

# Barron County

## 2010 SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM



### **NRCS EQIP Program:**

#### **Sign-up ends February 19th**

Below is a list of the practices that the Federal EQIP Program will provide funding for. To sign up for an EQIP project, stop at the conservation office in the Government Center before February 19th.

- Manure storage facility
- Grassed waterway
- Comprehensive nutrient management plan
- Nutrient management plan
- Manure storage facility closure
- Barnyard runoff system
- Stream/lakeshore fencing
- Stream crossing
- Rotational grazing
- Tree planting
- No-till
- Diversion

Questions? Call 537-5645, ext 3.

### **Conservation Stewardship Financial Assistance Available**

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary program that encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner. NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible applicants to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land. Applications may be filed at any time and cropland, grassland, improved pastureland,

### **2010 SWCD Conservation Assistance Program**

Sign up starts February 15 and runs through March 19

Cropping Practices	Incentive Payment	Maximum Funding
No-till	\$15.00 / acre	TBA
Cover Crop	\$ 18.50 / acre	TBA

All sign-ups for construction projects are contingent on State funding.

Construction Practices	Cost Share Rate	Maximum Funding
Grass Waterway	70%	\$3000
Well Abandonment	70%	\$500
AWSF Abandonment	70%	\$6000
Feedlot Relocation	70%	\$3500
Diversion	70%	\$3000
Streambank/Shoreline Fencing	70%	\$3000
Wetland Restoration	70%	\$3000
Critical Area Stabilization	70%	\$3000
Erosion Control Dam	70%	\$3500
Headland Planting	\$ 95.00 / acre	\$1000
Barnyard	70%	\$5000
Lakeshore Restoration	70%	\$1000

private forestland and prairie land are all eligible. Applicants must:

- \*be the operator of record with USDA for the land offered
- \*have documented control for the term of the contract
- \*include the eligible land in their entire agricultural operation
- \*be in compliance with highly erodible land and wetland conservation provisions
- \*supply information necessary to determine eligibility/ranking

Producers fill out a checklist to determine if CSP is the right program for their operation prior to applying. A resource inventory and the conservation activities the applicant agrees to apply will be used by NRCS to

determine eligibility, rank applications and establish annual payments. Approved applicants will develop a conservation stewardship plan and contract with NRCS. This contract will require the applicant to achieve a higher level of conservation performance by installing activities from their stewardship plan as well as maintaining the existing level of performance identified at application time. Contracts are for five years.

Estimated annual payment range:

- cropland—\$12-\$22/per acre;
  - pastureland—\$7-\$14/per acre;
  - forestland—\$6-\$12/per acre.
- Contact Patrick Richter, District Conservationist, at 537-5645, extension 3 for more information.

## New for 2010

The Conservation Programs administered by the Barron County Soil & Water Conservation Department will no longer include incentives for reduced tillage. With the widespread acceptance of reduced tillage and the superiority of no-till in protecting our soil, we have decided to concentrate our “planting” dollars on not-till incentives. We believe our funds are better spent encouraging those new to no-tilling by providing an incentive during the first few years of the learning curve. Once new management techniques become routine, the benefits of no-till pay for itself.



## WORKING LANDS INITIATIVE

The Working Lands Initiative is a cooperative state, local and private effort to save Wisconsin farmland, to promote agriculture, to protect the environment, and to minimize land use conflicts. The program includes updates to the current Farmland Preservation Program, the ability for farmers and local governments to establish voluntary Agricultural Enterprise Areas, and a state program to help with the purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements.

### What will Working Lands Initiative do for farmers?

- Preserve agricultural lands on which the future of Wisconsin farming depends.
- Minimize land use conflicts that threaten agricultural enterprises.
- Provide enhanced, simplified tax incentives for farmers to keep land in agricultural use, and adopt soil and water conservation practices.
- Maintain the legitimate rights and prerogatives of land owners.
- Recognize current agricultural practices, infrastructure needs, and land use realities.
- Provide new tools that will allow farmers to supplement income and realize tax savings, while protecting farmland.
- Provide greater predictability and certainty, to facilitate farm investment decisions.
- Focus and coordinate agricultural preservation and development efforts. *Cont.*

## *WORKING LANDS cont.*

The current *farmland preservation tax credit* (income tax credit) is intended to encourage farmland preservation and conservation practices. However, the current tax credit is based on a complex formula that considers farm income, property tax payments and other variables. Farmers must wade through 18 pages of tax credit forms and instructions. Many farmers are disqualified by outdated income limits, and the tax benefit is declining. Annual tax credit claims have dropped from \$35 million in 1987 to just over \$12.7 million today, so the credit no longer provides a strong incentive for farmland preservation.

The current *farmland tax relief credit* (income tax credit) was originally designed to provide property tax relief, but has been greatly overshadowed by Use Value Assessment. The current tax credit does little to encourage farmland preservation or conservation practices, but costs an average of \$15 million per year.

Farmers will be able to claim tax credits if they are covered by a *farmland preservation zoning ordinance* or a *farmland preservation agreement* (new agreements will be limited to “agricultural enterprise areas”).

Tax credits will be calculated as a flat amount per acre. The amount will depend on whether the land is covered by an agreement (\$5 per acre), a zoning ordinance (\$7.50 per acre), or both (\$10 per acre). The Department of Revenue may adjust tax credit amounts between years, as necessary, to keep total costs within appropriation limits (just as it does now for the Farmland Tax Relief Credit).

To receive \$10 per acre, your land must be in an Agriculture Enterprise Area (AEA). An “agricultural enterprise area” is a contiguous land area, devoted primarily to agricultural use, which the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) designates in response to a local petition. To have an area designated as an agricultural enterprise area, land owners and local governments must work together to develop and submit a petition to DATCP. At least five farmers must petition for each AEA.

Tax claim forms will be much simpler (a few lines instead of 18 pages).

Under WLI (as under the current farmland preservation law), farmers claiming tax credits must comply with state soil and water conservation standards. Counties must initially certify compliance by *new* claimants (counties already monitor *existing* claimants). Counties may suspend tax credit eligibility for noncompliance (as under current law).

This new program is in effect for the 2010 tax year. For those in unzoned townships with FPP agreements, when your agreement expires, you will no longer be eligible for the tax credit unless you are in an Agriculture Enterprise Area. Contact the Soil & Water Conservation Department for more information.



## Changes/Progress for SWCD

As you may know, Dale Hanson, Barron County Conservationist, retired last fall after over 27 years serving county residents and protecting our environment. He is pursuing his interest in environmental education and we wish him the best of luck. The goals of the department – soil conservation, assisting farmers, providing educational support – remain the same and the staff is dedicated to fulfill those goals.

In an effort to increase efficiency, several County departments have been united. They include the Zoning Office, Land Information, Forest & Recreation, Economic Development and SWCD. While each department retains its individual functions, we will work more closely together in an effort to provide better service to landowners.

When land does well for its owner, and the owner does well by his land; when both end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation.

Aldo Leopold

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Barron County Soil & Water Conservation Dept  
330 E LaSalle Avenue #221  
Barron WI 54812-1500