

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Report To
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board
April 14, 2011
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



Weekly News Briefs from NACD

Congressional Budget Update

Last week, President Obama and Congressional leaders finally reached a fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget deal, averting a government shutdown. The agreement calls for a \$38 billion cut below FY 2010 levels – reducing agriculture funding by \$3 billion, including a \$118 million cut to the NRCS budget.

The Conservation Operations account, which funds Conservation Technical Assistance, was funded at \$872 million, \$15 million below FY 2010. The Watershed Rehabilitation Program was funded at \$18 million, a \$22 million cut. Both the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations account and the Resource Conservation and Development program were eliminated. Funding for mandatory Farm Bill conservation programs was also cut. The Wetlands Reserve Program was limited to 202,218 acres, a \$119 million reduction. The Conservation Stewardship Program was funded at \$649 million, a \$39 million cut. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program received \$1,238 billion, \$350 below the level authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill. None of these reductions include the 0.2 percent across the board cut to non-defense accounts.

The agreement is expected to narrowly pass both chambers by Friday when the current short-term continuing resolution runs out.

Note:

The information above is from the National Association of Conservation Districts that describes the program cuts and fund reductions to agriculture. Official word has not been received from NRCS as another bill has to be passed by both the House and Senate this week to make the decisions final.



Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Funding Update

NRCS has approved funding for 31 EQIP contracts for \$612,061 within the 6 county area of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District. There is potential for additional funding in the future.

Practices funded in the EQIP contracts include:

- Cropland - terraces, underground outlets, diversions, no-till residue management and a grade stabilization structure.
- Pastureland – fencing, brush management, water well, pumping plant, pipeline and pasture planting.
- Animal Feeding Operation – waste storage facility.
- Seasonal High Tunnels for crop production.



Over \$1 Million Available for Organic Agriculture in Nebraska.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced a sign-up deadline of May 20, 2011, for a conservation initiative available specifically to organic farmers.

Through the Organic Initiative, NRCS will provide funding to help organic producers and those transitioning to organic production implement natural resource conservation practices on their agricultural operations.

Under Organic Initiative contracts, producers are paid a portion of the cost for the organic conservation measures they implement. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers are paid a higher rate. The program provides up to \$20,000 per year per person or legal entity, with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

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