

Attention Forest Landowners

Federal Assistance is Available for 2020 through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Applications are being accepted for technical and financial assistance to improve forest health and fuels management in privately owned forest and shrub land areas.

Who is the NRCS?

Guided by the mission of *helping people help the land*, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) collaborates with farmers, ranchers, communities and other individuals and groups to protect natural resources on private lands. Working side by side with our partners and customers, we identify natural resource concerns, such as water quality/quantity issues, soil erosion, air quality, wetlands and wildlife habitat, and develop unique solutions for restoring and protecting these resources.



What is EQIP?

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and non-industrial private forest landowners to implement conservation practices that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires throughout the forested and associated foothills landscape as well as improve water quantity and water quality to critical watersheds. In addition, assistance can be utilized to restore burned forest ecosystems and improve threatened and endangered species habitat.

Who can use EQIP?

- ✓ Applicant must own or operate agricultural or nonindustrial private forest lands.
- ✓ Applicant must meet Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) limitations.
- ✓ Eligible land includes cropland, nurseries, rangeland, forestland, and other farm lands.

What can EQIP do for you?

Producers receive financial assistance for structural, vegetative and management conservation practices such as:

- Brush Management
- Forest Slash Treatment
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Tree/Shrub Pruning
- And Much More!



Note: NRCS doesn't assist with vegetation removal practices within 100 ft. of structures.

For further information contact:
USDA - NRCS – Escondido Office
(760) 745-2061

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EQIP Process

What is the Conservation Program Process for San Diego County?

- Step 1:** Answer Initial Questionnaire and submit to NRCS
- Step 2:** A field visit(s) is conducted with you (the landowner) and your ranch manager/foremen if needed. A NRCS planner will help you determine objectives, collect and analyze your resource concerns, as well as discuss applicable conservation practices.
- Step 3:** Submit Application (along with all other required documents thereafter) – Funding occurs multiple times throughout the year. Applications accepted year round.
- Step 4:** Evaluate the alternative conservation practices and finalize a draft plan for what you would like to have included in your FY19 application. NRCS ranks all applications using an environmental ranking matrix.
- Step 5:** Applications that rank highest are funded first until all funds have been expended.
- Step 6:** **IF** funded your contract will need to be signed.
- Step 7:** **IF** your contract has been funded, construction and implementation can begin. (You will work closely with your planner or engineer to be sure the practice requirements are met).
- Step 8:** Once your practice has been installed you can contact NRCS for a field inspection. Once the practice has been certified as being installed correctly, we will begin the project reimbursement process. Typically 30 days until direct deposit.

What else should I know about the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)?

- NRCS is a federal, non-regulatory agency. We offer technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers.
- We do not offer grants, only financial assistance through contracts for established conservation practices found in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).
- Each practice has three components: 1. Standards, 2. Specifications, and 3. Practice Requirements. Practice requirements are written site specific to each individual landowner/farmer. These will be given to you at the signing of the contract or soon after. The standards and specifications are available on-line at: <http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov>.
- Each practice has its own specific payment rate that is usually calculated by the acre, volume, or length that will be implemented. The cost share amounts are estimated to be 50% -75% of the project, but are only a regionally based average. The cost share is not based on how much your project actually costs.
- Only new practices will be in your application/contract. Conservation practices that have already been installed or begun are not eligible for the program.
- Funding is not guaranteed if you apply. Applications are selected based upon the environmental ranking score.
- **Do not purchase parts or begin installation before officially funded (your contract is signed and you are notified to begin).**
- You may have more than one contract on your land at the same time. You may apply as many times as you like.
- Please keep all receipts, invoices, and time logs for your records. We do not collect them.
- You must start one conservation practice within a year of signing your contract.

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