

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Update

### Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program

(EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. It supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, farmers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

EQIP may pay up to 75 percent of the costs of eligible conservation practices; however, most are cost shared at 50 percent. Incentive payments may be made to encourage a farmer to adopt land management practices, such as nutrient management, manure management, integrated pest management, prescribed grazing and wildlife habitat management.

### How EQIP Works

Signup for EQIP is continuous. NRCS will evaluate each application, with higher priorities given to applications that use cost-effective conservation practices, address local priorities, and provide the most environmental benefit. All applications for the county EQIP sign-up received before March 4 will be ranked and considered for the fiscal year 2005 funding.

Farmers will develop a conservation plan, if they don't already have one, for the acreage affected by the EQIP practices. Conservation practices must meet NRCS technical standards. Farmers may elect to use an approved third-party provider for technical assistance, if available. State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups advise NRCS on setting priorities and limits for EQIP

About 50 percent of the EQIP funds will be targeted to animal waste storage systems. The signup for animal waste storage ends April 29. Farmers would receive up to 70% cost sharing on storage structures, depending on size. Contracts for waste storage will require a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP).

EQIP offers contracts for practice implementation from 1-10 years. These contracts provide incentive payments and cost share payments for implementing conservation practices.

### Eligibility

Any farmer engaged in livestock or crop production on eligible land may apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland; rangeland; pasture; private non-industrial forestland; and other farm or ranch lands, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.

### EQIP Practices

The list of eligible practices that can be cost shared are listed at on the Wisconsin NRCS website [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov) or you can call the local Natural Resources Conservation Service office at (608) 742-5361, ext. 3

## **Conservation Security Program (CSP) Reminder**

A reminder to those of you located in the Crawfish Watershed that the Conservation Security Program (CSP) workshops and sign-up are coming soon.

CSP pays farmers based on Tiers, ranging from Tier 1 where one resource is protected on part of the farm, to Tier 3, where all resources are protected on the whole operation. In addition, farmers may increase payments through enhancements, such as energy conservation measures, wildlife habitat, or extra nutrient and pest management practices.

To apply for CSP, farmers in the eligible watersheds will complete a quick questionnaire and if they meet the basic qualifications to enroll in the CSP they can complete a Self-Assessment Workbook, which are both available at their local NRCS office or on the website at [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp.html](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp.html).

For those not located within the Crawfish Watershed inquiring about EQIP could be advantageous towards addressing your natural resource concerns.

For more information, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office at (608) 742-5361, ext. 3 or visit the Wisconsin NRCS website at [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov)