

Air Quality Update California

APPLICATIONS FOR AIR QUALITY CONTRACTS

NOW UNDERWAY: *Current Cutoff is January 29*

The NRCS is again taking applications from agricultural producers in 36 California counties to upgrade diesel engine combustion systems and replace them with new cleaner technology.

"Last year's response was enthusiastic. The fact that there were four times more applicants than the funding could reach sends a strong message to lawmakers and policy experts," says Ed Burton, NRCS State Conservationist in California. "I strongly urge interested producers to apply. Unfunded applications will be kept for consideration for the next funding cycle. If additional funding becomes available later in the year, additional applications will be funded," Burton says.

Funding for this initiative is provided through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Conservation Innovation Grants (b) [CIG (b)] portion of the 2008 USDA Farm Bill. The primary goal is to reach National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) throughout California.

ALREADY APPLIED IN 2009?

If you applied in 2009 and were not funded, don't worry. Your application **will automatically** roll over for consideration this cycle. However, if you would like to change your application in any way or submit a new application, you will need to call or visit your local USDA Service Center and complete the application process by Jan. 29, 2010. All applications will be reevaluated using the new 2010 screening and ranking criteria designed to better prioritize projects with the greatest environmental benefits. If your application is ranked high priority, you will be notified by mail this spring.

STEPS TO APPLY FOR FIRST TIME APPLICANTS

If this is your first time to apply for the air quality program:

- Visit with your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to provide them information on your agriculture operation.
- Call or visit the NRCS office in the county of the proposed project. For locations see <http://offices.usda.gov>.
- Obtain application forms from any USDA Service Center or at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/.

Applications that are not completed by close of business on Friday, January 29, 2010 may still be considered, but will need to wait until the next funding cycle. EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous, year-round basis.



2009 Successes

2008 Farm Bill Conservation Programs

*Ag is doing its part for air quality. Results are in from the first year of a new air quality program and farmers were enthusiastic: 2,523 applications were submitted for the program to clear Central Valley skies by offering incentives to retire old inefficient engines and adopt conservation practices to improve air quality. The \$22.6 million made available last year through NRCS in California was able to fund 586 applications. Calculations predict that farmers' work in this program will have **the same effect on emissions reductions as removing 153,000 vehicles from California highways!***

"This program has been phenomenally successful," says State Conservationist Ed Burton. "None of us knew for sure how many farmers would be willing to come forth and make this investment," Burton said, noting that producers still needed to come up with approximately half the funds needed to voluntarily swap out older engines for newer, more efficient ones that are nearly 75% cleaner.

Additional funding may be available in the future, so sign-up now to ensure your consideration.

NRCS Web site for more Farm Bill information:

<http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2010/index.html>

January 2010

