

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program

2010 New Jersey FACT SHEET


United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources
Conservation Service
October 2009

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation program under the 2008 Farm Bill available only in approved watersheds across the country. In NJ, a partnership between the North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D), the NJ Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) and NRCS was approved in 2009 to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural lands in the Raritan River basin to protect water quality.

NRCS and RC&D professionals work with producers to develop a conservation plan for their operation, design conservation practices, and provide guidance to help implement the plan.

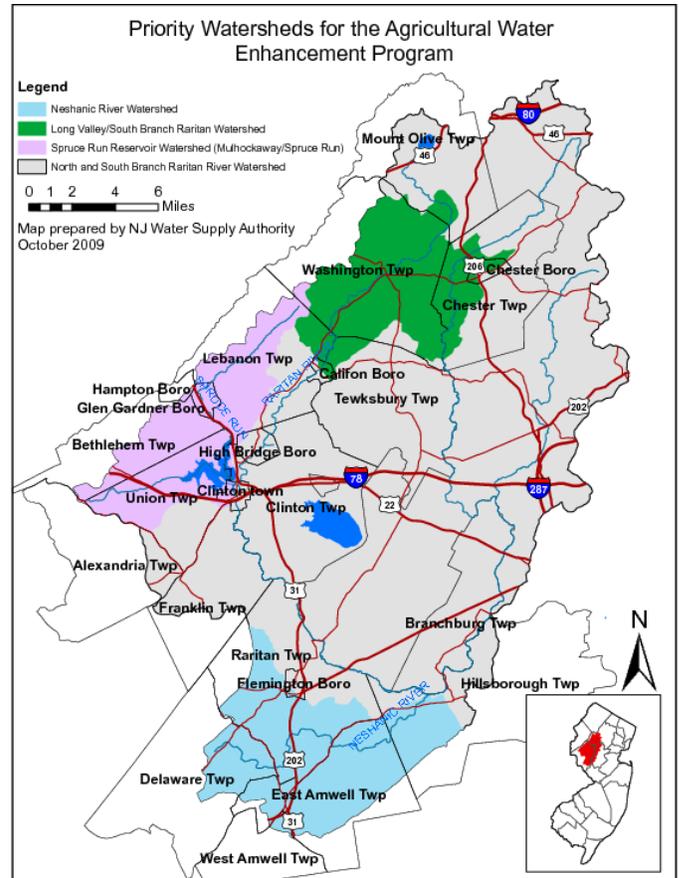
The NJ Water Supply Authority may provide additional financial assistance for certain practices and projects, to further reduce the cost to participants.

Who is Eligible?

Applicants must have an interest in an agricultural operation that is predominantly located within one of three designated sub-watersheds of the Raritan River basin; the Spruce Run/Mulhockaway Creek, Neshanic River, or South Branch/Long Valley.

Applicants must be compliant with the conservation provisions of the 2008 farm bill with current crop and producer records on file with USDA's Farm Service Agency. They must own or control the land, and agree to implement conservation practices according to the contract schedule.

Land is not eligible for EQIP if it is currently enrolled in another USDA Farm Bill conservation program such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP). Land is also ineligible if it is used for mitigation purposes, or if it is publically owned, unless the publically owned land is part on an eligible landowners operation and is not the only land offered for enrollment in EQIP.



What Practices Receive Funding?

The Raritan River AWEP project was approved as a water quality project. Eligible conservation practices are those that will have a positive impact on the quality of water leaving the farm through runoff or infiltration into groundwater. The specific list of practices is updated annually, and available at <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep>, or at the local NRCS or RC&D office.

The same list will display which of these practices is eligible for additional funding from NJWSA. A separate contract must be entered into with NJWSA to receive the supplemental funding.

For More Information or to Sign Up, Contact Your Local USDA Service Center:

Hunterdon and Somerset counties
Frenchtown Service Center (687 Pittstown Rd Suite 2)
Telephone: (908) 782-4614

Morris County
Hackettstown Service Center (Bldg #1, 101 Bilby Road)
Telephone: (908) 852-2576



Reduced tillage protects the soil surface from erosion, and reduces loss of nutrients and pesticides to groundwater.

Applications for federal AWEPP contracts are accepted at any time. A contract offer is developed with NRCS and approved by the applicant based on the conservation plan for the farm. Ranking points are awarded under four categories, with National, State and Local priority issues and a practice cost-efficiency calculation each contributing 25% of the total score.

Applications will be ranked and contracts approved each month starting in November, until the available funds for the federal fiscal year are exhausted.

What is the Contract Period?

Federal AWEPP contracts have a minimum term that ends one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practice and a maximum term of ten years. Contracts provide pre-determined program payments to the producer for the implementation of the planned practices according to a schedule developed with the producer.

The schedule lists the conservation practice extent (amount), date to be installed, and payment. The practices must meet NRCS technical standards. Any deviation from the contract schedule is considered a contract violation unless approved in advance.

What are the Payment Rates and Terms?

AWEPP contract holders receive federal payments based on rates of between 45 and 75% of the typical cost of implementing the practice, as determined by the State Technical Committee. If the applicant is a beginning farmer, socially disadvantaged or limited resource producer, the rates are 25% higher, up to a maximum of 90%. Payments are made after conservation practices are implemented to the standards agreed to in advance.

Payment for grazing and animal waste control practices will be based on the livestock that have been housed or grazed on land under the operator's control for at least 12 of the previous 36 months, with an allowance for normal variations in animal numbers. The contract holder may increase the size or extent of a contracted practice at their own expense. Waivers can be requested in writing to the State Conservationist.

Supplemental payments may be available from NJWSA for certain practices. Information on payment rates and contract terms for these supplemental contracts is available from the RC&D or NJWSA offices.



Grassed Waterways reduce sediment movement off the farm.



No-till soybeans

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