

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGENCY: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Commodity Credit Corporation

DIVISION: New Jersey

**ACTION: NOTICE**

New Jersey Conservation Innovation Grants Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Announcement for Program Funding

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

**SUMMARY:** The New Jersey office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NJ-NRCS) is announcing availability of state level Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in New Jersey. Applications are accepted from all 50 States, Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) for projects located in New Jersey. NJ-NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in FY 2010 will be approximately \$232,000. Applications are requested from eligible governmental or non-governmental organizations or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between 1 and 3 years in duration.

Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. This notice identifies the objectives for CIG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects, and provides the instructions needed to apply to CIG.

**DATES:** Proposals must be received at the NJ-NRCS State Office by 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST), on **June 4, 2010**.

**ADDRESS:** The address for hand-delivered, express mail, overnight courier service or proposals sent via the United States Postal Service is: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Innovation Grants Program, 220 Davidson Ave, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Somerset NJ 08873. The contact phone number for hand-delivered proposals is: (732) 537-6042.

To submit your application electronically, visit [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov)-Apply for Grants and follow the instructions.

For more information contact:

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## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

### I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

#### A. Legislative Authority

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) [16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8] under section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985, as added by section 2509 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), who is Vice President of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). The Chief delegated authority for state level CIG to the State Conservationists. EQIP is funded and administered by NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

#### B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies, while leveraging the Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) into NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides, and references or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Projects intended to formulate hypotheses do not qualify.

Conservation approaches or technologies proposed for projects should have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success. Projects should promote sharing of knowledge, skills, and technologies among communities, governments, and other institutions to ensure that scientific and technological developments are accessible to a wider range of users. CIG projects target innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

NJ-NRCS will accept proposals for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed 3 years, submitted to NJ-NRCS from eligible entities including federally recognized Indian tribes, State and local units of government, and non-governmental organizations and individuals. Proposals are accepted from all 50 States, the Caribbean Area (Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands), and the Pacific Islands Area (Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), however the project area must be wholly within the state of New Jersey.

Complete applications received by applicable deadline will be evaluated by a technical peer review panel based on the Criteria for Application Evaluation identified in the application instructions in section VI.A.

Applications with technically-based recommendations from the peer review groups will be forwarded to the State Conservationist who will make the final selections.

#### C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must be environmentally soundness with goals of environmental protection and natural resource enhancement, and encompass the development, field testing, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of:

- Conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; and
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity should:

- Use a proven technology or a technology that has been studied sufficiently to indicate a high probability for success;
- Demonstrate and verify environmental (soil, water, air, plants, energy use, and animal) effectiveness, utility, and affordability of conservation technology in the field;
- Adapt conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption;
- Introduce conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector; or
- Adapt conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance.

#### **D. State Funding Categories**

Proposals must identify the most appropriate category for the proposal and demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address one of the sub-categories listed below.

##### **1. *Ecosystems Markets***

The objective of this category is to advance the development of markets for ecosystem services and demonstrate their potential to provide new conservation incentives and improvements.

- Design and demonstrate active ecosystem markets that result in real water quality and biodiversity trades;
- Develop models and monitoring systems to analyze economic and environmental effects of ecosystem markets;
- Design and implement multi-credit ecosystem service trades or demonstrate stacking/bundling ecosystem services;
- Design conservation easements that incorporate multiple ecosystem markets.

##### **2. *Adapting Management for Improved Conservation Effects***

- Develop innovative technologies to reduce transformation and transport of mercuric compounds (methyl mercury), nitrogen, and other potential contaminants from natural and constructed wetlands; and

##### **3. *Preservation and Enhancement of Wildlife Habitat***

- Develop planning and decision aids to assess and maximize wildlife habitat value on land used to grow bio-fuel crops, including metrics that quantify units of potential habitat provided; and
- Examine managed grazing as a habitat management tool, including metrics that quantify units of potential habitat provided.

##### **4. *Energy***

The objective of this category is to implement new technologies and approaches to conserve energy and produce renewal energy while sustaining agricultural productivity.

- Modify or develop innovative tools to estimate the energy and fossil fuel implications of cropland agronomic practices;
- Provide life cycle analyses for current conservation practices to assess the energy and fossil fuel implications associated with the use of the practice including analyzing the fossil fuel embedded in materials and agrochemicals;
- Implement systems to achieve greater use of energy audits that address cropland energy use in addition to buildings and equipment;

- Implement innovative on-farm energy conservation technologies;
- Design and demonstrate on-farm applications of renewable energy production technologies to displace fossil fuel energy;
- Demonstrate sustainable biomass production, harvest, and handling technologies; and
- Demonstrate reduced reactive nitrogen and methane emissions from animal agriculture with the additional benefits of producing energy or other marketable by-products.

#### **5. Productivity and Environmental Health of Pastureland**

- Develop improved assessment tools for comparing “Pastureland Condition Scores” to a reference condition for particular soil and climatic conditions; and
- Implement new or novel pasture management systems that can benefit water or air quality, greenhouse gases (GHGs), or pathogen loading and runoff, and quantify measurable units of improvement gained through the use of these systems.

#### **6. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

The objective of this category is to demonstrate research results that address climate change adaptation and mitigation for agriculture. Proposals should apply established basic research results to field scale situations to demonstrate the capabilities of agricultural conservation systems to reduce GHG emissions and increase soil and vegetation carbon sequestration, and to maintain high levels of food and fiber production in the face of changing temperature and precipitation regimes.

- Adopt carbon sequestration practices in a wide variety of cropping systems and assess how these practices impact other ecosystem services, such as water quality and biodiversity, as well as farm profitability;
- Demonstrate effective nutrient management practices or use of organic nitrogen sources to control nitrous oxide emissions;
- Use new nitrogen fertilizer forms to reduce nitrous oxide emissions from soils;
- Design and adopt emerging soil and plant management systems to maintain productivity with a changing climate;
- Manage methane emissions through improved manure storage and utilization;
- Develop conservation planning approaches that integrate agronomic knowledge with climate and weather information in order to assist farmers with adapting to changing climate patterns;
- Develop tools to facilitate efficient processing of soil moisture sensor data;
- Develop new user-friendly technology to quickly measure CO<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O gases in soils;
- Develop new tools for measuring soil carbon where specialty crops are grown and on organic farms; and
- Develop efficient technologies for recycling nitrogen and/or bio-energy creating biochar soil amendments in order to enhance soil quality and carbon sequestration and/or bio-energy production.

#### **7. Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture**

- Examine methods and life cycle analysis for encouraging niche agricultural markets that focus on providing value-added agricultural products produced in an environmentally sustainable way.

#### **8. Soil Quality**

- Compare new technologies and methods (carbon fractions, enzymes, and other) for early prediction of soil quality degradation;

- Demonstrate conservation technologies to reduce soil erosion and minimize soil emissions of carbon in organic soils;
- Demonstrate technologies to restore and enhance the function and ecosystem services of degraded soils;
- Develop and implement a decision support system to aid land management decisions that enhance soil quality and other related ecosystem services;
- Evaluate and demonstrate technologies to restore and enhance ecosystem services of subaqueous soils, and;
- Apply continuous no-till crop production to enhance soil resources and other ecosystem services while maintaining crop productivity.

### **9. Priority Landscapes**

- Develop and evaluate technologies to measure emissions of nitrous oxide emissions from sensitive soils and landscapes;
- Implement new and innovative technologies to restore and enhance at risk forest ecosystems, e.g., pine barrens, highlands
- Implement conservation practices and measure effects on ecosystem services at watershed landscape scales.

### **10. Nutrient Management**

- Adopt new feedstuffs or additives for manure nutrient reduction to reduce water and air quality problems, GHGs, or pathogen loading and runoff;
- Demonstrate active methods which improve the capture of nitrogen in manure management systems and provide the opportunity to recycle the manure nitrogen in lieu of synthetic fertilizers;
- Design and test “farmer-friendly” recordkeeping software for complex systems, including quantification of nutrients applied by crop and field, manure form, dates, irrigation data, and runoff water quality; and
- Develop new strategies to fully implement existing nutrient management conservation.

### **11. Air Quality and Atmospheric Resource**

- Evaluate, demonstrate, and document air quality benefits/impacts of existing NRCS practice standards;
- Develop and demonstrate new practice standards for new technologies to address agricultural air emissions;
- Develop and document net GHG benefits and calculation methodologies for existing NRCS practice standards;
- Demonstrate innovative approaches to decrease atmospheric concentrations of GHG by increasing carbon sequestration (e.g. increasing soil carbon);
- Implement the use of improved microorganisms for modification of GHG production and document the method and results;
- Identify, evaluate, demonstrate, and quantify air quality improvement techniques, practices, and activities compatible with agriculture production and the management and handling of agriculture waste and by-products; and
- Demonstrate reduced reactive nitrogen emissions from monoculture agriculture.

### **12. Program Outreach and Conservation Technology Transfer to Targeted Groups**

- Transfer of demonstrated conservation technologies and practices through a producer handbook consistent with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and adapted

to specific producer groups (i.e., organic farming, specialty crops, livestock, row crops, small grains, etc.);

- Demonstrate innovative technology that can easily and inexpensively be adopted by small-scale producers to address concerns of the farmers, producers, or landowners;
- Demonstrate innovative technologies that lead to significant management efficiencies in farm resource management from a systems perspective, including technologies that lead to demonstrated benefits to multiple ecosystem services;
- Examine resource conditions and land capabilities by social groups of the traditionally underserved groups and communities; and
- Work with universities and other institutions to develop technical training for Beginning Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers, and Indian tribes or entities servicing Beginning, Limited Resource, Socially Disadvantaged Farmers.

### **13. Sustainable and Organic Agriculture**

The objective of this category is to focus on sustainable and organic agriculture including field data or tools for conservation planning and evaluation of NRCS conservation practice standards for integration of sustainable and organic agricultural productions systems.

#### **A. Technology Needs**

- Carbon Sequestration – determine how carbon can be sequestered using various organic rotations and tillage systems typical for organic operations;
- Rotations for pest control – determine which crops help suppress specific pests and the sequencing of the crops to minimize pests (weeds, insects, diseases);
- Erosion Control – evaluate the predicted wind and water erosion for organic crop rotations and tillage systems and slopes greater than 1-2 percent slopes;
- Nutrient Cycling – determine the proper crops and the sequence of the crops to maximize the nutrient cycling of crop nutrients;
- Organic approved nutrients (timing, rates, sources, and methods) – determine the proper source, rate, timing, and method(s) of application for organically approved nutrient amendments;
- Harvesting time and techniques for commodity quality and pest control – determine harvesting times and techniques that may minimize pest damage for the planned commodity;
- Forage Suitability Group Description (pasture and hay land) – assess the suitability of forages for a given soil/climate under organic management conditions;
- Beneficial Insect Habitat for Pest Control – determine the amount (acres) of habitat required to provide adequate pest control, match plant species to attract desirable beneficial insect species, and manage habitat to provide pest control during the cropping season; and
- Continuous cover crops – determine how cover crops can be used on a continuous basis to provide erosion control, crop nutrients, and pest control for the next crop in rotation and other ecosystem services.

#### **B. Field Data for Conservation Planning**

- Develop a guidance document for the various organically approved soil and crop amendments to address nutrients and pest management for organic operations; and
- Develop a guidance document for incorporating beneficial insect and pollinator habitat into the farm landscape to implement biological pest management strategies, including outcome metrics that describe expected habitat benefits.

### **C. Conservation Planning Needs**

- Develop guidance document on developing NRCS conservation plans to help organic producers meet the Organic System Plan conservation components for crop and livestock production;
- Analyze requirements to develop a Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition Plan to identify obstacles and limitation that discourage its use by farmers and provide recommendation to overcome obstacles and limitations;
- Expand the investigation of how conservation practices can be scaled to increase the adoption by small farms; and
- Undertake an assessment of applicable conservation practices on organic production.

### **D. Conservation practice standard modification**

- Evaluate the conservation practices that deal with establishing permanent vegetation (herbaceous and forest) to address approved seed and planting stock sources for organic operations; and
- Evaluate conservation practice standards to ensure national organic program guidelines are addressed.

## **14. Specialty Crops**

The objective of this category is to focus on conservation technology specific to specialty production systems, field data or tools for conservation planning, and evaluation of NRCS conservation practice standards for integration into specialty crops production systems.

### **A. Technology Needs**

- Seasonal High Tunnels – demonstrate conservation systems for specialty crops using seasonal tunnels involving crop rotations, cover crops, conservation tillage, nutrient management, pest management, and irrigation systems;
- Carbon Sequestration – determine how carbon can be sequestered using various organic rotations and tillage systems typical for organic operations;
- Develop and test new tools for measuring soil carbon where specialty crops are grown and on organic farms;
- Rotations for pest control – determine which crops help suppress specific pests and the sequencing of the crops to minimize pests (weeds, insects, diseases) in specialty crop systems;
- Erosion Control – demonstrate conservation systems to include crop rotations, cover crops, organic mulches, conservation tillage, etc. in lieu of plastic culture;
- Nutrient Cycling – determine the proper crops and the sequence of the crops to maximize the nutrient cycling in specialty crop production systems;
- Harvesting time and techniques for commodities quality and pest control – determine harvesting times and techniques that may minimize pest damage for the planned commodity;
- Beneficial Insect Habitat for Pest Control – determine the amount (acres) of habitat required to provide adequate pest control, match plant species to attract desirable beneficial insect species, and manage habitat to provide pest during the cropping season;
- Cover Crops – determine how cover crops can be used for the production of specialty crops to include orchards and vineyards to provide erosion control, recycle crop nutrients, improve soil quality and pest control for the next crop in rotation, and other ecosystem services; and

- Develop a guidance document and evaluate criteria to determine when an Integrated Pest Management Plan has been developed and implemented that meets NRCS Pest Management Standard 595.

**B. Field Data for Conservation Planning**

- Develop a guidance document for incorporating beneficial insect and pollinator habitat into the farm landscape to implement biological pest management strategies.

**15. Pollinator Habitat**

The objective of this category is to address present technology, data, management, planning, and implementation needs in regard to the enhancement of pollinator habitat.

**A. Technology Needs**

- Document the effectiveness and economy of alternate pest control methods in agricultural crops to protect pollinators and their habitats;
- Develop guidelines and management strategies for establishing and maintaining the foraging and nesting needs for specific pollinators and other beneficial insects; and
- Develop guidelines and management strategies for quality foraging and “resting” areas for the European honey bee during or after their being transported to provide pollination services.

**B. Field Data for Conservation Planning**

- Establish demonstration plantings of NRCS-recommended pollinator habitat seed/plant mixes to determine if these mixes are providing the expected pollinator habitat while also performing the intended conservation function;
- Document regional time of bloom of native plants and non-invasive, non-native plants in addition to monitoring the specific pollinators foraging upon these plants;
- Document the benefits to other wildlife species of improving pollinator habitat;
- Demonstrate effective methods of establishing and maintaining the most beneficial pollinator-friendly plant materials for specific regions of New Jersey; and
- Develop regional, crop-specific guidance specifying the vegetative species, landforms, and necessary acreage to support appropriate populations of managed and wild pollinators per unit area (e.g. acres) of pollinated crops (i.e., describe the components of the landscape).

**C. Conservation Practice Standards Modifications**

- Evaluate the following NRCS conservation practice standards using a large diversity of flowering plants in order to document if the revised practice standards do benefit pollinators while also meeting the main purpose of the conservation practice:
  - 332-Contour Buffer Strips
  - 342-Critical Area Planting
  - 393-Filter Strip
  - 412-Grassed Waterways
  - 528-Prescribed Grazing
  - 580-Streambank and Shoreline Protection

**D. Conservation Planning Needs**

- Develop region-specific “recipes” of pollinator-friendly plant species to fulfill specific pollinator needs in both natural and agricultural situations;

- Develop strategies to integrate pollinator habitat management into the agricultural working lands matrix to promote holistic, ecosystem-based conservation plans that support the full suite of ecosystem services;
- Develop crop/orchard-specific plans that address the nesting and foraging needs of crop/orchard-specific pollinators; and
- Develop crop/orchard-specific metrics that define and establish measurable units of pollinator habitat that can be used to develop pollinator trading/banking programs.

## II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

For FY 2010, NJ-NRCS will have approximately \$232,000 available for state level CIG. Individual grants are not to exceed \$75,000.

The intent of the State Component is to target CIG funds to individual producers and smaller organizations that may possess promising innovations, but may not compete well on the larger scale of the national grants competition.

## III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a federally recognized Indian tribe, State or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, or individual.

### A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive CIG grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. The recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions. In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match. The remainder of the match must be provided in cash.

Matching funds must be available at time of application. Additional information about matching funds can be found at the following link: [OMB Circular A-110](#).

### B. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985, 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, imposes a \$300,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between fiscal years 2008 and 2012. The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

- CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements. These grant agreements are not EQIP contracts; thus, CIG awards in and of themselves are not limited by the payment limitation.
- Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to the NRCS CIG program manager in the semi-annual report. Direct or indirect payments cannot be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds, or is contracted to receive funds through any of the USDA programs (EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Security

Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, etc.) since this would be considered a duplicate payment.

### **C. Project Eligibility**

To be eligible for CIG, projects must involve landowners who meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 USC 3839aa-1. Further, all agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must also meet the EQIP eligibility requirements. Additional information regarding EQIP eligibility requirements can be found at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/>. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract.

A person or legal entity will not be eligible to receive any benefit during a crop, fiscal, or program year, as appropriate, if the average adjusted gross non-farm income of the person or legal entity exceeds \$1,000,000, unless not less than 66.66 percent of the average adjusted gross income of the person or legal entity is average adjusted gross farm income.

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance and Wetland Compliance provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach (applicants should reference the NJ's EQIP Eligible Practices List found at [http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/documents/NJ\\_2010\\_Practice\\_Catalog.pdf](http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/documents/NJ_2010_Practice_Catalog.pdf) ).

### **D. Technical Assistance**

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, Administrative Contact, and Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award.

## **IV. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION**

### **A. How to Obtain Proposals Materials**

The announcement for CIG funding opportunity can be found on the following Web site: [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>. All Office of Management and Budget standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following Web site: [Grants.gov-Forms](http://www.grants.gov-Forms). An application checklist is available on the CIG Web site: <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/index.html>.

### **B. Application Content and Format**

Applications are required to contain the content, format, and information set forth below in order to receive consideration for funding. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. If submitting proposals for more than one project, submit a separate document for each project.

Applicants must submit one original signed and five copies of the application as follows:

- All non-form based submissions should be prepared in a font no smaller than 12-point, single-spaced, with one-inch margins.
- Material exceeding stated page limits will not be considered.

- Applications that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding.
1. **Proposal Cover Sheet:** Applicants must use Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance as the cover sheet for each project application. Standard Form 424 can be downloaded from [Grants.gov-Forms](http://Grants.gov-Forms) or the [NJ CIG web site](#).
  2. **Project Summary:** Applicants must submit the information below (limited to 3 pages in length). An optional template titled Project Summary Sheet is available on the [NJ CIG web site](#).
    - a. Project Title
    - b. Applicant determined CIG funding category (refer to Section 1 D)
    - c. Project start and end dates
    - d. Project director name, contact information (including email)
    - e. Names and affiliations of project collaborators
    - f. Project purpose – what is to be achieved
    - g. Project scope/area – geographic area covered by the project
    - h. Project deliverables/products – 6-12 specific and measurable actions, results, activities, etc. supported by the budget request. See IV F for the minimum required deliverables.
    - i. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
  3. **Project Location Map:** Applicants must submit a map indicating the location of the proposed project (limited to 1 page in length).
  4. **Project Description:** The description must include the following information and is limited to 10 pages in length. Pages in excess of the 10-page limit will be discarded and not evaluated. Bibliography, resumes, and references will be included in the page count for the project page limit.
    - a. **Project narrative:** The project narrative should provide a clear description of the work to be undertaken and how it will be accomplished. It must be formatted to address each of the merit review criteria listed in Part VI.A and provide sufficient information for the reviewers to evaluate the application in accordance with these merit review criteria.
    - b. **Project background:** Describe the history of, and need for, the proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success of the project.
    - c. **Project objectives:** Be specific using qualitative and quantitative measures to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how the project is innovative.
    - d. **Project methods:** Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes and timeline that will be used to implement the project.
    - e. **Location and size of project or project area:** Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
    - f. **Producer participation:** Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP).

- g. **Project management:** Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and non-government entities. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
- h. **Benefits or results expected and transferability:** Identify project beneficiaries, i.e., agricultural producers by type, region, or sector; rural communities; and municipalities. Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities. Explain how the results will be measured and the impact to each beneficiary group. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.
- i. **Project evaluation:** Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report (grant recipients will be required to provide a semi-annual report of progress, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement).
- j. **Project action plan and timeline:** Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion. The table should reflect the project deliverables/products included in the summary document, as well as the results expected and evaluation steps.
- k. **Environmental Information and Assessment of Environmental Impacts:** Describe and assess the anticipated or potential environmental effects and social impacts of the proposed project. One line or short descriptions of environmental impacts are not acceptable. The length of the analysis should be commensurate with the complexity of the proposed project and the direct, indirect (later in time), or cumulative environmental impacts. Where possible, information on environmental impacts should be quantified, such as number of acres of wetlands impacted, amount of carbon sequestration estimated, etc.

Environmental resources include soil, water, air, plants, and animals, as well as other specific resources protected by law, Executive Order, and agency policy. Resources are outlined in the NRCS Environmental Evaluation Worksheet, form NRCS-CPA-52, available at: [NRCS-CPA-52](#). The CPA-52 form can be used as a guide for the scope of environmental information required. Applicants may consult with the NJ-NRCS Environmental Liaison [Gregory Westfall](#) concerning the scope of what should be addressed in this section of the application.

*Note: Please be aware that applications for projects with potentially adverse impacts may need to be modified in order to achieve acceptable and beneficial levels of environmental impact. If projects cannot be modified, then there is a potential during the screening process that the application may not be selected.*

- 5. **Budget Information:** Applicants must prepare a Standard Form (SF) 424-A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs to document budget needs. The SF-424A is available at: [Grants.gov-Forms](#) or can be obtained from the NJ-NRCS State office. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, applicable statutes, regulations, Federal cost principles, and NRCS program guidelines and can be justified, as

necessary, for the successful conduct of the proposed project. Applicants must also include a budget narrative to justify their requests (see number 6 below). If claiming indirect costs, the applicant must provide an indirect cost rate agreement or indirect cost rate proposal as justification for the rate of indirect costs being claimed. Indirect costs is based on total Federal funds awarded and cannot exceed 15 percent. Unreimbursed indirect costs may not be used as part of the applicant match.

6. **Budget Narrative (maximum 9 pages):** In addition to the SF-424A, all applicants must provide a detailed narrative in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. All budget categories for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs by year) in the same order as the budget and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind the Budget Form (SF-424A). Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities (project action plan). Explain how budget items such as personnel, travel, equipment, etc. are essential to achieving project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel salaries. The budget narrative should also include the matching portion.
7. **Matching:** Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. A separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor, (2) the name of the applicant organization, (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made, (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation, (5) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value and type of in-kind donation, and (6) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

"In-kind" refers to non-cash contributions of goods or services made by third party individuals or organizations to support projects. Examples of in-kind include work done by unpaid volunteers and donations of supplies, facilities, or equipment. In-kind contributions must be necessary to accomplish program activities and are verifiable.

The sources and amounts of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the budget narrative.

The value of applicant contributions to the project will be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars, Cost Principles that apply to their entity for additional guidance, and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

8. **Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Applicants must include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP-eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP (if EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible). The declaration must describe and certify the level of involvement by EQIP eligible producers.
9. **Certifications:** All applications must include a signed Standard Form (SF) 424B - Assurances, Non-construction Programs. The SF-424B may be found at [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)-Forms or by contacting the NJ-NRCS State office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they are in compliance with the following from 7 CFR:
  - a. Part 3017, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)

- b. Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying
- c. Part 3021, Government wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)

10. **DUNS Number** (Entities only, not applicable for individuals): A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A *Federal Register* notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Information on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at: <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or by calling 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.

11. **Required Central Contractor Registry (CCR) Registration** (Entities only, not applicable for individuals): The CCR is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. The database is used as a central location for maintaining information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. CIG applicants, other than individuals applying under their social security number, must register with the CCR. To register, go to: <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

### **C. Funding Restrictions**

Awardees may not use unrecovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds. CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs:

- a. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project;
- b. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- c. Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project and any amendments thereto;
- d. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives;
- e. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities;
- f. Consulting services performed by a Federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee; and,
- g. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact person.

### **D. Patents and Inventions**

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR §3019.36. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 7 CFR §3019.2, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for Federal Government use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically.

## **E. Environmental Review Requirements**

The Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at CFR Part 1500-1508 and NRCS' regulation that implements NEPA at 7 CFR Part 650 require that an environmental review be prepared for actions where the agency has discretion and control. Accordingly, financial assistance under the CIG program requires compliance with these regulations. As part of the application package, applicants are required to provide appropriate information pertaining to their project so that NJ-NRCS may determine the documentation required to comply with NEPA and NRCS regulations. If the application is selected for funding, the NRCS Environmental Liaison will coordinate documentation for NEPA compliance with the applicant. The selected applicant will be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document (e.g., Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement) if required for NEPA compliance. Grant funding cannot be approved until environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met.

## **F. Deliverables**

Applications must include all of the following activities as deliverables:

1. Semi-annual reports
2. Supplemental narratives to explain and support payment requests
3. Final report
4. Performance items specific to the project that indicate progress  
A thorough list and explanation of measurable performance items specific to the project will be used in the technical evaluation (refer to "CIG Technical Evaluation Criteria")
5. New technology and innovative approach fact sheet or other results summary document

## **G. How to Submit Proposals**

### **1. How to Submittal a Written Application**

Applicants must submit one signed original and five copies of each project application. Applications submitted by email or fax will not be considered. The address for hand-delivered proposals or proposals submitted using the United States Postal Service, express mail or overnight courier service is:

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Conservation Innovation Grants Program  
220 Davidson Avenue 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Somerset NJ 08873

### **2. How to Submit an Application Electronically**

Applicants may submit applications electronically through Grants.gov. Applications submitted through Grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete proposal described above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms and adding attachments are posted on Grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by Grants.gov and must be received by the identified closing date. NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or Web site problems related to Grants.gov submissions. Applicants should begin the Grants.gov process in advance of the submission deadline to avoid problems.

## **H. Proposal Application Due Date**

Proposals must be received by 4:00 p.m. EST on **June 4, 2010**. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in application delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed proposals via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

### **I. Acknowledgement of Submission**

Proposals received by the due date will be acknowledged with an electronic notification. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgement within 30 days of the submission, they must contact the NRCS program contact below. Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered.

CIG Program Contact: Janice Reid, Assistant State Conservationist  
220 Davidson Avenue 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Somerset NJ 08873  
Phone: (732) 537-6042  
Fax: (732) 537-6095  
Email: [janice.reid@nj.usda.gov](mailto:janice.reid@nj.usda.gov)

### **J. Proposal Review**

Proposals will be evaluated by NRCS staff under the category identified by the applicant. Each pre-proposal will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice including EQIP payment limitations. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from competition and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant.

### **K. Anticipated Notification**

Applicants from both selected and not selected proposals will be notified via mail.

## **V. APPLICATION REVIEW**

### **A. Criteria for Application Evaluation**

Peer review panels will use the following criteria to evaluate project applications:

#### **Purpose, Approach, and Goals**

- a) Design and implementation of project based on sound methodology and demonstrated technology.
- b) Promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.
- c) Project outcome is clearly measurable.
- d) Potential for successful completion.
- e) Both beneficial and adverse impacts are considered and an acceptably significant level of improvement will be achieved.

#### **Innovative Technology or Approach**

- a) Project is innovative (national, regionally, and local in nature).
- b) Project conforms to description of innovative projects or activities in proposal request announcement.

#### **Project Management**

- a) Timeline and milestones are clear and reasonable.
- b) Project staff has technical expertise needed.
- c) Budget is adequately explained and justified.
- d) Experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of other organizations, institutions and agencies.

#### **Transferability**

- a) Potential for producers and landowners to use the innovative technology or

technologies.

- b) Potential to transfer the approach or technology nationally or to a broader audience or other geographic or socio-economic areas, including limited resource, socially disadvantaged and other traditionally underserved producers and communities.
- c) Potential for NRCS to successfully use the innovative approach or methods.
- d) Project will result in the development of technical or related technology transfer materials (technical standards, technical notes, guide sheets, handbooks, software, etc.)

#### **B. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates**

CIG Awards are anticipated to be announced by July 30, 2010. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee. All agreements are expected to be awarded by September 17, 2010.

### **VI. AWARD INFORMATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

#### **A. Award Notification**

Applicants who have been selected for funding will receive a letter of official notification from the NJ-NRCS State Office. However, all selections are contingent upon successful completion of the environmental review process. Upon notification of selection, the applicant must contact the National NRCS Environmental Liaison in order to determine the scope and level of NEPA documentation required for the project. The environmental documentation prepared to meet NEPA requirements must be prepared prior to award of grant funds. The official notice will also indicate the need to work with the administrative contact to develop an agreement prior to starting work on the project. Applicants who are not selected will be notified by official letter.

#### **B. Environmental Review Requirements**

Project proponents that are selected to receive grant funding must work with the NRCS Program Contact and NRCS Environmental Liaison concerning what documentation will need to be prepared for compliance with NEPA and NRCS regulations. Selected applicants may be required to prepare and pay for the preparation of the appropriate NEPA document if an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is needed. Grant funds cannot be awarded until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met. The NJ-NRCS Environmental Liaison is Gregory Westfall; NEPA requirements can be found at: Environmental Liaison.

#### **C. Grant Agreement**

The Commodity Credit Corporation, through NJ-NRCS, will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP. The grant agreement will include:

1. Project purpose
2. Project objectives
3. Project deliverables
4. Final project plan listing cooperators in the project and identifying the grant applicant and project manager
5. Project timelines and expected project completion date
6. Project progress and budget reporting requirements
7. Award amount and budget information
8. Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement
9. Role of NRCS technical oversight in the project
10. Reporting requirements including attendance at NRCS CIG showcase or comparable NRCS event during the period of the grant

11. Information regarding changes in project plans
12. Other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States

#### **D. Reporting Requirements**

Grantees receiving an advance of more than \$25,000 in Federal funds are required to submit a SF-272 (Report of Federal Cash Transactions) and, when necessary, the continuation sheet, SF-272-A, no later than 15 days following the end of each quarter or 90 days after project completion. These reports are used to monitor cash advanced to recipients and to obtain disbursement and outlay information for each award.

Grantees must submit a Federal Financial Report (SF-425) no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. The SF-272 and SF-425 are available at: [Grants Management Forms](#).

In addition, the grantee must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS Program Contact and Technical Contact every 6 months. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report must cover work performed during the previous 6-month period, including any funded or unfunded time extensions, a comparison of actual accomplishments to project goals, and a statement of work projected to be completed in the next 6-month period.

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, an Administrative Contact, and a Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award. These individuals will have technical oversight responsibility for the project.

To satisfy the requirements of EQIP (7 CFR 1466) compliance measures, the grantee is required to submit as a component of the semi-annual progress report:

1. A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP-eligible producers or entities involved in the project.
2. The dollar amount of direct and indirect payment made to each individual producer or entity for any structural, vegetative, or management practices. Both quarterly and cumulative payment amounts must be submitted.
3. A self-certification indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment through this grant is in compliance with the EQIP Payment Limitation, AGI, HEL, and Wetlands Conservation Compliance Farm Bill provisions.

A progress report template will be provided to grantees by the Program Contact. This template is available on the NRCS CIG Web site at: [Information for Grantees](#).

The grantee must send copies of each semi-annual progress report to the NRCS contacts and comply with any requests for information from them. NRCS recommends that the grantee work closely with these subject matter experts throughout the course of the project.

Upon passage of the completion date of the project, a final report must be submitted within 90 days detailing project activities, funding received, funding expended, results, and potential for transferability of results. The final report should address completion of the project deliverables listed in the grant agreement.

**VII. AGENCY CONTACTS**

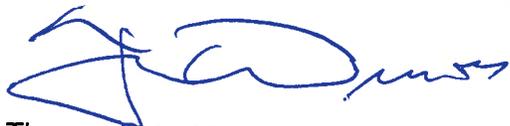
**CIG Program Contact:**

Janice Reid, Assistant State  
Conservationist  
220 Davidson Avenue 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Somerset NJ 08873  
Phone: (732) 537-6042  
Fax: (732) 537-6095  
Email: [janice.reid@nj.usda.gov](mailto:janice.reid@nj.usda.gov)

**CIG Administrative Contact:**

Carol Parker, State Administrative  
Officer  
220 Davidson Avenue 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Somerset NJ 08873  
Phone: (732) 537-6081  
Fax: (732) 537-6096  
Email: [carol.parker@nj.usda.gov](mailto:carol.parker@nj.usda.gov)

Signed this 27 day of April, 2010 in Somerset, NJ



Thomas Drewes  
New Jersey State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Attachment

## VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

**Important: Applications Missing Any of These Required Items Will Not Be Considered**

### NJ-NRCS CONSERVATION INNOVATION GRANTS FISCAL YEAR 2010 PROPOSAL PACKAGE CHECK LIST

- 1. Proposal Cover Sheet:** Submit Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance
- 2. Project Summary:** Submit a brief description including the information below (limited to 3 pages in length). An optional template titled Project Summary Sheet is available on the NRCS CIG Web site at: <http://www.nj.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ciq/index.html>.
  - a. Project Title
  - b. Applicant determined CIG funding category
  - c. Project Start and End Dates
  - d. Project Director name, contact information (including e-mail)
  - e. Names and Affiliations of Project Collaborators
  - f. Project Purpose
  - g. Project Scope/Area
  - h. Project Deliverables/Products
  - i. Declaration of EQIP eligible producer involvement
- 3. Project Location Map:** Submit a map indicating the location of the proposed project (limited to 1 page in length).
- 4. Project Description:** : (10 pages maximum, single-spaced, 12 point font)
  - a. Project narrative
  - b. Project background
  - c. Project objectives
  - d. Project methods
  - e. Location and size of project area (include a map if possible)
  - f. Producer participation
  - g. Project management
  - h. Benefits or results expected and transferability
  - i. Project evaluation
  - j. Project action plan and timeline
  - k. Environmental information and assessment of environmental impacts
- 5. Budget Information:** Submit Standard Form 424A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs.
- 6. Budget Narrative:** Submit a detailed budget narrative (maximum of 9 pages).
- 7. Matching Information.**
- 8. Declaration Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Eligibility:** Include a statement indicating that the proposed project will involve EQIP-eligible producers. Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP. (If EQIP eligible producers are not involved, the proposal will be considered ineligible.)

- 9. Certifications:** Complete Standard Form 424B (SF-424b) Assurances-Non-Construction Programs.
- 10. DUNS Number:** For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.
- 11. CCR Registration:** To register, visit <http://www.ccr.gov>. Allow a minimum of 5 days to complete the CCR registration.

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