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State Cost Sharing for Soil Conservation in Iowa

Cooperative Extension Service

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STATE COST SHARING FOR SOIL CONSERVATION IN IOWA

All people are responsible for conservation of soil and water resources. In Iowa, 100 soil conservation districts and six conservancy districts have power to enforce these responsibilities. These districts are political subdivisions of state government.

Boundaries of the soil conservation districts coincide with county boundaries except Pottawattamie County which is divided into two soil conservation districts. Districts are governed by five locally elected commissioners and receive technical assistance from staff assigned by state or federal agencies. Each district has an office in the county seat town.

Rules for operation of the six conservancy districts are summarized in Pm-536, "Iowa's New Conservancy Districts and Soil Loss Limit Regulations."

In compliance with the Conservancy District Act, the 100 soil conservation districts adopted soil loss limit regulations for all land in their respective districts, which includes all land in the state of Iowa. These regulations, adopted after public hearings, are available for examination at appropriate soil conservation district offices.

Cost Sharing

The Iowa General Assembly enacted legislation in July 1973 to provide funds to share the costs of installing permanent soil and water conservation practices on agricultural land. For each fiscal year of the 1973-75 biennium, \$1½ million has been appropriated from the general fund to the Iowa Department of Soil Conservation for this purpose. The state soil conservation committee, the governing body of the department, has determined that these cost-share funds will be allotted to soil conservation districts and that the program will be administered by the commissioners of the respective districts.

Prepared by Minoru Amemiya, extension agronomist, Iowa State University, and Richard A. Wilcox, resource conservationist, Iowa Department of Soil Conservation.

The appropriation act stipulates that not more than 50 percent of the approved cost of permanent soil conservation practices be paid from state funds, except that 5 percent of the appropriated amount (or \$75,000) may be used for cost sharing to abate complaints filed under the Conservancy District Act, in which case the cost-share rate by statute is 75 percent. The act further stipulates that priority be given to projects on watersheds above publicly owned lakes.

Allocation of Funds

Cost-share funds appropriated to the Department of Soil Conservation are distributed for use in soil conservation districts in two ways:

1. The \$75,000 authorized for use in cost sharing with landowners where complaints are involved is retained in the Department of Soil Conservation. The soil conservation district must secure approval before such cost-share agreements are processed.

2. The balance of cost-share funds, except for funds reserved for special projects and contingencies, are allocated to soil conservation districts according to the relative needs for installing permanent erosion and sediment control practices.

Eligibility

Eligibility for cost-share assistance falls into these categories:

1. Any landowner or operator of agricultural or horticultural land who is or agrees to become a cooperator of a soil conservation district. In this case, conservation practices are installed under voluntary agreement. The landowner or operator is eligible to receive 50 percent of the estimated cost of the practice, or 50 percent of the actual cost of the practice, whichever is less.

2. Any landowner or operator served with an administrative order by the soil conservation district directing him to install conservation practices because of a valid complaint filed by another party. Such an individual may not be required to be a district cooperator. The landowner or operator will be entitled to receive 75 percent of the actual approved cost of installing the practice.

In either category, an individual wishing to secure cost-share assistance must enter into an agreement which, among other things, requires that the practice installed will be properly maintained. The agreement provides that if the practice is not maintained the cost-share funds may be reclaimed by the district.

Practices Eligible for Cost-Sharing Assistance

The state soil conservation committee has established a policy that permits the use of state cost-share funds only in conjunction with the initial establishment of needed permanent soil and water conservation practices. Only those soil conservation practices whose primary function is to control soil erosion will be eligible for cost sharing. Practices that require significant capital investment beyond the usual costs of farm operation and which, with reasonable maintenance, will remain effective over a long period of time will have priority for assistance.

Cost-share assistance under this program will be available only for permanent practices listed and described below. From this list, soil conservation district commissioners may designate the conservation practice or practices for which cost-share assistance will be made available in their district. (Numbers given are Soil Conservation Service codes.)

(342) CRITICAL AREA PLANTING

Stabilizing silt-producing and severely eroded areas by establishing vegetation cover. This includes woody plants, such as trees, shrubs, or vines, and adapted grasses or legumes established by seeding or sodding to provide long-term ground cover. (Does not include tree planting mainly for the production of wood products).

(348) DAM, DIVERSION

A structure built to divert part or all of the water from a waterway or stream into a different watercourse, an irrigation canal or ditch, or a waterspreading system.

(362) DIVERSION

A channel with a supporting ridge on the lower side constructed across the slope on a grade or grades to an outlet.

(392) FIELD WINDBREAK

Suitable trees or shrubs established in a strip or belt within or around a field.

(410) GRADE STABILIZATION STRUCTURE

A structure to stabilize the grade or to control head cutting in natural or artificial channels.

(412) GRASSED WATERWAY OR OUTLET

A natural or constructed waterway or outlet shaped or graded and established in suitable vegetation as

needed for the safe disposal of runoff from a field, terrace, or other structure.

(600) TERRACE, GRADIENT

An earth embankment or ridge and channel constructed across the slope at a suitable spacing and with an acceptable grade.

(602) TERRACE, LEVEL

An earth embankment or ridge and channel constructed across the slope at a suitable spacing with no grade.

(604) TERRACE, PARALLEL

An earth embankment or a ridge and channel in parallel, constructed across the slope at a suitable spacing and with an acceptable grade. (Terraces constructed so that the interval between terraces is of uniform width constitute a parallel terrace system).

(599) TERRACE, BASIN

A form of level terrace with closed ends constructed on non-cropland with permeable soils and designed to impound a given amount of runoff from the drainage area above it.

(612) TREE PLANTING

Planting tree seedlings or cuttings in open areas to establish a stand of forest trees.

(512) PASTURE AND HAYLAND PLANTING

Establishing long-term stands of adapted species of perennials, biennials, or reseeding forage plants on land converted to pasture or hayland from other uses.

Conservation Practice Specifications

Specifications for soil and water conservation practices set forth in the Soil Conservation Service field office technical guide and/or the Iowa Conservation Commission technical forestry guides for tree planting will be used as a basis for determining need and practicability and for preparing plans and specifications of practices for cost-share payment. Practice description and specification information sheets are available in the district office.

Determination of Need for Practice

Cost-share funds may be used to share the costs of installing soil conservation practices only where the district's representative has inspected the site and determined that the practice is needed and is practical prior to commencement of installation. Practices will be certified as needed and practical when they are to be applied on lands suited for the designated use and where

control of funds. Funds have been reserved in the Department of Soil Conservation, and will be made available through soil conservation districts upon request for use in watersheds of the publicly owned lakes and reservoirs approved by the department for this purpose.

How to Participate in the State Cost-Sharing Program

Application

A party desiring cost-share assistance must file an application with the local soil conservation district indicating the practice or practices for which cost-share assistance is requested with an estimate of work involved, its cost, and date when the practice will be completed.

Determining Need and Feasibility

A district representative will check the site where the practice is to be installed to determine that the practice is needed to control an erosion problem and to determine the feasibility of the practice. Preliminary plans and specifications will be drawn up to estimate the cost of installation. Recommendation for action is made to district commissioners.

District Approval

District commissioners act on applications. When approved and signed by the commissioners, an application becomes an agreement between the district and the landowner or operator.

Design, Layout and Installation

A district representative makes additional surveys as needed, prepares detailed plans and specifications, and assists applicant with layout and construction of the practice. District staff members also inspect work during construction to determine that the project conforms to specifications.

Certification of Completion

A district representative maintains suitable record of work performed and, upon completion, certifies to the district commissioners that work has been completed in a satisfactory manner and that costs are reasonable and proper.

Voucher Preparation

Applicant submits voucher with supporting receipts through the district commissioners to the state of Iowa claiming reimbursement for appropriate cost sharing.

Voucher Transmittal to Comptroller

District commissioners act on voucher. If approved, voucher is forwarded to the Department of Soil Conservation for transmittal to the state comptroller for payment.

Payment

Warrants issued by the comptroller are routed through the Department of Soil Conservation to the soil conservation district for delivery to the applicant.

Additional information and details concerning state cost sharing for soil conservation practices may be obtained at the Soil Conservation District office, the Soil Conservation Service office, or at the County Extension office. These offices are generally located in the county seat town.

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