

Kansas NRCS Announces National Initiatives for 2015

Salina, Kansas, February 10, 2015— Eric B. Banks, State Conservationist with U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announces five national initiatives being offered in Kansas through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative, National Water Quality Initiative, On-Farm Energy Initiative, Organic Initiative, and Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative. While NRCS accepts applications for EQIP on a continuous basis, NRCS has set a deadline of March 20, to apply for 2015 initiatives funding.

Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative: NRCS will assist producers in 36 counties to implement conservation practices specifically targeted to improve the lesser prairie-chicken (LPC) habitat while promoting the overall health of grazing lands and the long-term sustainability of Kansas ranching. Expired or expiring Conservation Reserve Program fields in permanent cover that may benefit LPC habitat may also be eligible for funding. This initiative will be offered in Barber, Clark, Comanche, Edwards, Ellis, Finney, Ford, Gove, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Kiowa, Lane, Logan, Meade, Morton, Ness, Pawnee, Pratt, Rush, Scott, Seward, Sheridan, Sherman, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens, Thomas, Trego, Wallace, and Wichita counties.

National Water Quality Initiative: NRCS will assist producers with addressing high-priority water resource concerns in three watersheds. These include: Big Creek Watershed in Ellis county; Emma Creek Watershed in Harvey, Marion, and McPherson counties; and Grasshopper Creek Watershed in Atchison, Brown, and Jackson counties.

On-Farm Energy Initiative: Producers work with an NRCS-approved Technical Service Provider (TSP) to develop Agricultural Energy Management Plans or farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an agricultural operation. NRCS may also provide assistance to implement various recommended improvements identified in the energy audit through the use of conservation practices offered through this initiative.

Organic Initiative: NRCS will assist producers with installation of conservation practices on agricultural operations related to organic production. Producers currently certified as organic, transitioning to organic, or producers who are exempt based on the National Organic Program will have access to a broad set of conservation practices to assist in treating their resource concerns while fulfilling many of the requirements in an organic system plan.

Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative: NRCS helps producers implement high tunnels that extend growing seasons for high value crops in an environmentally safe manner. High tunnel benefits include better plant and soil quality and fewer nutrients and pesticides in the environment.

EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to eligible participants to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. Conservation practices must be implemented to NRCS standards and specifications. In Kansas, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers will receive a higher payment rate for eligible conservation practices applied.

For more information about EQIP, or other programs offered by NRCS, please contact your local USDA Service Center or go to the Web site www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity

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