



YELLOW MEDICINE SWCD NEWSLETTER

Clarkfield, MN 56223

320-669-4442 Ext 3

February 2010

EQIP – ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). EQIP provides technical assistance, cost share payments, and incentive payments to assist crop, livestock, and other agricultural producers with environmental and conservation improvements to their operations. This assistance is to help landowners install or apply structural, vegetative and management practices.

Some common practices are well sealing, grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, terraces, nutrient management, pest management, no till, strip till, closure of waste impoundments, conservation crop rotation, conversion to low pressure on irrigation systems, tree and shrub establishment, windbreaks, native prairie seeding, prescribed burning, and rotational grazing consisting of fence, pipeline, well, water tanks, and pasture seeding. There were over 66 different practices offered in the 2008 EQIP sign-up. In 2009, EQIP alone brought in over \$264,000 to producers in Yellow Medicine County. **This funding period ends February 26, 2010.**

WHIP – WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM

WHIP is a voluntary program for people who want to develop or improve wildlife habitat on tribal and private lands. It provides both technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. WHIP brought in over \$2,400 to the county in conservation practices. We are currently accepting applications for the EQIP & WHIP Programs. The ranking and **funding period ends February 26, 2010** and the ranking period is very short, so early planning will be ideal in order to get the best possible chance of funding for your application.

SIGN-UP FOR GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Minnesota Farm Service Agency (FSA) are accepting applications for the 2010 Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP). GRP applications received by **Friday, March 12, 2010** will be evaluated for 2010 GRP funding. GRP is a voluntary program that provides financial and technical assistance to support grazing operators. The program has several enrollment options: 10, 15, or 20-year rental agreements or permanent easements may be available. Application evaluation for acceptance in the 2010 GRP will be based on ranking criteria that will emphasize grazing operations; protection of grassland, land that contains forbs, and shrub land at the greatest risk from the threat of conversion to uses other than grazing; plant and animal biodiversity. Participants with approved rental agreements will receive annual payments for the rental contract period. The annual rental rate for Yellow Medicine County is \$16.50. GRP enrollment permits common grazing practices, haying, mowing or harvesting for seed production, subject to certain restrictions. All participants are required to implement a grazing management plan approved by NRCS. For additional eligibility and information, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit the NRCS Website at: <http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp/index.html>

CONTINUOUS CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CCRP)

The Continuous Conservation Reserve Program is available to landowners with marginal or environmentally sensitive cropland. This program offers financial incentives to land out of production for the duration of the contract. The financial incentives include annual rental payments of \$97 - \$146 per acre, signing bonuses, and cost-share assistance. Contract lengths are 10 to 15 years. The signing bonus is an up front payment of \$100/per acre. Cost share assistance is 50% with an additional 80% Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) of the cost share earned, so essentially up to 90% of the cost to establish the practice is covered by USDA. CCRP eligible practices and benefits are as follows:

- Riparian Buffers - A combination of grass and trees planted adjacent to a river or creek. Riparian buffers will reduce the impacts of flooding and are beneficial to wildlife.
- Wetland Buffers - Grass planted adjacent to a non-cropped wetland. Wetland buffers will intercept pollutants, improve water quality, and provide nesting areas for waterfowl.
- Filter Strips - Grass planted along drainage ditches, creeks, or rivers. Filter Strips will capture runoff before entering the water supply, and will provide food and cover for upland birds.
- Wetland Restorations - A combination of drainage alterations, earthen dikes, and grass treatment to the upland areas. Restorations will benefit wildlife and improve water quality.
- Grass Waterways - Natural waterways are reshaped and planted to grass. Waterways will prevent soil from eroding.
- Shelterbelts - Trees planted adjacent to building site. Shelterbelts will protect building sites from snow loads, prevailing winds, and helps save energy by reducing heating and cooling costs.
- Living Snow Fences - Strategically placed trees and grass plantings adjacent to roads and highways. Living Snow Fences will reduce blowing and drifting snow, provide lower snow plow costs, improve public safety, and increase wildlife habitat.
- Field Windbreaks - One to three rows of trees strategically placed in a field. Field Windbreaks prevent soil erosion, and are beneficial to wildlife.

If you have any questions on the above programs, contact Cheryl Heard or Jon Paul Pringle at (320) 669-4442 ext 3. All sign-ups are conducted at the NRCS Office located at the Ag Service Center building in Clarkfield.

NEW SWCD EMPLOYEE



As the new Farm Bill Assistant, I would like to say "Hello" to you all. My name is Amanda Prochazka and I come to you from Sparta, Wisconsin near LaCrosse. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin -River Falls and majored in Conservation and minored in Biology, Hydrogeology, and Soils. Last year I volunteered for the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC) out of St. Paul, Minnesota.

I look forward to working with everyone in the near future to promote conservation programs, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Continuous CRP, Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM), Rock Outcrop Program and many more.

WRP/RIM

Wetland Restoration Program Signup Begins in March

A RIM-WRP sign-up begins in March. This program offers competitive payment rates for landowners to enroll in a program to restore wetlands that have been altered and have a history of being used for agricultural production. The program is a local-state-federal partnership that combines the state's Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Reserve conservation easement program with the USDA Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

Combining these two easement programs allows state funds to leverage federal funds that are available through the Federal Farm Bill. Funding for this partnership is through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR).

Competitive payment rates have been established for this partnership using township average land values.

FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR RIPARIAN BUFFER EASEMENTS

Now is the time to take advantage of a new riparian buffer conservation easement program. These buffers will be enrolled into a permanent easement which will be acquired through the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program. Eligible land includes land with existing or new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that had a crop history prior to CRP enrollment and that are adjacent to public waters defined as: streams, ditches and lakes, excluding wetlands; as shown on the DNR Protected Waters Inventory. Whenever possible, cropland on both sides of the public waters must be enrolled.

The riparian buffer width must be at least 50 feet wide, unless there is a natural impediment beyond the landowner's control, for example a road or property line. The buffer width cannot be more than a 100 feet average width. The existing vegetation area between the eligible cropland and riparian sources must be included in the easement acreage, but cannot exceed more than 50 percent of the entire offered acreage. Any extra riparian acres must be donated as part of the conservation easement. The total easement size must be at least 3 acres unless the easement is part of a larger conservation project. No changes in vegetation will be needed if the land is already enrolled in CRP. For new CRP contracts plan dollars will be available to cover planting costs that CRP does not cover.

Landowners will be paid 100 percent of their Assessors Average Township Value (AATV) for cropland and 60 percent of AATV for non-cropland. Cropland is defined as planted to an annual crop for at least two of the last five years. Land that is already enrolled in CRP will be considered cropland for this sign-up. To apply for this program, eligible land must have been owned by the landowners for 1 year prior to the application. Call 320-669-4442 Extension 3 for more information.

TREE PROJECTS FOR 2010

Landowners interested in tree planting projects for this spring are encouraged to call Kurt Johnson at the SWCD to begin the planning process. It is possible for landowners to receive cost share for tree plantings. Federal and/or State Cost Share can provide up to 75% cost share. Cost share dollars must be requested and awarded prior to actual tree planting. Since funding for some programs are limited, those who make their cost share requests well in advance have more assurance that funds will be available and ensure availability of a chosen tree species. Call Kurt at 320-669-4442 Ext 3 to order trees for 2010.

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