

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

2011 AWEP Application Information

Introduction

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface and ground water and improving water quality. As part of the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#) (EQIP), AWEP operates through program contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in project areas established through partnership agreements. The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated the authority for AWEP to the Chief of NRCS.

Under AWEP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) enters into partnership agreements with eligible entities and organizations that want to promote ground and surface water conservation or improve water quality on agricultural lands. After the Chief has announced approved AWEP project areas, eligible agricultural producers may submit a program application.

Program Description

Each fiscal year, NRCS may make AWEP financial and technical assistance available to eligible owners and operators of agricultural lands who participate in approved AWEP project areas.

As authorized by Congress, this is not a grant program to eligible partners. This is a program whereby approved, eligible partners will enter into multi-year agreements with NRCS to promote ground and surface water conservation, or improve water quality on eligible agricultural lands.

The intent of AWEP is for the Federal government to leverage investment in natural resources conservation along with services and non-Federal resources of other eligible partners. Individual producers are not eligible to submit a partnership proposal.

Eligible Partners

Eligible partners include:

- Federally recognized Indian Tribes
- States
- units of local government
- agricultural or silvicultural associations or other groups of such producers such as
 - an irrigation association

- an agricultural land trust
- or other nongovernmental organization with experience working with agricultural producers.

Producers

Owners and operators engaged in livestock or agricultural production may be eligible for the program. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pasture, private non-industrial forestland, and other farm or ranch lands.

Producers must submit a program application to be considered for financial assistance through AWEP. See the NRCS [EQIP program website](#) for information how and when to apply. For more detail regarding eligibility and application requirements contact your local [NRCS field office](#).

Funding

The 2008 Farm Bill provides \$73 million for fiscal year 2009, \$73 million for fiscal year 2010, \$74 million for fiscal year 2011, and \$60 million for fiscal year 2012 and each year thereafter for AWEP.

Please note that the amount of financial assistance provided to approved projects will change every fiscal year depending upon appropriations and agency priorities. Agricultural producers in selected project areas may apply for available AWEP financial and technical assistance at their local United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center. Once an application is selected, an eligible agricultural producer will enter into a contract with NRCS to receive technical assistance and to implement approved conservation practices.