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News Release

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USDA Conservation Programs for 2016 Now Available in Ohio

COLUMBUS, Jan. 19, 2016 — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) now has 2016 Federal conservation program funds available for Ohio farmers and forestland owners.

Farmers and forestland owners may apply for funding under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) at any time throughout the year, but application selections for funding are made at specific times. The first 2016 application deadline is February 19.

EQIP provides financial assistance for conservation management and structures (practices) and technical assistance to develop a conservation plan. The conservation plan and practices help agricultural producers and forestland owners improve the natural resources on their property. These practices also benefit the public by improving water quality, reducing soil erosion, and improving soil health, wildlife habitat, and conserving energy.

Landowners should make an appointment with their local NRCS office as soon as possible to begin the conservation planning process. USDA Service Center locations are listed online at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture. General program information is available on the NRCS Ohio website at www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov.

Eligible producers who sign up for EQIP may receive a payment based on the statewide average cost for installing planned conservation practices. Socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers are eligible for a higher payment rate. Veteran farmers who are also new or beginning farmers receive the higher payment rate.

Applications for EQIP submitted by entities, such as farmers applying as a corporation, must register with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR), a process that can take up to 3 weeks. Information about CCR requirements, including obtaining a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number, is posted on the NRCS website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill.

Dedicated EQIP funds are available for conservation practices targeting On-Farm Energy, Organic Systems, High Tunnel Systems, Honeybee and other wildlife habitat, as well as several landscape-based initiatives, including:

- Livestock EQIP – Livestock farmers statewide (includes pastured livestock)
- Cropland EQIP – Crop farmers statewide EXCEPT those farming in the Western Lake Erie Basin Watershed (future 2016 EQIP funding will be available for crop farmers in this watershed)
- Forestry EQIP – Private forestland owners statewide

- Southern Ohio Appalachian EQIP – Pasture operations in Adams, Athens, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Scioto, Vinton, and Washington Counties
- Cerulean Warbler Regional Conservation Partnership Program RCPP (EQIP) – Tree planting on reclaimed mined land in Adams, Athens, Belmont, Carroll, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Tuscarawas, Vinton, and Washington Counties.
- East Fork Watershed Nutrient Reduction RCPP (EQIP) – Crop and pasture land in portions of Brown, Clermont, Clinton, and Highland Counties
- Promoting Best Management Practices for Phosphorus RCPP (EQIP) – Crop land in portions of Delaware, Knox, Licking, and Morrow Counties
- Upper Paint Creek Mississippi River Basin Initiative (EQIP) – Crop, forest, livestock, and pasture operations in Clark, Clinton, Fayette, Greene, and Madison Counties.

Additional EQIP funding will be available in 2016 for other landscape-based initiatives and priority natural resource issues. NRCS will post announcements of these future 2016 EQIP application ranking deadline dates on the Ohio NRCS website at <http://www.oh.nrcs.usda.gov>.

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