

United States Department of Agriculture



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
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APR 20 2012

SUBJECT: EQIP Funds Supporting Greenhouse Gas Conservation Innovation Grant Projects

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**Background**

In fiscal year (FY) 2011, nine Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs) were awarded to entities for projects related to greenhouse gas (GHG) resource concerns. The purpose of these grants was to stimulate the development, adoption, and evaluation of innovative approaches and technologies related to GHG credit trading systems. Although Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) rule asserts no direct or indirect interest in development or management of environmental credits, program participants are free to participate in ecosystem service crediting and markets that may be derived from establishment of financially supported conservation practices.

In addition to the funding provided directly to CIG grant recipients, in FY 2011 \$10 million of EQIP financial assistance (FA) was set aside to assist producers with implementation of practices that compliment work in the GHG-CIG projects. Because the CIG projects were approved in

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August of FY 2011 there was little opportunity to work with CIG partners to identify conservation practices needed, develop program guidance, or obligate producer contracts prior to the cropping year.

During FY 2012, National Headquarters (NHQ) again held \$10 million of EQIP FA to support the GHG-CIG projects. A detailed review and summary of the GHG-CIG proposals, discussions between the Air Quality and Atmospheric Change (AQAC) team at the West National Technical Service Center (WNTSC) and GHG-CIG recipients, along with discussions with State programs and technical staff highlighted the need for additional education, outreach, and significant laying of groundwork before funds could be distributed to States. In order to ensure that adequate guidance and support is provided to States and CIG partners to support producers who may want to participate in these projects, NHQ is working to prepare for use of EQIP funds for GHG-CIG projects in FY2013 instead of FY2012.

**Preparation for FY2013**

The nine approved GHG-CIG projects target 22 States. The unique focus of each project requires that guidance be developed independently to compliment each GHG-CIG project. Multi-State projects will require collaboration between States. Some of the projects did not identify need for supporting EQIP funding for producers to implement practices; therefore, not all States targeted in the GHG-CIGs will receive additional EQIP funding.

Each GHG-CIG project agreement identifies a technical contact, administrative contact, and programmatic contact. The first step to successfully prepare for FY2013 is to establish communication between the States and the assigned technical contact for the grant. The success of this effort will also require the participation of a representative from the State Programs and Technology staff. Adam Chambers and Greg Johnson of the NRCS AQAC Team serve as overall technical coordinators of the nine grants.

Key activities, assignments and target dates to prepare for FY 2013 include:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Target Date</b>
Initiate discussion with Science and Technology, Programs, GHG-CIG grant recipients, GHG-CIG technical contacts and NRCS State staff.	NRCS - NHQ, GHG-CIG recipients and NRCS State staff	<b>May 1, 2012</b>
Identify eligible practices and propose new interim practices standards if identified in grant	GHG-CIG recipients and States	<b>June 1, 2012</b>
Identify states and counties to target funding.	GHG-CIG recipients	<b>June 15, 2012</b>
Develop education and outreach materials with review and approval from the AQAC Team and State technical experts	GHG-CIG recipients, AQAC Team, and States	<b>July 1, 2012</b>
Review existing practices to ensure practice is supported by the identified GHG resource concerns and review proposed interim practices	NRCS – AQAC Team and States	<b>September 1, 2012</b>
Draft sample screening and ranking questions	AQAC Team, FAPD, GHG-CIG technical	<b>September 1, 2012</b>

	contacts, and States	
Finalize program decisions and draft National Bulletin in concert with participating State Bulletins	NRCS	<b>September 1, 2012</b>
Provide training to field staff on practices and program requirements for the GHG projects	NRCS & GHG-CIG recipients	<b>October 1, 2012</b>
Release National Bulletin for FY2013 Greenhouse Gas Program Guidance simultaneously with individual State Bulletins	NRCS	<b>October 1, 2012</b>

NHQ will coordinate a video teleconference with the CIG Technical Contacts, the AQAC Team, and NRCS State Program and Resources staff on April 16, 2012 to kick off the preparations for FY2013. The VTC information and agenda will be sent via email to participants.

**Contacts**

For program support, contact Mark Parson, Acting EQIP Team Leader at (202) 720-1840; email: [mark.parson@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:mark.parson@wdc.usda.gov). For assistance with CIG grants, contact Gregorio Cruz, CIG Program Manager, at 202-720-8071; email: [gregorio.cruz@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:gregorio.cruz@wdc.usda.gov). For technical questions and issues with the grants please contact Adam Chambers, AQAC Team Physical Scientist, at 503-273-2410; email: [adam.chambers@por.usda.gov](mailto:adam.chambers@por.usda.gov).



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2011 GHG-CIG Technical Contacts

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GHG CIG NRCS Technical Contacts

GHG-CIG Recipients

## 2011 GHG CIG Technical Contacts

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- **Adaptation of a Forest Carbon Protocol to Include Tribal Lands (Washington)**

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- **Agricultural Soil Carbon: Developing a Large-scale Agricultural Soil Carbon Transaction in the Palouse Region (Idaho, Oregon, Washington)**

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- **Bringing Greenhouse Gas Benefits to Market: Nutrient Management for Nitrous Oxide Reductions (Illinois, Michigan, Oklahoma)**

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- **Dairy Farm Stewardship Toolkit (Arkansas, California, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin)**

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- **Demonstrating Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions in California and Mid-south Rice Production (Arkansas, California)**

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- **Ducks Unlimited Avoided Grassland Conversion Carbon Project (North Dakota, South Dakota)**

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- **Estimating Nitrous Oxide Reductions from Nutrient Management in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (Maryland, Virginia)**

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- **Piloting Innovative Beef and Dairy Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Strategies in U.S. Feedlots and Dairies (Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin)**

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- **Smart Nitrogen Application Program Demonstration Program Project (Iowa, Illinois)**

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