

Funding Available to Plant Shelterbelts/Windbreaks

The Kansas Forest Service (KFS) is ready to help rural landowners qualify for funding to plant windbreaks (shelterbelts) around their farmstead/headquarters that would reduce energy consumption. The buildings must be heated to qualify.

Funding would be provided to eligible producers through the On-Farm Energy Initiative, which is funded through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). **The application periods for fiscal year 2012 funds end March 30 and June 1.** The program is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

To apply, landowners must schedule an appointment with the NRCS office at their local USDA Service Center. To qualify, applicants also must prepare a tree planting plan and must document the energy savings their farmstead/headquarters will realize from the proposed windbreak/shelterbelt. A KFS district forester can be scheduled to help develop the plan.

“That’s where one of our district foresters can help,” said Bob Atchison, KFS rural forestry coordinator. “Our foresters are willing to visit a farmstead, talk to the owners about the windbreak, and then prepare a design that should optimize the long-term energy savings.”

Research and experience show many details can affect a windbreak’s usefulness—shape, distance from buildings, plant selections, moisture supply—according to Atchison.

The On-Farm Energy Initiative provides financial assistance to cover the majority of cost to purchase and plant trees and shrub seedlings. Payment rates may vary from \$1.49 per bare-root seedling to \$2.57 per container-grown seedling and up to \$5.57 for balled seedlings greater than 18 inches. The initiative does not cover other costs typically associated with establishing windbreaks such as weed or grass control.

In Kansas, socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers will receive a higher payment rate for conservation practices related to the On-Farm Energy Initiative.

“If an interested landowner happens to miss the 2012 deadlines, that is okay,” Atchison said. “NRCS accepts the On-Farm Energy Initiative applications year-round. If NRCS receives an application after this year’s On-Farm Energy Initiative cut-off dates, it will simply be available for next year’s funds.”

Local NRCS contact information is available by accessing the Web at www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov or <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=KS> or by calling the Kansas NRCS State Office at 785-823-4500. Contact information for Kansas’ district foresters is available at the KFS State Office at 785-532-3300 or <http://www.kansasforests.org/staff/rural/index.shtml>. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.