

Environmental Quality Incentives Program for Forestry Concerns

“Kansas landowners wishing to implement conservation practices by improving tree stands may be eligible for federal funding assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP),” said Eric B. Banks, State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

The program provides funds to help landowners manage woodlands, renovate windbreaks, protect against streambank erosion or implement other conservation practices on their land, said Bob Atchison, rural forestry program coordinator with the Kansas Forest Service.

“Landowners who are interested should start the application process early by contacting their local Natural Resources Conservation Service Office, in your local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center (<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>),” Atchison said.

A forester then visits the landowner’s property to identify natural resource concerns, such as gaps or dead trees in windbreaks and shelterbelts. If the property has sufficient resource concerns making it eligible for EQIP funds, the forester creates a conservation plan and submits it to the NRCS, which ranks applications based on priority.

Common resource concerns foresters are watching for include a shortage of trees next to streambanks, leading to bank erosion that contributes to the sedimentation of federal water reservoirs. “We want trees planted along the banks to help hold the soil in place,” Atchison said.

Foresters also examine the species present in woodland areas. Most woodlands in Kansas are not managed, leading to an abundance of trees like honey locust and Osage orange, which are less beneficial than trees such as black walnut or bur oak.

While the official deadline for applying for EQIP is **November 16**, Atchison encouraged landowners to apply early and begin talking with their foresters about conservation practices now.

“EQIP helps address the unique circumstances and concerns of socially disadvantaged, limited resource, and beginning farmers and ranchers, who have natural resource concerns that need to be addressed on their land,” said Banks. Qualifying Kansas producers compete separately and receive higher payment rates.

Additional information about EQIP, may be found on the Web at <http://www.kansasforests.org/programs/rural/services.shtml>.