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DEADLINES APPROACHING TO APPLY FOR RESOURCE CONSERVATION FUNDS

LINCOLN – Sept. 5, 2014 – Farmers and ranchers interested in soil, water and wildlife conservation are encouraged to sign up now for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP is available from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Those interested in applying are encouraged to sign up before Oct. 17, 2014.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available to private landowners and operators. Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers may receive financial and technical help to install conservation practices on agricultural land.

According to Craig Derickson, NRCS State Conservationist, there are several options available to producers through EQIP.

“EQIP is one of our most versatile programs. It offers cost share and technical assistance to apply conservation measures on cropland and rangeland, as well as for animal feeding operations and establishing or enhancing wildlife habitat. There are many opportunities available, and NRCS staff can help landowners and operators sort out their EQIP options,” Derickson said.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program has become one of the most widely applied conservation programs in Nebraska; enrolling over 600,000 acres last year with more than 8 million acres currently under contract statewide. The goal of EQIP is to provide a financial incentive to encourage landowners to install conservation practices that protect natural resources, resulting in cleaner air and water, healthy soil and more wildlife habitat.

Individuals interested in entering into an EQIP agreement may file an application at any time, but the ranking of applications on hand to receive funding will begin Oct. 17, 2014. The first step is to visit your local NRCS field office and complete an application.

NRCS is also reminding producers who first participated in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in 2009 that they have until Sept. 12, 2014, to renew their contracts.

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The Conservation Stewardship Program helps agricultural producers maintain and improve their existing conservation systems and adopt additional conservation practices. The program provides farmers and ranchers who are already established conservation stewards financial and technical assistance to further improve water quality, soil health and wildlife habitat on their farming and ranching operations.

About 20,000 CSP contracts nationwide are reaching the end of their initial five-year contract period. In Nebraska, there are 1,057 contracts that may be renewed for an additional five years where participants agree to install additional conservation measures.

“This program allows landowners to reach the next level of conservation and opens the door to trying new conservation activities,” Derickson said.

For more than 75 years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has helped agricultural producers with conservation plans. NRCS Conservationists work with landowners on their farm or ranch to develop a conservation plan based on resource goals. Conservation planning assistance is free and does not require participation in financial programs.

For more information about the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program and other conservation programs, visit your local NRCS field office or www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.

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