

NRCS Groundwater Recharge Pilot Program

Applications DUE April 3, 2023

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is piloting a groundwater recharge program under EQIP* to evaluate the following Interim Conservation Practice Standards:

815 - Groundwater Recharge Basin and Trench

817 - On-Farm Recharge

** The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by NRCS that can provide financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices that address priority natural resource concerns.*

Project eligibility:

- Projects must be in one of the following locations:
 - Madera County
 - Fresno County (in the Fresno Irrigation District boundaries only)
 - Merced County (in the Chowchilla Irrigation District boundaries only)
 - Tulare County (in the Tulare Irrigation District or Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District boundaries only)
 - Kern County (in the Delano-Earlimart Irrigation District boundaries only).
- Projects must EITHER:
 - have access to recharge water from an Irrigation District OR
 - have access and water rights to winter flood water
- Projects must meet design and monitoring criteria detailed in one of the following:
 - **Practice Standard 815 (Groundwater Recharge Basin and Trench)**
https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/api/CPSFile/30312/815_CA_ICPS_Groundwater_Recharge_Basin_or_Trench_2020
 - **Practice Standard 817 (On-Farm Recharge)**
https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/api/CPSFile/30313/817_CA_ICPS_On_Farm_Recharge_2020

Applicant eligibility:

- Water Management Entities (WMEs) such as Irrigation Districts
- Farm-scale applicants such as growers and landowners

Deadlines and Timeline:

- Applications (Form 1200) must be received by the appropriate Field Office (Madera, Fresno, Merced, Visalia, or Bakersfield Field Offices) **by April 3, 2023**. Contact your field office to get the form and for further information.
 - Madera Service Center 559-674-4628
 - Merced Service Center 209-722-4119
 - Bakersfield Service Center 661-281-2765
 - Fresno Service Center 559-276-7494
 - Visalia Service Center 559-734-8732
- After submitting completed forms, **applicants will work with NRCS conservationists to develop a conservation plan** including the interim recharge practices and any needed supporting practices. (April – mid-June)
- NRCS staff will **rank conservation plans** according to the ranking questions. The highest scoring projects will be selected for funding in the pilot program and announced after July 1.

NRCS Launches NEW Groundwater Recharge Pilot Program

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Is this pilot program right for you?

- Decide which type of recharge you want to engage in – a recharge basin or trench (815) OR on-farm recharge (817). **Read the applicable practice standard thoroughly (See links on page 1).**
 - A recharge basin or trench is a permanent feature. Land will be taken out of production permanently (defined as a minimum of 15 years).
 - On-farm recharge (OFR) occurs in tandem with agricultural practices and happens on an annual basis, depending on water availability.
- Water availability: Does your site have access to recharge water from an Irrigation District OR do you have access and water rights to store winter flood water?
 - If not, your site will NOT qualify for the program.
- Monitoring: Is there a well (screened to the appropriate aquifer within ¼ mile from the center of the flooded field or 1,000 feet from the edge of the field) that can be used to monitor changes in groundwater that might be associated with recharge on the site?
 - If not, your site will NOT qualify for the program.
- Site suitability: Does your site have sufficient saturated hydraulic conductivity (percolation rates) in the top 5 feet of soil?
 - Check your site's suitability using the SAGBI tool here:
<https://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/sagbi/>
- Hydrogeologic suitability: Does your site have connectivity to the aquifer? This information can be found by:
 - On-site sub-surface soil investigations (such as deep soil cores, cone penetrometer, or nearby well log data)
 - Electromagnetic survey or ranking in LandIQ recharge Suitability Tool, available here:
<https://gratviewer.earthgenome.org/>
- For on-farm recharge only (817): Do you practice excellent nutrient management and integrated pest management? If not, recharge is not recommended.

Financial Assistance

These amounts will be reimbursed if you are selected to receive a contract and when design criteria are met.

- **Recharge basin or trench (815)**
 - Trench: \$3.59 per cubic yard excavated
 - Basin:
 - \$4,232.47 per acre foot storage capacity <10 ac ft
 - \$4,032.75 per acre foot storage capacity >=10 ac ft
 - Reimbursement will occur only once, after construction is completed according to design standards.
- **On farm recharge (817)**
 - \$103.93 per acre inundated* <60 acres
 - \$98.46 per acre inundated* >=60 acres
 - Farmers are reimbursed by number of acres inundated with water – this means that if recharge water is NOT available in a given year, then reimbursements will NOT be made that year.
 - OFR contracts are up to 3 years long and growers are able to get financial assistance for up to 2 out of 3 years, with opportunities to reapply for renewal.