

# NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Government programs  
available to forest landowners

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United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Photo courtesy of Ken Blazej



# Background

- **The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a division of the USDA and offers programs under what is known as the Farm Bill, which is authorized by Congress**
- **Services offered include technical & resource consultation, aerial photography, and cost share assistance programs**
- **Mission is to improve, protect, and conserve natural resources on private lands (agricultural land, forest land, and wildlife habitat)**



# **EQIP**

## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

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- **Voluntary conservation program that focuses on improving natural resources on private agricultural and forested lands.**
- **Producers may receive financial and technical assistance to address resource conservation needs**
- **Primary forest resource concerns:**
  - **Soil erosion**
  - **Water quality**
  - **Plant (tree) productivity, health & vigor**
  - **Wildlife**



# **EQIP**

## **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**

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- **EQIP is NOT a grant, it is a cost share program**
  - **Landowner implements and pays for all conservation work, and is reimbursed at specified rates**
- **Cost share rates are paid at a flat rate based on average costs in Maine**
- **Limited Resource Producers, Beginning Producers, and Socially Disadvantaged Producers can receive a slightly higher rate**



# EQIP

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program

### 2011 rates

- Forest Stand Improvement
  - Crop or mast tree release - \$368.55/ac
  - Thinning (average stand density) - \$368.55
  - Mechanical invasive species control - \$368.55
  - Chemical invasive species control (low/moderate intensity) - \$225
- Forest Trails & Landings
  - With water bars & fabric - \$4.85/ft
- Stream Crossing
  - Rock ford - \$40.65/ft
  - 15" or smaller culvert - \$379.60 (the unit is 'number' now, not feet)
- Tree/shrub pruning
  - 17-25' - \$3.36/tree



# EQIP Requirements

- **Forestry producers must have a current Forest Management Plan prior to applying for cost share assistance on forestry practices**
  - Practices you are interested in seeking cost sharing on must be included in the plan



# EQIP Activity Plans

## 2011 rates

- **Cost sharing is available to have a Forest Management Plan written:**

Forest Management Plan - Written	1-50 acres	1,030
Forest Management Plan - Written	51-100 acres	1,282
Forest Management Plan - Written	101-150 acres	1,718
Forest Management Plan - Written	151-200 acres	2,200
Forest Management Plan - Written	201-300 acres	3,095
Forest Management Plan - Written	301-400 acres	3,646
Forest Management Plan - Written	401-500 acres	4,656
Forest Management Plan - Written	501-600 acres	5,666
Forest Management Plan - Written	601-700 acres	6,675
Forest Management Plan - Written	701-800 acres	7,685
Forest Management Plan - Written	801-900 acres	8,695
Forest Management Plan - Written	901-1000 acres	9,705
Forest Management Plan - Written	1000+ acres	10,210

- **May not cover the full cost of the plan**
- **NRCS Forest Management Plan has certain criteria and must be written by an approved TSP (Technical Service Provider)**



# EQIP Activity Plans

## Working with the Maine Forest Service

- There is a small list of registered TSPs who can write the plans:
  - <http://techreg.usda.gov/>
- Maine Forest Service is a TSP and can act as an “umbrella” TSP for many Stewardship Foresters
  - The list of Stewardship Foresters eligible to write NRCS Forest Management Plans can be found on the Maine Forest Service website



# EQIP Activity Plans

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- **These funds are not competitive, but are “first come, first served”**
- **Currently funds have been exhausted, but we are expecting more money in November**
- **Can sign up anytime and be put on the waiting list for when the funds become available**



# **EQIP – The steps involved**

- 1. Stop by the office and fill out an application**
  - Will also need to fill out eligibility paperwork with the Farm Service Agency**
- 2. Develop a Conservation Plan (initial onsite visit may be needed)**
  - The practices in the Conservation Plan will come from the practices recommended by your forester in your Forest Management Plan**



# **EQIP – The steps involved (continued)**

## **3. Project is submitted for funding**

- Depends on when we get money – generally once a year**
- Each field office is given an allotment based on number of applicants and \$ requested**
- Funds are competitive within each county**
  - Each project is ranked based on environmental benefit, and highest ranked applications are funded first**
- If project is not chosen for funding it can be deferred and resubmitted for the next round of funding**

## **4. If project is chosen for funding, a contract is signed**



# **EQIP – TSPs and Maine Forest Service**

- **In addition to the payment rate for implementing the practices, there is also Technical Assistance money available**
  - **Money is for TSPs to design, lay out, and certify the forestry practices in the contract**
  - **There are a few TSPs who can do this, including the MFS, who can act as an “umbrella” TSP for any of the Stewardship Foresters**
  - **Payment rates are variable**



# EQIP Timeline

- **Signup is continuous**
- **Application deadline for 2011 projects was July 1, 2010**
- **Applications after that date will be for 2012**



# CSP

## Conservation Stewardship Program

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- **Agricultural and Non-Industrial Private Forestland is eligible**
- **Rewards producers applying and documenting high levels of conservation and management**
  - **In addition to maintaining existing conservation practices, producers must agree to adopt at least one new conservation activity**



# CSP

## Conservation Stewardship Program

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- Annual payment for installing new conservation activities and maintaining existing ones
- Potential payment rate for forestland is \$6-\$12/acre
- Currently accepting applications for 2011
  - Signup deadline is January 7, 2011



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