



Natural Resources Conservation Service
1201 Lloyd Blvd, Suite 900
Portland, Oregon 97732

August 3, 2007

OREGON BULLETIN NO. OR-300-7-8

SUBJECT: LTP – Special Initiative – Wildfires Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Purpose: To issue guidelines for a FY07 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Special Initiative for restoring grazing lands damaged by wildfires. The intent is to accelerate range recovery, reduce watershed erosion and sedimentation, and mitigate negative impacts of a reduced forage base.

Expiration Date. September 30, 2007

Background: The timing of the wildfire season does not correspond with EQIP funding cycles. Specifically, 2007 EQIP funds were obligated prior to the beginning of the Oregon wildfire season. In order to address the natural resource concerns associated with the 2007 wildfire season, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Oregon will offer a special initiative with the issuance of Oregon Bulletin OR 300-7-8 for damaged grazing lands. The sign-up will begin August 7, 2007, and end on August 17, 2007.

Eligibility: Producers must follow all guidelines in this bulletin in addition to all other EQIP program policies.

Adherence to program rules does not guarantee funding approval; however, it does allow interested producers the ability to remain eligible for funding consideration for future EQIP sign-ups. The focus of this initiative is privately owned grazing lands that were burned by wildfires in 2007. Priority of funding is based on the percent of area in management unit (one or more fields) that were burned:

- High – 100 to 50% of area burned,
- Medium – 50 to 30% of area burned, and
- Low – less than 30% of area burned.

Only burned private acreage within the management unit is eligible for payment.

Lands that are used for grazing and where grasses and shrubs are the dominate vegetation are eligible. Cropland acres (used for grazing crop stubble or other aftermath) are not eligible. Grazed forested lands are not eligible. The primary emphasis of this initiative is to restore the health, productivity and vigor of privately owned grazing lands burned by wildfires. Tribal lands may be eligible in accordance with previously established EQIP policies and the requirements of this initiative.

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Wildfire Application Process

Producers must adhere to the following steps in order to remain eligible for this EQIP wildfire special initiative:

1. Immediately defer livestock grazing on grazing lands burned by wildfire on acres proposed for enrollment. Grazing deferment until the spring of 2010 will be required for participation in this program on all contracted acres. NRCS has determined that grazing deferment is the best treatment for wildfire damaged grazing lands. Producers who are unwilling or unable to meet this requirement will not be eligible for funding assistance under this special initiative.
2. Submit an EQIP application to NRCS on or before 4:30 local time on August 17, 2007.
3. Submit all eligibility documentation forms to the appropriate USDA agency (NRCS or FSA) by August 17.
4. Applicant must be registered in SCIMS and meet all EQIP eligibility requirements by 4:30 local time on August 23, 2007.
5. Read and sign OR300-7-8 Attachment A, Producer Acknowledgement, to this bulletin, which is an acknowledgement of the special initiative requirements.
6. Cooperate with NRCS to determine the acres in the management unit eligible for this special initiative in order for NRCS to evaluate and rank the application.

Follow all other EQIP program policies contained in program information located at:
<http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/index.html>

EQIP Wildfire Special Initiative Packet

The EQIP Wildfire Special Initiative packet is a group of documents that will be supplied to the producer at the time that he/she submits the EQIP application.

- A copy of this bulletin and Attachment A, Producer Acknowledgement.
- A copy of the complete application materials (CCC-1200 and CCC-1202 CPC Appendix).
- A copy of the standards and specifications for NRCS conservation practices will be provided as needed to aid the producer with the installation of any practices applicable to the operation.

EQIP Eligible Practice

The only cost shared practice in the special initiative EQIP contract will be 528, Prescribed Grazing. The practice would be specified with a requirement to rest the contracted acreage for two years after the burn plus broadcast seeding of fire lines, cat-trails, and areas of deeper soils with high intensity burn. Seeding must be completed prior to December 1, 2007. Livestock cannot graze the areas until the spring of 2010. By signing the Job Sheet and Attachment A, the participant acknowledges his or her agreement to follow the specifications and timelines listed in this document.

Prescribed Grazing would be paid as a one-time \$16 per grazing land acre incentive payment, capped at 2,500 acres per individual. This incentive payment includes financial assistance for deferring grazing and any necessary seeding on the contracted acres. This will improve vigor and seed production of the key species: Idaho fescue on north slopes and tops, and blue-bunch wheatgrass on south slopes.

The critical area seed mixture must consist of introduced, native and/or temporary cover species that will be used to stabilize soils, control weeds and restore deep rooted perennial bunchgrasses. Broadcast rate is applicable. Seed must be purchased in 2007 with seed tags submitted to NRCS by December 31, 2007.

Fencing and livestock water development is not cost shared in this initiative. NRCS technical assistance will be available to contract participants.

Environmental Procedures

All environmental procedures and planning policies are to be followed in development and implementation of the funded contracts.

Ranking Criteria

The application priorities and the ranking criteria will be completed using the online ProTracts system. A fund code called “Special Initiative - Wildfires” has been developed and released for this initiative. Ranking criteria will consist of eight questions that consider steepness of the land, percentage of private grazing land burned in the management unit, and critical fish and wildlife habitat. The questions are:

Ranking Question	Points
1. Of the burned area; slopes of 20 % or less make up greater than 50% of the area.	5 pts
2. Of the burned area; slopes that are 21 to 35% make up greater than 50% of the area.	10 pts
3. Of the burned area; slopes of 36 % or greater make up greater than 50% of the area.	25 pts
4. Was the % of the private grazing land acres burned by the 2007 wildfires 49 % or less of the total private grazing land acres in the management unit? (See endnote for calculations.)	5 pts
5. Was the % of the private grazing land acres burned by the 2007 wildfires 50 to 74% of the total private grazing land acres in the management unit? (See endnote for calculations.)	10 pts
6. Was the % of the private grazing land acres burned by the 2007 wildfires 75% or greater of the total private grazing land acres in the management unit? (See endnote for calculations.)	25 pts
7. Did the burned area contain critical habitat for T&E or sensitive species (plant or animal)?	50 pts
8. Will a fish bearing stream be affected by sedimentation from soil runoff in the burned area?	50 pts

The answers to these questions will be transferred to the ProTracts web ranking sheet under State questions.

Participation in Other Programs

The following situations require clarification for instances in which another EQIP contract or Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) assistance is available:

- **Fences and watering facilities that were installed using previous EQIP cost-share:** If the EQIP contract is still active then the practices will be replaced in accordance with CPM 512.53 and CPM 515.102(h). The land serviced by those practices is not eligible for the initiative outlined in this bulletin. If the contract has expired then the land is eligible for the initiative (contracts cannot be cancelled or terminated for the purpose of obtaining initiative funding).
- **ECP Assistance:** The producer can receive EQIP financial assistance on land where ECP financial assistance has been, or will be, received provided it is not for the same practice. Note that fencing and water facilities are not part of the prescribed grazing specification nor are the EQIP funds under this initiative paid for fencing or watering facilities practices. (CPM 512.22 E; CPM 515.F and FSA guidance.)

Wildfire Special Initiative Timeline

Any EQIP-eligible grazing land damaged by a documented 2007 wildfire in Oregon will be eligible for the program. Eligibility does not guarantee funding. Producers who meet eligibility criteria for the EQIP program are encouraged to apply. The application cut-off date for this initiative is August 17, 2007. Any application received after this date will not be eligible for participation. NOTE: Applicants not registered in SCIMS by August 23, 2007, will not be able to meet the following time schedule for FY07.

Deadline Date	Item	Required Actions
August 7, 2007	Application Period begins	Producers must submit an EQIP application in compliance with this bulletin at the local NRCS field office. Producers need to ensure that all eligibility documentation is submitted. NRCS will accept applications and provide initiative information in the form of the EQIP Wildfire Special Initiative Packet to interested producers.
August 17, 2007	Application cut-off	NRCS will evaluate and rank all eligible applications when the applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submits an EQIP application that includes all eligibility forms to NRCS and FSA by 4:30PM local time on this date. Late applications are not eligible for funding. • Successfully registers in SCIMS and meets all EQIP eligibility requirements by 4:30 PM. local time on August 23, 2007. NRCS will rank the applications and fund them from highest score to a lowest until wildfire special initiative funds are expended.
August 20 - 30, 2007	Application evaluation period	Producers must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with NRCS to effectively determine eligible acres and total grazing land acres of the management unit. • Clearly understand the deferred grazing requirement on contracted acres until the spring of 2010, which includes the completion of OR300-7-8 Attachment A, Producer Acknowledgement.

August 31 – September 5	Applications are ranked and selected for funding	NRCS will complete all contracts in ProTracts by September 7, 2007. Producers & NRCS must cooperate to ensure that this deadline is met. Failure to do so will result in the cancellation of the pre-approval.
September 6-7, 2007	Contracting	Producers & NRCS must cooperate to ensure that this deadline is met. Failure to do so will result in the cancellation of pre-approval. Timing for finalization of contracts and the obligation of funds will depend on FY2007 special wildfire initiative funding. All contracts obligations must be completed in Protracts by COB September 7, 2007.

Endnote: The following examples were developed to illustrate the calculations for percentage of private grazing land acres burned in the management unit, contracted acreage, and funding amounts. Points will be assigned based on the percentage of the total private grazing land acres of the management unit that were burned by 2007 wildfires. Three examples are:

- **Example 1:** 1,200 acre grazing land management unit where 800 acres burned.
 - $800 / 1,200 = 0.67$
 - $0.67 \times 100 = 67\%$
 - Points = 10 pts
 - If funded the contract will be 800 acres @ \$16.00 = \$ 12,800.
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- **Example 2:** 15,000 acre grazing land management unit where 5,000 acres burned.
 - $(5,000 / 15,000) \times 100 = 33\%$
 - Points = 5 pts
 - If funded, the contract will be 2,500 acres (cap) @ \$16.00 = \$40,000
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- **Example 3:** 5,000 acre management unit (3,000 acres of grazing land and 2,000 acres of cropland) where 2,400 acres of grazing land burned.
 - $(2,400 / 3,000) \times 100 = 80\%$
 - Points = 25 pts.
 - If funded, the contract will be 2,400 acres @ \$16.00 = \$38,400.

If you have additional questions, please contact Bill White, NRCS Leader for Programs, Oregon, at (503) 414-3085.

BOB GRAHAM
State Conservationist

Attachments: OR300-7-8 Attachment A