Depletion
- Compaction
- Containments – Animal Waste and Other Organics - K
- Containments – Animal Waste and Other Organics - N
- Containments – Animal Waste and Other Organics - P

#### Soil Erosion

- Sheet and Rill

- Wind
- Classic Gully
- Ephemeral Gully

Water Quality

- Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater
- Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
- Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water
- Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater
- Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water
- Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water

Water Quantity

- Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land

Domestic Animals

- Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage
- Inadequate Stock Water
- Inadequate Shelter

Plant Condition

- Plants not adapted or suited
- Productivity, Health and Vigor
- Noxious and Invasive Plants

Fish and Wildlife

- Inadequate Cover/Shelter
- T&E Plant Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
- Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species

**Approved NRCS Conservation Practices**

Only approved NRCS conservation practices are eligible for financial assistance through the National Organic Initiative. For more information about NRCS conservation practices visit [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) the website link for all NRCS conservation practice standards. Table 1 lists the approved conservation practices.

Table 1. Approved Conservation Practices for the National Organic Initiative

Practice Name	Practice Code
Alley Cropping	311
Brush Management	314
Herbaceous Weed Control	315
Animal Mortality Facility	316
Composting Facility	317
Conservation Cover	327
Conservation Crop Rotation	328
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	329
Contour Farming	330
Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crops	331



Contour Buffer Strips	332
Prescribed Burning	338
Cover Crop	340
Critical Area Planting	342
Residue Management, Seasonal	344
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till	345
Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till	346
Well Water Testing	355
Diversion	362
Pond	378
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380
Silvopasture Establishment	381
Fence	382
Field Border	386
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390
Riparian Forest Buffer	391
Filter Strip	393
Grade Stabilization Structure	410
Grassed Waterway	412
Hedgerow Planting	422
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442
Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface	443
Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery	447
Irrigation Water Management	449
Access Control	472
Mulching	484
Forage Harvest Management	511
Forage and Biomass Planting	512
Livestock Pipeline	516
Prescribed Grazing	528
Range Planting	550
Drainage Water Management	554
Row Arrangement	557
Heavy Use Area Protection	561
Spring Development	574
Animal Trails and Walkways	575
Stream Crossing	578
Stripcropping	585
Structure for Water Control	587
Nutrient Management	590
Integrated Pest Management	595
Terrace	600
Vegetative Barriers	601
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612
Watering Facility	614

Water and Sediment Control Basin	638
Water Well	642
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650
Seasonal Tunnel System for Crops	798
Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition	CAP 138

**Application Screening Criteria for the National Organic Initiative**

The purpose of screening criteria is to prioritize applications into ‘High’, ‘Medium’ or ‘Low’ categories prior to application ranking. All eligible applications for the National Organic Initiative will be screened and applications in the ‘High’ priority category will be ranked. ‘Medium’ priority applications will be ranked only if funding is available. An application screening worksheet is included at the end of this document and will be used by NRCS to screen applications submitted for the National Organic Initiative. The following is for reference only.

**High Priority Category:**

The EQIP application schedule of operations and conservation plan includes practices supported by a RMS conservation plan for the entire agricultural operation that meets all the below criteria prior to screening deadline. There is:

- Appropriate field visit(s); A resource inventory and analysis; Alternatives presented to the client; Decision(s) made by the client; Client decision is appropriately documented and; Application addresses local priority resource concerns.

The plan must be for the whole farm but the application does not have to include all the practices identified in the plan.

**Medium Priority Category:**

The EQIP application schedule of operations and conservation plan includes practices supported by a conservation plan that meets all the below criteria prior to screening deadline. There is:

- Appropriate field visit(s); A resource inventory and analysis; Alternatives presented to the client; Decision(s) made by the client; Client decision is appropriately documented and; Application addresses local priority resource concerns.

The plan can be on a field or whole farm and the application does not have to include all the practices identified in the plan.

**Low Priority Category:**

During the previous two EQIP program years (2011 and 2012), did the applicant have a USDA-NRCS cost-share contract where:

- One or more practices were two or more years behind schedule for installation, OR The participant did not give a good faith effort to start a practice within the first 12 months of contract, OR The contract was terminated for any reason OR the applicant declined to sign/accept a USDA program contract after NRCS preparation of the contract and approval of the application for funding assignment.

### **Application Ranking Criteria for the National Organic Initiative**

The purpose of the National Organic Initiative ranking criteria is to evaluate the environmental benefits of conservation treatments included in an EQIP application, i.e. the EQIP schedule of operations and conservation plan. An application ranking score is based on national, state and local ranking criteria and the cost-efficiency of conservation practices in the EQIP application. The cost-efficiency score is based upon broad averages of the cost and environmental benefits of each practice in the EQIP application.

The following sections list the national, state and local ranking criteria for the National Organic Initiative and are provided for reference only. Applications will be evaluated electronically by NRCS using the Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT).

### **National Ranking Criteria**

Only questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 are applicable to the National Organic Initiative; all other questions will be answered “No” in the AERT.

- 1) If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering “Yes” to the following question. Answering “Yes” to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the national priority category.
  - a. Is the program application to support the development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)? If answer is “Yes”, do not answer any other national level questions. If answer is “No”, proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.
- 2) Clean and Abundant Water: Water Quality - Will the proposed project assist the producer to:
  - a. Meet regulatory requirements relating to animal feeding operations, or proactively avoid the need for regulatory measures?
  - b. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a designated "impaired water body" (TMDL, 303d, etc.)?
  - c. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a "non-impaired water body"?
- 3) Clean and Abundant Water: Water Conservation - Will the proposed project assist the producer implement conservation practices which:
  - a. Decrease aquifer overdraft?
  - b. Conserve water from irrigation system improvements and saved water will be available for other beneficial uses?
  - c. Conserve water in an area where the applicant participates in a geographically established or watershed-wide project?
- 4) Clean Air: Treatment of air quality from agricultural sources - Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practice(s) which:
  - a. Meet on-farm regulatory requirements relating to air quality or proactively avoid the need for regulatory measures?

- b. Reduce on-farm generated green house gases such as CO<sub>2</sub> (Carbon Dioxide), CH<sub>4</sub> (Methane), and N<sub>2</sub>O (Nitrous Oxide)?
  - c. Increase on-farm carbon sequestration?
- 5) Soil Health: Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practice(s) which:
- a. Reduce erosion to tolerable limits (Soil "T")?
  - b. Improve soil tilth, organic matter, structure, health, etc.?
- 6) Healthy Plant and Animal Communities Wildlife Habitat Conservation - Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practice(s) which:
- a. Benefit on-farm habitat associated with threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, or species of concern as identified in a State wildlife plan?
  - b. Help retain wildlife and plant habitat on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)?
- 7) High Quality, Productive Soils, Healthy Plant and Animal Communities: Will the proposed project assist the producer implement practices which:
- a. Help manage or control noxious or invasive plant species on non-cropland?
  - b. Increase, or improve habitat to benefit pollinator or other targeted wildlife species?
  - c. Properly dispose of livestock carcasses?
  - d. Are identified in an Integrated Pest Management plan?
  - e. Are identified in a Nutrient Management plan?
  - f. Apply principles of adaptive nutrient management?
- 8) Energy Conservation - Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practices which:
- a. Reduce energy consumption on the agricultural operation?
  - b. Increase on-farm energy efficiency with practices and improvements identified in an approved energy audit equivalent to criteria required in Ag EMP (122,124)?
  - c. Assist in implementing energy conservation measures that also reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants?
- 9) Business Lines - Conservation Implementation Additional Ranking Considerations - Will the proposed project result in:
- a. Implementation of all conservation practices scheduled in the contract on the CPA-1155 within three years of date of obligation?
  - b. Improvement of existing conservation practices or conservation systems already in place at the time the application is accepted?
  - c. Implementation of practice(s) which will complete an existing conservation system or suite of practices?

## State Ranking Criteria

All questions are applicable to the National Organic Initiative.

- 1) If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering “Yes” to the following question. Answering “Yes” to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the state priority category.
  - a. Is the program application for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) for a TSP prepared Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transitioning Plan (138)? If answer is “Yes”, do not answer any other state level questions. If answer is “No”, proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.
- 2) Soil Quality: Answer all questions that apply.
  - a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of two or more soil quality or enhancing practices that address soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter compaction, etc.?
  - b. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of one soil quality or enhancing practice that addresses soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter, compaction, etc.?
- 3) Soil Erosion: Answer all questions that apply.
  - a. Does the EQIP Schedule of Operations include practices that will result in reduction of erosion?
- 4) Water Quality: Answer all that apply.
  - a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes 595 Integrated Pest Management?
  - b. EQIP Schedule of operations includes implementation of practices for the management of noxious and invasive species ONLY on “non-cropland” acreage?
  - c. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practice 590 Nutrient management for management of soil fertility, plant nutrients, and soil amendments?
- 5) Plant Condition: Answer all that apply.
  - a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes practices that will result in creation of buffer zones that will mitigate offsite contaminants from entering farm?
  - b. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes practices with the intent of increasing habitat for pollinators and/or beneficial insects?
  - c. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes practice(s) that support Integrated Pest Management?
- 6) Water Conservation: Answer all that apply.
  - a. Practices scheduled in the EQIP Schedule of Operations will improve the efficiency of an existing irrigation system?
  - b. EQIP Schedule of Operations will include practices that will improve irrigation water management and/or conserve soil moisture?

- 7) Domestic Animals: Answer all that apply.
- EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practice 528 Prescribed Grazing AND/OR 512 Pasture & Hayland Planting for management of plant species, livestock, residues, feed, and other identified resource needs?
  - EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practices that limit and manage domestic livestock access to streams, creeks, and other natural water bodies?
  - EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practices to assure adequate domestic livestock drinking water sources (not to include streams) are available in the treatment unit?

### Local Ranking Criteria

All questions are applicable to the National Organic Initiative.

- If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering “Yes” to the following question. Answering “Yes” to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the state priority category.
  - Is the program application for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) for a TSP prepared Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transitioning Plan (138)? If answer is “Yes”, do not answer any other state level questions. If answer is “No”, proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.
- Category One - SOIL CONDITION: Organic Matter Depletion (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
  - Conservation treatment results in changing a Soil Condition Index (SCI) score from “Negative” to “Zero” or “Positive”, as determined by the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) evaluation tool, by implementing practices that increase soil organic matter. Potential practices include, but are not limited to cover crop, conservation crop rotation, mulching, and nutrient management.
  - Conservation treatment results in changing a Soil Condition Index (SCI) score from “Zero” to “Positive”, as determined by the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) evaluation tool, by implementing practices that increase soil organic matter. Potential practices include, but are not limited to cover crop, crop rotation, mulching, and nutrient management.
  - Conservation treatment results in changing a “Positive” Soil Condition Index (SCI) score by at least 50 percent, as determined by the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) evaluation tool, by implementing practices that increase soil organic matter. Potential practices include, but are not limited to cover crop, crop rotation, mulching, and nutrient management.
- Category Two - SOIL CONDITION: Compaction
  - Conservation treatment results in reducing soil compaction as a result from equipment or livestock traffic. Soil compaction is evaluated by the Soil Quality Test Kit, Penetrometer, pin-flag test, or Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health, p. 35

- (1). Potential practices include, but are not limited to conservation cover, cover crop, and conservation crop rotation.
- 4) Category Three - SOIL CONDITION: Contaminants and Other Organics – Phosphorus (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
- a) Conservation treatment will result in the risk of phosphorus loss as determined by the California P-Index being reduced from “Very High” to “Medium” or lower for any of the loss pathways (erosion, runoff, or leaching). Potential practices include but are not limited to nutrient management, cover crop, filter strip, riparian herbaceous cover, and forage and biomass planting.
  - b) Conservation treatment will result in the risk of phosphorus loss as determined by the California P-Index being reduced from “High” to “Medium” or lower for any of the loss pathways (erosion, runoff, or leaching). Potential practices include but are not limited to nutrient management, cover crop, filter strip, riparian herbaceous cover, and forage and biomass planting.
- 5) Category Four - SOIL EROSION: Sheet and Rill or Wind (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
- a) Conservation treatment reduces soil loss by 50 percent or more through management of vegetation and surface residues. After treatment, total annual soil loss will not exceed “T.” Soil loss will be estimated using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) or the Wind Erosion Prediction System (WEPS).
  - b) Conservation treatment reduces soil loss by 30 to 49 percent through management of vegetation and surface residues. After treatment, total annual soil loss will not exceed “T.” Soil loss will be estimated using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) or the Wind Erosion Prediction System (WEPS).
  - c) Conservation treatment reduces soil loss by 10 to 29 percent through management of vegetation and surface residues. After treatment, total annual soil loss will not exceed “T.” Soil loss will be estimated using the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE2) or the Wind Erosion Prediction System (WEPS).
- 6) Category Five - WATER QUALITY: Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
- a) Conservation treatment results in mitigating an “Intermediate” or higher risk pest management activities as determined by evaluation using the Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (Win-PST) AND implementation of an integrated pest management plan in accordance with UC-IPM recommendations. In addition to risk, pesticide has the potential to enter surface water because of location.
  - b) Conservation treatment results in mitigating an “Intermediate” or higher risks from pest management activities as determined by evaluation using the Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (Win-PST). In addition to risk, pesticide has the potential to enter surface water because of location.
- 7) Category Six - WATER QUALITY: Excessive Suspended Sediment or Turbidity in Surface Water (Select "Yes" to All Questions That Apply)

- a) Conservation treatment will result in the implementation of structural or vegetative practices that reduce or eliminate visible suspended sediment and turbidity in surface runoff water from fields.
  - b) Conservation treatment will result in the implementation of structural or vegetative practices that reduce or eliminate visible suspended sediment and turbidity in surface runoff water in drainage and other ditches.
  - c) Conservation treatment will result in the attainment of NRCS conservation practice, 449 - Irrigation Water Management, "Level III," that minimizes or eliminates visible suspended sediment and turbidity in surface runoff waters from fields to surface water bodies.
- 8) Category Seven - WATER QUALITY: Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
- a) Conservation treatment results in implementation of vegetative filtering and livestock management practices and planned land unit (PLU) is directly adjacent to a perennial stream listed as impaired for "pathogens" on the 303(d) List; the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List is found at the State Water Resources Control Board website:  
[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml)
  - b) Conservation treatment results in implementation of vegetative filtering and livestock management practices and planned land unit (PLU) within 0.5 to 1 mile of a perennial stream listed as impaired for "pathogens" on the 303(d) List; the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List is found at the State Water Resources Control Board website:  
[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml)
  - c) Conservation treatment results in implementation of vegetative filtering and livestock management practices and planned land unit (PLU) within 0.25 to 0.5 mile of a perennial stream listed as impaired for "pathogens" on the 303(d) List; the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List is found at the State Water Resources Control Board website:  
[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml)
- 9) Category Eight - WATER QUALITY: Excessive Organics and Nutrients in Surface Water
- a) Conservation treatment results in implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP) in addition to other conservation practices that reduce the risk of nutrients entering surface waters. Conservation treatment will be on land where manure is applied and there are pathways for nutrients to enter surface waters. Applicable practices may include filter strip, riparian herbaceous cover, irrigation water management, tail water recovery, cover crop, and drainage water management.
- 10) Category Eight - WATER QUALITY: Excessive Organics and Nutrients in Surface Water (Select "Yes" to All That Apply)
- a) Conservation treatment will result in the implementation of vegetative, structural or irrigation management practices that lead to the elimination or reduction of nutrients and organics in surface water runoff. Treated unit is adjacent to, or directly discharges into a California 303(d) listed Impaired Water Body or has exceeded water quality

- objectives for nutrients as determined in local monitoring program; the Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List is found at the State Water Resources Control Board website: [http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/tmdl/integrated2010.shtml)
- b) Conservation treatment will result in the implementation of an NRCS nutrient management plan according to the NRCS conservation practice, 590 - Nutrient Management, to minimize and eliminate the potential for nutrients and organics to degrade water quality.
- 11) Category Nine - WATER QUALITY: Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
- a) Conservation treatment reduces nitrate leaching from "High" or "Very High" to "Low" or "Very Low" as estimated using the Nitrogen Index Tool.
- b) Conservation treatment reduces nitrate leaching from "High" or "Very High" to "Medium" as estimated using the Nitrogen Index Tool.
- 12) Category Nine - WATER QUALITY: Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater (Select "Yes" to All That Apply)
- a) Conservation treatment will include management conservation practices, 449 - Irrigation Water Management and/or 590 - Nutrient Management that control or eliminate nutrient additions to ground water in areas determined to have exceedances of nitrates in monitoring wells.
- b) Conservation treatment will include vegetative or structural conservation practices that control or eliminate nutrient additions to ground water in areas determined to have exceedances of nitrates in monitoring wells.
- 13) Category Ten – WATER QUANTITY: Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land (Select "Yes" to One Question Only)
- a) Conservation treatment includes implementation of an irrigation system that results in an increase of 20 percent or greater annual water savings. Annual water savings has been estimated using the California Irrigation Water Savings Tool found in the California eFOTG Section 1, Resource Assessment Tools.
- b) Conservation treatment includes implementation of an irrigation system that results in an increase of 10 to 19 percent annual water savings. Annual water savings has been estimated using the California Irrigation Water Savings Tool found in the California eFOTG Section 1, Resource Assessment Tools.
- 14) Category Ten – WATER QUANTITY: Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land (Select "Yes" to All that Apply)
- a) Conservation treatment will achieve Level II or III irrigation water management according to NRCS CA Bulletin 201-11-3, and the farm operation ranks as “Medium” or “High” in need for 449 – Irrigation Water Management as determined from the Irrigation Scheduling planning tool.
- b) Conservation treatment includes vegetative practices that effect water conservation such as cover crop or mulching.

- 15) Category Eleven - DOMESTIC ANIMALS: Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage (Select "Yes" to All That Apply")
- a) Conservation treatment planned will improve the quantity and quality of feed and forage, including pasture or range seeding, grazing land mechanical treatment, prescribed grazing, or fencing and salt/mineral placement that improves livestock distribution. Both facilitating and management practices are used to address this resource concern.
  - b) Conservation treatment includes prescribed grazing to improve rangeland health and/or pasture condition to meet nutritional needs of the grazing animals. Management practices are implemented with no facilitating practices.
- 16) Category Twelve - DOMESTIC ANIMALS: Inadequate Stock Water
- a) Conservation treatment provides clean off-stream drinking water to improve animal health and livestock distribution.
- 17) Category Thirteen - DOMESTIC ANIMALS: Inadequate Shelter
- a) Conservation treatment provides shelter through windbreaks, tree planting or management of riparian forest buffers to provide livestock protection from extreme wind, heat or cold weather.
- 18) Category Fourteen - PLANT CONDITION: Plants not adapted or suited
- a) Conservation treatment address species suitability to the site and can include changes in percent of legumes, warm or cool season species, native or perennial to meet the goals of the landowner and meet the ecological site description (ESD), Forage Suitability Group or potential natural community of the site.
- 19) Category Fifteen - PLANT CONDITION: Productivity Health and Vigor
- a) Conservation treatment includes prescribed grazing to improve the health and vigor of the plant community by allowing adequate rest during the growing season.
- 20) Category Sixteen - PLANT CONDITION: Noxious and Invasive Plants
- a) Conservation treatment will address critical state-listed (A, B, or C) weeds that populate the planned land unit (PLU) or other identified noxious weed that is impairing resource conditions on the site. Control is expected to result in a slight to moderate or lower rating for the invasive plant indicator in a Rangeland Health Assessment, where approved an ecological site description (ESD) is available. When an ESD is not available, appropriate monitoring methods will be used to assess before and after invasive species populations.
- 21) Category Seventeen - FISH AND WILDLIFE: Inadequate Cover/Shelter (Select "Yes" to All That Apply")
- a) Conservation treatment includes practices that will improve the riparian zone within 100 feet from a perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral stream as assessed using the

- Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEP). The score is greater than or equal to 0.5 ( $\geq 0.5$ ) on the WHEG Riparian worksheet.
- b) Conservation treatment includes practices that will restore or enhance habitat for pollinators and the score on the CA Native Bee Pollinator Habitat Assessment Guide is at least 140 points.
- 22) Category Eighteen - FISH AND WILDLIFE: T &E Plant Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
- a) Conservation treatment includes practices that restore or enhance regional or locally identified rare or declining habitats for the benefit of native fish and/or wildlife as assessed using the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEP). The score is greater than or equal to 0.5 ( $\geq 0.5$ ) on the WHEG for that plant community. Refer to the NRCS California State Fish and Wildlife Habitat Plan for species lists.
- 23) Category Nineteen - FISH AND WILDLIFE: Threatened and Endangered Species
- a) Conservation treatment for fish or wildlife improvements “predominantly” affect habitat for Federal or State threatened, endangered, rare, and selected species (selected species included: Tricolored blackbird, Western burrowing owl, Foothill yellow-legged frog, Steelhead, Western pond turtle and pollinators) as assessed using the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEP) or the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP2). The planned WHEG score is greater than or equal to 0.5 ( $\geq 0.5$ ) OR the SVAP score is greater than or equal to 7 ( $\geq 7$ ).