

Subject: Funding opportunities NRCS Pinto
Lake
Date: Thursday, June 04, 2015 8:36: AM

This is a message from the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Coast Region (3).

Dear [Pinto Lake TMDL](#) interested party,

The following is an informational update regarding funding opportunities for conservation and watershed improvement projects in the Pinto Lake watershed:

[Landowners Encouraged to Apply for Regional Conservation Projects](#)

NRCS News Release, May 27, 2015. Funding is now available for private landowners in the Pajaro Valley to conserve and protect their land as part of six new regional conservation projects in California. The projects are funded by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), newly created in the 2014 Farm Bill.

Project Overview: The Pajaro Valley Community Water Dialogue. Partners: Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, Driscoll Farms and Sustainable Conservation. Project will provide assistance to local growers to implement conservation practices that reduce groundwater pumping, increase aquifer recharge, protect surface water by reducing nitrate leaching into the groundwater. The attached PDF files contain information relevant to the Regional Conservation Projects and other funding opportunities.

Interested growers can contact Rich Casale at the Santa Cruz County USDA NRCS office (see below) regarding the Pajaro Valley Community Water Dialogue RCPP funds and other funds available under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). See attached info on EQIP as well.

Note: NRCS services are available free of charge and are non-regulatory. All information is kept confidential.

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Note: The Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board is increasing its efforts to transmit correspondence and other information electronically, reducing the amount of paper used, and increasing the speed of which information is distributed. Therefore, you are receiving the attached correspondence from the Central Coast Water Board in a Portable Data Format (PDF) and will not receive a hard copy unless requested. The latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader or similar software is required to view the attached PDF. If you need help viewing this document, you may download the latest version of Acrobat Reader, free of charge at <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>



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News Release

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Landowners Encouraged to Apply for Regional Conservation Projects *Eligible landowners are encouraged to apply for available funding this summer*

DAVIS, Calif., May 27, 2015 – Funding is now available for private landowners to conserve and protect their land as part of six new regional conservation projects in California. The six projects are funded by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), newly created in the 2014 Farm Bill.

Each project has its own set of conservation benefits, specific goals and management practices. Four of the selected projects benefit agricultural lands geographically located within California, and two additional projects provide conservation benefits on a multi-state level. The four projects that are totally within California borders will receive approximately \$12 million with partners providing matching resources to implement the work. The work will tap into resources from both the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program.

Eligible landowners within the six project areas should submit an application to their nearest USDA Service Center to request financial and technical assistance. Each of the six projects are developing timelines between now and mid-summer to take applications. NRCS funding will be used to implement a variety of conservation practices on private lands.

California-Specific Project Overviews:

- **Enhancement of Tricolored Blackbird Habitat on Agricultural Land.** Partners: Audubon California, Western United Dairywomen, Dairy Cares, Farm Bureau and Sustainable Conservation. Project will address factors that challenge dairy farmers and threaten Tricolored Blackbird populations, with the goal of finding a sustainable solution for management of colonies on farms and saving the species from extinction. In addition to using working lands programs and wetland easements to protect and increase habitat, an educational campaign will help increase awareness of farmers' role in saving the species.
- **Expansion of Waterbird Habitat Project in the Central Valley.** Partner: California Rice Commission. Project will increase technical and financial assistance to California's rice growers to increase wildlife features on approximately 165,000 acres of rice fields. A special component will address the specific needs of upland-nesting bird species on 12,000 acres.
- **The Pajaro Valley Community Water Dialogue.** Partners: Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County, Driscoll Farms and Sustainable Conservation. Project will provide assistance to local growers to implement conservation practices that reduce

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groundwater pumping, increase aquifer recharge, protect surface water by reducing nitrate leaching into the groundwater.

- **Bay Area Climate Change Practices on Agricultural Lands.** Partners: Marin Agricultural Land Trust and local Resource Conservation Districts. Project will help farmers accelerate conservation planning and implement conservation measures that combat climate change. Practices will take place on lands protected by long-term agricultural easements. Partners and landowners will monitor soil quality, water quality, and in-stream habitat on these lands.

Multi-State Project Overviews:

- **The Klamath-Rogue Oak Woodland Conservation Project.** Partner: Lomakatsi Restoration Project. Work will target 3,200 high-priority acres, from California to Oregon, recently identified in a Conservation Implementation Strategy, to preserve, enhance, and restore the structural diversity, ecological function, and overall health and persistence of oak habitats and their watersheds.
- **The Rice Stewardship Partnership.** Partner: Ducks Unlimited. In California, targets approximately 25 landowners on 2,600 acres. Will address water quantity, water quality, and wildlife habitat across 380,000 acres in six states including California. Using remote sensing to estimate bird population carrying capacity in shallow waters and the Field-to-Market Fieldprint Calculator to monitor results over time, the partners offer several innovations to augment conservation implementation and gain broader producer participation.

RCPP is a five-year investment, therefore, applicants not selected for funding for this fiscal year may be eligible for funding in subsequent application periods. Also, each year USDA will award funding for new RCPP projects, so other opportunities for funding may come available in the coming years.

RCPP selected competitive conservation projects, designed by local partners specifically for their state or region. Eligible partners included private companies, universities, non-profit organizations, local and tribal governments and others joining with agricultural and conservation organizations and producers to invest money, manpower and materials to their proposed initiatives.

NRCS has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water and other natural resources since 1935. For more information about NRCS's programs and services, please visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

-NRCS-





Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation or improved or created wildlife habitat.

EQIP



Environmental Quality Incentives Program



USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary Farm Bill conservation programs that benefit agricultural producers and the environment.

Benefits

Eligible program participants receive financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices, or activities like conservation planning, that address natural resource concerns on their land. Payments are made to participants after conservation practices and activities identified in an EQIP plan of operations are implemented. Contracts can last up to ten years in duration.

Eligibility

Agricultural producers and owners of non-industrial private forestland and Tribes are eligible to apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and other farm or ranch lands.



Socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers, Indian tribes and veterans are eligible for an increased payment rate and may receive advance payment of up to 50 percent to purchase materials and services needed to implement conservation practices included in their EQIP contract.

Applicants must:

- Control or own eligible land
- Comply with adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) provisions
- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements
- Develop an NRCS EQIP plan of operations

Additional restrictions and program requirements may apply.

How to apply

Visit your local USDA Service Center to apply or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted.

NRCS will help eligible producers develop an EQIP plan of operations, which will become the basis of the EQIP contract.

EQIP applications will be ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

More Information

For more information visit your local USDA Service Center or www.nrcs.usda.gov/farmbill.

Find your local USDA Service Center

<http://offices.usda.gov>

What's New in EQIP

- The former Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program was folded into EQIP.
- Advance payment opportunities now exist for veteran agricultural producers.
- Advance payments for socially disadvantaged, beginning and limited resource farmers, Indian tribes and veterans were raised from 30 percent to 50 percent.
- Payment limitations are set at \$450,000 with no ability to waive.



A water trough in a pasture keeps cattle out of critical riparian area.

www.nrcs.usda.gov.

Natural Resources Conservation Service