

August 10, 2012

## Colorado NRCS Announces Nearly \$2 Million in Financial and Technical Assistance to Drought-Stricken Landowners and Producers

**Denver** – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Phyllis Ann Philipps recently announced nearly \$2 million in financial and technical assistance to get much-needed help to landowners and producers in Colorado who are facing extreme and exceptional drought conditions. With this limited funding, higher priority will be given to those who have been in the exceptional drought (D4) areas of the state the longest and will include additional criteria based on erodible soils and other sensitive areas. This will ensure that the funds provided will be applied to the most vulnerable areas of the state.

Priority will be also given to those who are within areas of the High Park Fire that occurred in Larimer County. A map of the areas defined by the National Drought Mitigation Center in Colorado is located at: [http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM\\_state.htm?CO,HP](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM_state.htm?CO,HP).

Colorado will hold special signups for landowners and producers interested in applying conservation practices that will alleviate the drought’s impacts and improve soil health and productivity.

*“NRCS is committed to helping landowners and producers through this challenging drought period by providing additional financial and technical assistance through our conservation programs,”* said Philipps. *“Program authorities allow us to reschedule practices, extend contracts, and substitute practices so producers are not penalized for circumstances beyond their control.”*

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), funds will allow eligible producers to apply for selected conservation practices. These practices include prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, and water conservation practices. Eligible producers also can re-apply for financial assistance to re-apply failed conservation practices due to drought.

Landowners with a current EQIP contract can also request a contract modification to re-schedule planned conservation practices such as prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, water conservation and other conservation activities on pasture and forest land until drought conditions improve.

*“With this funding, we hope to provide some immediate relief in specific geographic areas where we can address critical resource concerns caused by the drought,”* Philipps said. *“It will also help producers keep their cattle healthy, restore pastures, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and protect forest land.”*

Through the WHIP funding, landowners interested in reducing erosion, sedimentation, and the effects of debris flows that compliment wildlife habitat, and who are willing to install erosion control practices to protect the riparian and lowland areas from sedimentation are encouraged to sign up.

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According to the August 7, 2012, U.S. Drought Monitor, 65 percent of Colorado is in an extreme drought and approximately 6 percent is in an exceptional drought (please check website for updated information at [http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM\\_state.htm?CO,W](http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/DM_state.htm?CO,W)). What that means is grasslands in these areas are considered severely impacted and slow recovery could occur, exposing soils to excessive erosion and long-term reduced productivity.

Landowners and producers are encouraged to visit with their local USDA Service Center for assistance with drought-related issues. Additional program requirements and information about EQIP and WHIP is available on the Colorado NRCS website at [www.co.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov).

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