

“General Conservation Program Financial Assistance Sign-Up Period Ending October 30th”

August 31, 2011, Jackson, Miss - The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is encouraging landowners, farmers and producers to visit their local conservation office and apply for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). While the application process for these Farm Bill conservation programs is continuous, funding selections are only made once or twice a year.

“EQIP is the primary conservation program available to farmers for farmland conservation practices, offering flat-rate of compensation payments for more than 50 conservation practices,” Acting State Conservationist Al Garner said.

Farmers can sign up at the NRCS office in USDA Service Centers statewide. NRCS anticipates nearly \$14 million in funds for Mississippi producers. The deadline for filing an application for the first ranking period is **October 30, 2011**.

About EQIP:

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program administered by NRCS that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through this program, agricultural producers may receive financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practice. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program. EQIP activities are carried out according to a plan of operation developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns. The practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions.

About WHIP:

WHIP provides technical assistance and cost sharing to restore wildlife habitat. In Mississippi, more than 20 different conservation practices are available, ranging from prescribed burning to establishing native grasses, shrubs and trees. Special priority is given to habitat that benefits species of national or state significance, including declining and endangered species.

Depending on the site, grasslands, forestland, and other types of habitat, including habitat for pollinators, may qualify to be restored. Land eligibility for WHIP includes private agricultural land, non-industrial private forest land and tribal land.

For more information and applications for either of these programs, visit www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov or contact the NRCS office at the USDA Service Center serving your county.

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