



Natural Resources Conservation Service
655 Parfet Street, Room E200C
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

November 17, 2008

State Technical Committee

Dear Members of the State Technical Committee:

During fiscal year 2009, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado will utilize a Call for Proposal (CFP) process to offer up to one million dollars of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding targeted for the control of invasive plant species. The program will be offered in limited geographical areas for watershed scale projects that will significantly reduce the abundance and impacts of newly emerging noxious weed species and improve the surrounding plant communities.

Due to limited funding, only project areas identified by organizations or units of government that have an existing program or organized effort to address invasive plant species will be considered for funding. Since EQIP funding can only be utilized on private working lands through contracts with individual landowners, this funding **will not** be offered as a grant. Once the project area is selected, individual landowners or groups of landowners can apply for funding within the approved project areas.

Responses to the CFP will be accepted from organizations, units of government, or other groups with an ongoing weed management or invasive plant species initiative or program. To be considered for funding, proposals must follow the attached guidelines and be received prior to February 2, 2009, at the NRCS State Office at the address listed above. Electronic proposals are encouraged. The proposals will be evaluated and project areas selected by February 23, 2009.

Questions concerning the CFP may be referred to Tim Carney, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at (720) 544-2805, or Cindy Lair, Executive Director, Colorado State Conservation Board, at (303) 239-4111.

We have enclosed detailed guidance on the application process and the ranking criteria that will be utilized to select the project areas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Allen Green".

ALLEN GREEN
State Conservationist

Enclosure

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

cc:

Tim Carney, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, NRCS, Lakewood, CO
Cindy Lair, Executive Director, Colorado State Conservation Board, Lakewood, CO
Kelly Uhing, State Weed Coordinator, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Lakewood, CO
Area Conservationists, NRCS
Area Resource Conservationists for Programs, NRCS
District Conservationists, NRCS



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NRCS Colorado EQIP Invasive Plant Program – 2009

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, the Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is using a Call for Proposals (CFP) format to identify priority watersheds that qualify for the invasive plant program. This program emphasizes watershed scale projects that significantly reduce the abundance and impacts of newly emerging noxious weed species and improve affected plant communities. Project proposals for weed species not identified in this CFP will not be considered. This is a project initiated by NRCS, the Colorado Noxious Weed Management Program, and the Colorado State Conservation Board.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Colorado Invasive Plant Program is a voluntary program for conservation-minded landowners who want to improve the productivity of their rangeland and riparian lands for agriculture and wildlife by reducing the impact of noxious weeds primarily on private land. Through this initiative NRCS provides a payment incentive to contain and control the spread of targeted noxious weeds and improve the quality of desirable plant communities.

NRCS will offer up to \$1,000,000 in FY 2009, in a cooperative, watershed scale for cost-share assistance to private landowners to implement integrated weed management plans that target selected invasive plant species. Payments will be made through EQIP contracts with individual landowners. Incentive payments will be offered for implementation of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan. To qualify, landowners must be EQIP-eligible and be located within approved watershed areas that demonstrate a cooperative effort to the control of invasive plants. Watershed areas that can provide matching cost-share funding, technical assistance, and have existing programs to address invasive plants will receive priority for funding.

All proposals **MUST** be reviewed and signed by the local NRCS District Conservationist, County Weed Manager, and appropriate partnering agencies/entities before being submitted to the NRCS State Office for funding consideration. **NEW** for 2009 – all proposals must be approved by the Colorado Department of Agriculture, State Weed Coordinator, prior to submitting to NRCS for consideration by the February 2, 2009, deadline. The State Weed Coordinator will determine if the proposal supports the State and County Weed Plan. Proposals with contribution agreements are strongly encouraged and will receive highest priority for funding if all other CFP criteria are met. A concurrence letter from the State Weed Coordinator must accompany the CFP. **NEW** for 2009 – contribution agreements will be offered for project technical assistance not to exceed 10 percent of the total requested funds. Contribution agreements requests must accompany the submitted CFP. The use of Technical Service Providers, for design and implementation of practices in approved EQIP contracts, is also strongly encouraged.

The process for 2009 will involve the following steps:

1. If the local Conservation District is not sponsoring the proposal, the proposal sponsor shall contact the local NRCS office and inform them of proposal development intentions. Viable partnerships between NRCS, Conservation Districts, and local governments are strongly encouraged.
2. The proposal will be developed addressing all eight elements listed here in as much detail as possible. Please limit written portion of proposal to three pages.
3. Once the proposal is completed, it should be reviewed and signed by the District Conservationist, County Weed Manager, with a letter of concurrence from State Weed Coordinator.
4. **Electronic filing** of the proposal must be received in the NRCS State Office by close of business on February 2, 2009, at the following address:
colakewood.nrcsprogram@co.usda.gov
5. A proposal review committee will prioritize the proposals using the attached ranking form.
6. After the committee prioritizes the proposals into high and medium priority, they will rank the highest priority proposals first and recommend funding the proposals according to the ranking. If there is money left after funding high priority proposals, the medium priority proposals will be ranked and may be considered for funding.
7. The proposal sponsors will be notified of funding by February 23, 2009.
8. Once the projects are identified for funding, a sign-up period will be announced anticipated to be March 2, 2009 – April 1, 2009. Private landowners that are eligible for EQIP can apply for individual contracts to treat invasive plant populations. An integrated weed management plan and land rehabilitation plan must be developed for the treatment areas prior to treatment.

Proposals that are received in the NRCS State Office between November 17, 2008, and by close of business on February 2, 2009, will be screened using the eight elements listed above and the following guidelines:

Proposals must focus on the management of one or more selected List A or List B State-designated noxious weeds that are recognized in Colorado.

High Priority Proposals must target two or more of the following priority species for management or the invasive species proposal is considered part of a Watershed Management Plan:

List A:

- African Rue (*Peganum harmala*)
- Meadow knapweed (*Centaurea pratensis*)
- Mediterranean sage (*Salvia aethiopis*)
- Orange hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*)
- Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)
- Yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*)

List B:

Absinth wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)
Black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*)
Chinese clematis (*Clematis orientalis*)
Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*, *Linaria genistifolia*)
Diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*)
Hoary Cress (*Cardaria draba*)
Houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*)
Leafy Spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
Oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*)
Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*)
Plumeless thistle (*Carduus acanthoides*)
Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*)
Russian-olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) – Riparian Areas Only
Salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*)
Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*, *Onopordum tauricum*)
Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)
Sulfur cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*)
Yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*)

In addition to managing two or more of these selected species, high priority proposals must:

1. Identify and enhance/restore the appropriate habitat type associated with the treated acreage according to a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district.
2. Emphasize appropriate integrated weed management techniques that focus on the elimination and eradication of outlying populations of the targeted noxious weed (those that are generally acknowledged to be outside the core infested areas of Colorado) before targeting more heavily infested areas of Colorado.
3. Identify and address urgent threats (e.g., diminishing critical habitat for threatened and endangered species), habitat issues (e.g., limited habitat for rare or valued species of plants and wildlife), or other impacts (decreasing forage production, reduced recreational opportunities, compromised water quality) of the targeted species.
4. Watershed based projects are encouraged. Contribution agreements between NRCS and local Conservation Districts, County Weed Districts, County Commissioners, etc. will be considered highest priority.
5. Proposals with participants identified will also be considered highest priority.

Medium Priority Proposals must also accomplish these same objectives but will target only one of the selected invasive plant species listed above.

ALL PROPOSALS MUST ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING:

The following information must be included within each application in order to rank it against competing proposals. Failure to address each of these elements will handicap a proposal. Do not hesitate to request assistance from the State Weed Coordinator or your local Conservation District Program Manager to ensure that you understand and address these elements in a satisfactory manner.

Species: Identify the specific noxious weed species that your project will address. Priority species for 2009 are noted above. Only proposals that included one or more of these invasive plant species will be evaluated.

Location of Project Area: Describe the area (geographically and ecologically) addressed by the proposal. Proposals that target noxious weeds from the prioritized List B must identify whether the project area is located within an eradication/elimination or containment/suppression zone for that species. Please include appropriate maps of the proposed area. Contact the State Weed Coordinator or County Weed Manager(s) for additional information regarding the distribution of targeted noxious weed species.

Point of Contact: Identify (name & address) one non-NRCS point of contact for the project, and lead NRCS District Conservationist.

IPM Practices: Projects should adopt weed management strategies that not only practice integrated weed management but also recognize relevant ecological factors that affect the efficient and cost-effective management of an area. Projects should include a landscape approach that considers watersheds, as well as wind, water, wildlife, and human vectors and attempt to manage the effects of these features. Applications must be explicit with regard to the use of integrated pest management techniques appropriate for the type of project proposed. Identify the management techniques (biological, chemical, cultural, mechanical) that will be applied. Provide an estimate of the total project acres treated by each practice. Ensure that the selected techniques are appropriate to achieve the management objective (e.g., biological control is used in areas for suppression, not eradication). IPM plans must be site and species-specific and available upon request.

Project Management: A) Explain how the project will be managed. Identify who will be coordinating actions, contacting partners and landowners, performing field work, etc. After completion of the project, what type of follow-up will occur? For example, please address how education materials will continue to be distributed or reinvasion of targeted species or other noxious weeds species will be prevented. B) Explain the participant post-treatment management of the project. Provide details of types of management that will be conducted on treated acres after completion of project (contract). C) Post-treatment management from partnership; is there any type of system planned to map/tract treatment locations, monitor and evaluate effectiveness, and prescribe any necessary follow-up treatments. D) Annual reports will be due to Tim Carney Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, by November 1, 2008, of project year for the first three years of the project timeline. Identify who will be responsible for this report.

Management of Adjacent Lands: Since EQIP funds are only available to eligible agriculture producers, will adjacent public lands be treated or enrolled in other noxious weed management programs? Are neighboring jurisdictions concerned and actively managing/searching for new invading species targeting by the proposal? Also, has the proposed watershed completed any watershed planning process that has bearing on noxious weed management in the area?

Landowner Cooperation: How many landowners do you anticipate will be involved in the project? Is there some form of commitment that participating landowners will continue to manage noxious weeds in a coordinated and effective fashion once funds have been exhausted? The proposal should clearly describe the desired outcome of project and the degree to which landowners have committed their participation to achieve this outcome.

Project Budget and Timeline: In as much detail as possible, identify the expected costs of the project. Itemize expected expenditures and be specific as to any cost-share assistance and partner contributions. Also provide a detailed timeline that depicts the expected chronology of events leading to the completion of the project. Only NRCS EQIP cost-shared practices will be taken into consideration for the project dollars requested.

Partnerships: Identify and explain partnership commitments to the project. Projects located in counties with active noxious weed programs should involve the County Weed Manager. Be very specific as to the actual commitments of each contributing partner (i.e., hard cash, in-kind, leadership roles, etc). Is the commitment in writing or verbal? Priority will be given to projects with written partner commitments. A letter of support from Kelly Uhing, Noxious Weed Coordinator, Colorado Department of Agriculture, must accompany the application.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek and provide matching cash and in-kind resources. This funding opportunity seeks to leverage additional public and private resources toward local weed management objectives. Matching resources may include direct expenditure of applicant funds for necessary project costs, including contracted professional services, and/or in-kind staff support and services necessary to complete project tasks.

Contacts: Tim Carney, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, (720) 544-2805
 Cindy Lair, Program Manager, State Conservation Board, (303) 239-4111
 Kelly Uhing, State Weed Coordinator, (303) 239-4173
 County Weed Supervisors

Once all proposals are prioritized by the selection committee into high and medium categories, each will be reviewed and scored by the committee using the following system. Each of the following items will be used to assess the quality of the proposal and generate an overall project score. The point value for each item may range from 1-20 points. The overall project scores of the proposals will be compared to determine funding allocation. Proposals with highest total score will be considered for funding first.

1. **Species selection:** List A species will receive the highest point value. Populations of List B species managed in eradication zones will receive more points than populations managed in containment/suppression zones. The primary emphasis of funds used for management projects will be to eliminate outlying populations and stop the spread of targeted species.

Points _____

2. **Impact of project:** The expected contributions of the project towards the protection/restoration of important habitats or valued land-uses, tangible improvements in watershed-wide management of noxious weeds, or the successful halt of a species' continued spread will be evaluated. Tangible and measurable outcomes are preferred.

Points _____

3. **Landowner participation and commitment:** The active participation of EQIP eligible agriculture producer is an important component of any successful proposal. Project should be clear about how they and other landowners will participate or benefit from the project, their expressed commitment to the project, and how project administrators will provide opportunities for their involvement.

Points _____

4. **Landowner post treatment management:** Management practices the participant commits to conducting after the contract expires is an important component of the success of this project. What type of long-term monitoring does the participant commit to conducting and what actions will be taken as a result of that assessment?

Points _____

5. **Integrated weed management:** Project should be specific about the management techniques used to achieve specified management objectives. Techniques should be appropriate to the task. An integrated management approach and strategy has been clearly articulated and is appropriate to the project and project area.

Points _____

6. **Partnerships:** The number and type of partnerships is appropriate to the type, scope, and location of the project. Post-treatment management planned by project partners (other than EQIP participants).

Points _____

7. **Contributions:** Projects will be evaluated on the type and amount of matching and in-kind contributions from landowners and partners.

Points _____

8. **Project organization:** Project has a clearly developed set of leaders and tasks, the budget is sufficiently detailed and appropriate to the project, and the timeline is appropriate.

Points _____