

Helping Washington's forest landowners

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Quick Guide

Overview

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers who face threats to soil, water, air, and other natural resources on their land. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the EQIP program with advice from Local Work Groups (LWG). The EQIP program may vary slightly between Local Work Groups but generally is focused on protecting water quality from non-point pollutants; conserving ground & surface water resources; and reducing soil erosion and the resulting sedimentation from agricultural and forest lands.

Who is an eligible forest land owner?

An eligible forest land owner is an individual, entity or joint operation engaged in forest production on the land being offered for enrollment in EQIP. Additionally, forest landowners must have one of the following in order to be eligible to participate in EQIP:

- A forest management plan or forest stewardship plan
- A prior record of timber harvest or revenue from timber sales
- Proof of capital investment on forest practices such as:
 - Tree Plantings
 - Forest Stand Improvement
 - Site Preparation
 - Prescribed Burning
 - Other Agro-forestry Practices

Which practices on forestland are eligible?

Forest practices used to treat the resource concerns include:

- Access Road (560) – performing treatments on existing forest access roads to prevent road erosion and sediment delivery into streams, e.g. water bars, culverts, rock/gravel, ditches, cross drains, out-sloping, in-sloping
- Critical Area Planting (342) – grass seeding on roads.
- Road/Landing Decommissioning (722) – closing forest roads or landings and rehabilitating sites to prevent erosion
- Forest Stand Improvement (666) – crop tree release, pre-commercial thinning
- Forest Site Preparation (490) – mechanical and chemical site treatment
- Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) – tree/shrub planting and protection
- Pest Management (595) – vegetative control
- Pruning (660)
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) snag creation, nesting structures
- Forest Slash Treatment (384) – mechanical or hand treatment

What isn't eligible?

- Reforestation following a commercial harvest
- Commercial thinning
- Restoring abandoned access roads or landings

Which applications will be funded?

EQIP applications are ranked according to criteria developed by the Local Working Groups.

What are the producer eligibility requirements?

Landowners who wish to participate in EQIP must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Be in compliance with the Highly Erodible Lands and Wetland Conservation provisions of the farm bill.
2. Have an annual adjusted gross income that is less than \$2,500,000
3. Have not exceeded the \$450,000 cap on current Farm Bill program payments.
4. Provide landowner entity information to USDA.

What is the application/implementation process?

Following are the five simple steps to apply for and implement an EQIP contract.

1. A landowner submits an application to a local USDA Service Center, NRCS office, or conservation district office.
2. The NRCS works with the applicant to develop a list of potential conservation practices.
3. NRCS ranks each application using the locally developed natural resources ranking process.
4. NRCS sets aside funds for the highest ranking applications, after which the NRCS works with the applicant to finalize a conservation plan and contract.
5. Participants may then begin to implement the EQIP conservation plan following NRCS guidelines and practice standards.

For more information:

For further information please contact an NRCS office near you. To locate the closest NRCS office please call **(509) 323-2900** or on the web at **www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov**.