

## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds available**

Agricultural producers looking to solve natural resource problems on their farms should apply now for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) administered by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The Minnesota NRCS announced that a scoring period to determine priority for funding applications will occur at the end of February, 2010. Nearly \$22 million is available to assist producers.

According to Cheryl Heard, District Conservationist, completed applications must be received at the Yellow Medicine County NRCS Field Office in Clarkfield by February 26, 2010 in order to be considered for this scoring period.

Through EQIP, landowners interested in conservation practices are provided both technical assistance and financial assistance to install eligible practices.

For 2010, Minnesota producers are eligible for two new practices, drainage water management and seasonal high tunnels for crops. Drainage water management facilitates the management and control of existing tile drainage systems to improve the water quality leaving the system. Seasonal high tunnels, sometimes referred to as hoop houses, are limited as a pilot practice to determine if such structures can provide environmental benefits with increased production.

Participation in EQIP is limited to agricultural producers. Organic producers, limited resource farmers, beginning farmers, and underserved farmers were designated in the 2008 Farm Bill as focused outreach groups and may benefit from EQIP. EQIP provides assistance for a wide variety of conservation practices treating cropland, grazing, forestry, feedlots, and wildlife.

To find out more about EQIP in Minnesota, contact Cheryl Heard or Jon Paul Pringle at the NRCS field office in Clarkfield or visit the MN NRCS website: [www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov).