

HOOSIER FARMLAND WILDLIFE NOTES

Fostering Wildlife in Agriculture



EQIP: Opportunities for Wildlife Management on Your Land

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The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program** (EQIP) is a new voluntary program introduced in the 1996 Farm Bill. It is designed to provide assistance to producers to establish conservation practices to improve water quality and wildlife resources in target areas where significant natural resource problems exist. EQIP replaces the Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) and Water Quality Incentives Program (WQIP) offered in the 1990 Farm Bill.

In Indiana, 40 priority areas within 46 counties have been identified for fiscal year 1998 (Figure 1). At least 70% of the \$2,525,000 allocated to Indiana for FY 1998 will be spent in the conservation priority areas; however, *all* lands are eligible. Each priority area will emphasize one or two primary resource concerns such as soil erosion, water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and forest and grazing lands. The primary resource concerns designated in a priority area must be addressed on all EQIP bids. Your USDA Service Center representative can inform you of the primary resource concerns for your area. Addressing additional concerns such as wildlife habitat will allow your bid to score higher in the competitive bid process and improve your chances for acceptance into this program. Wildlife is a priority in 38 of the 40 Conservation Priority Areas (CPA). This means that practices favoring wildlife management should be considered in these areas.

Eligibility

You **do not** have to be located within a CPA to apply. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pasture, and forestland. Confined livestock operations of more than 1,000 animal units are not eligible for cost-share assistance for animal waste storage or treatment facilities. You must have a conservation plan to establish an EQIP contract. The plan should outline the resource management objectives and systems specific to your land. Your local NRCS Office can help you design your plan. Total cost share and incentive payments are limited to \$10,000 per person per year and \$50,000 for the length of the contract.

Eligible Practices Beneficial to Wildlife

The following practices will receive up to 75% cost share. In return, the producer must enter into a five- continuous CRP, EQIP offers cost share and technical assistance to establish year contract. Some of the practices described below can also be established through the continuous sign-up Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) program. You should register your land in the CRP first since the 50% cost share and annual rental payments for 10-15 years will yield a better return than EQIP. However, on acreage that is not eligible for waterways and filter strips in environmentally sensitive areas. Incentive payments for up to three years may also be available for specific wildlife management practices. The following are just a few practices that are eligible for 75% cost-share.

<i>Selected Eligible Practices with Wildlife Benefits</i>	<i>Enhancements for Wildlife</i>
Grassed Waterways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant warm season grass mix or cool season grass/legume mix Mow after August 1st
Grass Filter Strips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant warm season grass mix or cool season grass/legume mix Mow after August 1st
Conservation Cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant native grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees that are adapted to the site conditions
Tree Planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant species that provide hard (oaks) and soft (dogwoods) mast valuable to wildlife
Pasture and Hay Planting/Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant warm season grass mix or cool season grass/legume mix Mow after August 1st
Field Borders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant native grasses, forbs, and shrubs that are adapted to site conditions

Linear, irregularly shaped plantings are best for wildlife. Plantings should be at least 66 feet wide to maximize value to wildlife. Your NRCS representative and district wildlife biologist can assist you in selecting species that provide optimum food and cover value for wildlife.



Figure 1. EQIP Conservation Priority Areas for Indiana (shaded).

Who do I call?

NRCS, along with FSA, provides leadership for EQIP. Contact your local USDA Service Center first. They will assist you with determining the eligibility of your land, the development of a conservation plan, and the application process. In addition, they can put you in touch with your district forester or wildlife biologist.

Additional Information

For additional information on assistance with conservation planning, cost-share opportunities, and wildlife incentive programs, contact your county Extension Office, the Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources Div. of Fish and Wildlife [(317)-232-4080], the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [(812)-334-4261], and online the internet at <http://www.fnr.purdue.edu> or <http://www.ai.org/dnr/public/publicat/fis.htm>. You may also order publications by contacting the Agriculture Communication Service Media Distribution Center, 301 South 2nd Street, Lafayette, IN 47901-1232, Toll Free: 1-888-EXT-INFO, Fax: 765-496-1540.

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