

NRCS Announces New Edge-of-Field Water Quality Monitoring

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Acting State Conservationist Daniel H. Meyerhoff, announced that funds are available for a new edge-of-field water quality monitoring program under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). "In an effort to improve the effectiveness of agricultural conservation practices and systems, NRCS is implementing this program in which producers use edge-of-field monitoring to evaluate the quality of water draining from their farms," said Meyerhoff. Producers in Headwaters Grasshopper Creek in the Delaware River Watershed in southcentral Brown County and small portions of Atchison and Jackson Counties may apply. Applications must be received by **June 14, 2013**.

Headwaters Grasshopper Creek is a 22,000-acre watershed that was selected in 2012 for the National Water Quality Initiative which accelerates efforts to improve water quality in small watersheds for nutrient, sediment, and pathogen concerns. "I encourage all producers who are in Headwaters Grasshopper Creek and interested in monitoring to contact their local NRCS office as soon as possible so they can meet the application deadline," said Meyerhoff.

Edge-of-field water quality monitoring will use a paired watershed approach to establish baseline information and has the potential to provide much needed water quality data to show the effects of conservation practices in quantifiable terms. As monitoring progress is made, NRCS will be better able to focus conservation practices on the areas of greatest need using the most effective conservation systems. EQIP contracts for edge-of-field monitoring may extend for a total of nine years with an additional year of maintenance.

Edge-of-field water quality monitoring has three primary purposes: evaluate performance of conservation practices and conservation system, validate and calibrate models, and inform on-farm adaptive management. NRCS will work with producers to use new conservation activities for water quality monitoring system installation and monitoring system data collection and evaluation.

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