

Landowners and operators within current project areas have until Feb. 18, 2011 to apply.

State Conservationist Craig Derickson announced the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide more than \$2.4 million to conserve water and improve water quality within approved project areas through the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP).

Farmers and ranchers with land located in AWEP project areas have until Feb. 18, 2011, to apply for program assistance.

The Agriculture Water Enhancement Program is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides technical and financial assistance to help farmers and ranchers conserve surface and ground water and improve water quality.

The Agriculture Water Enhancement Program operates through contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in project areas established through partnership agreements.

Derickson said, “The Natural Resources Conservation Service is proud to work with state and local agencies to establish partnership agreements that will help protect one of Nebraska’s most precious natural resources—its water.”

Each project is a three or five year effort that includes ways to reduce water use and improve water quality. The following summarize current AWEP project areas:

- The Groundwater Quality and Supply Conservation AWEP project, through a partnership agreement with the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District, will install conservation practices

that conserve irrigation water from groundwater sources and improve groundwater quality within the project area.

- The Lower Republican AWEP project, through a partnership agreement with the Lower Republican Natural Resources District, will address water conservation issues in the Republican River Basin.
- The Ogallala/Platte River Recovery AWEP project, through a partnership agreement with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, will reduce water consumption in critical habitat areas by converting irrigated cropland to non-irrigated land uses along the Platte River from northeast Polk County to the Wyoming state line.
- The Middle Republican Natural Resources District AWEP project offers a temporary and permanent conversion of irrigated land to dry land cropping or other land uses. Funds will also be used to increase the irrigation efficiency of present irrigation systems, especially gravity systems.
- The Lower Platte North Natural Resources District AWEP project converts irrigated land to dry land production or further reduces water usage by increased irrigation management or by using flow meters or other scheduling equipment.
- The Little Blue Natural Resources District AWEP project seeks to improve irrigation water usage by converting gravity to sprinkler irrigation systems, converting acres from irrigation to dry land, improving the efficiency of sprinkler systems and better water management.
- The Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District AWEP project seeks to reduce water usage in the Beatrice, Wilber and DeWitt, Neb., well field areas and the NRD's groundwater management area with improved irrigation management practices.
- The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Tri-Basin Natural Resources District AWEP project seeks to install new full circle center pivots and 400 acres of sub-surface irrigation. Producers agree to farm pivot corners using no-till and have some record keeping

requirements.

Targeted areas are lands along the CNPPID supply canal southeast of North Platte and acres in Gosper, Phelps, and Kearney counties.

- These projects were selected using a competitive process that considered several factors including emphasis on water conservation activities.

Partners enter into multi-year agreements with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to promote ground and surface water conservation or improve water quality on eligible agricultural lands in the project areas.

Producers with land located in the project areas may apply to participate in AWEP at their local NRCS office through Feb. 18, 2011. Additional information is also available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep/>.