

NEWS *For Immediate Release*

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New Payment schedule delays cutoff date for popular conservation program

SPOKANE, Wash. (August 15, 2011) – Agricultural producers, including private forest landowners, will have more time to apply for financial and technical assistance through Washington’s most popular conservation program, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced today.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program designed to help farmers, ranchers and private forest landowners improve irrigation efficiency; manage nutrient run-off and/or animal waste; improve the health of native plant communities; and reduce soil loss. In most instances, producers who participate in the program pay for roughly half of the costs of the conservation measures or practices.

In previous years, the signup deadline for Washington’s general EQIP funding has been August 15th. According to the NRCS, they are taking a new regional approach to the development of the EQIP payment schedule and the establishment of a cutoff date will be delayed until a new payment schedule is completed and ready for public release.

“EQIP remains instrumental in providing conservation assistance to producers on Washington’s working lands,” Asst. State Conservationist Dave Brown said. “Due to changes in the payment schedule, applicants who want to be considered for a fiscal year 2012 EQIP contract will have more time to complete their applications this year,” he said.

Application cutoff dates for additional NRCS programs will also be announced at a later date; including Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

Brown said that while NRCS programs operate on a year-round signup basis, and producers can file applications at any time, periodic ranking deadlines are established so applications on file at that time can be evaluated for the next available funding allocation.

Interested agricultural producers are encouraged to contact their local USDA service center office or check the agency’s web site at www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov for more information.

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