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Clean Water Farms – Whole Farm Planning Project Guidelines to Environmental Assessment and Cost-Share Programs

The Kansas Rural Center is offering Kansas farmers and ranchers incentive payments and cost-share grants to protect water quality on their farms. Incentive payments are available for farmers and ranchers to conduct a self-environmental assessment of their individual farms, and to develop an action plan for improvement. Cost-share funds up to \$5,000 per farmer or rancher are available on a competitive basis to those who complete the self-assessment and apply for assistance to implement management-based farming practices or management systems that will improve water quality protection. Financial analysis of on-farm options is also available to assist in better planning.

The self-environmental assessment will help farmers and ranchers better identify resource and management strengths and weaknesses, and incorporate a whole farm planning approach to solving potential or existing water quality or environmental problems on their farms. Farms and ranches in Category I (high priority) watersheds in Kansas are eligible for assistance. (Call KRC office for details.)

Completion of the *River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment* and developing an action plan is necessary to be eligible for the cost-share funds. A \$250 incentive payment is available to encourage farmers and ranchers to complete the assessment. Those completing the assessment and an action plan will then be eligible (but not obligated) to apply for cost-share funds to implement part of their plan. These funds can be used in conjunction with state and federal cost-share programs. The completed assessment and action plan can also be used to develop requests for other state and federal cost-share programs, whether the farmer applies for KRC funds or not.

The Kansas Rural Center's Clean Water Farms-Whole Farm Planning Project (CWF-WFP) is a four-year project (2000-2004) made possible with funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Section 319 Non-point Source Program, administered by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and coordinated by the Kansas Rural Center.

As part of the cost-share grant program of up to \$5,000 per farmer, the CWF-WFP offers a Crop Rotation Incentive Payment of up to \$3,500 per farm for projects that develop and implement a legume based extended crop rotation to reduce or eliminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. (See page 5 of Guidelines for details.) The project also offers up to \$3,500 per farmer to address household waste water system problems. Applicants must meet State Conservation Commission requirements.

A team of advisors in agronomy, soil and water conservation, agricultural economics, agricultural engineering, and production agriculture will review the action plans and cost-share applications, and make recommendations and selections. Kansas Rural Center staff will work with the individual farmer through all phases of the project: completing the assessment, developing the action plan, implementing solutions, and monitoring progress and success.

Benefits of Completing the Environmental Assessment:

The environmental assessment, or River Friendly Farm Plan (RFFP), consists of a notebook with questions designed to help you assess and score the status of soil conservation, nutrient, pesticide, and livestock waste management on your farm. A new edition (July 2002) includes a Farmstead Assessment evaluating the household wastewater system, fuel and pesticide storage, solid waste management, and a section on

Irrigation. Using information you already have from conservation plans, aerial maps, and field and yield data, you can put together a picture of your farm and farmstead in a day or day and a half, depending on the size of your operation. A quality of life section involves the whole family in the planning process.

The benefits of completing the assessments are:

- * Better defined farm goals and a clear plan for achieving those goals.
- * Farmer control over the process; assessment information remain confidential;
- * Improved conservation and management – which translates in the long term if not short term into money saved!
- * Improved position for qualifying for cost-share funds from a variety of places.
- * Better position to comply with – or avoid – future regulation.

Although there is no economic analysis component in the notebook, an added benefit of cooperating in the KRC project is the farm financial analysis option. Participants applying for cost-share funds have opportunity to work with KRC or KSU staff to run cost-benefit analysis of their farm options through such tools as Finpak, enterprise budget allows. Together, the financial analysis and environmental assessment will put the farmer in the best possible position to make management decisions.

Eligibility for the River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment:

- 1) The farm or ranch must be located in a Category I (high priority) watershed as identified in the Kansas Unified Watershed Assessment published in October 1998.
- 2) Must show income from farming or ranching operation.

Each farmer or rancher will receive assistance from KRC staff to complete the assessment, including a farm visit. Producers may have the option to participate in a group workshop for notebook completion.

To receive the \$250 incentive payment, the farmer or rancher must complete the assessment, and develop an action plan with timeframe for implementation. They must submit the assessment's scorecard and completed action plan to KRC. These will be reviewed by KRC staff and a member of the Project Advisory Team for approval. The \$250 incentive payment can then be made. With an approved action plan, the farmer or rancher has the option to apply for cost-share funds from KRC. Or they may use the assessment and action plan to help support a request for cost-share funds from state and federal programs.

Practices eligible for cost-share funds include but are not limited to:

- * Planning and implementing extended legume based crop rotations to reduce or eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- * Use of cover crops to reduce soil erosion and run-off, and build soil quality.
- * Use of buffer strips or riparian filter strips, streambank stabilization, field grass filter strips.
- * Livestock management systems that reduce confinement feeding and pollution potential including:
 - * Management intensive grazing systems for dairy and livestock operations; * conversion of cropland to grass;
 - * alternative livestock watering systems; * alternative forages;
 - * fencing of streams and ponds, or restricted access water ramps on streams or ponds;
 - * construction of stream crossings; * Alternative shelters and/or windbreaks for livestock
- * Livestock waste management systems that limit pollution potential from feedlots, wintering, feeding and storage areas: construction of sediment basins, diversion terraces around livestock lots, soil and manure analysis for application for crop needs; composting, and site re-design.
- * High residue cropping systems: conversion to minimum till or no till, with a planned crop rotation to limit chemical inputs.
- * Household wastewater systems: assistance for addressing failing septic systems if the assessment shows this to be a significant pollution problem or threat on the farm or ranch.

To Apply for CWF-WFP Cost-share Funds, the applicant must:

- * Complete the River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment and develop an approved action plan.
- * Provide written answers to the application form questions.
- * Define the water quality problem being addressed.
- * Clearly describe how the funds will be used (submit a detailed budget plan)
- * Match the requested cost-share through labor, machinery and land use, and purchased supplies.
- * Provide a final accounting of expenditures and contributed resources.
- * If funded at the full \$5,000 limit:
 - The project is considered a “demonstration project” and the farmer must be willing to host a farm tour and/or share their information and experience via workshops or other outreach avenues;
- * Post a sign at the demonstration site stating “Clean Water Farm-Whole Farm Planning Project in collaboration with the Kansas Rural Center, EPA, and KDHE”

Cost-share recipients will receive a portion of the grant funds in advance as start-up funds. Only actual expenses incurred after the demonstration has been approved will be reimbursed. The final payment will be made upon completion of a final report and a final accounting of expenditures.

Criteria for Selection for Cost-share grants

All applications for cost-share funds will be reviewed by the Clean Water Farms-Whole Farm Planning Project Advisory Team, which is made up of researchers, farmers, educators, and representatives of state and federal agencies and institutions. The following elements will be among those considered by Project Advisory Team members when they review applications:

1. Location within a Category I watershed with a well-defined water quality problem, and a clear plan for addressing it.
2. Applicant shows farm or ranch income.
3. Completed the RFFP Environmental Assessment and action plan.
 - a. Whether the proposed project addresses one or more of the farm’s high priorities (as identified by the environmental assessment).
 - b. Shows consideration of options.
4. Proposed project’s potential to impact water quality.
5. Lower-cost management based practices or systems will be given priority (see below for definition of eligible practices) but if other options (such as structural) are the best solution, these will be considered.
6. Realistic and justifiable budget; economic feasibility.
7. Adoptability by other farmers; useful beyond one year.
8. Long term commitment to protection of water resources; willingness to maintain the measure or practice beyond the project.
9. Outreach, education, and networking potential to other farmers and ranchers.
10. Statement of their farm’s water quality protection goals.
11. Availability of other cost-share funds.

To apply:

Applications can be handwritten or typed as long as they are readable.

Deadlines: November 1, 2002 and other to be announced deadlines in 2003.

Applications should be sent to:

Kansas Rural Center, CWF-WFP, Box 133, Whiting, Ks. 66552-0133

For more information, contact KRC at 785-873-3431; E-mail: ksrc@rainbowtel.net

Sample Budget Information

Here is a brief explanation of what kinds of expenses are covered by the Clean Water Farm-Whole Farm Planning Project (CWF-WFP) which will help you complete the individual sections of the proposed budget. The budget form shows two columns for expenses. The first is for grant funds requested. The second is for the “In-kind” contributions or services provided by the farmer or rancher, other farmers, or other entities, such as private organizations or businesses, or government agencies. (Note: You do not have to show an expense or contributed resource in every category; some may not apply)

The second column of farmer matching dollars (contributed time, labor, equipment, land, and purchased inputs) must match or exceed the amount of cost-share or grant funds requested.

Cost-share grant recipients will receive a portion of their funds up front to cover demonstration expenses. A final report and financial records documenting the expenditure of these advanced funds must be submitted before the final funds will be released.

Labor covers the number of farmer hired employee hours at an hourly rate up to \$15.00/hour. This should include not only the in-the-field hours but the time spent planning, designing, monitoring, and recordkeeping for the demonstration. While labor can be used for grant costs, it is usually a good source of farmer match.

Consultants and Training includes fees for workshops or conferences related to farmer skill or information development. It also can cover private consultant fees (such as crop consultants, engineers, etc.) The CWFP also has funds for contracting with consultants to assist individual farmers, in addition to or in place of any requests made on cost-share applications.

Travel covers the number of miles to attend educational workshops and meetings, meet with consultants, or to pick up special seed or supplies, etc. at a rate of \$.33/mile.

Operating Supplies can include seed, soil tests, nitrogen tests, manure analysis tests, fencing or watering system supplies, equipment modification parts or supplies, and other misc. inputs.

Crop Rotation Incentive Payment refers to a payment requested for developing and implementing a strict crop rotation system. Because such systems do not lend themselves well to “cost-sharing”, the CWFP offers an incentive payment of up to \$3,500 per farm for 75 acres or more. Under 75 acres, the per acre amount is at the discretion of the Review Team. It can be matched by farmer time and labor in planning and implementing the system, see purchase, and equipment use or rebuilding (i.e. as in rebuilding manure spreaders or mechanical cultivation equipment). The farmer can also apply for the remaining funds up to the \$5,000 limit per farm, for other farming practices (See page 5).

Land use refers to the number of acres being used as part of the project and assigned a value per acre based, for example, on local annual cash rent rates. This can **only** be used for farmer match, not for cost-share.

Equipment use or rental/contract services includes leasing of any one-time use of grass seed drills, no till or trenching or other equipment; or contracting with individuals who operate the equipment. Farmers can also count their own equipment use as match.

Equipment purchases may be allowed, but it is not the intent of the CWF-WFP to purchase new equipment. Small equipment purchases may be allowed limited to requests for used equipment or equipment needing modification. (For example, a used manure spreader needing rebuilding or modification, or a cultivator requiring modifications.) The equipment purchase or refurbishing must be rated as a high priority for solving a water quality problem as identified in the environmental assessment.

Miscellaneous can include such things as film and photo development costs for reporting and educational purposes; field day costs; farmer Xeroxing, postage, and telephone; other lab tests; etc.

If you have questions, call the KRC office 785-873-3431; or E-mail: ksrc@rainbowtel.net

Clean Water Farms-Whole Farm Planning Project Guidelines to Crop Rotation Incentive Payment Program

The Clean Water Farms-Whole Farm Planning Project (CWF-WFP) offers cost-share assistance to farmers willing to plan and implement crop rotation systems that protect water quality. Well planned and implemented crop rotation systems have long been known to reduce chemical fertilizer use by substituting nitrogen fixing legumes. They also are known to reduce soil erosion through the maintenance of cover crops. And use of a crop rotation system also helps to break weed and pest cycles. With changes in the federal farm program allowing more flexibility, farmers have a window of opportunity to adopt strict crop rotation systems. However, such systems do not lend themselves well to cost-share.

Planning and implementation assistance appear to be the major need. Therefore, the CWFP offers Crop Rotation Incentive Payment based on a per acre amount up to \$3,500 per farm over 4 years. The \$3,500 cap applies to 75 acres or more enrolled. (This translates into \$11.66 an acre for 75 acres for 4 years.) Under 75 acres, the per acre amount is determined by the discretion of the Review Committee. In addition to the incentive payment, the CWFP also provides planning and monitoring assistance in development of the crop rotation system. The farmer applying for the incentive payment can also apply for the remaining additional CWFP funds up to the \$5,000 limit for additional farming practices to protect water quality.

The crop rotation system proposed should meet the following minimum criteria:

- * Must address a well defined water quality problem
- * Maintains 20% of the crop acres in a resource conserving crop;
- * Development of a five-year written plan (or for however many years are in the crop rotation whichever is more.)
- * Utilizes necessary soil conservation practices, e.g. terraces, grassed waterways, windbreaks, contour strips, etc.
- * Provides for maintenance and improvement of soil productivity
- * Includes a soil building legume for nitrogen fixation
- * Includes a grass or small grain sod crop, alone or with a legume, for organic matter
- * Is systemic and cyclical, but can and should allow for some flexibility
- * Targets manure and/or fertilizer applications appropriately to the most responsive or high cash value crops.

The CWFP offers planning assistance to those interested in developing such a proposal. For more information, contact KRC 785-873-3431.