

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

A Western Summary

2007



Promoting science-based forest management that serves the values of society and ensures the health and sustainability of western forests.



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About the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition

The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition is a State and Federal government partnership. The members of the coalition include: the 23 State and Pacific Island Foresters of the West and the 7 western Regional Foresters, 3 western Research Station Directors, and Forest Products Lab Director of the USDA Forest Service.

This partnership creates a clear voice on western forestry, strengthening our ability to address pertinent issues and help meet the needs of society.

To advance the agenda and priorities of the members, there is a five-person staff based in Denver, CO as well as seven committees comprised of State and Federal staff from the west.

The mission of the WFLC is to promote science-based forest management that serves the values of society and ensures the health and sustainability of western forests.

Acknowledgements

The concept to create this report was introduced by the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition's (WFLC) Forest Resource Management Committee at the 2006 WFLC Spring meeting. The proposal was approved by the WFLC Executive Board and subsequently adopted into the committee's work plan.

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Objectives

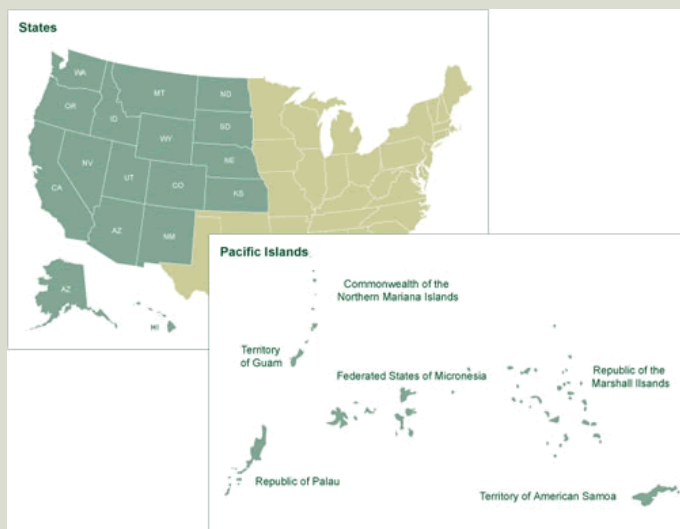
The objectives of this report are to communicate the methods that individual states use to access Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds for forestry-related activities as well as to identify and share related successes. This summary can be used to inform program managers and decision makers as to how EQIP is operating in the west. The details and state summaries will provide the stimuli for new ideas and opportunities to increase application of EQIP program funds for forestry-related activities.

To obtain the information for this report, in June of 2006, a survey was sent to the 17 western states and 6 Pacific Island Territories (see Map 1) inquiring about their EQIP implementation and successes. As well, information on EQIP funding was obtained by the US Forest Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Background

EQIP is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers and ranchers who face threats to soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Through EQIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides assistance in a manner that promotes production and environmental quality as compatible goals, optimizes environmental benefits, and helps landowners meet Federal, State, Tribal, and local environmental requirements. EQIP was reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). Funding for EQIP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

When the reauthorization of EQIP added non-industrial private forests as eligible land, funding was made available for landowners implementing agroforestry and other forestry practices. These practices include: prescribed burning, riparian forest buffers, firebreaks, forest site preparation, pest management, tree/shrub establishment, forest stand improvement, windbreak/shelterbreak establishment, forest harvest trails & landings, and brush management.



Map 1
States and Islands within the WFLC

Analysis of EQIP Monies used for Forestry

The following data includes monies from 2002-2006.

- 1) Nationally, all States/Territories have received a total of \$2,801,258,276 from EQIP through 2002 Farm Bill contracts. Of that total, the 17 western States and 6 Territories in this report have received 43% or \$1,207,896,460 of the total dollars.
- 2) Of the total western-approved EQIP funds (bullet 1), \$35,282,608 were used for forestry practices (as described in the background section on page 4). Excluding the monies that have been deobligated, the total for forestry practices is \$32,861,647 or 3.26%. This is higher than the national average of 2.40%.
- 3) Of the western-total of approved funds used for EQIP-forestry practices (bullet 1):
 - a. 36% has been paid-out, or used on-the-ground, as of 2006
 - b. 7% has been deobligated and is no longer available for forestry practices for various reasons, and
 - c. 57% has been scheduled for the future, but not yet utilized (as of 2006)

Please continue to Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1 - EQIP Forestry Monies from 2002 Farm Bill (2002-2006).
States are listed in descending order in column three.

Western States	Total State Allocation All Activities	Forestry Contracts Approved		Forestry Practices Paid		Forestry Practices Deobligated		Forestry Practices in out-years		Forestry Approved minus deobligated vs. total State Allocation	
		\$	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$
Western Average	\$	\$	3.26%	\$	36.0%	\$	7%	\$	57%	\$	%
Pacific Basin	\$ 2,339,566	\$ 244,110	10.43%	\$ 86,166	35.30%	\$ 3,342	1.37%	\$ 154,602	63%	\$ 240,768	10.29%
Alaska	\$ 17,531,473	\$ 1,724,546	9.84%	\$ 98,149	5.69%	\$ 69,497	4.03%	\$ 1,556,901	90%	\$ 1,655,049	9.44%
Hawaii	\$ 17,488,398	\$ 1,015,764	5.81%	\$ 555,444	54.68%	\$ 226,790	22.33%	\$ 233,530	23%	\$ 788,974	4.51%
Montana	\$ 89,279,424	\$ 4,776,994	5.35%	\$ 1,714,422	35.89%	\$ 229,152	4.80%	\$ 2,833,420	59%	\$ 4,547,842	5.09%
California	\$ 179,185,217	\$ 9,572,728	5.34%	\$ 3,762,442	39.30%	\$ 503,047	5.26%	\$ 5,307,240	55%	\$ 9,069,681	5.06%
Idaho	\$ 57,289,562	\$ 2,872,021	5.01%	\$ 575,879	20.05%	\$ 193,343	6.73%	\$ 2,102,799	73%	\$ 2,678,678	4.68%
North Dakota	\$ 62,225,745	\$ 2,553,827	4.10%	\$ 1,177,185	46.09%	\$ 191,220	7.49%	\$ 1,185,422	46%	\$ 2,362,607	3.80%
Oregon	\$ 67,451,957	\$ 2,465,007	3.65%	\$ 1,097,425	44.52%	\$ 279,512	11.34%	\$ 1,088,069	44%	\$ 2,185,495	3.24%
New Mexico	\$ 81,240,712	\$ 2,806,212	3.45%	\$ 1,324,071	47.18%	\$ 212,206	7.56%	\$ 1,269,935	45%	\$ 2,594,006	3.19%
Washington	\$ 57,756,451	\$ 1,930,432	3.34%	\$ 683,843	35.42%	\$ 50,615	2.62%	\$ 1,195,974	62%	\$ 1,879,817	3.25%
Colorado	\$ 109,935,559	\$ 2,560,009	2.33%	\$ 786,579	30.73%	\$ 182,670	7.14%	\$ 159,760	6%	\$ 2,377,339	2.16%
South Dakota	\$ 63,596,385	\$ 954,781	1.50%	\$ 301,064	31.53%	\$ 104,549	10.95%	\$ 549,168	58%	\$ 850,232	1.34%
Nevada	\$ 23,847,727	\$ 204,324	0.86%	\$ 19,844	9.71%	\$ 26,900	13.17%	\$ 157,580	77%	\$ 177,424	0.74%
Nebraska	\$ 98,523,662	\$ 725,842	0.74%	\$ 328,391	45.24%	\$ 74,592	10.28%	\$ 322,839	44%	\$ 651,250	0.66%
Wyoming	\$ 53,546,422	\$ 371,852	0.69%	\$ 120,838	32.50%	\$ 37,280	10.03%	\$ 213,735	57%	\$ 334,572	0.62%
Kansas	\$ 92,922,371	\$ 272,025	0.29%	\$ 72,401	26.62%	\$ 19,512	7.17%	\$ 180,111	66%	\$ 252,513	0.27%
Utah	\$ 69,052,158	\$ 206,283	0.30%	\$ 37,011	17.94%	\$ 13,209	6.40%	\$ 156,063	76%	\$ 193,074	0.28%
Arizona	\$ 64,683,671	\$ 25,871	0.04%	\$ 1,481	5.72%	\$ 3,545	13.70%	\$ 20,845	81%	\$ 22,326	0.03%

Individual State Survey Responses

In June of 2006 a survey was sent to the 17 western states and 6 Pacific Island Territories inquiring about their EQIP implementation and successes. Of the 17 western states, 15 responded. Of the 6 Pacific Island Territories (referred to below as The Pacific Basin), 2 responded. The following questions were asked:

- 4) Does your agency have a cooperative agreement providing technical service for EQIP recipients who implement forestry-related practices in exchange for a set amount of funding?
- 5) Does your agency provide or sell seedlings to EQIP clients for forestry-related practices?
- 6) Does your agency utilize the Conservation Innovation Grant program?
- 7) Does your agency collaborate on environmental education initiatives?
- 8) Does your agency develop forestry-related management plans for EQIP recipients and/or share forestry expertise with EQIP recipients or the NRCS?
- 9) Is there any other information not mentioned above?
- 10) Do you have examples of success stories related to working with EQIP?

The following are summaries of the state and territory responses, as well as state summaries from Table 1.

The Pacific Basin

The Pacific Basin utilizes 10.29% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices. The six Islands/Territories funds are calculated together as the Pacific Island Basin. Individual survey responses are below.

American Samoa

The American Samoa Forestry Program and NRCS have a close tie-in with field projects. This partnership has been developing for almost two years facilitated through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG). The Forestry Program and NRCS work side-by-side to utilize vertiver grass for the management of soil and water erosion on agro-forestry plots. The Forestry Program propagates and multiplies the vertiver grass on their demonstration plots; some plants are given to farmers and forestry clients of NRCS for use in agro-forestry plantations. It is hoped that this affiliation with NRCS will gradually lead to American Samoa receiving some of the possible funding provided by EQIP.

Guam

Guam Forestry has an informal relationship with NRCS-EQIP regarding the Forest Stewardship Program in that they share cooperators whereby they assist the cooperator with technical advice, particularly with windbreak species and spacing.

NRCS refers their EQIP cooperators to Guam Forestry to obtain the plant material used in windbreaks. Guam Forestry provides only four species for windbreaks depending on the cooperator's desire and site characteristics: three native species (*Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Artocarpus mariennensis*, and *Thespesia populnea*) and one non-native (*Gliricidia sepium*). When EQIP cooperators desire fruit trees (agricultural productive species) they are referred to the Agriculture Development Services to purchase the seedlings and receive 90% re-imbusement. If Guam Forestry provides the material it is free and only their labor and water is reimbursed by NRCS. This informal relationship has been working satisfactorily for the past several years.



Alaska

The state of Alaska utilizes 9.44% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

Alaska Division of Forestry is in the process of developing an agreement with the NRCS.

Arizona

The state of Arizona utilizes .03% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

No answers to the survey questions were provided.

California

The state of California utilizes 5.06% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

No answers to the survey questions were provided.

Colorado

The state of Colorado utilizes 2.16% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

In cooperation with two conservation districts, Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) provided half of the salary for a forester to work with forest landowners with EQIP forestry-practices contracts. As a result, there have been several forest practices implemented through EQIP in those areas. These agreements are no longer in effect. However, CSFS is now serving as a technical service provider to assist landowners enrolled in EQIP as a result of the program development provided by the cost shared positions.

Hawaii

The state of Hawaii utilizes 4.51% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

The Hawaii Division of Forestry & Wildlife is in the process of developing an agreement with the NRCS. They utilize the Conservation Innovation Grant program and collaborate on environmental education initiatives.

Idaho

The state of Idaho utilizes 4.68% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

The Idaho Department of Lands utilizes an agreement through the USDA-NRCS Contribution Agreement format. The Soil & Water Conservation Districts sell seedlings acquired through RC&D seedbank programs. The agency does not utilize the Conservation Innovation Grant program. They do collaborate on environmental education initiatives via a Forest Stewardship Program MOU with Extension Forestry. With remaining FLEP funds, the agency develops forestry-related management plans for EQIP recipients. The agency does share forestry expertise through a formal arrangement.

Kansas

The state of Kansas utilizes 0.27% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

The Kansas Forest Service (KFS) has a *Technical Service Provider (TSP) Contribution Agreement* with NRCS that includes EQIP and other USDA Programs whenever the KFS provides technical service on behalf of NRCS. Forest Stewardship, Forest Management and Practice plans are all prepared for EQIP applicants. KFS is reimbursed for 50% of its costs to develop conservation plans for the following NRCS conservation practices: Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment, Riparian Forest Buffer, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Windbreak Renovation and Forest Stand Improvement. The KFS also receives funding for every conservation practice that it certifies to be implemented.

In 2004, KFS approached the Kansas State Technical Committee and requested that forestland be considered a “Resource Concern” under EQIP. The Committee recommended to the State Conservationist inclusion of Forestland Health as a resource concern in Kansas and the State Conservationist agreed. Beginning in 2005, \$100,000 has been devoted annually to the Forestland Health Resource Concern for the eastern one-third of Kansas (NRCS Areas 4 and 5). Through 2007 there have been 83 contracts devoting \$326,617 to improving the forestland health on over 3,000 acres of forestland.

KFS sells seedlings to all Kansans including EQIP participants through the Conservation Tree Planting Program. KFS has not yet applied for a CIG grant.

KFS works closely with NRCS to provide forestry education at annual and periodic events such as the Agroforestry Field Day and the Fall Forestry Field Day. KFS also contracts with the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education to train facilitators in Project Learning Tree curriculum.

KFS has a close working relationship with NRCS. All but two of its field foresters are located in NRCS offices. In addition to the TSP Contribution Agreement, KFS maintains an MOU with NRCS that specifically outlines the working relationship and the office arrangements. As TSP providers for NRCS, KFS benefits from all types of NRCS training such as cultural resources. Another benefit is having access to NRCS GIS tools and digital orthophotography.

Montana

The state of Montana utilizes 5.09% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

The Montana DNRC - Forestry Division cooperates heavily with NRCS through EQIP since the agency has no state-level cost-share programs. The Montana DNRC has an agreement to get paid to provide technical assistance, specifically for EQIP projects, at \$1,000 per agreement with a four-day average assist.

The agency sells seedlings to EQIP participants, develops management plans and provides technical assistance to EQIP participants.

Nebraska


The state of Nebraska utilizes 0.66% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

Nebraska has an agriculture-based economy dominated by crop and livestock production. Forestland comprises about 2 percent of the land area of the state. Therefore, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs focus primarily on the protection and enhancement of crop land and grass land.

However, the Nebraska NRCS and Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) have traditionally had a good working relationship. The current State Conservationist and staff have been very supportive of forestry practices. NFS Service Foresters work closely with NRCS field office staff to implement forestry practices at the local level. A NFS representative serves on the State Technical Committee (STC) and on several sub-committees to provide input on issues related to forestry. An NRCS representative also serves on the Nebraska Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (NFSCC), which advises the Nebraska State Forester concerning forestry issues. A cooperative arrangement was recently initiated whereby the NFSCC will serve as ad hoc forestry sub-committee to the STC to address NRCS forestry issues and advise the State Conservationist.

A Conservation Innovative Grant was approved in 2005 for a *Pine Ridge Forest Health Restoration* project. The \$70,000 CIG grant primarily helps landowners reduce the risk of wildfire by implementing thinning and slash treatment practices. To date, five CIG applications have been approved to treat 418 acres.

In 2004 an innovative, 3-year, cooperative forestry agreement between the Nebraska NRCS and NFS was executed. This agreement funds four non-NRCS Technical Service Provider (TSP) foresters with the NFS. The TSP foresters are stationed at five NRCS field offices to enhance NRCS technical forestry assistance to landowners, particularly Farm Bill programs like EQIP. The TSP positions were funded 75% NRCS, 25% NFS.



This arrangement almost doubled the forestry technical assistance capacity in Nebraska and is an excellent example of inter-agency cooperation to achieve similar conservation goals.

Due to the success of the 3-year TSP cooperative agreements, a similar 5-year cooperative agreement has been recently executed to continue funding the TSP forester positions through September 30, 2012.

Nevada

The state of Nevada utilizes 0.74% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) and NRCS are working towards developing an MOU to exchange services. NRCS would like NDF to become a Certified Technical Provider. That way, once contracts are approved, the cooperator could hire NDF to write the plan and NRCS would reimburse NDF's services for what is called a “design of the practice application”.

Currently, EQIP cooperators are eligible to purchase seedlings from NDF Conservation Nurseries. NDF forest-related management plans have been funded through FLEP and previous cost share programs. As these funds are zeroed out, it is anticipated that cooperators will apply for EQIP funds and use qualifying NDF management plans. NDF shares forestry expertise informally, as requested.

NRCS has EQIP funds set aside for forestland and rangeland fire rehabilitation and fire pre-suppression practices and is adding prescribed burning as an eligible practice.

New Mexico

The state of New Mexico utilizes 3.19% of its EQIP funds for forestry-related practices.

The New Mexico Forestry Division does not have an agreement with NRCS regarding EQIP and forestry practices. Two of the local working groups have earmarked a fraction of the EQIP funds for forestry practices in their area.

NRCS-NM has not had a forester on staff since 1997. In September 2007 an agreement was signed by NRCS-NM and the Forestry Division for a shared position. Funds for a portion of the salary of a Forestry Division staff person are coming from NRCS - Technical Service Provider funds. The New Mexico Forestry Division will provide technical forestry assistance to NRCS field staff and update standards and specifications for forestry practices and ecological site descriptions.

A few Forestry Districts have Conservation Days for 5th graders with 5-8 stations operated by natural resource agencies/professionals. The local NRCS conservation districts usually are a contributing agency. There is a conservation seedling program, with some seedlings sold to EQIP clients.

There is a good working relationship with staff in some of the NRCS conservation districts and there is informal exchange of information – on soil and stream bank erosion issues. This is expected to change. Not only due to the EQIP program receiving forestry cost share dollars, but because the agency added piñon and juniper species to their commercial timber list and any landowner that is going to harvest more than 25 acres in a calendar year will need a permit from the Forestry Division. That includes EQIP landowners or other NRCS program landowners doing brush management.

A part of the EQIP funds were for use by the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, which have been successful in working with NRCS to get \$2 million of EQIP funding to be spent on federal and closely-associated private lands, where the federal grazing lessee does range improvement work on their land and the federal lease.

North Dakota

The state of North Dakota utilizes 3.80% of total EQIP funding for forestry.

In North Dakota, state and national priorities for program delivery limit the implementation of forestry-related practices. Water quality issues related to livestock feedlots and other grazing operations are the primary priority for EQIP delivery in North Dakota. This is an incredibly important natural resource concern that affects a large land base and the quality of life. To target this concern, the NRCS set up parameters within their priorities and criteria to facilitate funding these practices. Funding for traditional forestry practices is a lower priority. Currently, the North Dakota Forest Service's primary involvement with EQIP is through the State Technical Committee.

Oregon

The state of Oregon utilizes 3.24% of total EQIP funding for forestry-related practices.

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) works with NRCS on an informal basis. The agency does not have a cooperative agreement for providing technical service to EQIP recipients. A couple of years ago an attempt was made, as a mutual effort between local NRCS staff and local ODF staff, to set up a limited technical service agreement in one county, but the deal was never finalized. The local NRCS and ODF staff recognized that ODF technical assistance was needed for EQIP forestry projects. NRCS did not have the staff to handle the technical assistance needs of the forestry projects. The draft agreement assigned technical work for forestry EQIP projects to ODF with compensation, according to specified rate schedule, provided to ODF by NRCS.

ODF Stewardship Foresters provide information and assistance to landowners that need to secure seedlings, regardless of the incentive program involved (and when there is no incentive program involved). Stewardship Foresters provide information and technical assistance to landowners involved in EQIP forestry projects upon request. Ultimately it is up to the landowner to locate and purchase seedlings from one of several nurseries available (usually private). The ODF nursery is going out of business in 2008; the property and plant will be sold.

At this time, ODF is collaborating with OSU Extension Forestry, NRCS, SWCD, FSA, and OR Dept. of Ag on training in the establishment of riparian forest buffers. The training is targeted for agency staff that work with landowners in creating riparian forest buffers generally and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) projects specifically. ODF initiated the training with funding from USFS, Region 6. The last (interagency) staff training similar to this was conducted in 2000.

There is no formal linkage between ODF forest stewardship plans and EQIP forestry project conservation planning. However, some local NRCS offices "rank" an EQIP forestry application higher when the applicant has an approved forest stewardship plan for the property. In some situations, NRCS Conservationists incorporate existing forest stewardship plans into NRCS written conservation plans where the property consists of agricultural and forest land. Upon request from NRCS Stewardship Foresters provide EQIP project technical specifications (Project Management Plans) as work load allows.

South Dakota

The state of South Dakota utilizes 1.34% of total EQIP funding for forestry-related practices.

South Dakota Resource Conservation & Forestry provides forest management and agroforestry technical assistance to NRCS program participants. However, forestry practices are not funded by EQIP in South Dakota. Since the beginning of EQIP, only three agro-forestry practices received EQIP funding. Therefore, it is not considered a "forestry-friendly" program.

On the other hand, the forestry agency has a close working relationship with NRCS on conservation matters. In a state that is dominated by traditional agricultural uses, forestry is not perceived as a critical factor in the development of statewide programs. Forestry practices are included in EQIP and can be cost shared; however, they do not receive a score high enough to compete with traditional practices and the priority components.



Utah

The state of Utah utilizes 0.28% of total EQIP funding for forestry-related practices.

The Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands has a formal MOU with NRCS whereby each organization has agreed to share technical expertise for respective program areas. The MOU addresses many aspects of the relationship, including the following statement: “NRCS shall share technical responsibility and work jointly with FFSL personnel in developing EQIP Forestry projects and ranking criteria.”

The forestry agency provides the necessary technical expertise for forestry; NRCS provides the same for agriculture-related planning and projects. No exchange of funds between the two organizations has occurred, although there have been attempts.

Cooperators, producers and landowners may purchase seedlings and other conservation planting stock from the States' Lone Peak Conservation Center / Nursery. It is not specifically catered to EQIP clients, but the likelihood is if landowners are participating in cost share program(s) and need locally-grown planting stock, they'll try to first acquire it from Lone Peak, if the stock is available.

Although there have been no attempts to utilize their Conservation Innovation Grants, the forestry agency provides the necessary technical expertise for planning (Forest Stewardship Plans, project / practice plans, etc.) and project implementation to landowners who are participating in the EQIP program. Success has been limited since not much of the EQIP dollars (less than half a percent of Utah's total allocation) goes to funding forestry-related projects.

About two years ago, the forestry agency was successful in obtaining approximately \$114,000 in EQIP funds for forestry projects despite efforts to utilize existing FLEP funds for similar projects. Since then however, no forestry projects have been funded.

Washington

The state of Washington utilizes 3.25% of total EQIP funding for forestry-related practices.

Washington Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) does not have a formal agreement with NRCS in reference to EQIP, but would like one.

Wyoming

The state of Wyoming utilizes 0.62% of total EQIP funding for forestry-related practices.

The Wyoming State Forestry Division works with the State Conservationist and, through the state technical committee, provides landowner cost-share funding for timber management practices under EQIP. NRCS offices provide for landowner registration and program administration. The Wyoming State Forestry Division personnel provide for feasibility determinations, project implementation plans and certifications. District Conservationists Foresters work cooperatively to prioritize forestry-related practices that are sent to the state office for funding consideration.

Summary and Conclusion

Forestry practices are a critical component in our nation's goal for conservation of natural resources, their value and benefits to society. Forests provide a myriad of benefits such as clean air, water, forest products, recreation, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, flood protection and many more. In 2002 Congress reauthorized the Farm Bill to extend non-industrial private forests as eligible land. With funding made available for landowners implementing agroforestry and other forestry practices as well as agriculture, Congress recognized the importance of forestry practices within this arena.

With the upcoming 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization it is prudent to examine the successes, needs and obstacles of EQIP and conservation incentive programs. The House passed their version of the Farm Bill July 2007 (House Bill 2419) and has expanded the opportunities for non-industrial forestland in both EQIP and the other cost-share program (CSP) that have been historically reserved for agricultural conservation practices. As of publication date, the Senate's version of the Farm Bill includes a new conservation program with the phasing out of EQIP and CSP. The new program is titled the Conservation Security Incentives Program. Current information can be found at <http://agriculture.senate.gov/>

There is not a one-stop recipe for success with conservation incentive programs, nor can one conclude that above a certain percentage of funds used for forestry is good, while below is bad. Every state places EQIP within its unique mix of programs and funding. Therefore, how EQIP performs and interacts will be different, as will the needs for the program.

Many of the states discuss either having or being interested in developing an agreement with the NRCS on how EQIP services between the agencies will be distributed and enhanced by working together. Some of these relationships began with the implementation of a Conservation Innovation Grant, please see <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>.

The survey and table both demonstrate that some EQIP monies are used for forestry-related activities. With this being the case now, or for the future, it is prudent for state forestry agencies to be involved. Early discussion of the 2007 Farm Bill Reauthorization recognizes that cooperation improves on-the-ground success and looks to strengthen coordination on forestry issues by building stronger ties between State Forester participation on the individual NRCS State Technical Committees.

In the future, the focus on these partnerships and agreements will ensure that the public benefits of forests are recognized as an important part of overall agricultural conservation and will secure the success of forestland conservation opportunities. As State Foresters and their partners build relationships and utilize opportunities to work together, the full breadth of forestland conservation will be realized.



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