

US Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2011 Colorado Partnership Program



Date Issued: February 2011

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In 2011 Colorado NRCS will utilize a Call for Proposals (CFP) format to identify partnership projects throughout local watersheds that address similar resource concerns. This program emphasizes group projects that positively address resource concerns and supports landowners working cooperatively to accomplish similar goals.

The Colorado Partnership Program (CPP) is a voluntary program for conservation-minded landowners who want to improve the management of their rangeland, riparian areas, forest or farmlands. The program offers support for wildlife habitat projects and other unique projects that address resource concerns. Through this solicitation NRCS will provide payment with the implementation of better management and structural practices.

NRCS will offer cost-share assistance to private landowners and operators to implement conservation management plans which address the identified and documented resource concerns. Payments will be made through Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contracts with individual landowners and operators. These payments will be offered for management when applicable. To qualify, landowners and operators must be located within an approved project area that demonstrates a cooperative effort to address the resource concern identified in the proposal. The landowner or the operator and the proposed lands must meet EQIP eligibility requirements.

A partnership that provide matching cost-share funding, technical assistance, and programs to address the resource concern on lands not otherwise eligible for EQIP funds will receive priority for funding.

Applicable partnership projects that will be considered for this funding opportunity include the following, but are not limited to these examples: addressing soil quality issues through alternative tillage operations, addressing Colorado List A or List B noxious weed species, and development of fish and wildlife projects. The fish and wildlife projects must address the priority species listed in the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) plan.

Additional projects that are applicable for this program are those that address grazing land and forest land health and projects that address soil and wind erosion. Emphasis of this program is on a group effort to address a common resource concern across multiple lands and landowners. Eligible partners for this proposal include: federally recognized Indian Tribes, state and local units of government, producer associations, farmer cooperatives, institutions of higher education, and nongovernmental organizations with a history of working cooperatively with producers.

Effective at the time of publication of this notice, Colorado NRCS announces the availability of \$1 million in financial assistance to support partnership projects through EQIP. NRCS will enter into partnership agreements with eligible partners who have a history of working cooperatively with agriculture producers. NRCS allow \$250,000 maximum for individual funded proposals.

Dates-- The notice of this request is effective **February 12, 2011**.
Proposals must be received by Close of Business on **March 10, 2011**

All proposals MUST be reviewed and signed by the local NRCS District Conservationist and appropriate partnering agencies/entities before being submitted to the NRCS State Office for funding consideration.

The process for 2011 will involve the following steps:

- The proposal sponsor shall contact the local NRCS office and inform them of proposal development intentions. Viable partnerships between NRCS, Conservation Districts and local governments are strongly encouraged.
- The proposal will be developed addressing all numbered elements listed below in as much detail as possible, please limit written portion of proposal to three pages.
- Once the proposal is completed, it should be reviewed and signed by the NRCS District Conservationist and appropriate agencies entities before submittal. .
- Electronic files of the proposal are encouraged. Electronic files or hard copy files must be received in the NRCS State Office by close of business on **March 12, 2011**. The files can be sent to the following addresses:

NRCS
C/o Jodi Hastings
Building 56, Room 2604
P.O. Box 25426
Denver Federal Center
Lakewood, Colorado 80225
(720) 544-2821

OR
colakewood.nrcsprogram@co.usda.gov

- A proposal review committee will prioritize the proposals using the attached ranking form.
- After the committee prioritizes the proposals, the highest ranked proposals will be recommended for funding. Individuals who are not funded may defer their application until the next funding opportunity.
- The proposal sponsors will be notified of funding by March 18, 2011.
- Once the projects are identified for funding, an application signup will be announced anticipated to be **March 18, 2011 through April 1, 2011**. Private landowners and operators that are eligible for EQIP can apply for individual contracts.

*Proposals that are received in the NRCS State office between **February 15 and March 10, 2011** will be screened using the following guidelines and the elements listed below.*

Proposals will focus on the management of one or more identified resource concerns. The resource concerns in the proposal were identified by the local work group. (LWG) Partnerships are encouraged to work with the local NRCS District Conservationist and the Conservation District to understand the priority local resource concerns.

High Priority Proposals must target local priority resource concerns.

In addition to managing two or more resource concerns, high priority proposals must:

1. Emphasize appropriate management techniques that focus on the conservation practices that address the resource concern.
2. Identify and address urgent threats (e.g., diminishing critical habitat for threatened and endangered species), habitat issues (e.g., limited habitat for rare or valued species of plants and wildlife), or other impacts (decreasing forage production, compromised water quality) of the targeted species.
3. Develop screening and ranking tool that will be utilized to select applications for funding.
4. Proposal sponsors will accept, screen and rank applications. They will work with NRCS staff to plan the individual's projects.
5. A wildlife proposal must address species identified in the Colorado Department of Wildlife Action Plan or in the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) plan.
6. Identify and enhance or restore the appropriate habitat type associated with the noxious weed treated acreage according to a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district.
7. Site specific evaluations have been completed, documenting that the project will have substantial positive impacts on resource concerns.
8. Positive consideration will be given to proposals that provide outreach to beginning farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers or limited resource farmers or ranchers and Indian tribes within the area covered by the project.
9. Projects that further the Nation's efforts with renewable energy production, energy conservation, mitigating the effects of climate change, or fostering carbon sequestration will also receive priority consideration.

ALL PROPOSALS MUST ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: The following information must be included in each application in order to rank it against competing proposals. Failure to address each of these elements will disqualify a proposal. Do not hesitate to request assistance from the District Conservationist or your local Conservation District Program Manager to ensure that you understand and address these elements in a satisfactory manner.

1. Project Title

2. Project director/manager name, email address and telephone number.

3. Name of lead partner entity submitting proposal and other collaborating partners.

Need points of contact for the NRCS and for the partners, provide names, email address and phone numbers.

4. Resource Concerns: Identify the specific resource concern that project will address. Objectives should be specific, measureable, and achievable; results oriented and include a timeline for completion. Priority projects for 2011 are those that emphasize partnerships working cooperatively to address similar resource concerns. *Only proposals that include multiple landowners will be evaluated.*

5. Location of Project Area: Describe the area (geographically and ecologically) addressed by the proposal. Include a detailed map showing the project area. Describe the location and size i.e., acres, of the proposed project area. Contact the local District Conservationist and the Conservation District for additional information regarding project area.

6. Conservation Practices: Projects should provide a list of approved Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) conservation practices and enhancements that will be used to address the resource concerns identified. Projects should include a landscape approach that considers watersheds, as well as soil, wind, air, water, plants, wildlife, and human factors and attempt to manage their effects. Identify the management techniques that will be applied. Provide an estimate of the total project acres treated by each practice. Make sure that the selected techniques are appropriate to achieve the management objective.

7. Proposed project start and end dates. (Not to exceed three years.)

8. Expected outcomes of the Project: Explain how the project will be managed.

A.) Identify who will coordinate actions, contacting partners and landowners, performing field work, etc. After completion of the project, what type of follow-up will occur? For example, please address how education materials will continue to be distributed. **B)** Explain the participant post treatment management of project. Details of types of management that will be conducted on treated acres after completion of project (contract). **C)** Is there any type of system planned to map treatment locations, monitor and evaluate effectiveness of project proposal and prescribe any necessary follow-up. **D)** Annual reports will be due to Jodi Hastings, Conservationist Programs by November 1st of project year for the all of the project timeline. Identify who will be responsible for this report.

9. Management of Adjacent Lands: Since EQIP funds are only available to eligible agriculture producers; will adjacent public lands be treated or enrolled in other management programs? Are neighboring jurisdictions concerned and actively managing/searching for new management methods targeted by the proposal? Has the proposed group project completed a planning process that will positively impact the management in the area?

10. Landowner Cooperation: How many landowners do you anticipate will be involved in the project? Is there some form of commitment that participating landowners will continue to

implement better management in a coordinated and effective fashion once funds have been exhausted? The proposal should clearly describe the desired outcome of project and the degree to which landowners have committed their participation to achieve this outcome.

11. Project Budget and Timeline: In as much detail as possible, identify the expected costs of the project. Itemize expected expenditures and be specific as to any cost-share assistance and partner contributions. Provide a detailed timeline that depicts the expected events leading to the completion of the project. Only NRCS EQIP cost shared practices will be taken into consideration for the project dollars requested.

12. Partnerships: Identify and explain partnership commitments to the project. Be very specific as to the actual commitments of each contributing partner (i.e., hard cash, in-kind, leadership roles, etc). Is the commitment in writing or verbal? Priority will be given to projects with written partner commitments.

13. Payment Schedule--The 2011 General EQIP payment schedule which is applicable to the project area will be utilized for the Colorado Partnership Program. Regular program payment rates will apply.

A primary intent of the Colorado Partnership Program is to leverage other non federal resources along with NRCS program resources to achieve project objective. The partner is not required to provide financial or technical resources toward the project, however, proposals that include or offer non-federal resources will be given a high priority through the evaluation process.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek and provide matching cash and in-kind resources. This funding opportunity seeks to leverage additional public and private resources toward local management objectives. Matching resources may include direct expenditure of applicant funds for necessary project costs, including contracted professional services, and/or in-kind staff support and services necessary to complete project tasks.

Contacts: Jodi Hastings, NRCS Conservationist, Programs 720-544-2821
Local NRCS District Conservationists
Conservation Districts: <http://www.ag.state.co.us/CCDD/>

Additional information can be found at <http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov>.

Once all proposals are prioritized by the selection committee, each will be reviewed and scored by the committee using the following competitive ranking process sheet. Each of the items found on the attached ranking form will be reviewed to determine high priority applications. This will allow the reviewer to assess the quality of the proposal and generate an overall project score. The overall project scores of the proposals will be compared to determine funding allocation. Proposals with highest total score will be considered for funding first.