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“Transmitted Via E-mail”

October 10, 2008

MINNESOTA BULLETIN NO. 300-9-2

SUBJECT: LTP – EQIP – 2009 Program

Purpose. To initiate the 2009 EQIP and Local Work Group process.

Expiration Date. December 21, 2008

NRCS District Conservationists will again use Local Work Groups (LWG) as part of the locally-led process to formulate and implement a local FY 2009 EQIP. The 2008 Farm Bill will result in some changes to the program and the final rules are not yet written. The locally-led process is designed to establish the local resource priorities to be addressed regardless of any change in policies. Starting the locally-led process now will prepare offices to facilitate an EQIP sign-up later this fiscal year.

The basic framework of EQIP will remain unchanged. The draft Minnesota statewide template for the 2009 ranking tool is attached and is based on the previous scoring worksheets. The locally-led process and Local Work Group establish the priorities and issues to customize the template to each county.

Across the state, many organizations and individuals continue to express interest in participating in Local Work Groups. To facilitate participation, Minnesota will again post the schedule for all local listening sessions and Local Work Group meetings on the Minnesota NRCS web site. Remember that while the Local Work Group membership is restricted to government representatives, public input is still allowed and desired.

For 2009 we have not established a cut-off date for scoring and ranking applications. Neither do we have the 2009 EQIP Practice Payment Schedule finalized. Nevertheless, offices can and should proceed to establish the foundation of their 2009 EQIP. Offices should expect the 2009 EQIP to be very similar to the 2008 EQIP.

2009 EQIP Groundwork Action Items:

1. **Gather comments from field and areas for 2009 policies and payment schedule.** Comments have already been provided and work begun.
2. **Establish dates for, and inform your Area office of your listening session and LWG meeting dates.** As soon as you and your SWCD have set dates for your listening session

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and Local Work Group meeting, email the time, location, and date of those meetings to Susan Ploetz, susan.ploetz@mn.usda.gov to be posted to the web site. Each county's LWG meeting date should be posted a minimum of 2 weeks in advance.

3. **Conduct local listening sessions in October and November 2008.** Field offices coordinate with SWCD to gather local input on resource concerns and priorities.
4. **Hold Local Work Group meetings.** The goal is to have LWG meetings completed by November 26, 2008. Again, coordinate with your SWCD. Have local input or listening sessions prior to, or in conjunction with the LWG meetings. Determine, prioritize, and record the local resource concerns that EQIP will address.
5. **Complete the attached LWG worksheet and send to your ASTC(FO).** Review the attached sample worksheet for example local questions and instructions. Review the draft state template to see how the total tool looks. The locally developed questions will be incorporated into the county ranking tool. Each county will have its own ranking tool.
6. **Receive training on the 2009 EQIP ranking tool and the 2009 EQIP.** This training is tentatively scheduled for late November or December.
7. **December 13, 2008** is the state goal to have the all county ranking tools in place and ready for use in the 2009 sign-up process. Depending on the availability of funds, an early winter EQIP sign-up will be scheduled for Minnesota.

Questions should be directed to your ASTC(FO) or from the area level to Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist or Sid Cornelius, Resource Conservationist.

// s // Tim Koehler, Acting

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

Attachments (3)

DIST: ASTC(FO)
DC
ARC
Area Engineers
Program Specialists
EQIP State Office Team

Local Work Group development of local EQIP.

District FY09 EQIP

1. List the local resource concerns that EQIP can address:

Soil erosion

Water quality

Pasture conditions & grazing concerns

Irrigation efficiencies

Wildlife habitat, especially for grouse

Invasive species problems

[This is a master or brainstorm list of all resource concerns in the county]

2. If applicable, list any geographic regions (i.e. watersheds, townships, etc.) and their respective resource concerns within the District to receive priority:

Stinking water creek watershed - soil erosion and water quality issues

Big Hill Township - limited participation, soil erosion, wildlife habitat

[A master list of all geographic areas that you may want to target funds to]

3. From items 1 & 2 above prioritize the local resource concerns to be addressed with EQIP funding for the district. Describe a minimum of 3 categories of the highest priority applications which you would want to receive funding.

Soil erosion & water quality concerns in Stinking Water Creek watershed

Applications addressing water quality

All applications in Big Hill Township

Applications with prescribed grazing practices

[Working from the master list in 1 & 2, prioritize and list in order the type of applications you would want to fund first. Local priorities should build on the national and state priorities of soil erosion, water quality, air quality, water conservation, and wildlife habitat. A list of 3 or more local priority concerns should be developed.]

4. Develop a minimum of 3 and maximum of 12 yes/no questions to determine if an application is addressing the high priority concerns described in item 3.

SOIL EROSION - the application will install practices that reduce soil erosion by 5 or more tons/acre/year within the Stinking Water Creek watershed. 14 points.

SOIL EROSION - the application will install practices to reduce soil erosion to T or less within the Stinking Water Creek watershed. 10 points

WATER QUALITY - the application will install practices to address water quality concerns within the Stinking Water Creek watershed. 14 points

WATER QUALITY - - the application will install practices to address water quality concerns outside the Stinking Water Creek watershed. 7 points

ALL CONCERNS - the application will install practices to address a national priority concern within the Big Hill township. 1 point

SOIL EROSION and WATER QUALITY - the application will install practices that result in the implementation of a prescribed grazing system. 2 points

[Local questions should be prefaced with the national priority they address. For ease of use, group questions by the national priority they address. Questions must be answered by either yes or no, variables are not allowed. Local questions should supplement and tie back to state questions which in turn supplement and tie back to national priorities. Questions should reward applications with higher environmental benefits, that treat multiple resource concerns, that cooperate or leverage with other environmental projects, and provide long-term environmental benefits. Questions may reward applications achieving a higher level of treatment, applicants with a history of proper maintenance of practices, or applicants with a history of completing previous contracts. Questions must be size and class neutral and avoid bias for or against any group or size of operation.]

5. Assign points to the questions in Item #4 as desired to reflect local priorities. The total points assigned to the questions should be between 35 to 60 points.

[At 40 points, the local issue questions will comprise approximately 35% of the final score. At 60 points, the local issue questions will comprise approximately 48% of the final score. Because applications only compete within your county, the exact percent is not critical, but the local issues should not exceed 50%. If more than 60 points are needed to adequately address the local issues, contact your Area Office.]

6. Submit this worksheet to your respective ASTC(FO). After approval from the state office, the questions will be entered into the Local Issues section of the ranking tool.

The local EQIP program description, cost-share docket changes, and ranking worksheet must be reviewed and approved by the State Conservationist before any EQIP contract is approved and signed.

This document serves as the Local Work Group recommendation for FY 09 EQIP. Attached is a roster of participation in the Local Work Group.

Chair, Local Work Group

Date

SAMPLE

5. Assign points to the questions in Item #4 as desired to reflect local priorities. The total points assigned to the questions should be between 35 to 60 points.
6. Submit this worksheet electronically to your respective ASTC(FO). After approval from the state office, the questions will be entered into the Local Issues section of the ranking tool.

The local EQIP program description, cost-share docket changes, and ranking worksheet must be reviewed and approved by the State Conservationist before any EQIP contract is approved and signed.

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Chair, Local Work Group

Date

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Application Ranking Summary

EQIP General FA

Program:	Ranking Date:	Application Number:
Ranking Tool: EQIP General FA		Applicant:
Final Ranking Score:		Address:
Planner:	Telephone:	
Farm Location:		

National Priorities Addressed

Issue Questions	Responses
1. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in considerable reductions of non-point source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, excess salinity in impaired watersheds, groundwater contamination or point source contamination from confined animal feeding operations?	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
2. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable amount of ground or surface water conservation?	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
3. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable reduction of emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards?	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
4. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land?	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
5. Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable increase in the promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation?	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>

State Issues Addressed

Issue Questions	Responses
Sheet and Rill and /or Wind Erosion - answer only 1 of next 3	
1. SOIL EROSION - less than 3 tons/ac/yr will be saved by the installed practices from sheet and rill and /or wind erosion	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
2. SOIL EROSION - 3 to 5 tons/ac/yr soil will be saved by the installed practices from sheet and rill and/or wind erosion	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
3. SOIL EROSION - greater than 5 tons/ac/yr will be saved by the installed practices from sheet and rill and/or wind erosion	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Soil Conditioning Index	
4. SOIL EROSION - the Soil Conditioning Index changes from negative to at least 0.0 on the field	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Classic or Ephemeral Gully Erosion	
5. SOIL EROSION - structural practices Diversion (362), Grade Stabilization Structure (410), Grassed Waterway (412), Water and Sediment Control Basin (638), Dam (402) or other structural practices will be installed to control ephemeral or gully erosion	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Water Resource Protection - answer only 1 of next 3	
6. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Nutrient management (590) will be implemented	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
7. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Conservation Crop Rotation-Organic (328b), Well Decommissioning (351), Riparian Forest Buffer (391), Filter Strip (393), Pest Management on Cropland (595), Sinkhole Treatment (725) or Use Exclusion in a riparian area (472) will be implemented	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
8. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Contour Buffer Strips (332), Field Border (386), Irrigation Water Management (449), Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580), Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (100), or, when installed to improve water quality but not part of a complete runoff control system: Diversion (362), Roof Runoff Management (558), and Closure of Waste Impoundment (360) will be implemented	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Livestock Waste - answer only 1 of next 7	

9. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - existing MinnFARM/FLEval rating is 1 to 10	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
10. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - existing MinnFARM/FLEval rating is 11 to 25	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
11. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - existing MinnFARM/FLEval rating is 26 to 49	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
12. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - existing MinnFARM/FLEval rating is greater than 49	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
13. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - waste storage will be implemented to eliminate a groundwater pollution problem where a feedlot runoff problem does not exist	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
14. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - storage or composting of manure is required ONLY to eliminate a land-spreading problem	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
15. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Animal Mortality Facility (316), Silage Leachate Abatement system, or Milkhouse Wastewater system will be implemented to address a single problem.	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Livestock Waste add on	
16. NON-POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Animal Mortality Facility (316), Silage Leachate Abatement system, or Milkhouse Wastewater system will be implemented as part of a complete Wastewater and Feedlot Runoff Control system	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Wildlife Habitat - answer all that apply	
17. HABITAT CONSERVATION - Prescribed Burning (338), Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (380), Stream Habitat Improvement (395), Restoration and Management of Declining Habitat (643), Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645), Early Successional Habitat Development (647), Wetland Restoration (657), Pond for wildlife (402) or Invasive Plant Species Pest Management (797) will be implemented	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
18. HABITAT CONSERVATION - A wildlife practice will be implemented that benefits a threatened and endangered species according to MN eFOTG Section II.D	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
19. HABITAT CONSERVATION - A practice will be implemented that benefits native pollinators according to Native Habitat Development for Pollinators-Minnesota guidelines	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Air Quality - answer only 1 of next 2	
20. AIR QUALITY - A practice will be implemented specifically to improve air quality	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
21. AIR QUALITY - A practice will be implemented to address other resource concerns, but also addresses air quality as a secondary concern	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Sensitive Water Bodies	
22. WATER QUALITY - Sensitive Water Bodies - the application is located within: -a watershed impaired by turbidity, fecal coliform, or excess nutrients -a Source Water Assessment Area -a Drinking Water Supply Management Area with medium to very high vulnerability -a very high to high Sensitivity Aquifer AND the practice will be implemented to address a water quality concern	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Distance to a Receiving Water - answer only 1 of next 7	
23. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses soil erosion or non-point source pollution and is less than 100 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
24. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses soil erosion or non-point source pollution and is 100 to 500 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
25. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses soil erosion or non-point source pollution and is 501 to 1000 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
26. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses soil erosion or non-point source pollution and is 1001 to 2000 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
27. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses only habitat conservation, grazing systems, or forest management and is less than 100 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
28. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses only habitat conservation, grazing systems, or forest management and is 100 to 500 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
29. WATER QUALITY - Distance to a receiving water - the application addresses only habitat conservation, grazing systems, or forest management and is 501 to 1000 feet from a receiving water	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Grazing Practices	
30. GRAZING SYSTEMS - Prescribed Grazing (528) including Organic systems will be implemented	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
Forest Practices	

31. FOREST MANAGEMENT - Forest Stand Improvement (666), or Tree Planing (612) will be implemented	Yes <input type="radio"/> or No <input type="radio"/>
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Local Issues Addressed

Issue Questions	Responses
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Land Use:

Resource Concerns	Practices
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Ranking Score

Efficiency: Local Issues: State Issues: National Issues: Final Ranking Score:
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This ranking report is for your information. It does not in any way guarantee funding. When funding becomes available, you will be notified if your application is selected for funding. Some changes to the application may be required before a final contract is awarded.

Notes:

NRCS Representative:	Application Signature Not Required for Contract Development unless required by State policy:
Signature Date:	Signature Date: