



SOIL AND WATER Resources

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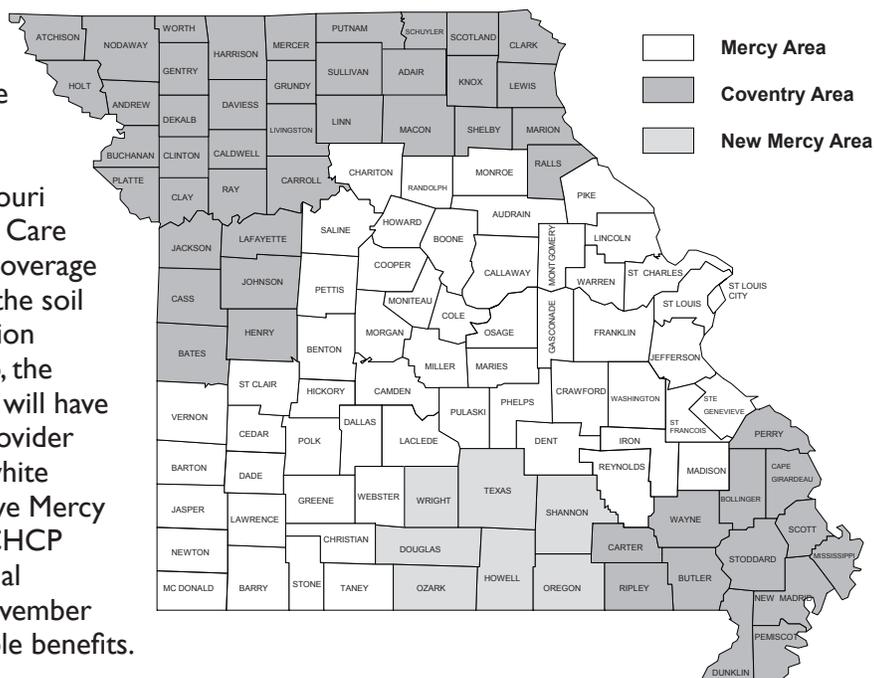
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Department Offers Statewide Health Insurance Coverage for Soil and Water Conservation District Employees

The Department of Natural Resources recently accepted the rates for the health insurance monthly premiums from Missouri Consolidated Health Care Plan, offering group coverage for all employees of the soil and water conservation districts. On the map, the districts in dark grey will have Coventry as their provider and the districts in white and light grey will have Mercy as their provider. MCHCP conducted educational meetings in early November to explain the available benefits.



The department selected the medical plan but local boards may choose any combination of the optional programs available including dental, vision and an Employee Assistance Program. The department pays 100 percent for the employee-only coverage for the medical plan but will not contribute toward the premiums for any of the optional plans.

All counties must participate in the group plan offered by MCHCP. Once all of the counties have agreed to participate, there will be an opportunity for individual employees to waive the coverage that will be provided. Only 75 percent of district employees are required to be enrolled in the MCHCP group health insurance program. If an employee of a district has Medicare or is insured through a different insurance company, they can waive the group insurance provided by the state. In order to waive coverage, the employee must provide proof that they are currently enrolled in a health insurance program through another entity. If an employee decides to waive the group health insurance provided by the state, they will not be reimbursed from the state for any of their health insurance expenses.

If an employee initially decides to waive coverage for the first year, they can enroll in the group plan during the next open enrollment period for the second



Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Soil and Water Conservation Program

year. There are also certain “life situations” that would allow an employee to enroll in the group plan during the year. Please refer to the MCHCP Web site, www.mchcp.org, for additional information on this subject.

For calendar year 2009, the Soil and Water Conservation Program office will again be reimbursing the employees for all “in network” deductible, “in network” out-of-pocket maximum expenses and the copay for emergency room visits.

Employees will not be reimbursed for “out of network” expenses, physician copays or prescription copays. If we paid the deductible for “out of network” expenses, MCHCP has stated that would undermine the monthly premium amounts and they would have to renegotiate the monthly premiums.

Once applications are processed, MCHCP will contact the board for enrollment meetings for each of its employees. Coverage is expected to begin Jan. 1, 2009. If you have any questions, contact Jim Boschert at 573-522-3320 or jim.boschert@dnr.mo.gov or Carol Buckner at 573-526-4066 or carol.buckner@mchcp.org.

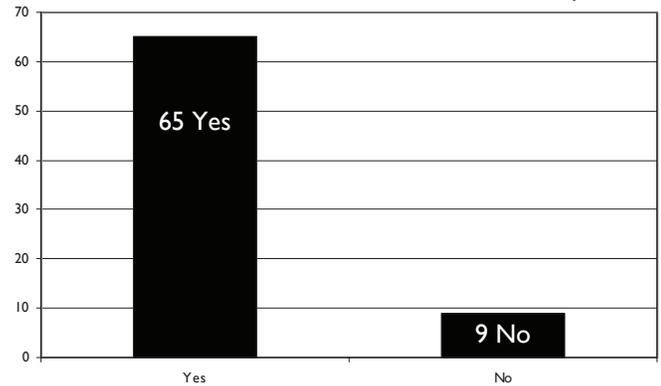
District Survey Results on Policy Changes to the DSP-3 Practice Presented to Commission

Districts recently provided comments on policy changes to the DSP-3 Grazing System Practice. The intent is to create a practice that is easier for districts to administer, more flexible for producers and focused on environmental benefits for Missouri taxpayers. The survey results were presented to the commission at its Dec. meeting. They will be reviewing these results and will make policy changes at a future meeting. The following bar graphs show the results of the survey.

\$ Per Acre Maximums	
Dollars received will be based upon components installed	
Water Supply	\$ 95
Water Distribution	\$ 85
Fence	\$ 60
Seed	\$ 40
Lime	\$ 50
Total per Acre	\$ 330
Nutrient Management	= \$30 / Acre x 3 years (N590) = \$35 / Acre x 3 years (N633)
Pest Management	= \$15 / Acre x 3 years (N595)

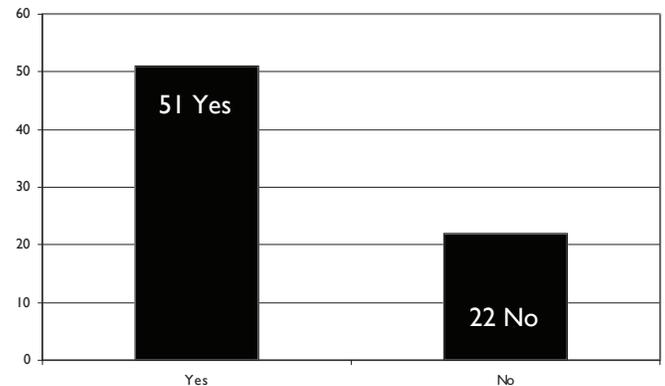
Eliminate the \$13,500 cap on total dollars per landowner for the practice.

The current policy states: “A maximum of \$13,500 in cost-share is allowed per landowner.” The proposed change will eliminate the commission maximum set on this practice.



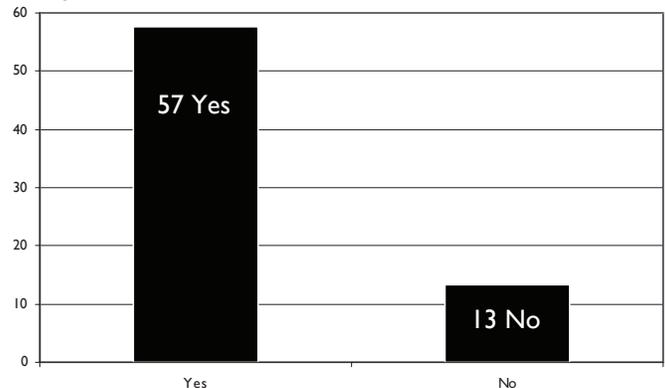
Eliminate or raise the four-year limit for installation to 10 years.

The current policy states: “the four consecutive year period begins from the day the board approves the initial contract payment, meaning the last contract must be approved within that four-year period”. The proposed change will not have a time limit for modification of a grazing system.



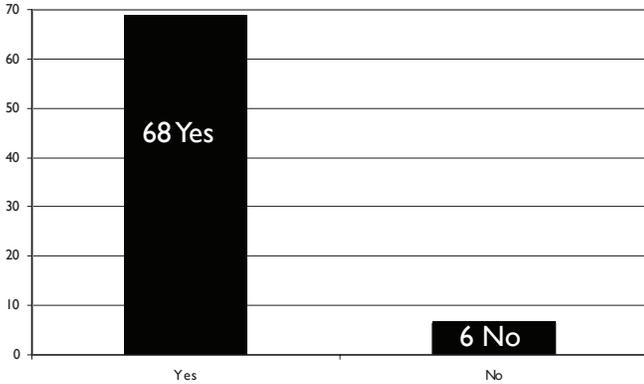
Eliminate limit on minimum and necessary components that are for proper functioning of the system (such as energizers).

The current policy limits cost-share to \$225 for one rapid impulse fence charger or solar energizer; \$3,500 for water source development; and \$500 for heavy use area protection. The proposed change will remove restrictions per individual component and apply per acre limits on necessary parts of the system.



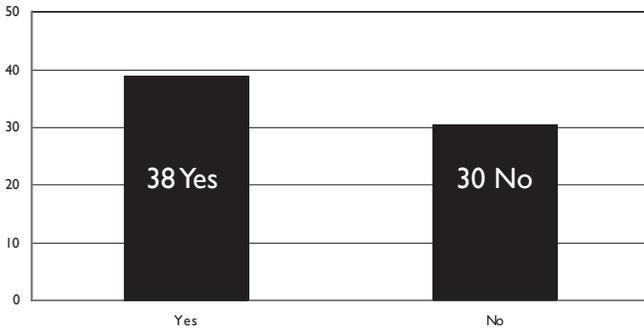
Allow producers who previously participated in DSP-3 practice to be eligible for further participation.

Current policy restricts participation in the DSP-3 practice when the four-year time limit, or \$13,500 per landowner have been reached. The proposed change allows funding for additional work on any system that meets the 528 Prescribed Grazing Standard, provided the number of paddocks is increased.



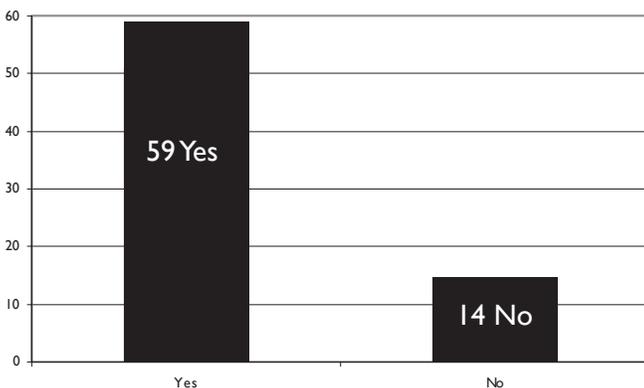
Producers in a current EQIP contract are not eligible to participate in this program.

Current policy in regular cost-share does not allow landowners in an EQIP contract including prescribed grazing to participate in the DSP-3. The proposed change will allow 25 percent cost-share in addition to 50 percent federal cost-share EQIP on systems in a contract, or 75 percent on improvements made to systems originally funded through EQIP up to the \$ limit per acre when added together.



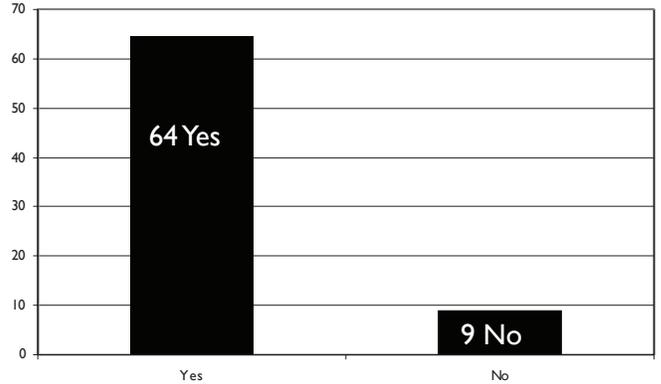
Minimum fertility is not required to install fence and water.

Current policy requires the landowner to take a soil test and meet a per acre minimum fertility requirements of 15lbs. of F, 100 lbs. of K and require less than 600 lbs. of ENM per acre to be eligible to sign a contract for a DSP-3. The proposal changes eliminate the minimum fertility requirement when only fencing, water supply and water distribution are installed.



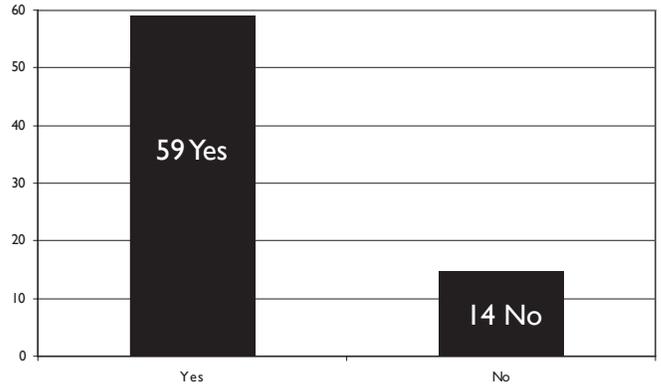
Operators must attend an approved grazing school prior to program office approval of the contract.

Current policy requires the landowner or system manager to attend an approved grazing school prior to the district board approving the contract. Current policy will not change except that a board member will no longer have to attend grazing school for the district.



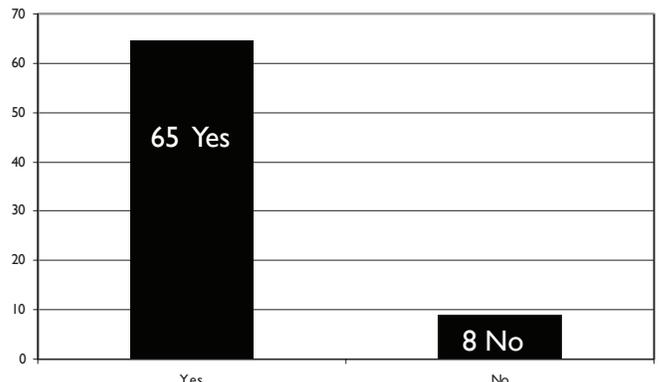
Seeding is available only on acres where fertility and pH meet soil test requirements for establishment.

Current policy does not allow for seeding of cool season grass and legumes. The proposed change will allow a one-time interseeding of legumes (seed and spreading) provided fertility meets requirements for the seeding. Cool season and warm season grass seeding will not be eligible for cost-share within this practice.



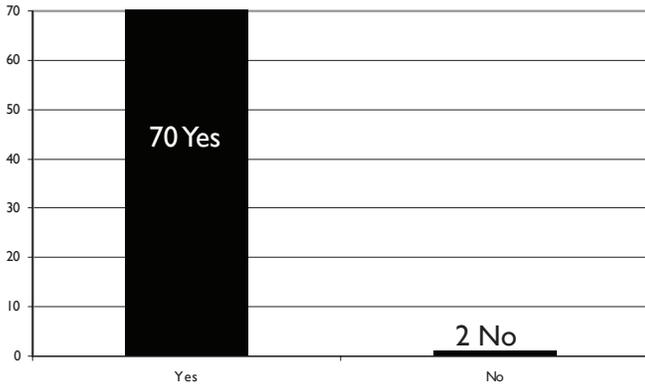
Lime will be available on all acres one time if the lime requirement from soil test shows a requirement of 600 lbs. ENM/acre or more. A maximum of 1500 lbs. ENM/acre can be approved for cost-share payment.

Currently, lime is not an eligible component with the DSP-3 practice. The proposed change will allow cost-share for a one-time application of lime on any field in the system if the requirement is over 600 lbs. of ENM/acre; however cost-share assistance would not exceed 1,500 lbs. of ENM/acre.



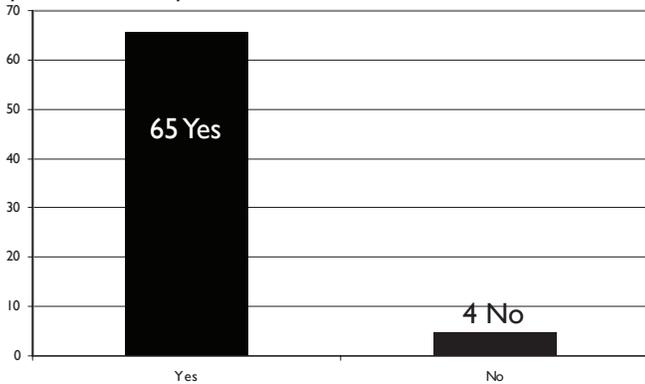
Nutrient management (three consecutive years) will be available (not required) to producers after one or more years of system management with fence and water.

Currently there is no funding for nutrients in the DSP-3 practice. The proposed change will provide an incentive for following a nutrient management plan after one full year of implementation of a grazing system. Landowners will be allowed to participate for three consecutive years using the N590 Nutrient Management Practice and N633 Waste Utilization Practice and must adhere to the policies of those practices.



Pest Management (three consecutive years) will be available (not required) in the first year of system operation to eradicate invasive species. Further weed and brush control should be examined after one or more years of system management.

Currently there is no funding for pest management in the DSP-3 practice. The proposed change will provide an incentive for following a pest management plan after one full year of implementation system management. Landowners will be allowed to participate for three consecutive years using the N595 Pest Management Practice and must adhere to the policies of that practice.



Conservation Management Tool Deadline Pushed Back

A new deadline of Feb. 2, 2009, is when the Soil and Water Conservation Program will require that a Conservation Management Tool Web site map number be associated to each new DWC-I contract submitted for eligibility approval in MoSWIMS. Also, contract payments for DFR-4, DFR-5, DSP-3, DSP-33, DSP-333, N391, N472 and WQ10 must be submitted with a CMT

Web site map number. Mapping requirements can be found on page IX-9 of the Cost-Share Handbook. Previously, Dec. 1, 2008, was the deadline, but the program office wanted to give districts more time to become proficient with the tool. The Conservation Management Tool Web site is designed to aid district technicians in planning cost-share conservation practices. The password protected site allows users to plan practices by drawing them out on aerial photography. Training sessions were held in October and November. For more detailed information on the process, please review Memo 2009-011 available at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/correspondence.htm. If your technician did not attend training and would like a login and password, please contact Chris Wieberg at 573-751-5792 or chris.wieberg@dnr.mo.gov.

Commission Recognizes Certified Technicians at Tan-Tar-A

At its Dec. 1 meeting in Tan-Tar-A, the Soil and Water Districts Commission recognized 47 technicians that passed the Baseline Technician II Certification test. These technicians now have signature authority for the following practices:

- DSL-1 Permanent Vegetative Cover Establishment
- DSL-2 Permanent Vegetative Cover Improvement
- DSP-2 Permanent Vegetative Cover Enhancement
- mDSP-2 Modified Permanent Vegetative Cover Enhancement
- DFR-4 Forest Plantation
- DFR-5 Woodland Protection through Livestock Exclusion
- N472 Use Exclusion
- N386 Field Border
- N393 Filter Strip
- N391 Riparian Forest Buffer
- N380 Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- N725 Sinkhole Treatment
- N574 Spring Development
- N351 Well Decommissioning
- WQ10 Stream protection

The signature authority for any practice that is not listed above is the responsibility of Natural Resources Conservation Service and district staff will have to work with their NRCS personnel for technical signatures. The allocation for a Technician I is \$10.59 but increases to \$13.35 after certification.

The department, NRCS and Lincoln University are working on the next phase of the process that will include additional certifications in nutrient management, pest management, engineering design (prepared for NRCS signature), pipeline/irrigation, grazing management, woodland management, and accounting and cost-share data entry (accounting

and cost-share data entry is only available to districts who do not have a District Program Specialist II). Districts will be notified when further tests are available. Districts must have a need to be certified in these areas. For example, if a district does not plan on offering nutrient management, then the technician would not be eligible to receive certification in that area. Also, if districts have more than one technician, both technicians can be certified in the same specialized area, but a maximum of one allocation per district will be distributed. A district board can choose to split the allocation between the two technicians, but that will be up to its discretion.

Reminder on Dam Height Policy Revision for DWC-I Water Impoundment Reservoir Practice Effective Oct. 1, 2008

This is a reminder that the Soil and Water Districts Commission approved the following revision in the policy for the DWC-I Water Impoundment Reservoir practice. This change went into effect on all new contracts approved after Oct. 1, 2008.

Structures with an overall dam height of 25 feet or more with a storage volume of at least 50 acre-feet of water are not eligible for state cost-share. For purposes of this definition, the height of the dam is measured either from the natural bed of the stream or watercourse at the downstream toe of the barrier or dam, or the lowest point on the downstream toe of the dam, whichever is lower, up to the lowest dam crest elevation. The storage volume is the amount of water stored in the reservoir below the dam crest elevation. Information on how to measure a dam is available on the department's Web site at <http://www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wrc/damsft/damhgt.htm>. Refer to Memo 2009-006 available at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/swcp/correspondence.htm for more details on this policy.

Commission Clarifies Policy on Equipment Rebate Rule

The Soil and Water Districts Commission would like to continue providing an incentive program to landowners and operators to purchase and use different types of conservation equipment. The rule will restrict the landowner/operator to participate no more than once every five years for the same type of equipment. In the future, the commission may wish to allow innovative equipment new to soil conservation and water quality. The commission did not want to restrict eligibility in the new rule, but will establish guidelines for eligibility in their program policy. The commission did agree that a bona fide auction would be acceptable; therefore, the proposed rule will reflect a change to allow purchase at a public auction. Section (3) of the rule will be changed

Regular Cost-Share Snapshot

Allocated:	\$23.8 million
Obligated:	\$15 million
Claimed:	\$4.6 million

As of Dec. 4, 2008

to add the words "or auction service." This will allow participants to purchase equipment at a public auction and qualify for the incentive rebate program. Allowing purchase between individuals will not be eligible since this type of transaction may provoke fraudulent sales to benefit from the rebate.

Commission Reviews Supervisor Election Rules

During the November commission meeting, program office staff presented the commission with proposed changes to the rules for conducting supervisor elections. Some of proposed changes that were presented to the commission include:

- Notify all landowners of assessed agricultural land of the upcoming election and have anyone that wishes to run contact the district board.
- Remove any reference to the nominating committee.
- Conduct the election by mail ballot only.
- Mail a numbered ballot to the address on the County Assessor's list.
- Make the election period run for one month.
- Not require an election to be held if only one person asks to be placed on the ballot.

The commission did not take action on the rules at the meeting but wanted staff to look further into the cost of holding the elections based on the proposed rules and find ways to reduce the cost. The proposed rules will be discussed again at a future meeting to see if the commission wishes to proceed with the changes.

Nutrient Management Workshop Will Be Held in February

The Soil and Water Conservation Program will be hosting an optional Nutrient Management Workshop in February for district staff who would like to attend. The workshop will cover several nutrient management issues such as soil and manure testing, interpreting fertilizer recommendations, nutrient planning, variable rate applications and several other activities to assist in nutrient management planning for cooperators. The dates and times will be determined and sent to districts soon. If you have questions or suggestions, please send them to kurt.boeckmann@dnr.mo.gov.



Program Office Presents Information/ Education Proposal to Commission

The program office and the Soil and Water Districts Commission both support information and education activities provided by the districts. In response to this, the program office has come up with a proposal that would be fair to all students in the state of Missouri. After much discussion, the following plan was developed. This plan was developed using 2008 data provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. From that information, it was determined that there are 915,233 students statewide that would benefit from this proposal. The proposal has two parts:

1. To give all districts 25 cents per student for programs only. This would include no labor. This would be the money released from the previous completed information and education grants that was not used. These grants would conclude June 2009. This amount would be \$250,000. This plan would go into effect July 1, 2009.
2. In addition, a second 0-25 cents would be given to districts with a 1-to-1 local match. Districts could apply for this additional money. The program office would need to request an expansion of \$207,616.50 to fund this portion of the proposal.

Districts must show at the end of the year that they had positive contact with at least 10 percent of all students in their county. This would be done in the form of a report listing activities and the number of students that participated. These activities could include face to face contact with students, projects, field days, poster contests, newsletters, DVDs, involvement, support and

sponsorship in the Envirothon and Grassland Evaluation Contests.

This proposal was presented to the commission at its Dec. 1 meeting. The commission will vote on this proposal at a future meeting.

Some Landowners with Flood Damaged Practices may be Eligible for Cost-Share Assistance

As landowners are completing their harvest, they may be coming into the office to report that they have terraces that received damage from the summer rains. If the district knows of any practices that may have received damage from the summer rains, there is a process the district must follow to be able to assist the landowners with reconstruction.

If there are Emergency Conservation Program funds available, the board cannot approve cost-share assistance for reconstruction. If there are no ECP funds available, reconstruction cost-share assistance with state cost-share funds is only eligible on practices that failed during the maintenance life of the practice. To be eligible for reconstruction with state cost-share funds, the district needs to send a letter to the commission requesting to utilize cost-share funds for reconstruction. The letter must document the seriousness and the extent of the damages along with estimates of costs for repairs. The district's request must receive approval prior to the board approving any contracts for reconstruction. For the complete policies and guidelines on the reconstruction process, see Section IX, pages 2-4 of the Cost-Share Handbook.

Creation of a Revolving Fund Could Eliminate the End of the Fiscal Year

Lately there has been a lot of discussion concerning a separate fund that was created to cover Agricultural Nonpoint Special Area Land Treatment project contracts. This fund contains \$35 million, including the \$28 million originally set aside for the SALT contracts. While the \$28 million is still needed for SALT contracts, the program staff has suggested to the commission that the excess funds be used for setting up a revolving fund to eliminate the end of the fiscal year. Each year districts, landowners and contractors lose about six weeks when they are closing the books on the fiscal year. This revolving fund would cover contracts for those six weeks so there would not be a big break during one of the busiest times of the year. Technically, the end of the fiscal year would still be the same, but the money would be obligated based on termination dates on the contracts instead of board approval dates. If the commission chooses to pursue this, they will set up policy and regulations, and eventually take it through the rulemaking process where it would become part of the state regulations.

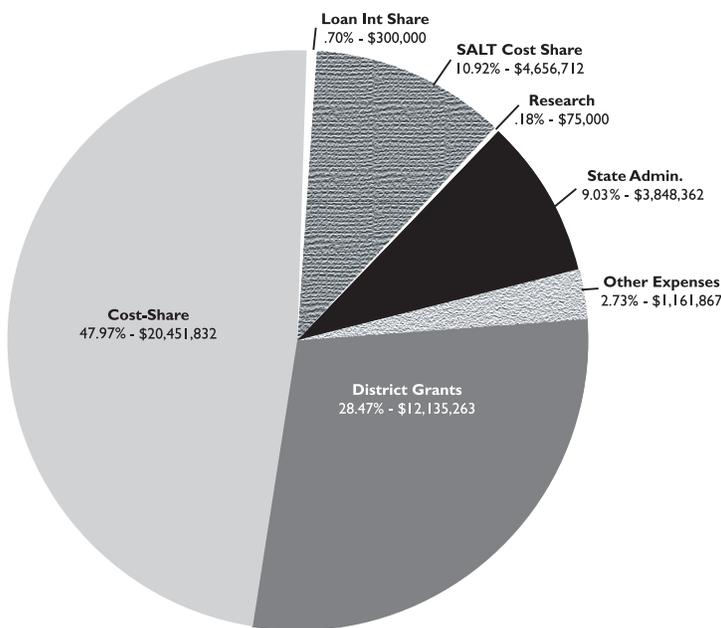
Commission Will Not Increase Component Rates on Rollover Contracts

Over the past few months, the program office has received multiple letters requesting that the commission increase the obligated amount of contracts based on fiscal year 2009 cost-share component rates for nutrients. The commission decided to maintain its current policy and not increase the obligated funds. This is due to the number of potential requests from other landowners throughout the state that had contracts rolled over from fiscal year 2008 into fiscal year 2009 because of six month liming requirements, the inability to predict the change in the cost of farm products used for cost-share and to consistently use the same cost-share component rate that is used for federal programs such as EQIP. In addition, the federally approved EQIP contracts are not updated with new costs each fiscal year.

FY10 Projected Budget and Core Budget Changes

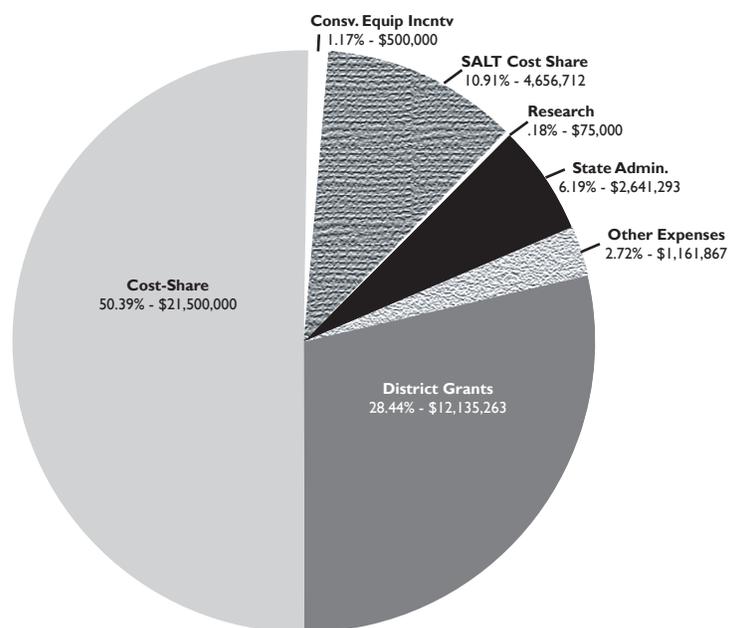
- Initiate the Conservation Equipment Incentive Program.
- Core redirect of \$200,000 from state admin E&E to the Conservation Equipment Incentive Program.
- Core redirect of \$2.2 million to district grants from SALT.
- Elimination of soil science section.
- Expansion of \$1 million for cost-share appropriation.

FY09 Projected Fund Allocation



59.59% - \$25,408,544 to Landowner/Opr
 28.47% - \$12,135,263 to Districts
 11.94% - \$5,085,229 to Admin, Research and Other
TOTAL: \$42,629,036

FY10 Projected Fund Allocation



62.47% - \$26,656,712 to Landowner/Opr
 28.44% - \$12,135,263 to Districts
 9.09% - \$3,878,160 to Admin, Research and Other
TOTAL: \$42,670,135



SOIL AND WATER *Resources*

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Editor: Jessica Royston

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