



# News Release

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*"Helping People Help the Land"*

## **Historic On-Farm Conservation Funding Assistance Available for Producers**

*More than \$100 million is available for conservation practices on farms, ranches, and private non-industrial forestland*

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California announces Fiscal Year 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025) federal assistance opportunities for agricultural producers, including through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP). While NRCS accepts applications for these programs year-round, interested applicants should apply no later than **November 15, 2024**, for the first application cutoff period.

"We are excited to support California's producers with an historic investment in on-farm conservation this Fiscal Year," said NRCS California State Conservationist Carlos Suarez. "With the addition of the Inflation Reduction Act, we will be investing approximately 50 percent more federal funding to help producers address their unique resources concerns and help them achieve their stewardship goals."

Through EQIP and the Inflation Reduction Act, more than \$100 million is available for conservation practices and initiatives, including but not restricted to,

- National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI) to assist farmers in replacing outdated engines with new and cleaner-burning technology.
- Activities that support wildlife habitat creation and enhancement on farms and ranches.
- NRCS and Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart partner projects to help improve water infrastructure, delivery, and application on farms.
- National Water Quality Initiative for targeted conservation actions to improve water quality.
- Joint Chief's Landscape Restoration Partnership to collaborate with agricultural producers, forest landowners, tribes and public land managers to mitigate wildfire risk, improve water quality, and restore forest ecosystems

Application cutoff periods allow NRCS to screen and rank applications for those with the highest conservation benefits across California's landscapes, including cropland, ranchlands, and private non-industrial forestlands. Additional signups may be announced at later dates.

EQIP provides financial assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits. These include improved water and air quality, improved irrigation efficiency, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, forest restoration, organic and creating or enhancing wildlife habitat.

### **Applying for Assistance**

Applicants seeking financial assistance are required to meet Farm Bill Program eligibility in conjunction with the Farm Service Agency, which includes meeting the Highly Erodible Land

and Wetland Compliance requirements and the Adjusted Gross Income limits.

NRCS California will be utilizing ACT NOW to process conservation applications in selected ranking pools to deliver conservation faster. ACT NOW allows NRCS to immediately approve and obligate a ranked application. This means no longer having to wait for all applications to be reviewed and preapproved. Applications selected through ACT NOW will be batched and processed in the order received.

NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round. State Technical Committees, composed of producers and partners, work with NRCS to set state-specific, ranking dates to evaluate applications for funding. These dates account for producer needs, staff workload, and to ensure potential participants have ample opportunity to apply. To find out more about our application process or to begin an application, please contact your local NRCS Service Center by visiting [here](#).

### **Technical Assistance**

NRCS offers conservation technical assistance at no cost to give producers personalized advice and information, based on the latest science and research, to help them make informed decisions. If a producer chooses to take the next step towards improving their operations, NRCS staff can work with them to develop a free, personalized conservation plan, with conservation practices that can help them reach their agricultural production and conservation goals.

The voluntary conservation plan defines and explains existing resources in a simple, easy to understand manner. Typically, the plan will include land use maps, soils information, inventory of resources, engineering notes, and other supporting information. One benefit to landowners who work with an NRCS professional conservationist to develop a plan is an increased potential for participating in financial assistance programs and is a good first step in the overall process.

### **Historically Underserved Producer Benefits**

Special provisions are also available for [historically underserved producers](#). For EQIP, historically underserved producers are eligible for advance payments to help offset costs related to purchasing materials or contracting services up front. In addition, historically underserved producers can receive higher EQIP payment rates (up to 90% of average cost). NRCS sets aside EQIP funds for historically underserved producers.

NRCS has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water, and other natural resources since 1935.

For additional information about EQIP, visit the California NRCS [website](#).

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